

Thank you School Board Chair Talento, Vice-Chair O'Grady, and all members of the school board, it is an honor to be selected for this very important position at this critical time in the evolution of education. We are facing new challenges and uncertainties, and despite that, **we will** work together to manage a challenging budget and meet both the instructional and social-emotional needs of every student.

I am excited to join Arlington Public Schools and optimistic about the possibilities to make a difference, address gaps, and expand opportunities for all students.

Arlington is an outstanding school division in a vibrant community that values public education. The strong national reputation of APS is a testament to its engaged and supportive parents, a diverse community of learners, excellent high-quality teachers and leaders, strong academic programs, and an emphasis on student well-being and mental health. That is why I decided to start this journey toward being your superintendent.

I began my career as an educational assistant in a twice-exceptional special education classroom, and I have been fortunate for the past twenty-six years to work at every level in education: teacher, principal, central office administrator, and superintendent; all in culturally diverse, urban systems with similar needs, challenges, and opportunities. As superintendent, I made it a priority to engage the community of my district as we worked through school moves and budget challenges.

As I often reflect upon my years as a teacher, I am reminded that the success of our students happens in the classroom, and it is my commitment to provide our teachers with the tools they need to inspire learning. Teachers are tasked with doing more than ever before, and they need to be paid what they are worth. Most importantly, they need our support through professional development, the proper resources, and recognition for their achievements.

All students need to be college and career ready, and it is my goal to ensure that we support each student by closing access, opportunity, and achievement gaps. This means we must collectively commit to sustain and improve the level of academic excellence for all students within APS through an equity and inclusion lens.

My commitment is to establish a culture of leadership by listening and always bringing people together. I am looking forward to getting to know Arlington County leaders, staff, students, parents, and community, even through our current challenges to connect given social distancing. I will be hosting a series of online community chats and town hall events in June to introduce myself and hear from you. More details will be shared soon.

I know this is a community that has faced challenges around leadership transition, boundary planning, and school moves, which have been compounded by difficult budget constraints and rapid growth. We will come together to break down barriers to achieve equitable outcomes for students. There is a significant opportunity to improve outcomes for all learners and address their unique needs. Together we can make a difference that will further enrich our students' lives.

I was influenced to become an educator as a result of my life being impacted by a teacher who saw talents in me, nurtured those talents, and inspired me to challenge myself in everything that I do. As the first in my family to graduate from college, I know far too well that education is the key that can open doors of opportunity that I had never imagined, like standing before you this evening with the honor to serve as your new superintendent.

In closing, I would also like to thank interim superintendent Cintia Johnson for her leadership during this past year, and I look forward to working closely with her during our transition.

As educators, we are all learning and striving to do our best to adapt to a changing educational landscape. This requires vision, dedication, careful planning, expertise, and ingenuity. Arlington teachers and administrators possess those qualities, and I look forward to our collaboration. Let us all work together to open doors of opportunity for every student in APS!