

1. Our district shows impressive math and reading scores overall, with about 3 out of 4 students performing at or above grade level. However, a closer analysis shows that some areas of our district are high-performing while other areas are lower-performing schools. What specific approach would you take to address this disparity while maintaining our overall academic excellence?

To address disparities in academic performance while maintaining high levels of excellence in St. Johns County, I would ensure we share the research revealed by the *Opportunity Myth*: many students (particularly students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELL), and students from low-income backgrounds) spend much of their school experience without access to four critical resources: grade-level content, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations. To close achievement gaps and ensure all students reach their potential, it is important to increase access to these resources through a systemic approach rooted in data, instructional alignment, and capacity-building.

First, I would build district-wide systems that ensure consistent access to grade-level content. Every classroom must deliver benchmark-aligned instruction and provide tasks and assessments aligned to state standards. I currently use a benchmark walkthrough tool that supports principals in identifying gaps in task alignment, providing feedback, and strengthening the instructional core. All students, regardless of subgroup, should engage daily with grade-level assignments before receiving intervention. For students who begin the year behind, access to rigorous content is essential for accelerating growth and promoting equity.

Second, I would focus on subgroup performance. In every school, we should disaggregate data by subgroup and analyze trends to identify inequities. Some schools, including high-performing ones, show achievement gaps for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. To address this, we can strategically schedule support services. This might mean revising and aligning special education teacher schedules to maximize impact and ensuring they are part of the lesson planning process. For ELL students, general education teachers must be equipped with ELL strategies and resources. I have conducted ELL strategy book studies with principals, facilitated side-by-side coaching, and helped build teacher confidence in supporting ELL students effectively.

Third, I would leverage the power of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Effective PLCs go beyond surface-level collaboration and focus on lesson design,

data analysis, and student outcomes. Teachers should engage in collaborative discussions with peers to plan lessons, review student work, and share strategies. When instructional gaps emerge, teachers can observe or co-plan with colleagues who demonstrate success. These professional conversations support teacher growth and lead to more consistent and effective instruction across classrooms.

Fourth, I would ensure training supports dynamic small group instruction. Strategic small groups should be flexible, data-driven, and tailored to student needs. Teachers need time and professional development to design personalized learning pathways. Groupings should change regularly based on assessment data, ensuring students receive timely and responsive support.

Finally, I would strengthen high school math interventions. A drop in proficiency in high school sometimes reflects middle school acceleration participation, where higher-achieving students complete Algebra early, limiting the tested population. Students enrolled in Algebra and Geometry at the high school level may need additional support, including concept reinforcement and targeted instruction. Teachers may also need professional development in scaffolding strategies and engagement techniques.

By remaining anchored in equity, instructional coherence, and collaborative practice, we can eliminate achievement gaps and ensure every student benefits from the high-quality education that defines St. Johns County.

2. Our district projects significant growth in the coming years. What do you identify as the three most critical factors a superintendent must address to ensure successful expansion while maintaining educational excellence? How would you develop sustainable systems capable of accommodating continued growth?

As St. Johns County continues to experience significant growth, as superintendent I will lead with foresight and systems thinking to ensure expansion supports, rather than disrupts, educational excellence. The three most critical factors to address are: (1) strategic planning for enrollment and facilities, (2) robust community engagement, and (3) collaborative organizational structures that connect all departments in service of students and families.

1. Strategic Planning for Enrollment and Facilities

Sustainable growth begins with a strong strategic planning process. As superintendent, I will establish annual systems to analyze enrollment data, disaggregated by subgroup, to detect emerging trends, anticipate student needs, and respond proactively. New school construction and redistricting decisions are

often emotional and personal for families. By using clear, transparent data and communicating early, I can build trust while ensuring that boundary changes are grounded in logic and fairness. A comprehensive assessment of facilities is important in balancing new construction with the modernization of existing campuses. This includes prioritizing renovations, managing relocatable classrooms, and integrating technology across older buildings to ensure equity of experience and resources.

2. Community Engagement

Growth brings new families and opportunities to strengthen the district's identity and community bonds. As superintendent, I will need to create multiple pathways to engage families through public forums, community events, and partnerships with local organizations. These partnerships can extend the district's reach while reinforcing shared ownership of student success. Equally important is the inclusion of community voice in decision-making. I have successfully facilitated community impact groups to better understand what families and stakeholders value, ensuring decisions reflect the priorities and aspirations of those we serve. Transparent communication about how funds (such as those from the half-cent sales tax) are used for new school construction and improvements is vital to maintaining community trust. Welcoming new families also requires thoughtful onboarding that helps schools understand students' academic strengths and areas for support as they enter our schools.

3. Collaborative Organizational Structures

Successfully managing growth requires strong collaboration across departments including Academic Services, Human Resources, Facilities, Assessment, Transportation, and Finance. Each offers critical insights that shape district decisions. A key role for me as superintendent would be to align these teams to identify emerging issues and design durable solutions. For example, a school experiencing increased enrollment due to neighborhood growth might benefit from expanded programs or adjusted staffing models to maintain quality and ensure all students are well supported. Long-term, I would ensure departments have the tools necessary to analyze data, forecast trends, and make informed decisions. Staffing new schools must be planned in advance, with a focus on recruitment and professional development. Planning ahead avoids staffing shortages and supports academic continuity.

While enrollment growth cannot always be controlled, its impact can be managed through thoughtful planning, transparent and inclusive communication, and organizational alignment. With these systems in place, the district will be positioned not only to accommodate growth, but to thrive because of it. A student-centered approach ensures every neighborhood has access to a high-quality school where students feel welcomed, challenged, and supported.