

NEW LEADERSHIP

My goals as superintendent

By **Todd Bowden**
Guest Columnist

On March 1, I will assume the responsibilities of superintendent of the Sarasota County School District. I will do so very well aware that I am succeeding a brilliant leader who guided the district to tremendous success through extraordinarily trying times.

Lori has been a wonderful role model to me. In her, I have witnessed grace, humility and an uncompromised focus on the students of this community. I hope to emulate those qualities during my tenure as superintendent.

Lori set the bar very high. She also inspired the confidence in her staff to know that we can and we will achieve even greater success in the years to come.

During the superintendent search, I was frequently asked why I wanted to be a superintendent. My answer was quite simple: I did not want to be a superintendent, I wanted to be the superintendent of schools in Sarasota County. For the last 10 years, our family has called Sarasota home. It is the only home my children can recall. I have never applied for any other superintendent position.

Sarasota is a unique place, particularly in the state of Florida. Public education is not held

in the same regard in many places as it is in our community. Again and again, our citizens have supported and advocated for public education in many ways. The support shown to public education by our arts, philanthropic and business communities is the envy of other districts throughout this state.

As superintendent I will focus my efforts on three key areas. The first area of focus will be in maintaining our tradition of excellence. Our school district, including our traditional public schools and our charter school partners, has established itself as a leader in Florida. We are one of only three “A” districts in the state, and one of only two to be rated “A” since district grading began in 2004. We have achieved national recognition for arts integration and innovation in instructional technology. We must uphold this reputation of excellence in every decision we make.

Second, we must ensure that our tradition of excellence extends to all of our students. We have a moral obligation to provide the resources necessary for all of our students, teachers and schools to be successful. I believe all students can meet their full potential if we provide them with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

Finally, our

commitment to our students, and to this community, must extend beyond graduation. We must ensure that our students not only graduate on time, but that they graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in college and the workforce. “College and Career Readiness” is not just a phrase, it is our promise to our students. Each student should graduate with a career plan that leads him or her to be a contributing member of our community.

The Sarasota County School District has much to be proud of, but no organization is perfect. It is my hope that each day we strive to do better than the day before. It is through this daily, incremental change that great things become possible.

I ask for your thoughts and prayers as I assume the role of superintendent. I believe my experiences and educational background have prepared me to be successful, but the role of superintendent is a position for which one can never fully be prepared. As I take the oath of office March 1, I promise that – to the best of my ability – everything I do will be done with the care, humility and uncompromised focus on the students of this community you have come to expect of your superintendent of schools.