

October 7, 2014

Kurt Browning, Superintendent of Schools  
Alison Crumbley, Board Chair  
District School Board Of Pasco County  
7227 Land O' Lakes BLVD, Land O' Lakes FL 34638

Per your request, this letter is a formal notice of my intent to resign from my position as Assistant Superintendent for Student Achievement for the District School Board of Pasco County, effective January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. As we have spoken, if necessary, I am willing to remain until my contract ends at the of June, 2015.

Serving the students of the Pasco County School District has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my career. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to work and learn alongside the dedicated educators here in Pasco. I wish the students and schools nothing but the best as they continue the difficult work of instructional transformation and advancement. With the community's commitment and support, I believe this talented staff will realize improved educational experiences and life outcomes for all students of this county.

I haven't made a final decision yet on what my next journey will be, but my commitment to lead an innovative agenda that is in the best interest of students is relentless. I will continue to advocate for a smart accountability system that truly supports teaching and learning. Florida's current system is reckless and will inevitably hurt the very children it is aiming to protect while also alienating the very professionals it needs to carry the work. While serving as an Assistant Superintendent over the past two years, I have always asked the question of every situation: "Is this best for kids?" My answer to Florida's current accountability system is "No, this is absolutely not good for kids."

I have witnessed the educators in our system welcome the higher, more-rigorous standards, which require a significant change in the learning roles of teachers and students on a massive scale. However, there is a real concern over excessive student testing that does not inform instruction but simply ties results to high-stakes educational decisions, such as student promotion or generation of VAM scores for teachers' evaluation. I will continue to advocate for meaningful assessments that generate data to reveal what students know and are able to do and provide teachers with the information they need to track student progress and to identify and support students who are struggling, such as the IRLA (Independent Reading Level Assessment).

The approaching unreasonable timelines for major state mandates fail to give our schools sufficient time to organize systemic responses to our current and future demands: preparing and supporting principals and teachers to engage students in much deeper learning, so they will be equipped not just with deep academic knowledge, but with the 21<sup>st</sup> first century skills and dispositions necessary to be globally competitive.



Regardless of Florida's relentless focus on the wrong drivers for improvement, Pasco County has put students and teachers first and is a different entity than it was two years ago. We have focused on capacity building, collaborative efforts, and new pedagogies.

Pasco has seen significant accomplishments that have contributed to the attention now focused on our District's public schools:

- Restructuring of the instructional departments for improved programs and services
- Establishment of Regional Support Teams
- Creation of new positions to support regions: Principal Coach, Learning Community Executive Director, Curriculum Specialists, PD Specialists, MTSS Specialists, ICT Literacy Specialists to better support schools within regions
- Percentage of students taking AP courses increased by 6% and passing AP Tests increased by 17.6%
- Percentage of first time test takers scoring Level 3 and higher on End-of-Course Exams increased in every subject area
- Increase in Industry Certification by 48%
- Increase in percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma from 63% to 72%
- Improvement in Reading Performance
- Improvement in Science Performance
- K-5 Implementation of the new Florida Standards in ELA and math
- 6-8 Preparation for implementation of new Florida Standards
- K-12 Math Summer Institute with follow-up supports
- K-12 Curriculum Writing Teams for ELA and mathematics
- K-12 Teacher Teams for Curriculum Units for ELA and Math
- Implementation of Title I Pilot Summer Literacy Program for Grades K and 1
- Implementation of Title I Pilot Summer math program for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- Implementation of Title I Pilot Summer STEAM for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade
- Expansion of Summer Reading, Migrant, and PEACE Camps
- Restructuring the K-5 Self-Contained Academic Program
- Restructuring of Intensive Reading at the High Schools
- Implementation of Tiered Supports for Blended Middle School Course/Credit Recovery
- Emphasis on Teacher Leadership – Teacher Facilitators and Curriculum Writers
- Marzano Framework Reset – Professional Growth System
- Revamped Leadership Program
- Implementation of Leader Intern Program
- Implementation of CANVAS Learning Management System
- Launching of Online End-of-Course Supports
- Early Literacy Initiative through district-wide implementation of IRLA
- Development of Early Warning System Indicators and Benchmarks
- Training of Early Warning Systems Database in PascoStar



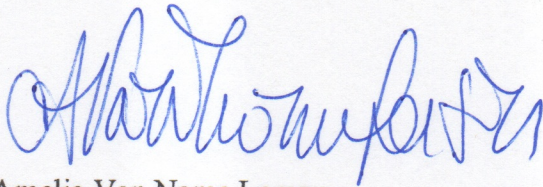
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- Together We Stand Community Symposium to promote a safe and inclusive environment for all students
- District-wide implementation of PLCs
- Expansion of Elementary and Secondary STEM Fair
- Implementation of Discovery Education as a benchmark assessment
- Implementation of Teacher Advisory and Principal Advisory Committees
- Expansion of PLACE Before and After School Program to better assist children in becoming college, career and life ready
- Expansion of Blended Pre-K
- Expansion of Instructional Technology: 1-to-1 and BYOD
- Increased use of Social Media
- Expansion of the AVID Program into more schools
- Implementation of Learner Active Technology Infused Classroom (LATIC) in five elementary schools
- Expansion of Quality Choices: Cambridge and Infinity Academies and upcoming STEAM Magnet Elementary School
- Implementation of Robotics and Coding in all Title I Elementary Schools
- Implementation of SMILE in Title I Middle Schools
- Use of Gallup Student and Employee Surveys
- Increased emphasis in the Fine Arts and Physical Education Programs
- Textbook adoption for grades K-5 ELA and math secondary subjects

There is much to be proud, and I am truly grateful for having had the opportunity to serve this community with an incredibly passionate and talented team. But there is much more to be done and you can't rest until every student has access to relevant opportunities and to a robust and rigorous education. Do not settle for the status quo. Far too many students are still disengaged and dropping out; far too few are finishing college and entering the work force with the requisite skills.

I wish the District success in the future and entrust to you the charge of improving the lives and opportunities for our students and staff. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance during this transition.

Sincerely,



Amelia Van Name Larson  
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*"Education is either liberation or perpetuation." Paulo Freire*