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NEWS RELEASE

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Escambia County School District Launches Initiative

Celebrating Our Past, Designing Our Future, Together

Escambia County School District's Superintendent Dr. Timothy A. Smith and the members of the Escambia County School Board kicked off a community-wide initiative to begin strategic planning for the future of the Escambia County School District.

During a virtual community brief held Jan. 14, 2021, Superintendent Smith thanked everyone in the school district for all of their hard work this year. He also praised them for gains made in the past highlighted by the recently announced graduation rate which increased again for the 12th year in a row.

Superintendent Smith said, "I have learned that we have a successful, hard working group of employees in the district who have worked together to make real gains to reach a graduation rate of 86.5%."

"Couple this with community residents who have voted for the half-cent sales tax for schools, local community leadership found in Achieve Escambia, the Studer Institute's efforts in early childhood learning initiatives and kindergarten readiness, and the Children's Trust being approved by 61% of the ballots cast by residents, and there is no doubt we live in a fantastic community and we have an opportunity!"

"My vision for the district is a launching spot," Superintendent Smith explained, "Through a process of strategic planning, a vision will be shaped, fine-tuned, and finalized based on district and community feedback."

Superintendent Smith's vision includes:

- Increasing student proficiency rates of learning,
- Closing the achievement gap between African American students and white students, and
- Being as united as we possibly can be as a community for all students.

Celebrating Our Past, Designing Our Future, Together

Escambia County School District (ECSD) is launching a pre-strategic planning initiative themed, Celebrating Our Past, Designing Our Future, Together. The initiative will be a joint-effort designed to listen to, engage with, and gain insights from internal stakeholders as well as citizens across Escambia County. This will inform the crafting of ECSD's mission and vision statement and areas of focus needed to help realize a new vision for the future of our schools.

The initiative will include multiple steps:

- Step one will be a dialogue session to engage a cross-section of district internal stakeholders and will include teachers and staff. The goal is to hear and listen to shared ideas and aspirations.
- Step two will be an ECSD-wide online survey for all district employees to provide an opportunity for all employees to share their thoughts.
- Step three will be to conduct a community dialogue session in April where a cross-section of community leaders and partners will be brought together to share their perspectives.
- Step four involves an online portal that will be created for staff and the community to access information and updates about the initiative. The portal is scheduled to go live in mid-February.

The research team from the Pensacola-based idgroup, who ECSD has engaged to facilitate this process, will analyze all of the input collected. A brand transformation firm, idgroup works with leaders to empower organizations of all sizes.

“No one knows this district, its students, or its community better than those who are a part of this great district and this outstanding community,” Superintendent Smith added. “As we grapple with the real challenges ahead, we must also focus our sights on the future. Our goal is for every student to successfully learn in a safe, positive, and supportive environment; for every student to graduate; and for every student to become a helpful, productive citizen.

Prepare for a Life Filled With Positive Choices

Superintendent Smith closed with a Call to Action. “I ask for your participation, collaboration, determination, enthusiasm, and grit. We need your commitment to embrace the power of possibility as we celebrate the district's many accomplishments and write the next chapter of the story for our district, together. We will live a chapter where all kids are positioned to succeed and live a life filled with positive choices and great opportunities, together.”

“We must reach all kids, we must eliminate our achievement gap,” said Superintendent Smith. “I call for us to unite for all of our students. We must. We can. And, we will!”

Virtual Viewing Options: A recording of the presentation has been posted and it can be watched from:

- o ECSD's YouTube page, <https://www.youtube.com/c/ECSDFlorida>
- o Facebook page, Escambia Schools Public Relations, <https://www.facebook.com/ecsd.public>
- o Facebook page, Escambia County School District, <https://www.facebook.com/ecsdfl>
- o <http://escambiacountysdf1.swagit.com/superintendent>

Photos from the Virtual Community Brief have been posted on facebook on the page, Escambia Schools Public Relations.

Photo IMG_1929: (left to right): ECSD held a Virtual Community Brief to announce the start on a pre-strategic planning initiative on Jan. 14, 2021. Board Member, District 2 Mr. Paul Fetsko, School Board Vice Chair, District 1 Mr. Kevin Adams, Superintendent Dr. Tim Smith (at the podium), Board Member, District 3 Dr. Laura Edler, and Board Member, District 4 Ms. Patty Hightower. School Board Chairman, District 5 Mr. William Slayton, was unable to attend the brief.

Photo IMG_1890: Escambia County School District's Superintendent, Dr. Timothy A. Smith presented his vision for the school district and announced the launch of a pre-strategic plan to collect input from the district's internal stakeholders as well as the community to help frame the ECSD mission and vision statements for the future. The initiative has been themed, Celebrating Our Past, Designing Our Future, Together.

Media queries about Escambia County School District topics should be directed to Kim Stefansson, at 850-469-6219, kstefansson@ecsdfl.us Like ECSD on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ecsdfl Go to Escambia Schools Public Relations on www.facebook.com/ecsd.public to see pictures of recent events.

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