

TO: Flagler Exceptional Student Education Community

FROM: Dr. Randy Shearouse

RE: Responses to Information Request

Thank you for allowing me to respond to the questions I received on February 5th, from the Flagler Exceptional Student Education Community. I will do my best to respond accurately and completely, however, please feel free to reach out to me for clarification.

1. The concept of “full inclusion” is certainly a goal we have supported in our school district and have realized a tremendous amount of success, not only impacting students socially, but also academically. An incredible effort has been made to include more students in our district which has led to huge gains and success. However, the system has not reached the status of being “fully included”, nor do I believe this is always the correct decision for the student. I believe in providing a well-rounded education for every student, and meeting their needs where it will provide the most benefit to the student. Moving forward in Flagler, I do believe administrators, teachers, and support staff, must have the appropriate support and training in inclusion strategies and methods before true success can be realized.
2. From time to time, conflicts will arise in a district over a variety of issues, and these conflicts are certainly not isolated to exceptional students. My success in dealing with conflicts is simply sitting down and listening to concerns and trying to forge a compromise where all parties can support the compromise. If the district is wrong on an issue, we have to admit that we are wrong and correct the problem. If we can't agree, the door must never be closed on either side for the benefit of our students. I have an open-door policy for everyone and believe that all should have their concerns heard. In addition, I believe on-going issues should be addressed through periodic scheduled meetings where everyone is at the table and their voices heard.
3. In our district, we have approximately 13,000 students with 15 schools. I have always believed my role as a superintendent is to hire the best principals and teachers and retain them as long as they are effective. Administrators must be the right fit for each individual school. I have always evaluated all of our principals in the district, and feel that my personal involvement is critical to the success of the district. My belief is that if you lead by example, others will adopt your style of management when dealing with issues. The Rotary Four Way Test encourages: *telling the truth, being fair to everyone, building goodwill and better friendships, and benefitting all concerned*. Following these simple, yet impactful beliefs is what I strive to achieve every day and would expect everyone to do the same.

4. In our district, we have an Aspiring Leaders program, and an Inspiring Leaders program designed to benefit our district leaders. Both programs were formulated locally to fit the needs of the district. The Aspiring Leaders program is competitive in nature and is designed for teachers who one day have the dream of becoming an administrator. I usually conduct a book study with both groups, and every department in the district has an opportunity to share their role in the district. The Inspiring Leaders program was designed to have current administrators, who have the desire to one day lead a school facility, have additional training in that area. The end result has been the creation of a culture in the district where students are the number one priority. Training leaders within the district should and must be a priority in Flagler as well.

5. Serving in the role of an administrator at various levels, I have actively been involved with the ESE community and continue to be involved as superintendent. As an assistant principal and principal, I actively participated in IEP meetings to address the needs of students from various exceptionalities. As superintendent, I am proud to say that we recently moved our therapeutic support students back to our community where their needs could be served more effectively. Parents are also able to take a more active role in their child's education. Project Search and Faith Equestrian are two initiatives, the district supports to provide additional resources for our students and parents. We continue to be creative and open as a district to best meet the needs of our exceptional students, and progress continues to be made.