

September 25, 2023

Dear West Bonner County School District (WBCSD) Community,

Today, I am announcing my decision to seek an amicable and fair exit from my role as the Superintendent of the West Bonner County School District. This decision has not been made lightly, and I am fully aware of the challenges and sentiments that have surrounded my brief tenure.

Assuming this role on June 28, 2023, I faced a situation marked by its relentless obstacles thrown my way by those who wished to see me fail, including the Idaho State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. However, despite these challenges, I persevered and with the help of great staff achieved remarkable milestones that I hope will have a positive impact on the district long into the future. Here are some of the major achievements during my time as Superintendent:

1. **Staff Enhancement:** In a short period, we successfully placed over 30 new staff members in key positions across the district, including a first-ever Curriculum Director, ensuring that the schools had the best talent to support our students' growth and development.
2. **Forensic Audit:** We initiated a thorough forensic audit, demonstrating our commitment to transparency and financial responsibility.
3. **Strategic Planning:** Despite the challenges, we managed to begin the implementation the district's five-year strategic plan, providing the district with a clear roadmap for the future. This plan guides the district's efforts to enhance education and provide the best possible opportunities for students.
4. **Professional Development:** We invested in the professional development of district staff through Quantum Learning training, equipping them with the latest tools and strategies to excel in their roles and offer the highest quality education to students.
5. **Budget Reassessment:** Our comprehensive reassessment of the district budget, though ongoing, has been instrumental in ensuring efficient resource allocation to meet the evolving needs of the district's schools while remaining fiscally responsible.
6. **District Office Restructuring:** The restructuring of the district office yielded tangible benefits, resulting in savings for WBCSD taxpayers and enhancing the district's ability to make strategic decisions that positively impact its students and community.
7. **Community Engagement:** Increasing accessibility was a priority, and I hosted three town hall meetings and numerous office hours to foster open communication with all stakeholders.

Throughout my short tenure, I remained cognizant of the fact that not everyone in the community welcomed my hiring, and there were those who hoped to see me fail and did everything in their power to try make that so, even if it meant hurting the very students they claimed to support. I was undeterred by the naysayers and their negativity only strengthened my resolve to do what needed to be done to put this district on a path towards success.

Legendary Notre Dame head football coach, Lou Holtz, once said, "I follow three rules: Do the right thing, do the best you can, and always show people you care." These are the principles I tried to uphold throughout my time as Superintendent.

To that end and to promote healing and unity within the community, I believe it is necessary for me to step aside as Superintendent. It may not be entirely fair, but life rarely is. However, I am committed to facilitating a smooth transition for the district and supporting the new superintendent.

While my last day as Superintendent will be up to the board, until then, I will continue to work diligently to uphold the district's mission and support students' success.

I want to express my deep gratitude to those who entrusted me to serve as Superintendent and those in the community who gave me the benefit of the doubt. Thank you again for this opportunity.

In service,



Branden Durst
Superintendent
West Bonner County School District