



FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF DISTRICT SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

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Escambia County Superintendent Malcolm Thomas Selected as Florida's 2019 Superintendent of the Year

Tampa, FL – Escambia County School District (ESCD) Superintendent Malcolm Thomas was selected as Florida's 2019 Superintendent of the Year by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS). Thomas was formally recognized today in Tampa during the joint meeting of FADSS and the Florida School Boards Association.

Thomas was first elected Escambia County Superintendent in November 2008 and was subsequently reelected to office twice and will complete his current term in 2020. He is now in his 38th year serving Escambia County students having served in multiple roles including teacher, education specialist, coordinator and administrator. Throughout his entire education career, Thomas has continued to tutor students every week – just as he did when he first started working with the district as a teacher 38 years ago.

"Malcolm Thomas represents the finest in education leadership," states FADSS Board Member and Santa Rosa District Schools Superintendent Tim Wyrosdick. Adding, "His passion for student learning is exemplified by his remarkable character and service to his community. He is well-respected as a visionary and highly committed to student success"

During his tenure as ESCD Superintendent, Thomas spearheaded the district's Future Ready initiative designed to decrease the graduation rate gap, foster a culture of digital learning, and ultimately ensure access to a quality education for all students through a student-centered approach to learning. The district's Vision 2020 initiative is an outgrowth of Future Ready, focusing on the needs of the twenty-first century learner. As a result of these targeted efforts, the overall graduation rate gap between the district and the state has decreased 10.1% since 2011 (currently 2.8%) and the African American graduation rate gap between the district and state has decreased 9.41% since 2011 (currently 3.9%).

"I can tell you first hand that those who choose the path as a public school superintendent do so not for the glory, but rather the opportunity to make a positive difference in children's lives," states FADSS President and Sumter County Public Schools Superintendent Rick Shirley. "Malcolm is a clear example of this and has been a constant champion of students with unwavering dedication to public education. Highly respected by his colleagues, Malcolm well represents the educational leaders of Florida and is truly deserving of this significant award," adds Shirley.

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“As a superintendent, I strive to lead by example, as a collaborative, servant leader,” states Thomas. “My vision for the school district has always been to create a school district where parents want to send their children, students want to learn, teachers want to teach, and employees want to work,” adds Thomas. When all those elements work together, a school district thrives.

“Malcolm is not only an exceptional superintendent with a proven track record of success; he is a true servant leader committed to educational excellence,” states FADSS Chief Executive Officer and Florida Senator Bill Montford. “He is and has been an asset to the association and his leadership is valued by his colleagues throughout the state, in large part due to his ability to recognize the significant challenges statewide regardless of district size,” adds Montford.

The process for electing Florida’s Superintendent of the Year was established by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), a national organization of school superintendents and other educational leaders. In February 2019, Thomas will represent all Florida superintendents at the AASA’s National Education Conference in Los Angeles, CA where he will be recognized and honored for his public education service in Florida.

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Photo caption (l to r): Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) President and Sumter County Schools Superintendent Rick Shirley (left) and FADSS President Bill Montford (far right), with the newly named 2019 Florida Superintendent of the Year Escambia County Public Schools Superintendent Malcolm Thomas and his wife Sandra.

Escambia County School District (ECSD) is the westernmost, oldest county in the state of Florida, and the 19th most populated county in the state. The county stretches from the Alabama border on the north and west, south to the Gulf of Mexico and east to Santa Rosa County, Florida. ECSD serves approximately 41,900 students and has nearly 5,300 full-time and part-time employees. There are seven high schools, nine middle schools, 32 elementary schools, one pre-kindergarten center, an adult technical college, and a center for severely disabled students. The district serves a diverse student population made up of 48% Caucasians, 34.1% African American, 2.4% Asian, 7.1% Hispanic, .6% American Indian, .3% Pacific Islander, and 7.4% more than one race. Over 700 students speak English as a second language and over 200 students are migrants. The district uses Direct Certification data for participation in the federal free/reduced lunch program. Under this process, 44 schools are 100% certified. The percent of children from low-income families who are identified as eligible for free lunch based on the direct certification process is 54.22%. The total percent of students who are eligible for free and reduce lunch is 81.7%.

The mission of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents is to assist and support superintendents in providing leadership to ensure that every student in Florida acquires the skills, knowledge and attitude to be contributing members of our democratic society through leadership development programs focused on student achievement, building relationships with business and governmental leaders, and communication and networking services.