

Montgomery Independent School District

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Heath Morrison, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Dec. 2, 2020

Dear Montgomery ISD Community,

In February of this year, I made a decision to return to the superintendency. For the past several years, I was the unit president of a large education company, and while the work was enjoyable, it did not provide the sense of purpose I felt as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. While I was humbled to be considered for a number of excellent opportunities, I have found my calling in Montgomery ISD.

My transition back to public education has been amazing and frenetic since being named the MISD Superintendent in July. As I began to acclimate into to the new role, I quickly learned that the challenges presented during an unprecedented time required unique action. I am proud of how our school district reopened schools in phases; starting fully remote and then phasing in students, always keeping the safety of our children and staff as the priority.

Today we have over 88% of our students back for in-person instruction, one of the highest rates in the state, and, due in large part to the hard work and cooperation of our students and staff in adhering to safety measures, we have had some of the lowest rates of individuals requiring quarantine because of the virus. Additionally, I am proud of our work to balance the district budget and provide much deserved raises for our employees – two priorities of our community. Finally, we restructured central services and completed the work for the goals and performance objectives our board adopted to guide our district moving forward. While I am proud of what has been accomplished in a short period of time, I remain laser-focused on how we will continue to strengthen MISD.

I entered this role with a detailed entry plan and an intentional commitment to “listen and learn” about how the community views our district. [As I shared with trustees at the board meeting on November 17](#), I would also like to share with you some of the many things I have learned after speaking with teachers, staff, students, parents, and members of the community.

When I asked various stakeholders about the strengths of MISD, every group responded with the same answer - great teachers, staff, and students. There is recognition that we have exemplary educators who are dedicated to providing quality instruction to very capable and engaged children. It was also made clear to me that our staff and administrators excel in their role in supporting quality instruction and our success is dependent upon keeping this strong. Additionally, another strength is unparalleled community support with taxpayers who not only want, but expect excellence from the district.

But, community support must continue to be earned and never taken for granted. As I asked about areas of improvement for our district, a number of issues were consistently raised. The district’s inability to balance the budget and the perception of a lack of transparency in this area has raised concerns, especially as it has impacted our salary schedule falling behind other school districts in the region. We cannot afford to lose our quality teachers and staff, so the work that has started with balancing the budget and providing mid-year raises will continue to be top priorities.

Communication and lack of processes and systems were also identified as areas that need to be addressed in the district. Additionally, technology has been cited as a needed area of growth, even before the challenges of having to utilize remote instruction last spring when schools were closed due to the pandemic.

During my time of entry, I heard many excellent ideas, including building on our Career and Technical Education Programs, adding more academic and extracurricular programs for our students, and doing more to meaningfully engage our community in the improvement of our schools. All of these suggestions will be part of the development of our new strategic plan based on the goals and performance indicators just adopted by the board.

Every journey begins by being honest about where you are, and knowing where you ultimately want to be. We have a very good school district, but as Jim Collins said: *“Good is the enemy of great.”* We need to be consistently great to serve our students and deliver on the educational expectations of this community.

We are on a journey to be the “Premier School District in Texas.” My commitment is to embark on that journey, together with the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heath Morrison", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Heath Morrison
Superintendent
Montgomery ISD