

Dr. Clay Carmichael's Responses

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St Johns County Schools

Superintendent Semifinalist Interview Written Question Responses

April 15th, 2025

Superintendent Semi-Finalist Response to Written Question #1

To address the math and reading performance disparity within our district I propose, as I have done in the past, a detailed student-by-student analysis. Interviewing students who have made significant progress, especially during late middle school and early high school, will aim to identify the strategies which contributed to their successes in key standardized tests such as the 10th grade ELA, Algebra 1, and Geometry exams. Leading teams in the past to carry out such analysis met with great success and improvement within the school. I have found that such a focused approach enables us to learn from students who have overcome challenges in both math and reading, allowing us to pinpoint effective teaching methods and support systems which empower them. A firm understanding of their experiences not only boosts their math and reading scores but also enhances their overall well-being in school.

As our teams conduct these interviews the insights gained will lead to improved teaching practices. Making a real impact requires commitment. However, by fostering strong relationships and recognizing the unique challenges faced by some students we can create an environment which supports all learners.

Once qualitative data has been collected, we can move towards analyzing common themes and successful practices. Specific teaching methods which prove effective can then be disseminated district wide. Professional development sessions can focus on these strategies, ensuring all teachers are equipped to support their students effectively.

To foster a sense of equity and support among our teachers it is essential to create Professional Learning Communities which include both high achieving as well as struggling math and reading schools. By establishing PLC initiatives, where teachers from all backgrounds collaborate and share insights, we can elevate teaching practices across the board. This approach not only values the expertise of educators in struggling schools but also highlights the shared goal of improving student outcomes. When we cultivate a supportive community, we empower all educators to contribute

Dr. Clay Carmichael's Responses

meaningfully, ensuring that every teacher feels equally valued and capable of making a positive impact on their students.

Targeted support programs for struggling students, such as lunch tutoring and/or peer mentoring should also be implemented. Addressing the unique challenges faced by these students will help them to build the confidence and skills necessary for math and reading success.

In summary, my approach to reducing math and reading performance disparities involves analyzing student experiences, sharing effective teaching strategies, encouraging educator collaboration and providing targeted support. By focusing on student growth and well-being we can uphold our district's commitment to academic excellence while ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Superintendent Semi-Finalist Response to Written Question #2

As we navigate the exciting journey of population growth in our school community, it is essential to remember our primary mission: to provide a wholesome, All-American school experience for every student regardless of the numbers. Instead of perceiving growth as a challenge, we can instead embrace it as a source of "social energy" that enriches our learning environment. This influx of students (and their families) brings diverse perspectives, empowering each individual to develop into a strong, confident person who is well prepared for the demands of higher education and the work force.

1. **Celebrating Population Growth:** Embracing growth means we can enrich our educational offerings while also enhancing the diversity of our community. Our focus should be on delivering a first-tier education that not only prepares our students academically but also instills in them a sense of self-assurance and resilience. While we may face challenges along the way, our commitment to nurturing confident individuals remains unwavering.
2. **Building Strong Infrastructure:** In order to support our growing student body, we must work collaboratively with county commissioners and state officials to secure funding through avenues such as proportionate mitigation and accurate geocode projections. By doing so we can create the robust infrastructure necessary for our expanding community. This infrastructure should reflect our dedication to being good stewards for our funding while ensuring that every student has access to high-quality educational resources.

Dr. Clay Carmichael's Responses

3. **Engaging With Our Community:** We recognize that many of our new families, bringing students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, may not be familiar with our school culture and what it has to offer. Therefore, it is our responsibility to welcome them with open arms and provide clear, informative communication that honors their role as partners in education. By fostering a culture of trust and transparency we can ensure that all families feel valued and connected to our shared goals.

Focusing on these areas will create sustainable systems which can then accommodate our growth while maintaining our steadfast commitment to educational excellence. Together, let's build a vibrant school community where every student feels empowered, and every parent feels included.