



Kent County Board of Education

Growing a Community of Leaders

*Dr. Karen M. Couch
Office of the Superintendent*

January 8, 2024

Dear Members of the Kent County Public Schools Community,

With gratitude and mixed emotions, I announce my decision to retire as the Superintendent of Kent County Public Schools (KCPS), effective June 30, 2024. Since assuming this role on July 1, 2013, collaborating with an exceptional team of administrators, teachers, staff, and dedicated Board of Education members has been an honor. Our collective commitment to the students and families of this county has been profound.

Throughout my tenure, we achieved significant milestones, a testament to our collective dedication to excellence in education. This commitment consistently drove us to adapt and innovate, ensuring our students receive the best education possible.

A highlight of our journey has been pioneering Universal Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten, setting a precedent in early childhood education within our county and providing a solid foundation for our youngest learners. The success of this program exemplifies our unwavering dedication to educational advancement and our belief in its long-term impact on student success.

Throughout my tenure, there has been a continuous focus on enhancing the school system. In our latest initiative, we secured funding to extend Judy Centers into Rock Hall and Galena Elementary schools, representing another step forward in our ongoing efforts. This strategic expansion, and the establishment of the 3-year old program at Rock Hall Elementary, constitutes a pivotal component of our continuous investment in their educational journey. It ensures early learning opportunities and essential services to our youngest students and their families.

To enhance both the academic foundation and instructional methods, our commitment to fostering student success extends beyond our focus on the youngest learners. The successful implementation of our inaugural Blueprint Implementation Plan aligned with our district strategic goals for college and career readiness, facilitated the expansion of dual enrollment opportunities, the establishment of an early college pathway, and the introduction of apprenticeships. Our efforts also include an enhanced career counseling program for grades 6-12, ensuring our students are well-prepared for the future.

Simultaneously, recognizing the pivotal role of effective teaching, two years ago, over 80 teachers and staff underwent training in the science of reading, followed by approximately 70 teachers and special educators in Orton Gillingham. These initiatives have been instrumental in propelling our

students toward reading proficiency. In the field of mathematics, we introduced a new curriculum and collaborated with MSDE math experts to systematically unpack math standards and identify best practices for effective classroom implementation. Together, these efforts signify our holistic commitment to advancing both the educational experience and instructional methodologies throughout our system.

Amidst numerous budgetary challenges, including declining enrollment and limited resources, we remained committed to prioritizing organizational improvements and addressing the diverse needs of our students and staff. Our commitment to cultural responsiveness has also been a guiding force, recognizing the unique backgrounds and requirements of our student body and actively working to ensure an inclusive and supportive educational environment. Through the years, we also worked diligently to empower our students with the knowledge and awareness of their responsibilities towards the environment.

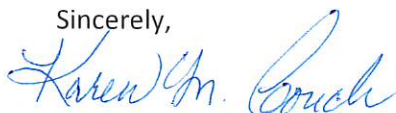
During my tenure, we also executed a comprehensive six-year Facilities Strategic Plan, revitalizing educational facilities untouched for over 25 years. This initiative included installing security vestibules in every school, upgrading athletic facilities at KCHS, replacing HVAC systems in two schools, and roof replacement in four schools. Moreover, we successfully fulfilled preliminary state requirements for the construction of a new middle school while advocating for legislation to increase state funding participation for the project.

Reflecting on these accomplishments, the true measure of our success lies in the achievements of our students. Each milestone we have reached, every initiative we have implemented, has been with the singular goal of enriching their lives and broadening their horizons. The real triumph is seen in their growth, their curiosity, and their readiness to face the future with confidence and competence, including a deep understanding of their role in preserving our planet. The smiles on their faces, their academic and personal achievements, and their transformation into responsible and informed citizens are the most rewarding outcomes of our collective efforts.

As I begin a new chapter, I know that our work has laid a strong foundation for continued student success. The legacy of our efforts is not in the programs we've started or the facilities we've renovated, but in the lives of the students we've touched. I am confident that KCPS will continue to nurture and inspire every child who walks through its doors, and I eagerly anticipate hearing about their future successes.

In closing, while I eagerly anticipate this next phase of my life, my commitment to the district in ensuring a smooth transition remains steadfast. I have the utmost confidence in the future of KCPS, and I leave knowing that the district is in capable hands with our administrative team and school leaders. Serving the students and families of Kent County has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

Sincerely,



Dr. Karen M. Couch