

Jonathan Phipps, Abbeville, SC

Work experiences

- Superintendent
Abbeville County Schools.....2014-present
- Secondary Education Director
Lancaster County School District.....2012-14
- Principal
Buford High.....2007-12
- Principal
A.R. Rucker Middle.....2005-07
- Adjunct Professor
South Piedmont Community College.....2003-06
- Assistant Principal
Indian Land Elementary and Middle.....2001-05
- Site Administrator, Summer Programs
Indian Land Elementary/Middle.....1999-2005
- Teacher
Barr Street Middle1995-2001
- Manager
S&K Menswear.....1992-94

Education

- PhD. – Leadership in Educational Administration
Capella University.....2007-12
- EdS. – Leadership in Educational Administration
Capella University.....2007-09
- Administration Certification Program
Winthrop University2000-01
- Master’s of Education/Early Childhood
University of South Carolina.....1997-98
- B.A. History/Education
University of North Carolina at Charlotte.....1990-95

S.C. Licenses/Certificates

- Elementary Principal
- Elementary Supervisor
- Secondary Principal
- Secondary Supervisor
- Middle School Social Studies
- Secondary Social Studies
- Superintendent

Professional Development & Contributions

- Rotary Club
Chair-Elect.....2017-present
Member.....2014-present
- *Ten at the Top* Board Member.....2017-present
- Western Piedmont Education Consortium
Member.....2014-present
Board Chair.....2016-17

Here’s the key to school district success

My first meal in Abbeville was at the Village Grill. The waitress asked my wife and I if we from the area. My wife smiled, and I said, “I have applied to work with the school district.”

The waitress responded with, “Our schools are great. The teachers care about students, and the parents are so supportive. My son plays football, and he really loves his school.”

During the summer, I stopped by schools to visit and meet principals. Some were looking at test data, some were working with our custodians to trim bushes or repair playgrounds. Others were helping teachers.

Clearly, the principals were doing all they could to prepare for the first day of school.

And on the first day of school, I got up early to ride a school bus to meet students and see the community. The bus driver called the children by name as they got on, and she asked, “How was your summer?” The bus driver’s relationship with these students was unbelievable.

Now, as I visit classes around the district, I see teachers smiling and working with our students. Every school I visit seems to have such a positive atmosphere – the students are engaged in learning. Every teacher I see is up and helping students.

One Monday early in my superintendency, I was asked a question on an article I wrote in the local paper.

“How did every school in Ab-

beville receive an A on the Federal Report Card?” State Superintendent Mick Zais called to ask.

So, to answer Dr. Zais’s question, our community of parents, teachers, administrators, staff members and students work together to make good things happen in our schools.

I am proud that out of 82 SC school districts, we received the 3rd highest grade in the state on our federal school report card.

But no matter what grade is given, I know our teachers and staff give 100% to help our students achieve. That’s all anyone can ask.

Over the last few years, my feelings and beliefs on what makes a successful district haven’t changed. First, it’s the people, not the programs. I believe we hire good quality folks and spend our resources to enable and equip teachers and principals to do a good job. Technology, new programs and other big ticket items are tools for teachers. But being people-driven – not program-driven – is one of my core beliefs.

Secondly, we do not strive to be winners; we strive to be champions. Winners are short term. Champions build a lasting program of success.

Building a climate of high expectations is the key for high student achievement. Everyone – from students to teachers to district staff – should have high expectations. We only achieve what we expect.

A successful district should have



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very open communication at every level. A wise leader once told me he had a “no surprise rule.” I agree with this philosophy. We need communication strong enough to ensure we are not surprised – communication must be an ongoing dialogue.

Finally and most importantly, put our children first. Dr. Pat Burns taught me years ago that we can’t go wrong if we base every decision on what is best for students. I have tried to live out this philosophy as a teacher, principal and superintendent.

The right focus, open communication and high expectations help a district become more than a place to work. The district becomes a family of educators who want the best for students. This is my vision for Lancaster County School District.

- Abbeville United Way Board Member
.....2014-present
- Abbeville Economic Development
Steering Committee Member.....2015-present
- Lancaster United Way Board Member
.....2012-14
- Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce
Board Member2012-14
- Student Assistance Team1996-2012
- *Hope on the Hill* Board Member2006-14
- Beta Club Advisor1997-2000
- William & Mary training
for Language Arts1999
- Celebrate Great Teaching Award Nominee
.....1999 & 2000

The Visit
Jonathan Phipps
 Monday, May 1