

Dr. Alexander,

Thank you very much for your time on the phone today.

As we discussed, the remaining "long answer" questions appear below. I wish you the best of luck with them.

Sincerely,

George Schiro

Q3b) What plan of action would you take to implement Florida's Race to the Top initiatives successfully?

I would begin by reviewing and examining our current plans of action. All theories of action and action plans are fluid. As the new leader of the district, I would listen to our stakeholders and board members to determine the next best adjustment to our plan. Student achievement will be my top priority. I will implement two approaches to address our student performance. First, I will review our current school improvement plans with our district staff and building level leadership teams. The information gathered concerning our current improvement plans and our results at each school we lead us in a direction of success or in the direction calling for modifications. Secondly, I will work closely with our Board and leadership teams to implement research-based strategies and interventions to meet the needs of our students. These interventions will include personalizing the educational process for all students, increasing academic rigor, and the building of trusting relationships.

Q9) Will you allow teachers to provide input and have a voice into matters that concern them? How will you go about this? How will you determine if there are legitimate issues and concerns at the teacher/staff level?

As your new superintendent, I will develop an entry plan that focuses on gathering information by listening and meeting with all stakeholders in our community. Through a series of town hall meetings, small and large group as well as individual meetings, I will ask two questions. What are our strengths as a district and where do we need to improve? As I meet and listen to thousands of people, I will establish a set of criteria. The criteria will be shared with our community and the School Board so that we can go about the business of addressing our strategic plan for the next five to eight school years.

An important piece of this information gathering will be the relationship I establish with our staff. I will meet with all building level staff formally each semester and individual as needed and requested. I will meet with the teacher's leadership team monthly and president of the bargaining unit each week. I am a straight-forward open and honest leader. These meetings will serve as an opportunity to develop a trusting relationship. Resolving and addressing issues of concern in their early stages has always been a priority for me.

Q10) How will you handle a difficult parent? Define "difficult parent". How will you handle five individual personalities on the School Board?

Difficult parents are upset and frustrated with the district for a variety of reasons. I try to treat others the way I would always wish to be treated. Throughout the years, I have dealt with many parents. I return all calls each and every day and follow through with my commitments and the promises I make to parents. Understanding and tolerance are the key as well as understanding at a deeper level exactly what the parent is experiencing in that moment are keys to assisting parents during these stressful situations.

Meeting the needs of five personalities on the Board is an exciting challenge that I welcome. In the past, I have worked diligently to establish an open and trusting relationship with Board members. We all have the same goals as public figures. Our mission and commitment to the mission of the district is clear for each of us. Establishing guidelines for the communication process, decision-making, communication, and problem-solving will be essential for us to meet our goals. Completing the training workshops available by the Department of Education would go a long way in supporting the development of our relationship.

Q14) How do fine arts and performing arts fit in to your overall plan for a school district?

Research tells us that when students are involved in the arts their writing, reading, and mathematic skills and overall academic performance increases drastically. I believe strongly in the arts. As superintendent in Hernando, I worked closely with the Board as we developed a gifted program and middle school fine arts and performance arts programs. Program development such as career academies is a top priority for me. Creating the "hooks" that will capture the interests of students will increase our graduation rates, lower our dropout rates and allow students to be prepared for the world of work as they compete in a global society.

Q16) Discuss the experiences you have had in working with the special needs of exceptional education students and language enriched pupils (LEP). What initiatives have you implemented in your current district to meet the special needs of exceptional education students and limited English speaking students? What were the results?

I have served as a special education and administrator for 27 years in urban and suburban school districts in four states. I began as a teacher of special education students. I have worked with a variety of students with various disabilities at all school levels. As an urban educator and leader, I have also worked with LEP students. I have developed curriculum and sheltered English courses for LEP students. I have developed a welcome center at a high school so that parents of students just arriving in the USA could feel welcomed and comfortable in the community and school. Finally, I have developed career academies and Navy ROTC programs that transformed the culture and climate of a school and the community. These programs included courses and course work that were developed with a focus on the differentiated learning styles of all students. Their focus was to develop learning strategies and alternative assessment techniques that focused on a student's learning ability, not their disability.

As a result of these programs, student performance has improved at every school and district that I served in a leadership role. Though I have served in a variety of roles during these school reform efforts, I also was able to hire, recruit, and retain excellent staff members.

Q17) Discuss the progress the schools in your district have made in the area of student achievement. What role did you play in these accomplishments?

As stated previously, as a building leader and district level leader, I have a history of improving student performance. As a superintendent, I was able to quickly move a "B"/"C" district to the "A" performance level. I was able to do this by having a laser-like focus on student achievement. As a hands-on leader, I developed and implemented data teams at all schools and attended quarterly team review meetings. I also developed the expectation of personalized learning plans for struggling students and students that were close to achieving at a proficiency level. Finally, I used technology as an expected teaching and learning tool for all staff and students. It was also used as a credit recovery and early intervention modification for students.

Q19) Discuss the experience you have in motivating a diverse staff and student body.

As an urban leader and superintendent I have served a diverse staff and student body on several occasions. I believe that the key to motivating all individuals is to take the time necessary to develop open and trusting relationships. This is possible even in a large district. Our greatest resource is our staff. At all leadership levels, we need to treat all staff with respect and dignity. We need to follow through with our commitments and be sincere and honest.

Finally, we motivate staff and students by recognizing and promote their effort and accomplishments. This recognition can take the form of quarterly academic celebrations sponsored by our business community and by committing time, time to listen, follow through and incorporate the ideas and improvement strategies offered by all staff members and their thousands of years of experience and commitment to our district and students.

Q20) How has diversity impacted your leadership in your current workplace? What role have you played in celebrating diversity?

I have worked in many diverse communities during my 27 years as an educator and administrator. Celebrating our diverse goes beyond the week or day that we currently incorporate into our school year as a time to celebrate diversity. Celebrating our diverse must be part of the curriculum we teach daily. It includes integrating projects and the development of artifacts that promote reading, writing, and mathematics across all disciplines. It means expanding our students global understand of our world and appreciating our differences and the long list of similarities we all share regardless of our background.

Q23) What is your position on privatization of County School Board jobs?

I have not had a history of success in the process. I have found that their services are tasked -related. That is, you get only those specific tasks that you purchase. I feel that the commitment to a job well done and a deeper level of commitment to the position and your employer is lacking. During these difficult times, I have also found that it may be a short term answer to our budget problems, but can lead to long-term difficulties. It could work if our current employees are given the opportunity to work for the private vendor, but frequently it includes lower wages because the private company is trying to make a profit.

Q25) What sort of relationship do you envision between employer and Union at the School Board?

I would develop an open and trusting relationship with union leader members. I am an open straight-forward leader. I believe through this approach we will be able to resolve differences and find the common ground necessary to successfully meet the needs of the Union members and our district.

Q32) What do you know about this community and school district?

I believe that we are the fifth largest district in Florida at 53,000 students. We are experiencing tremendous funding difficulties as is the entire state of Florida. I know that what I read in the newspaper is currently my only source of information. Most importantly, I am wise enough to know that what I have read seldom tells the truth or the entire story.

Q42) How would you organize this district's custodial services?

I have successfully used a plan based on square footage in the building. I have also completed time studies to determine what is reasonably during a traditional shift of work. This formula has worked well in the past.

Q43) How would you operate the food service program? Should the food service program operate in the black?

Operating in the black is a good thing! I have operated several food service programs under my list of duties in past positions. They ran in the black and the surplus funding supported other components of the operating budget.

Q49) As an example, let's assume that you are not familiar with the "Race to the Top" standards for the state of Florida. How do you get up-to-speed quickly on such unfamiliar policies implemented in other states? Describe the method that you would use.

I was unfamiliar with the budgeting formula when I arrived in July of 2007 as superintendent. I quickly developed the expertise necessary to develop a 440 million-dollar budget. I would use the same approach in this situation. I would meet with all departments and department leaders especially those in the teacher evaluation, human resources, student achievements and school operations departments. I would review existing action plans, student results and all other information that was available. I learn best by listening. Base on the information I acquired, I would work closely with the leadership team to assess and evaluate our plan and its results. Reporting to the Board and community would be a top priority for me. Sharing up dates and result information would be ongoing.

Q50) What do you think about the Parent Internet Viewer (PIV) used in the Osceola County School District? What have you used in the past to keep parents informed of their children's grade status? What is the maximum amount of time that should elapse between the determination of an assignment or test grade and when it is posted online for parents to see? Please elaborate.

I have used a Parent Portal program to communicate with parents via the Internet. I have also developed a monthly Parent Connection TV program to communicate with parents and the community. I believe it is reasonable to post assignments and tests within a 48 hour time period. I would review our current practice, seek out the input from a sample of parents as well as listen to our teaching staff before changing what is currently in place. I would want to establish a Board policy to address this concern and be sure that the policy is consistently enforced across the entire district.

Q51) How would you verify on a day-to-day basis that your policies and procedures are being properly implemented? For example, how do you know if teachers are handing out the questions and answers to midterm or final exams?

I believe that our policies must be implemented and reinforced through a series of procedures that we develop as a Board and superintendent. We must be open and up front in our expectations. We must clearly establish how we will hold all employees of the district accountable. Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute to the development of these policies, but clearly the responsibility for their implementation sits with the superintendent and Board.

Q52) What plans would you implement to eliminate sugary products in school cafeterias and vending machines?

I would empower an ad-hoc committee to study the research and develop a plan of action that would be supported by the Board. The research would include state and federal information, feedback from parent and community members and a review of current successful programs throughout the nation. I believe strongly in the theory of a "sound mind and a sound body". Establish a policy and our new practices would be a priority.

Q53) Given the state school systems are currently face with regarding bullying on campus as well as off campus, briefly mention:

a. What measure(s) have you implemented in dealing with this issue in your current position?

b. What measure(s) you will implement across the school system to ensure the safety of all children?

c. How will you ensure that this method is implemented in all schools?

I would first review our current policy and determine their effectiveness based on a review of available data such as suspensions, expulsions, and overall disciplinary infractions. I would also conduct several forums to listen, learn and receive feedback from parents, families and community members. Base on the information we gather, I would establish a policy or make the appropriate modifications and recommendation of existing policy to the Board which included quarterly reviews by the Board so that adjustments could be made to the policy when necessary.

Q54) What method(s) do you have in mind to deal with out-of-zone students?

I believe that we would need to establish a policy or review our existing policy to determine if it is effectively meeting the needs of our students. I am sure that I policy for the admission of out of zone students is in place. Does it meet the needs of our students? How to we handle the appeal process? Most importantly, how to we monitor its effectiveness? These questions would need to be reviewed and answers would need to be provided before we made modification recommendations to the Board.

Q55) What will you do to recruit minority teachers to Osceola County?

I will take an aggressive approach to recruiting and retaining minority teachers. It is a top priority for me as your leader. This would include conducting and attending recruitment fairs throughout the nation. Once hired, I believe that we should provide the support necessary to retain minority teacher. A comprehensive transitional and retention program must be developed and implemented. We must get creative and explore the recruitment of other professionals that may be interested in career changes. We should also explore programs such as the Teach America Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne Alexander, Ed.D.