

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?

As Superintendent of St. Johns County School District, I would approach the challenge of academic disparities with both urgency and hope, because behind every data point is a student with unique potential. While I am proud that 3 out of 4 of our students are performing at or above grade level, I am equally committed to ensuring that every school, regardless of ZIP code, is a place where excellence is not just possible, but expected.

My approach would be strategic and grounded in the belief that equity is not about equal resources, but about meeting every student where they are and helping them grow. Inspired by Jim Collins' *Good to Great*, I believe in facing our challenges head-on and creating systems that lift every learner.

First, I would lead a deep, honest look at our school and student-level data—not just to identify where we are falling short, but to understand *why*. Listening to teachers, school leaders, and families in those communities will be just as important as the numbers. We must confront the facts without losing sight of the faces behind them.

Next, we would strengthen our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with real purpose. We need to make sure they are not just meetings, but engines of growth. When teachers collaborate around student needs, share strategies, and support each other with clear goals, great things happen. I have seen it. This is the work we have been doing in our Tier 3 schools the past two years and have seen growth in student achievement.

We would also ensure our highest-need schools have access to our best resources, including instructional coaches, professional development, and consistent curriculum supports. The idea isn't to "fix" schools, it is to equip and empower the incredible educators already there with the tools to help students thrive.

Another key element is community. We cannot do this alone. I would work to expand partnerships with families, nonprofits, and local businesses so that our schools become stronger through shared ownership and support. This is the work that I championed through Community Partnership Schools at Webster and South Woods Elementary schools. Both schools achieved UCF-Certified Community Partnership Schools status under the work we were able to accomplish together. We were able to expand the model to include Crookshank Elementary School just last year.

Most importantly, I believe in the power of continuous improvement which includes celebrating what's working, learning from what's not, and always keeping students at the center of every decision. I have led this work before at Nease as well as supported this at our secondary schools,

and I have seen the difference it makes when we listen deeply, act strategically, and stay committed to the long game.

With this approach, we can address disparities while protecting what makes our district strong and ensuring *every child*, in *every classroom*, has the opportunity to succeed.

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 Superintendent of St. Johns County School District, I know that growth is both a privilege and a challenge. It means families are choosing our schools, believing in the excellence we provide. But managing that growth responsibly requires more than strategic plans. It takes a deep commitment to people, purpose, and progress.

To ensure we grow wisely while protecting what makes our schools great, I believe three critical priorities must guide our path: **proactive infrastructure planning, intentional development of people, and strong systems that support continuous improvement.**

First, we must get ahead of the curve on infrastructure. That means more than just building schools, it means ensuring the right schools are in the right places at the right time. In past roles, I've seen first-hand the work of our school district with local government, zoning boards, and planning committees, and I have seen how early collaboration and open communication can prevent some overcrowding before it begins. I would continue that model here by being present in planning conversations, listening to families and community voices, and ensuring our facilities reflect both current needs and future growth.

Second, no amount of buildings matter if we don't have exceptional educators inside them. Teachers and leaders are the heart of everything we do. That is why we must prioritize recruiting, growing, and keeping the very best. For me, this work is personal. I still remember my first mentor principal, Mr. Bill Mignon, who believed in me and how that shaped the leader I have become. I want every new teacher to have that same experience. By expanding mentorship programs, leadership pipelines, and professional learning opportunities, we can make St. Johns a place where educators not only want to start their careers but grow them.

I am also passionate about shifting the mindset around innovation. Inspired by Ryan Leak's "Chasing Failure," I believe our district should encourage smart risk-taking. This is where failure isn't feared but embraced as part of growth. That mindset builds resilience and unlocks creativity in classrooms, departments, and leadership teams alike.

Third, as we grow, we must stay grounded in systems that keep us aligned and focused. I believe in the power of data not just to identify gaps, but to fuel intentional, strategic improvement. This means creating user-friendly dashboards, empowering school leaders to act on real-time data, and building a districtwide culture where reflection and accountability are expected, not optional. I have seen firsthand how regular collaboration and thoughtful progress monitoring create momentum and elevate outcomes for both students and staff alike.

Ultimately, the key to managing growth is not just in buildings, programs, or plans. It is in how we build trust, empower people, and stay focused on students. I am excited about the growth ahead. Not because it will be easy, but because it gives us the chance to do what great districts do: adapt, rise, and lead with purpose.