

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

Lichter 00:02

We just want to welcome you back for the final round. Based on the Collier County School Board's vision, mission and priorities listed on the district website, please present your plan to achieve these priorities. The priorities include items under academics, climate and culture, fiscal responsibility, human resources, and student conduct. You have up to 20 minutes to present your plan. The plan should include benchmarks for achievement at the two year and five year marks. The time allotted for your presentation will be monitored and enforced. Following your presentation school board members will take 10 to 15 minutes for follow up questions, clarification and for elaboration on processes, techniques and methodology. You may begin.

Ricciardelli 00:52

Excellent. Morning, board.

Ricciardelli 00:56

So the vision, mission, and priorities of the board will be the foundation of our next strategic plan. My presentation this morning, as you said, will cover each of the five priority areas, which are essentially the blueprint to realizing the board's mission and vision. In addition to covering the strategies, I will also include the benchmarks, but due to time constraints, I've chosen to focus on either one or two components for each of the priority areas to highlight my anticipated benchmarks for the two and five year period. I've also added the midterm of my first year. So let's begin.

Ricciardelli 01:29

Priority One - Academics. Academics actually has six components to it. The first being implementing a knowledge based curriculum with aligned to state standards. Right now we're revising our curriculum guides with specific and sequenced content area instruction aligned to Florida's Best Standards. Our new standards are probably more closely aligned to core knowledge than has ever been before. So this is a great opportunity for us to really focus on content and instruction.

Ricciardelli 01:59

We're planning for structured professional learning opportunities for the summer and then throughout next year for the teachers and I put in here I think we have an increased emphasis on social studies and science literacy. The reason why I've done this is because that is really going to support the writing components and the writing opportunities that we'll be investing in our ELA curriculums. I also call this out because this is really where students will gain the knowledge needed to be able to discuss or write on big ideas.

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 02:29

The next component is in the way it's written in your priorities is to improve literacy and math learning outcomes. I've separated this out, separated it out by elementary and middle secondary literacy, and then elementary and secondary math. So that's why this looks a little bit different.

Ricciardelli 02:47

For elementary literacy, you're aware that we're currently researching a new systematic and explicit phonics program based on the Orton Gillingham, Orton Gillingham methodology to be implemented in grades K to two beginning in August of '23. That same curriculum will also be used as a tiered intervention for students in grades three through five who are needing additional support. We worked on redesigning the elementary literacy block for next year. Included in that will be the adoption and implementation of a strong writing program to deepen, and again going back to what I said earlier, the deepening of content knowledge in science and social studies will enable students to write on big ideas such as about democracy.

Ricciardelli 03:28

It will also include direct instruction and cursive handwriting.

Ricciardelli 03:32

One thing I do want to note you'll see this on every slide all of the delineations in these four areas will require us to school leaders to refine scheduling, their their scheduling practices to narrow the range that will help teachers because it's a whole lot easier to differentiate when students are more closely aligned.

Ricciardelli 03:49

Secondary literacy. We're really going to have to utilize the score reports with more fidelity from PSAT eight, PSAT eight, nine, the 10th grade PSAT and then the SATs and ACT. We can utilize differentiated supports for those students through Khan Academy and then through some other programs. Of course, those are all free. So I want to make sure that that's noted and they've proven to be extremely successful and moving the needle on our graduation rate.

Ricciardelli 04:15

We're also currently reviewing for purchase a new supplemental reading remedial reading program for secondary students, and then that'll be included and to enhance the MTSS process.

Ricciardelli 04:27

This slide looks a little different because this is one of the slides where I told you I'm going to just pull out one or two areas from each priority to really focus on on the benchmark. So in this

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview

April 26, 2023

one, it's elementary math. You're very well aware that we have the ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is to provide students, elementary students who are gifted in the area of math, a direct pathway to higher level math when they get to middle school. The goal would be for them to take algebra in seventh grade seventh and geometry in grade eight. We do have new Best Standards so curriculum guides are being provided, written and prepared for teachers to support instruction in all areas. Or for all students in math. But in this particular chart below, you'll see our my way of scaffolding the implementation of the accelerated math course which is a new course offered by the state of Florida, beginning grade three next year in five schools where it'll be piloted. And then the next year grade four, and then at the end of June 2028, it'll be implemented in all schools, all elementary schools, grades three through five. Professional learning will have to take place immediately for those schools, those pilot schools really want to make sure that our curriculum guides are on point and be and best prepared, able to prepare students.

Ricciardelli 05:44

I do want to make note that even in spite of the fact that five schools will have access to that particular course, we will be providing an advanced advanced math course for all students and all elementary schools in grades three through five should not leave anybody out. But this will just be an advanced math curriculum guide. And of course professional learning will be provided to all of those teachers, secondary math. The big focus will really have to be on a enhancing professional learning for teachers to really build their math content and I was speaking with someone from FGCU the other day, I was explaining that teachers need support in geometry. Most of them don't take geometry as a math major in college. So really, we need to provide a stronger level of math content support to those teachers.

Ricciardelli 06:29

And then we are offering a new high school math course for to meet graduation requirements. They have to have four of those credits. That course is called Mathematics for Data and Financial Literacy.

Ricciardelli 06:40

And then this past week, I just sent a letter to the Department of Education. They have a new course called Math for College ACT and SAT. I've asked that that'd be an approved course to meet graduation requirements, not an elective maths. Core math course.

Ricciardelli 06:53

And then, next inspire lifelong readers. We are reinstituting and reintegrating common novels at each of the grade levels. We're looking at adding two novels per grade level one for more of an advanced reader and then in putting them in the curriculum guides. We are going to develop our own reading list that will be locally developed, like I said, and thanks to two of you

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

who agreed to help read those books, those will also be the basis and the foundation for those school based reading incentive programs.

Ricciardelli 07:23

School and classroom libraries. We know that that is has been a big topic of discussion across the state and there are many new laws and mandates that come with that. So in according accordance with those state mandates, we've we've been in the process and we'll complete the process of reviewing and cataloging all of the books in the classroom and media centers, and then make sure that those are high quality texts.

Ricciardelli 07:45

Family reading activities and parent education. That is a great opportunity for parents engagement. One of the things I just want to call out is the efforts we put into place a couple of years ago that we will continue because it's proven to be extremely supportive, especially to parents whose first language is not English, but those sight word vocab, sight word flashcards have been extremely helpful for parents to support their students. And by the way, they are also able to learn at the same time.

Ricciardelli 08:13

Next is academic programming options. You've asked us to look at the academic programming options for all students, focused on gifted and academically advanced, students with disabilities and ELL students. We are in the process of revising the entire curriculum for our advanced gifted and advanced students elementary and middle school and really with a focus on meeting the needs of those students better and then so that they can work at a faster pace, use differentiated instructional materials and engage in more project-based learning that reflects gifted practices. For students with disabilities we need to enhance and we will enhance the instructional supports needed to optimize instruction and we're researching alternative instructional delivery models for them.

Ricciardelli 08:57

And then on ELL we've had a significant increase of number of students as you're aware, so we've been providing and will continue to provide targeted training for instructors and administrators. And then we've been beginning we're beginning to provide differentiated staffing supports to those schools and enhancing post expanding and enhancing post secondary options. One of the greatest things I think we're doing right now is and we'll be ready to go for next year is taking those career academy courses from the high school, aligning the courses, aligning the content to the courses in the programs at the technical colleges so that those courses can be used for credit when they get to technical colleges and get them through those programs a little faster. Kind of like our academic dual enrollment courses, increasing access to students from all high schools, to the technical colleges.

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 09:43

And then increasing the number of academic dual enrollment programs on our high school campuses. We've been in talks with FGCU and FSW to increase those.

Ricciardelli 09:51

Civic literacy and critical thinking. You know that we have new civics standards coming out and to be implemented in the fall of 2023. One of the things that I think you're going to love and I'll just go into it briefly is that we have created a knowledge based continuum and curriculum focused on primary sources. So for example, in kindergarten, the founding documents that will be taught in kindergarten specifically start with the US Constitution. First grade they'll look at the national motto In God we Trust, the United States Constitution, We the People. Second grade Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, I heard an elementary school teacher referred to it as carpet time democracy. I thought that was pretty cute. And so that's we've got that for every grade level, and I can I can get that to you in another time. And then of course, student participation, the more they participate in and are engaged with civics and civic opportunities in the community, the better off they are and then they learn it from just hands on type of things. We have Know Your County Government which is an unbelievable program. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Ricciardelli 11:02

So much on their plates, so that they're not covering capital, you know that the schools know that it will support the teachers so that they don't have so much on their plates, so that they're not covering so many classes on their own. One of the greater things that has come about and just the recent month or so is the adoption of a new prop.

Ricciardelli 11:34

Just hands on type of things. We have Know Your County Government which is an unbelievable program for high school students, where they get to learn our own local government and how things work. And then our Student Advisory Council, which is in the process of being developed to begin in early August for our high school students from each high school, very excited about that they'll have the opportunity to work with you, to work with me, to work with other elected officials. And then continuing to enhance and grow our student government associations in the middle and high schools.

Ricciardelli 12:04

Priority 2 -- Culture and climate. That has two components. So in order to broaden collaboration with community stakeholders, for student centered decision making, again I just mentioned it but that student advisory council for high school students which will have two students from each high school, anywhere grades nine through 12, they'll be able to apply. We

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

have a person for our district office who will lead that and really work with them on how to communicate and how to bring things to a board and and and how to learn about laws and policies. So we'll start that and you can see at the bottom that will be fully established and active by December of 2023.

Ricciardelli 12:42

You know that we've been working on enhancing our relationship with the Sharing the Commitment Parent Advisory Group and we've just instituted a parent, pure parents program. It would be my wish that by June of 2025, we can develop a model parallel to that, similar to that for let's just go with parents of ELL students. If we could provide a parent advisory group or a parent peer group for those parents, that would be extremely helpful to them. And then by June of 2028 just making sure that we meet the established goals of Future Ready Collier to support early childhood, student success, and college and career readiness.

Ricciardelli 13:20

Supporting and motivating all employees by refocusing resources. This has been a big thing for me. I've already started and and continuing through the summer, but shifting staff from the district office into the schools. That's where we need the resources and that's where we need the human capital, you know that, the schools know that, and we'll support the teachers so that they don't have so much on their plates, so that they're not covering so many classes on their own.

Ricciardelli 13:45

One of the greater things that has come about in just the recent month or so is the adoption of a new process to hire principals. That includes the participation and feedback from staff and parents to for them to create a profile of the characteristics of the principal they would like next. In the past. This has been a thing in our district and if you go back to our climate survey, it's been it was one of the bigger complaints, creates a lot of anxiety for people, including administrators if they don't know if they're going to move and where they're going to be moved. This allows for you know, principle changes occur naturally people retire they move on and do something different. This allows for interested candidates to apply to a school so that nobody wonders where will they be next year, and it includes the input of the staff.

Ricciardelli 14:28

And then of course, continuing and maintaining employment engagement surveys. I have to say that that employment engagement survey we did in January for the board. I you know, 36% of them felt that there would not be any action taken. That's not a good number. But I do feel like the actions that have been taken since we've gotten the results of that survey since we've read all 7000 comments, since we've been making changes accordingly, in the few surveys we've done subsequent to that one, we've had a higher percentage of participation

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

and we've been getting great feedback and of course, but they've seen action so that's what matters, right? So that's a big thing.

Ricciardelli 15:06

Fiscal Responsibility has two components. The first being, yours says maximizing return on investment, I added the word academic, that needs to be an academic return on investment. This isn't a business but we do need to for the for the first time since I've been at the district office that I'm aware of, we're really implementing a modified zero based budgeting process, which really entails me personally reviewing every district budget, examining their explanations on how they are explaining that how their requests are going to move the needle on student achievement. If they're not able to provide a rational explanation or provide evidence, then I'm asking them to go back to the drawing board come back to me and tell me, do you need it, do you not need it and how is this going to impact student achievement. We really got to be really looking at reallocating our dollars toward pressing and significant needs, not as a community member or others have referenced as fluff.

Ricciardelli 16:06

This is something I just put in here because this goes back to the whole new budgeting process. But you we're gonna have a five year strategic plan. We need to have a five year strategic financial plan to match that. This is it takes the annual budget a step further. It's not a static process. It's something we need to review and evaluate every year to make sure that the what we're what we're trying to do to meet your priority areas are effective, and that there's a return on investment in those. It's responsive to changing circumstances, increase the number of students, increase the number of ELL students, include stakeholder engagement, you all are bringing on an auditing committee. That's an additional stakeholder engagement. In the past our budgets and our finances have really been the decision of a very small group of people. So we need to increase the size of that to increase transparency and build trust with the community. Oh sorry.

Ricciardelli 17:03

Cost saving opportunities. This is really in preparation for the looming fiscal cliff that we have. We have to be proactive, which I believe we've been. We have between the ARP and the SR grants that are sunseting soon and then you know our tax neutral referendum that will also be sunseting in 2026 if we do not choose to go for another one. So we need to be reducing spending now so that we can continue to maintain and support schools and students. You know that I've already reduced district level annual staffing costs by 2 million at this point. But really, we need to really focus on targeting reductions and individual district departments. And also looking at their organizational charts.

Ricciardelli 17:43

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

You know that the state requires that we maintain a strategic reserve of 3%. The board this board and our school board has required a district reserve of 5%. So we need to maintain that.

Ricciardelli 17:54

We need to make sure we have the funding needed to open Aubry Rogers in August and then our build our two new elementary schools in the next five years. Biggest way to do that is to really look at those non essential initiatives and remove them and go back to just teaching what what is needed and back to basics, I think is what of the one of you all called it.

Ricciardelli 18:11

Human Resources has two components. You've asked us to look at differentiating staffing. We've been evaluating short term short, short term staffing needs, even providing our own development. And you'll see at the bottom, our own Grow Your Own program. We these are people who are already in our district, they have a home they have a family, they have a network of support. They don't have to find an apartment to rent, they can be here so we need to start to grow them to be able to take on the next level job, whether it's from a paraprofessional to a teacher, whether it's from a specialist to a budget manager or finance manager. So Growing Our Own program, you'll see where my my benchmarks are for doing that. We just really have to look at how are we going to support the schools and support the staff.

Ricciardelli 18:56

Differentiating the total compensation package is one of your other the other components, you know, and I know that this is a negotiated item, so only so much that I can say about this. However, I do think it is critical that all of our employees know and feel that our compensation package is the absolute best that we can possibly offer. Salaries are critical, but the entire package with the benefits is also just as critical. So we must be able to provide the whole package in order to recruit and retain our people, especially with the cost of living in Collier County.

Ricciardelli 19:31

Finally, student conduct this has two components. I do want to say that I probably made my name in this district by being disciplinarian and a rather strict disciplinarian. The enforcement of the student code of conduct is something we look at every year and we're in the process, as you know, of approving it this year with the board. But we really have to relook at the Code of Student Conduct and make sure that is aligned with the statutory requirements of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Commission and which we've done.

Ricciardelli 20:00

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

We also have to monitor the consistency and the compliance and the use of the discipline codes and the consequences again, a Marjory Stoneman Douglas commission statutory requirements. One of the things we've been doing and will continue to do and I think it has proven fruitful, is differentiate differentiating trainings for site based administrators, especially new administrators. Sometimes it's, it takes a little support to help them to make sure that they're implementing consequences that are consistent and firm. Those will always lower bullying and aggressive behaviors. And then of course, the other piece of that is making sure parents understand the expectations and the consequences.

Ricciardelli 20:36

Examining student safety and implementing student enhancements. Don't want to talk about things we've already been doing. You'll see we'll continue those, but the deployment of the redesigned badges for all active employees will happen in August of 2023. We're piloting a program for vape detection in middle and high schools and then adding stop-the-bleed kits in all classrooms, and then classroom walkthroughs. This is about the facility and hardening the facilities. We have annual classroom assessment walkthroughs at the beginning of each year, they make sure the classrooms are in good shape. Every three years by statute, we have to do this with law enforcement, fire districts, EMS and Collier County Emergency Management to make sure our buildings are in compliance. And I do want to say that one of the big things that you'll see at the bottom are my benchmarks for increasing the number of doors in the district with access control locks. It was said in the Uvalde report that Rob elementary there was a culture of non compliance. We're looking for a culture of compliance. You can only imagine the number of lives that would have been saved if that principal would have been able to push one button and lock every door. And then finally Marjory Stoneman Douglas Safety Commission developed ... Okay, there you go. All right.

Lichter 21:46

Thank you very much. At this time Board Members, any questions follow up questions related to this presentation, Mrs. Lucarelli. We can start with you if you have any. If not, you can put your light on and Mr. Carter, go ahead.

Lucarelli 22:00

Go ahead. No, go ahead.

Carter 22:02

So Dr. Ricciardelli. Thank you. Good presentation. I just You mentioned just recently or your last statement was about locking down the schools have been able to do that with one button. When the schools are locked down, how are we going to give access to first responders to get into those schools?

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 22:19

Great question. About six, four or five six months ago, every single law enforcement officer, Collier County Sheriff Naples Police Department, Marco Island Police Department, also fire and EMS they have a red that so I don't have my badge on me. But they have an access badge that will allow them to get into any building in the district which of course you know, they're always you know, someone in the area so they'll be able to get into any district school, any exterior door and any interior door that has got an access badge to it.

Carter 22:51

Pretty good. And then one more question, if I may, Ms. Lichter? You talked about increasing social studies and science to help with writing. Can you elaborate a little bit more some of the writing and why it's important I know Florida used to have it but they moved away from it.

Ricciardelli 23:08

So well, that's a whole nother topic there but removing that FCAT Writes didn't exactly help our students with writing. But neither here nor there. When... It's the social studies and science curriculum, that that factual curriculum, building their knowledge at an earlier age. They can't write what they don't know about. If we can't provide the knowledge to them and they don't understand, if we're going to talk to them about you know, sharks they have to have some knowledge of sharks or sea life to be able to write a paper about sea life. So it's really providing knowledge and factual knowledge. So that they can write from that so that they're not inventing something.

Carter 23:51

So when they get a prompt writing, yeah, that the knowledge is absolutely subject matter. Okay, thank you.

Ricciardelli 23:55

That's a really elementary type of question, answer, but

Lucarelli 24:00

Thank you, for so much substance in your answers. One of the things you talked about was the, the what used to happen here where principals were plucked out of schools and moved around and this new plan that you've implemented, that you've had to use already, excuse me, allowing input. Can you explain what the feedback has been from that implementation?

Ricciardelli 24:25

So the first, we did it the first time, the first time, the principal is going to do something different. And so I brought it to the principals and said Listen, I'm not I don't want to be in the business of moving you, playing God with your life. If you would like this position, or if you'd like to consider

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

going to the score if it interests you, I would like you to let me know and you you, you put in your interest. But in this particular first situation, we only accepted current principals. That particular school had four principals in five years, so that was a little bit different.

Ricciardelli 24:58

So the fact is, is that rather than me meeting with the principals first who were applying, I asked the staff. So they picked a a committee of staff members and then PTO president and I think a parent or an a non-instructional person, and they met with the three candidates themselves. They put forth two people and knowing that whichever two that they chose, that they were going to be happy with. Then my team met with them, and then we made a choice.

Ricciardelli 25:24

I will say that the staff themselves felt validated. Because of course, having four principals in five years that's hard on anyone, and that's very hard on a on a on a faculty and staff. So they were super. I got great feedback. The leadership director got great feedback. Interestingly, I was at an event the other day and the PTO President happened to see me, introduced herself to me and said, I can't thank you enough for letting us be a part of that. I got to be there. I got to meet the candidates. Oh, they're so excited. And again, I go back to what I said last week, what you said, people support what they helped build, if they're building it, and they that always helps that transition. I yesterday I happened to be there at that faculty meeting when the new principal who was being who's going to be working at that particular school was introduced to her faculty. Oh my gosh, it was great. It was great. So...

Lichter 26:17

Thank you. Any other questions down here, Mr. Rutherford? Do you have any questions related to the presentation?

Rutherford 26:23

No, not right now, Mr. Moshier?

Lichter 26:26

So first, I just want to say thank you for a detailed presentation and also, my question's related to the safety aspect. You were talking about the deputies' access and I also want to thank our deputies who are here today. We appreciate all their work here in our district. Yes, thank you. So as far as the just so people understand the relationship that we have with those deputies, I know there's talk about the Guardian program and I know this wasn't necessarily a part of the slide, but it's still safety, security. Can you elaborate on the relationship with our deputies at the schools and how they support our safety efforts?

Ricciardelli 27:12

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

So Sheriff Rambosk has committed to our district that there will always be an armed deputy on every campus. At least one. So when you're looking at the high schools or the larger schools, there's more than one so there's usually two at the high schools and two at the middle schools that are the larger ones. And then of course, they have roving sergeants and then lieutenants. Those deputies are there all day. They are there to create relationships with students, they're there to meet with parents, they're there to support any incidences of crime right and to support the administration if a crime occurs, then they're there to handle that situation. But we have an excellent relationship with them. Our district people, I think there's a daily conversation between the lieutenant for YRB or the captain for YRB, our Youth Relations Bureau deputy, and, and then of course, we have monthly and quarterly meetings with them, just to make sure that we're all on the same page.

Ricciardelli 28:10

We instituted a new program this past year and -- not a not a program, a process -- so that when we have events, let me give you an example of a football game. So they brought, Sheriff's Department said listen, we'd like to have an incident or, not in, an event planning sheet so that we know how many deputies are there. What is the where will they be located? How many staff will be there, just to be able to support a large event, especially a football game where anything could happen, right, who are going to be at all of the gates, who how, where, where will EMS be? So we've had a really great open relationship with them.

Ricciardelli 28:45

We've been communicating with them more recently about refining and developing our reunification plans for any crisis situation. And then of course, just always going through with them our emergency planning. They also support us, they they they utilize our facilities to do their own training. They know our facilities. They walk our campuses every day, every day a deputy is making sure that every door is locked. And if a door is not locked, by the way, they do provide, they document that on a spreadsheet. I've reviewed those spreadsheets personally, not in this role, but in my last role. I just don't have time now. But I've met with the sheriff's department in December, and we went through all of them making sure if there's a door that's not, that isn't locked because it's broken, we're gonna get that fixed. That's where it went bad at Uvalde all day. We have to learn from the unfortunate situations at other locations. Does that answer your question?

Lichter 29:40

Any other questions or we can move on? Yeah, we have a couple minutes actually.

Carter 29:46

So you spoke about the Student Advisory Council. One thing that did I did when I was my senior year in high school, I was on a student liaison with the superintendent and as a student,

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

I remember that being just one of the highlights of my senior year. So I appreciate you doing that. I've been speaking to a previous administrator here in the past to try to get something like that going. Can you speak a little bit more to Student Advisory Council and how it's different from anything else we've done in the past or...

Ricciardelli 30:12

So? I think the difference is that so, in the past we've had you know senior roundtables that was really just a group of kids who, who met with the superintendent at the end of their senior year to talk about things, what they liked about CCPS what they wished maybe we could change. To me this is different. This is kids who are going to be in grades nine through 12. They're going to do an application it does not have to be a current student government officer in their school, it could be anyone. There will be bylaws that go along with this. We do have something similar to this that the principal of Naples High started a couple years ago with the city of Naples. That would probably be the most similar program that we have. That is running really well or those students communicate with city members of leaders in the city of Naples. To me this is different because these kids are going to meet with you. They're going to meet with you about your policies and procedures. They're going to participate in my initial thoughts. And by the way, I've just seen that this is working somewhere else. I didn't make this up off the top of my head. I will never take credit for that. But I will say that it's an unbelievable process and an unbelievable opportunity that for them to participate in civic leadership. They'll be able to meet with you and talk to you about those things. I would like to see them on at least three district committees, and there'll be represented on Student Code of Conduct Committee, dress code committee, and mental health committee for students. Those are, to me, a great place to start. They'll also meet with me and again, they'll meet monthly. There'll be an attendance requirement and that kind of thing. Perfect.

Lucarelli 31:47

We have more time right now.

Lichter 31:48

Well, Mr. Rutherford.

Rutherford 31:50

This may be because I didn't didn't hear all of your presentation because of these earplugs. But did you mention something about teacher retention?

Ricciardelli 32:02

I did, where I was talking about teacher retention was in our compensation package. And I feel quite frankly, and I know I think it's probably gonna come up later, but how we're losing teachers, when we do those exit interviews? Part of it is in the cost of living here. For teachers

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

who are renting the rent that has gone up in some cases by 75%, 100%. They're not able to stay. But if we can keep them here, and if we can continue to work with the county government, and we can provide the most competitive and comprehensive compensation package, they will find a way to stay.

Rutherford 32:42

Well, how will you keep them here? Since...

Ricciardelli 32:45

We have to we have to be willing to really put our money with the teachers, right not into programs that aren't necessary programs for instruction. We have to, Mr. Moshier says Back to Basics is how he wrote refers to it regularly. That is where we have to go. We can we can put more into our teachers if we have less of extra initiatives that aren't required initiatives. Does that make sense?

Rutherford 33:16

Less programs?

Ricciardelli 33:18

Yes.

Lichter 33:20

All right, we are going to just because we are strict timing here we are going to move on to the second portion of the interview process. In this following segment, each board member created their own two questions. We will rotate and ask the questions on different topics. You're allotted approximately five minutes per question. So at this time, we will begin with Mrs. Lucarelli with question number one.

Lucarelli 33:50

Okay, thanks. So with the enormous growth that we see in Collier County, we expect to be rezoning several schools during the next few years. Can you please explain your experiences with rezones? Strategies, troubles and what you will do to ensure that the next few years of rezones go as smooth as possible?

Ricciardelli 34:12

So included in that rezone is also obviously I mentioned it before but looking at increasing the number of schools. So we're gonna have to build two new elementary schools, and we're aware of that.

Ricciardelli 34:23

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

The biggest thing is to start early and meet often and review the data often. We have a great team of people who are able to literally put on a map where students are, where they live, and then calculate the mileage between schools. This is really about early communication with parents, making sure that our policies are in place, but it's also including a board member and regularly reviewing these plans with board members because you all are the ones who answer to the community just as much as we do.

Ricciardelli 34:57

We also once we get some of these plans formulated and get them have more information about where students are. Some of these places are just being built. We have an entirely new development. Let me just say this in East Naples area, all of the houses are built, but there's actually only one student school age student in that development. So we can't just look at a development and assume that there are going to be multiple people there. So we really have to look at the facts once we pull that data together. It's looking at every option where will programs be for, special programs be for students with disabilities? What is the distance? Where do those kids live now? Where can we move them? What would the numbers be? What do where are the numbers moving up. With every grade level, there are kind of like it's almost like bubbles of of high numbers of kids and then the numbers drop off. So maybe this year is eighth grade class is huge, but this year is sixth grade classes not so large. So we have to look at that. That takes a lot of forward thinking but it's also looking at historical data.

Ricciardelli 35:58

Our department has, our office of staffing and student allocations has done staffing allocations looking at student population has been pretty close to accurate in every situation. Again, it's really pulling together a team of people when we do this, we pull together members of every single department people from student relations people, from ESE, from, from high school, elementary, middle school, from transportation, finance, and again, we've recently after the last situation we've included board members. And then creating communication packets so that we can bring it out to parents, listen to what they have to say. And we did that last time. Really it's about looking at just everybody. Two brains are better than one. We have to have more people on those committees to start the plan and then roll that plan out and see what people think, to get their buy in. Is are we going to make everybody happy every time? No, we're not. But we've done it was good that we rolled back that more recent elementary rezone to give it another year to really think things through. So I think it'll it'll work much better if we just maintain the process but also keep the lines of communication open. Thank you.

Lichter 37:19

Thank you. Mr. Carter.

Carter 37:20

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Thank you. Please explain if you have or how you will respond to the recent change by the state in test score requirements, more specifically the change in concordance and comparative test scores. What is your plan to mitigate these changes as it pertains to our students if you're the next superintendent?

Ricciardelli 37:38

So that was probably the best news and I we were all sitting on pins and needles. Graduation rate for the last eight years has been one of it's been it's been my thing. It has been my primary focus literally for eight years. I am proud and excited to say that the rollback of the concordance score for the ELA requirement took us from 241 kids who seek current seniors who needed to meet the English just the assessment requirement down to I think it was 126 that just by rolling it back. That is a doable number. So many of those kids are so close. They're literally just a few points away.

Ricciardelli 38:19

One of the things that reasons you saw that I mentioned the PSAT8, 9. We started that a couple of years ago when we were told that you know, three years down the road, they were going to increase the concordance score requirement to 480 for the SAT and an average of nine of 18 for the ACT. Those were huge increases. So if we didn't start looking at students back as early as eighth grade so that we could start providing them resources and differentiated supports. If they weren't going to meet the requirements for the Florida State Assessment, I want to say that a lot of those struggling students have a difficulty with the Florida State Assessment. It's a very long assessment. It is three days of testing. We have found and I am able to show you that we've tripled the number of students earning meeting the requirements for graduation, through SAT or ACT. That is a doable amount of time for a student. A 50 minute reading section is significantly different than two days of reading and one day of writing. So for those struggling students, they've really been successful with this, and then of course, supplementing it with Khan Academy, so every time they take a PSAT test or an SAT test we link it to Khan Academy. It's online, it's it's, it meets them where they have gaps in their learning. It's not a workbook that we give them. It truly differentiates to a level that you know a human couldn't differentiate.

Lichter 39:54

All right, as you know, there have been many concerns in the community related to books in the media centers with borderline pornographic content and concerns related to an LGBTQ agenda being pushed onto students. How will you address these specific community concerns and what is your stance on protecting the innocence of children?

Ricciardelli 40:14

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

I Well, first of all, as a parent, I am right in line with that. I wouldn't have wanted that for my own child. And of course if you've heard me say it over and over again. I will always be whatever role I'm in the person I would want my own child to have, teacher, principal superintendent, whatever it is.

Ricciardelli 40:34

We have a process that has been a board approved process that has been working. If a parent has a concern about a book that is currently in the media center, of course, this is prior to what we're doing now. So let me start there. Prior to what we're doing now by literally re-looking at every single book and cataloging every single book. We really kind of had to go with making sure we look at all the books in the media centers. When a parent or community member has a concern about a book or when they see something and they hear something about a book and they have a concern, we have a process in place for a book review committee. I think that has been great because it puts up a number of people, parents, if it's an elementary book if it's it's an elementary teacher and administrator, a district district administrator district media specialist person to really review those books and review the content and review the age appropriateness of that of that book.

Ricciardelli 41:31

By pulling... The board has ultimately the final decision. Here are the results of our review of the book. And then we bring it to you and you all say You know what? I want that book out of the library completely. I will tell you that some books we didn't, we haven't even brought to you because they're just so egregious that we pulled them right away. And of course we make you aware of that and then they're just off the shelves.

Ricciardelli 41:54

We are, the fact that we have our books already in a an electronic system, we can tell you how many copies of those books exist, how many times they've been checked out. And so that's good information for us to have. It's also good information for you to have. But I do like our process as it exists. I think that we will reduce the number of those situations where books are challenged, I guess is maybe is that that's how to say it? after we complete this process of reviewing every looking at every single book and re-cataloging them. So I think we'll reduce the numbers of those.

Ricciardelli 42:32

But I I would agree with you we have to make sure that books are appropriate by age. And, you know, in some cases, the board has said you know, listen, parents rights are parents rights. However, just because I don't agree with it doesn't mean I have the right to tell another parent that they can't agree with it. So you've, the compromise there that was made was you'll put those books behind the desk so to speak, the circulation desk, you leave maybe a cover of

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

the book or something like that out on the shelf. But if a student wants to check that book out, because it's kind of like got a little bit of a rating on a parent review rating, the media specialist has to make contact with the parent. I also appreciate that. I would want to know, right. My mother wouldn't allow me to go see PG movies until I was a certain age but so I either had to lie or figure out a way to go or don't go. So I think it's up to a parent and I think parents have that right. But I also believe in the right of parents who say you know what, I want my child to be able to read that book. So it's kind of a good compromise that we just communicate with them.

Lichter 43:42

The second part, sorry, the second part of that was just the concerns from the community about the LGBTQ agenda being pushed on to students. So I don't know how you you want to respond to that.

Ricciardelli 43:55

You know, I I guess I don't like any agenda. Really. I I have a problem with I don't I don't think that that is... This is a public education system. We're here to teach state standards. We're not here to push agendas. So if there is a concern about an agenda, if I think that we have to look at all of them, and I don't really think it's just limited to that, into LGBTQ. However, that said, we have to review every single concern to see just to the extent and then pull back because again, no matter what the agenda is, we should not be pushing that forward. Teachers are not supposed to do that, that is in their in teacher ethics. You cannot tell people how you feel about specific things. You're there to teach the standards. We're here to teach the standards and we're here to put forth appropriate materials by grade level.

Lichter 44:51

All right. Mr. Moshier.

Moshier 44:54

All right. Kind of a long winded question here. The significant responsibilities of school board and the superintendent is minding the numbers. The Florida Education Finance Program is extremely compartmentalize funding formula that leads to a complex maze of roads for funding. In addition there are special appropriations. Please briefly describe what you know about this, about the formula, the special appropriations and how would you go do ensure CCPS gets the maximum amount of funding available in that particular or any special appropriations so we provide some unique and special learning opportunities for our students.

Ricciardelli 45:40

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview

April 26, 2023

So you're really talking about the Florida Finance and the FTE and the weighted FTE. We know that each student receives it receives a base allocation that's called it's a student base allocation.

Ricciardelli 45:55

So then we have categoricals, which I'm assuming that's what you were talking about the maze of different additions and add ons. Those categoricals may be in the areas of ESE, right. They have a different need and a different set of needs. So we have additional add ons for fundings, but that's categorical dollars that we receive to support students that with disabilities or to support students in the low 25% in reading or math.

Ricciardelli 46:24

So you're asking me, How do I? The bottom line is is that it's it's really in making sure that our all of our student data is correct. And it's incorrect in our computer systems. If a student has a disability and they that's it there's a matrix of services that goes along with that. If the student is a is needs the services of a matrix four which is a high level of services, which is extremely cost intensive, at a much higher dollar amount to support those students, but it's not documented or it's not reported correctly, and we're reporting it as a student with a matrix level of one, that's going to hurt us. So one of our big things is we have got to make sure that we're monitoring the, in this particular case, all of our IEPs to make sure that our matrix numbers and the IEPs and the services that we're saying we're providing in the IEP matches the matrix number so that we get the funding that is required to meet the needs of that particular student.

Ricciardelli 47:26

Again, it's it's it's how we report, that's part of our responsibility and then principal the responsibilities of principals and data entry, we monitor those numbers and on a regular basis. It's also how many kids are in our buildings. If we're not monitoring attendance during FTE week, right? We have FTE week in the fall and FTE week in the spring. That's a big week. If those if those students aren't in a chair at some point during that time that during that week, we don't get funding for them. We have to make sure students are there, so it's communicating with every parent. As a principal, my assistant principal for discipline would bring me the list every day. This is a student who has yet to show up. I don't care if I have to go to the door of that student. I'm going to I'm going to have to pay for that student when they come back. I'm going to make sure I get those students in the building, especially during the time when the when the state is counting, counting the heads in our in our building. So again, it really comes down to accurate reporting, and then and then making sure that our categoricals are being spent correctly. Again, when it's a categorical I can't take the funds that are meant for students with disabilities and put it into athletics. Right, and so we really just got to make sure that we do our checks and balances as we do to make sure that our students' needs are met and that the school's needs are met.

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Lichter 48:47

All right. Mr. Rutherford.

Rutherford 48:50

Yes. Riots, murders, fires, robberies. These are people who grew up or grown up or have gone up in our public schools. What will you do to correct the problems for our students so the same results are not out there.

Ricciardelli 49:17

Can I reframe your question to make sure I understand it?

Rutherford 49:20

Okay.

Ricciardelli 49:21

Let me just ask you to make sure I understand what you're asking. People who are in currently incarcerated for robbery or murder or arson are former public education students...

Rutherford 49:36

What you saw just recently, and the riots up north, and the tearing up of property, the stealing and everything else. All that's from public school students, all those people came from there. So we got a problem in the public schools because we haven't given them what they need. And I'll let you answer that. What do you think you can do to solve the problem so that these students now will not not turn out like those?

Ricciardelli 50:10

Okay. No disrespect but I want to say that I have a hard time saying that we can say every criminal attended a public school in the country or in the state of Florida or in Collier County Public Schools. So I just want to make sure you understand that there are private schools, who also have ...Some private schools specifically cater to students with behavior disorders. So I just want to make sure that I don't want to paint public schools with a wide brush and say that every criminal comes from public school.

Ricciardelli 50:42

Now. One of the biggest things we do and we start early, which you know, you were big in the development of or review of and you even added to the character traits that are in our current Code of Student Conduct. Listen, at the end of the day, people do what you allow them to do. So if you are going to enforce consequences on with consistency then students learn early that they are it is not okay to steal. That's our relationship with CCSO. If a student steals

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

someone's cell phone, they should feel the effects and the consequences just as they would if they were at the mall and they're 20 years old, they steal a cell phone. They would be arrested. That's a felony based on the cost of a cell phone. We have to meet, we have to follow through with the consequences if people do things incorrectly. If nobody is going to sit on the road and monitor that I'm driving 45 miles an hour, guess what, I'm not gonna drive 45 miles an hour. I might go a little faster than that. If they know somebody is going to be there and hold me accountable to it, then I'm going to drive 45 miles an hour and I'm going to wear my seatbelt so I don't get a ticket. Right.

Ricciardelli 51:59

One of the things I would say to you is teaching kids early that here's the expectation, and here's the consequence, that's pretty much the best we can do. The other thing I will say to you is this is where parents come into play. Parents have to know here are the expectations for socially appropriate behavior, and here are the consequences. And your child doesn't get a break when they destroy a bathroom. There are consequences to doing that. There are consequences to it damaging school property or stealing or fighting or bringing or using drugs. We have to we have to maintain order and because without that there is no discipline. Can we control someone after they leave our school system? No. They go to college and maybe maybe they're doing drugs or whatever it is they're doing. We can't necessarily control that but we can give them the foundation for what's right and wrong. And we can hold them accountable to it at an early age.

Rutherford 52:59

When we have 70 pages of non discrimination rules and regulations. And one page of values or in the Student Conduct the virtues there, doesn't that seem like an imbalance. In other words, you got one page saying these are good things and you should really practice these. Isn't there more that should be done?

Ricciardelli 53:27

Well, I think I I'm not sure about the 70 pages of non discrimination. We have many pages that outline different behaviors and consequences for those behaviors. There's also a continuum of conflict consequences. If a student skips school for a whole day, here's your consequence. If they do it regularly, those consequences go at a higher continuum on they get incrementally larger, right. If they disrespect the teacher the first time here's your consequence. After the third time, here's your consequence. It's a higher level of consequence and parents need to be prepared to accept that. Again, I told you last time, discipline is a matter of consequence, not convenience. That Student Code of Conduct really spells out very specifically the expectations for student behavior and the consequences for misbehavior.

Ricciardelli 54:17

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

So yes, I guess I would say to you, there's one page of character traits or virtues. But I think, you know, we're getting ready to produce that art show with fine and performing arts. Either fine or performing arts next year, really to get kids to focus on what are those character traits. Hopefully, that'll put some things into their mind and embed it a little bit deeper than just seeing it on a page or seeing it once a month on a morning announcements. Hopefully, if they have to actually produce something, create something around the concept of kindness, then it'll it'll get a little deeper inside them.

Ricciardelli 54:58

But the best I can tell you is I think we do a really good job of, of holding kids accountable. And quite frankly, I'm really thankful to this board for allowing us to tighten that code of conduct and to put some language back in there that holds kids to a higher level of expectation.

Rutherford 55:18

Thank you.

Lichter 55:18

Thank you. All right, Mrs. Lucarelli.

Lucarelli 55:24

So you've answered some of this question, but of course, it's multiple parts. So you might want to just focus on the last and have it but, please explain your understanding of the FEFP and the base student allocation, what it means to be a donor district, since Collier is one, and what have you done or will you do to cut the budget without negatively affecting students?

Ricciardelli 55:48

So I think I've explained my understanding of base student allocation and the add ons. The fact that we're, you know, we have a very high tax rate. So the state, we provide 90% of our education of our costs and the state provides us 10. If our I guess to be I guess the easiest way for me to explain the donor district is, there are other districts who can't provide to the same level that we can because their tax base is not and their property values aren't to the same level as ours. So we have to, the state is able to I guess I would say not. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Ricciardelli 56:59

... part one more time because I know I had a thought about that. I did write your whole content, question.

Lucarelli 57:04

What have you done or will you do to cut the budget without negatively affecting students?

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 57:09

So this goes back to really looking at the return on investment? It's not just as easy to say we're going to cut 10% from everyone's budget. When I was recently going through every single district budget, 70% of the budgets that were put in front of me had a had a reduction from prior from this past year, moving into next year. However, transportation had an increase. I get that he can't control that because the cost of fuel has gone up. That's something that we can't control but we do need to plan for. The big thing is to really look at so I guess what I'm saying is every single department isn't going to be able to cut by 10% and we also don't want to cut just by cutting off the top. Can't really cut too many clip positions from finance because what are we going to do cut the last person that was hired into payroll? Then we impact people's paychecks, that's not gonna work out well for us. So we have to be mindful of where we're able to pull from. The only way to do that is to take a really deep dive into the the organizational charts, and then the responsibilities of each person which, you know, I've been doing at a very deep level and for every single department and have been able to shift staff so that we don't have to rehire.

Ricciardelli 58:28

I guess the big thing I would say to you is, we were sort of in a culture of, oh, there's a problem. We're going to throw we're going to add a new staff member to that. We don't necessarily need to add new staff members and we don't necessarily need to throw programs at a particular problem. We really need to look at the problem. Figure out what is the real issue, how can we solve that issue without increasing costs? And then again, what things do we not need, what things are not necessary? One particular initiative that we participated in this past year was pretty costly for us as a district, not just financially but also for the morale of the teachers who really were against it and didn't, it wasn't part of their curriculum. They fought back pretty hard. And you know, how I dealt with that one immediately. Teachers have enough stress, especially with new standards and new assessments. We need to take those things away. But I guess I would say to you, we really have to look at all of the extras. Again, call it fluff, you can call it whatever you want. Reduce those, and then once we reduce those, then we can figure out where we where we can pull them and then you can get a little bit deeper. But I guess I would say to you, you have to look at the whole picture first because you just can't do say Oh 10% from every department because every department won't be able to do that.

Lucrelli 59:43

Thank you.

Lichter 59:44

Thank you. Mr. Carter?

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Carter 59:46

Okay. In recent years, several districts in the state of Florida have requested a tax referendum from the voters. Please explain to the board your knowledge of CCPS's tax referendum. Also how you intend to handle budget challenges if it continues, and if it does not continue.

Ricciardelli 1:00:02

So our tax referendum is a tax neutral referendum. We didn't have to increase taxes to do that. Well, I, to be quite frank with you, I am only going to be able to tell you some of the information I have because we're looking at preparing a presentation to bring to all of you because we have to make a decision or you have to make a decision on if you're gonna want to go forward with that tax neutral referendum on the November 2024 ballot.

Ricciardelli 1:00:26

So what I can tell you is that there are 21 counties in the state of Florida who have a tax referendum and they also have an education tax. The thing is, there are some when I say a tax referendum, I'm saying it is not tax neutral, so it is an additional tax. Our goal is to really the only place we could reduce is in our capital millage. But the problem is, is if we reduce the capital millage, our tax neutral referendum as you know, the fact that the county has said, the voters have said yes, you can take some of that capital, all those capital dollars and move it into your operating budget that supports teachers and teacher pay and the teacher compensation package along with other things, but if we don't have that tax neutral referendum, we are not going to have the ability to take those capital dollars to support teachers.

Ricciardelli 1:01:25

I will also tell you that if we reduce that capital millage or if county, or if we're looking at doing that, we're, we can't reduce the capital millage and increase increase compensation. So it's going to be one or the other. And I think right now we're in such a crisis with teachers. We have to be mindful that we need in teachers and we need to be able to bring people to this county. So we have to be mindful of that. And of course, nobody wants a tax referendum where it's actually going to increase their taxes. And we also do not want to add an education tax and we've been really fortunate in Collier County not to have to do that.

Lichter 1:02:05

Okay, so this is not the scenario question, but it is a scenario that I'm putting forward. So let's say it has been brought to your attention that a teacher is using their class to promote a certain political ideology and is using unapproved resources to perpetuate radical ideas. How would you handle this situation as the superintendent?

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 1:02:28

We invest, we immediately investigate. So if it is, so here's, if that's brought to my attention from a parent, from a student, from a principal. We made it so we have a position in our district called a leadership director. We have four of them. Those leadership directors support schools, each of them have approximately, you know, nine or 10 schools that they they support. Immediately the leadership director is contacted. They are in communication with the principal, they go to the classroom to first of all, they're reviewing everything from lesson plans to talking to the teacher also meeting with students and seeing what is it that has been taught. What is the class, right? If it's a college level class, you know, really looking at the resources but also just so you know, you even at a college level class you especially at the high school, you still want to make parents aware of what's being taught.

Ricciardelli 1:03:20

But really, we're here to teach state standards. Our state standards don't allow for that. So if they're not teaching state standards, then there is that immediately goes to what's called our employee review committee. We make contact with HR human resources, and they walk us through the steps. Here's what you need to do. Something similar, slightly different, but similar happened and the HR communicated with the principal and said, here's what you're gonna do. You're going to go into the classroom, you're going to have the teacher remove all of these books, remove all of these materials, posters, whatever it was. And, and then you'll bring the teacher into your office, go through a conversation with them, have sometimes HR goes to the school and meets with them. Sometimes they ask their union representative to be there, but it's an immediate go to the classroom, see what it is, pull it out of the classroom, especially if it's not part of state standards.

Ricciardelli 1:04:13

You really have to find out the facts first, and again, meeting with the students to find out what was said.

Lichter 1:04:19

Thank you very much.

Ricciardelli 1:04:20

Discipline, by the way comes from there. So the first time they may get a letter of conference or conference summary, then they may get a letter of reprimand and they may be get a suspension. So, of course, just like any other thing, there's a continuum of discipline, of consequences for the teachers.

Lichter 1:04:36

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Okay. And actually just a follow up question, would a communication go out to the parents regarding..

Ricciardelli 1:04:42

Yes. Good point. So well, yes, because typically, it ends up on social media these days. So communication goes out to the parents of those kids in that school, not to the parents of everyone in District. Okay.

Lichter 1:04:53

Yeah. And I'm glad you clarified that because I know there's been a recent situation that it didn't go district wide, but you know, that it was communicated to the parents of the school. So thank you, Mr. Moshier.

Moshier 1:05:09

All right. Every parent's worst nightmare is an active shooter is an active shooter event at their child's school. Can you share with us your background? Your background was prepare you to deal with this. Have you already? What have you done to accomplish in your career to prepare for or to deter such an event? And what have you done to deal with such an event? That's first part of the question.

Ricciardelli 1:05:36

Okay, you want me to answer that first part, then you're gonna ask second the second part. So I guess going back as far as Columbine, so that's really when we started those heavy trainings with the Sheriff's Department. And at the time, I think I was a new assistant principal. We have obviously trainings every year and one of the big things we do for teachers and for students is we have kind of a video review at the beginning of each semester. That reminds them of what happens if they have to go into lockdown or if they have to go into a secure in place, right.

Ricciardelli 1:05:36

Just recently there was an incident where there was shooting in the neighborhood but not at the school. So we had to do a secure in place and on the school was kind of locked down. Everybody stayed in place in their classrooms, and nobody was allowed out and instruction was able to continue.

Ricciardelli 1:06:28

We do drills, monthly drills, our teachers and students go through monthly drills. It's kind of a shame that our students have to do that. But they go with, every month they go through a lockdown drill. In addition to the fire drill that we would have done when we were kids, these kids have to go through a lockdown drill and we, the principals provide us with a monthly

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

calendar. This is when this lockdown drill is going to be and it has to be done at different times of day.

Ricciardelli 1:06:51

I was at an elementary school recently. They were getting ready to do the lockdown drill at dismissal time, very difficult, difficult time. But but to make sure that they knew exactly what to do and that they knew that they had to corral those kids into a classroom or into a locked room. Lock the door. Get them quiet and get them into a safe corner. So we go through these trainings every year.

Ricciardelli 1:07:13

Again, the sheriff's department they do tabletop exercises with us kind of like what we're talking about now. How would you handle the situation or maybe kind of, you know, when I do that, the next little exercise where I have to give you a they give you a scenario. We have to talk to them. Here's what what do we do? Here? One of the things that has since changed, over the years one of the things that's changed is it used to be after a lockdown, we used to call it a code red now we call it lockdown, that the principal used to, or an administrator used to be able to go through the class or the hallways and release the kids okay, you know, Code Red is over. But we only did that once or twice a year. Now students do not leave that lockdown without a deputy going into the classroom and being they are the ones who released the class. They are the ones who release the lockdown. So, of course, again, it's really the training and CollierCounty Sheriff's Office is unbelievable and training they go all of the deputies do this with the faculties in the school. So the YRBS for the schools have have the trainings with their teachers in the buildings. The sheriff's office comes here or to wherever our principals meetings are and they train the administrators. And then they also train activities coordinators for events. Thankfully, I've never had to be in one.

Ricciardelli 1:07:44

Okay. And then what's your position on the Guardian program and how would you implement it? If you've been watching the news, Lee County already has their program implemented and we're just ... waiting.

Ricciardelli 1:08:39

So we are working on this and what we've done. I met with Collier County Sheriff's Office because really many most counties in the state of Florida are implementing it in some form, they're all doing it differently based on their capacity to support the schools from the from their law enforcement.

Ricciardelli 1:09:01

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

So in one particular county law enforcement is not able to provide an armed deputy in every single one of their schools. So law enforcement provides the armed deputy in their middle and high schools and they have guardians in their elementary schools because they just don't have enough deputies to go around.

Ricciardelli 1:09:18

What we're looking at and after multiple meetings with members of the sheriff's department, what we're looking at right now and we've already created it. The plan is that it will come to you in June at the June board meeting, but we've created a job description so that it won't be.... First of all, there's a capacity piece to this right. There's a training capacity that the sheriff's office has to be able to train all of the people who want to be a guardian, and that's about 144, at a minimum, of 144 hour training that the sheriff's department has to do. We can't do that.

Ricciardelli 1:09:52

We, all those people also have to go through the psychological exams to make sure that they're there have the capacity, similar to what a deputy would do if they're going to carry a gun in a classroom or on a campus and you know right now guns, even though it might have been you know, the freedom to carry is become more of a freedom in the state of Florida. It is still not a freedom on school campuses. The school campuses, it is still not allowed. So we have to be mindful of those laws.

Ricciardelli 1:10:19

But so I'm gonna bring forth a job description where we start small, a couple of them maybe in the beginning so that they roam, they're available throughout the district. One of the greatest things I think we've done is when I went back, to go back to your question, the fact that every law enforcement officer, every Fire, EMS, these people, the fact that they're able to get into our buildings, it at the end of the day those people are going to be to get it to any facility, including this one faster than anyone else. will, but, you know, teachers aren't there and they're not trained on a regular basis to handle a crisis to that effect to that to that level. So I think if we've got someone who that is their sole job, they're traveling through the district and really I look at it more like a feeder pattern. So if you look at you know, if you look at this area, you would look at Baron Collier, Pine Ridge, Sea Gate. you know, this kind of this feeder pattern right here Pelican Marsh so that someone is in that area just similar to the to the local deputies.

Ricciardelli 1:10:25

All right, looks like Mr. Rutherford, this will be our final question.

Rutherford 1:11:33

What do you think is the major What do you think is the major reason for the moral decline in our country and schools?

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 1:11:49

So terms of the moral decline, are you I guess, I mean, let me just say this. We have again, I'm gonna go back to our discipline policy. We have a very tight policy on our expectations for behaviors. Has the family unit changed over the years? Yes. Do all families sit down at around a table and eat dinner together? No. I can't tell you that I did that in my own house. I worked too many hours. So you know, maybe just the family unit in fact that most at this point, especially Collier County, there are so many parents it's a it's a dual income household, right. So parents are working and they're home and gone at different times. I I guess I would say to you, social media has not helped, we know that. That's why we're addressing cell phones in schools. Not that that is going to take away the social media piece because the second that school is over, they're going to be right back on it, but I think it's really about parents also being really aware. I used to tell parents when I was at the high school, parent night, every year I said the same exact thing. This is not the time to walk away from your kid. This is not the time to think that you don't need to know the first and last name of every one of their friends. This is not the time for you to not know who their parents are and who they're hanging out with. And at that point, I quite frankly I used to recommend to every parent to do the same thing I did, which is take a drug test, go go to CVS, get a drug test, put it on your refrigerator and tell that student, your child, that you will test them at any time. You give that your own child the power to say you know what, nope, my parents, you don't know them. They'll test me. Give them an excuse. I could always put my head down at night. She didn't have to make up an excuse as to why she had to succumb to peer pressure.

Ricciardelli 1:13:34

So we have to provide them every possible support. And we also have to be supportive of parents and educate parents. You know, it's hard on parents because, you know, just like any other time you it's hard on them. The the older kids get and the more technologically savvy kids are, parents just assume that their kids are grown up. Just because they know how to work the computer and the parent doesn't that does not mean they're grown up, does not mean they can handle what they're looking at.

Ricciardelli 1:14:02

So parents have to be involved from that perspective. So I would say to you, you know, again, parents rights, there are parents who would say to me, How dare you say that? How dare you try to put, you know, maybe I feel it's okay to maybe maybe I feel it's okay to do drugs. So how dare I tell you that your kid can't do drugs? Well, what? You know, maybe that's just the way things are going in America. I guess that's probably not a great answer. But I would say to you that it really comes back to us to hold hold tight to our expectations for appropriate behavior, and also hold the parents to the same level of expectation, and that we're not going to let them say, Well, you know, I don't think that what Johnny did was so bad. Well, I think what Johnny

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

did was pretty bad. And it goes against our student code of conduct and it also goes against the law. So your child is going to have to your child's going to get the consequence.

Rutherford 1:14:58

Thank you.

Lichter 1:15:01

All right, excellent. At this time, we're going to move into Phase three of your interview. This is the scenario challenge and you were given the scenario which probably sounded like you know, a Friday every couple weeks or so. So approximately 10 minutes before the start of this interview, you were asked to review as a series of hypothetical requests, incidents, indoor events, and be prepared during this segment to prioritize and present your action steps. So at this time, we'd like you to please read the scenario to us and take up to 15 minutes to prioritize and present your action steps in addressing these issues.

Ricciardelli 1:15:45

You want me to start with a situation?

Lichter 1:15:47

Yes, please read.

Ricciardelli 1:15:49

The situation is it's Monday, October 16th, 2023. You've been the superintendent of Collier County Public Schools for several months and have become familiar with the staff and operations of the district. You have a good working relationship with the board members and have come to trust those who report directly to you. You are scheduled to be in your office for the day.

Ricciardelli 1:16:10

The following events are brought to your attention between eight o'clock and 8:15am. Please describe the actions you would take immediately and during the remainder of the day to appropriately address the issues.

Ricciardelli 1:16:20

So this one is a little bit prior to eight o'clock. But prior to a, prior to arrival, the chief of Human Resources informs me or informs you that an assistant principal was arrested over the weekend and has been detained in Miami due to what is described as a very serious altercation. Do you want me to that one first or just go through the whole thing?

Ricciardelli 1:16:40

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

8:00 am the Chief Financial Officer mentions to you while you're walking in the building in the morning that he has concerns regarding regarding the increase in the cost of fuel. Given the funds allocated in the budget and the current price per gallon of fuel, the buses will stop running on April 1, 2024.

Ricciardelli 1:16:58

8:05am You get a call from the manager for the county committee from the county Commissioner's Office, who informs you about a change in plans for a new housing development that may impact traffic flow around several CCPS schools. She needs to review this with you and get feedback ASAP because all construction at the site has been halted.

Ricciardelli 1:17:19

At 8:10am you were told by your administrative assistant that a reporter called this morning asking for you to comment on the community protests that social media sources indicate will occur in the app this afternoon near several of the high schools regarding the decision regarding the decision regarding middle and high school redistricting. The reporter indicated that the community members including parents and students, intend protests near dismissal times and demand that current school boundaries remain in place. You learned that several local networks intend to film the protests and attempt to speak with both students and parents.

Ricciardelli 1:17:54

8:15am the Director of Transportation calls to tell you that there was a bus accident in Everglades City. At least five students and the bus driver are hospitalized.

Ricciardelli 1:18:03

8:17am assistant superintendent comes to your office to notify you that mold has been reported in several schools. Your input is needed on several solution options, a communication plan and whether to send students home for virtual learning.

Ricciardelli 1:18:18

Okay, so prior to arrival, I'm going to start with that one and human resources. So if human resources contacts me, the first thing I'm going to do is make contact with the leadership director of the principal of the school where that assistant principal works. They'll make contact with the principal and they'll make sure that the school has all the coverage needed, right, because that's a critical position in terms of supervision. Then the leadership director will work with the communications department to assist the principal in crafting a message will the district will share that message with the media and then the principal can share it with school staff and parents as appropriate.

Ricciardelli 1:18:55

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

While doing all of that someone from human resources will also be working with potentially the Collier County Sheriff's Office if they're not able to get information from Miami Police Department or Dade County Sheriff's to gather as much information about the arrest as possible. And then figure out what is the timeline for the person to be released.

Ricciardelli 1:19:15

The the person from human resources will gather the members of what's we have a committee called employee review committee. And so they'll either gather those numbers together or they will meet with legal and really the first thing they'll do is as soon as they're able to communicate with the assistant principal they will ask the assistant principal to report here on the following workday morning at eight o'clock to human resources and then we'll determine we'll look at the whole situation because we have to investigate and get them due process. So I will get information and updates from human resources throughout the day in terms of when will the person be back. I will review all of the messages that are going out to the community or to the media first before it goes to media and then of course to the staff. And then also the leadership director will give me input on you know coverage at the school if it's needed.

Ricciardelli 1:20:06

Next one, Chief Financial Officer mentions about the concerns about increasing fuel. That doesn't really go into effect that's going to impact next year's budget. So let's just pretend that next year's budget's already done, but really at this point we're working on next year's budget. So in my mind, I was trying to kind of look at it as this year but we will Director of Transportation the chief operations officer who oversees transportation will get together with the Director of Transportation and the Chief Financial Officer. They'll review their entire budget and figure out really what is needed to run those buses. They're also going to need to look at the FTE that's coming off of those buses and make sure are those buses full? Are we able to consolidate any of those routes? Maybe there aren't so many kids on one bus. Maybe we can do something like that which, PS, we've done before just by the sheer problem of not having enough bus drivers. So that's another issue. But again, they will have to reevaluate their bus routes at the end of the day, and then finance will review budgets and figure out where can we pull from other areas that maybe are unnecessary, right? Maybe we don't need to purchase a new bus, maybe we don't need to. Maybe because of the positions we were already able to reduce from the district office, we can use the funds that were already allocated for those positions and kind of move that over. That is always a possibility. So there, there's always [inaudible] ways that we can kind of shift funding and shift resources. Then they will give me an update at the end of the day or in my next briefing with them because all of those chiefs I have weekly brief briefings with anyway but again, it's not a crisis emergency it is important but it's not something that has to be done and I need to update right in five minutes.

Ricciardelli 1:21:52

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview

April 26, 2023

So 8:05, chief facilities officer, oh, this is the county manager who informs us about the new housing development that's going to impact traffic flow around several CCPS schools. Not really sure how that happens, but ultimately it's the chief facilities officer or chief facility manager is in communication will get in communication and call the person at the county office to figure out where's the issue? What do they think are potentially going to be the problems? Where will the what schools will be impacted? Typically they'll get with Chief Operations Officer and again the Transportation Director, potentially even the safety and security officer will probably be involved and they will schedule a time to go out and either look at the site and then kind of look at the routing. Transportation will also be able to explain well this is you know where we route truck buses. This is and then the county will, the county will also have their people that are determined for things like traffic lights and enforcement, that kind of thing. But ultimately, we just need to develop a plan. How could we reroute traffic. Sometimes it might be how are we going to if it's an elementary school and maybe we have a lot of parent drop off that elementary school how are we going to do that? And can it be done? Maybe it's on the county. They're the ones who were supposed to plan that in advance and then communicate with us in advance. So if something has come up after that, that's sort of rare. That tells us that that wasn't very poor planning or they didn't communicate with us well, so we need to sit down with them and figure out how they can help rectify that. Again, weekly briefing topic not a crisis at the moment.

Ricciardelli 1:23:31

And then communicating with the media. Here's what we know. Here's what we can prevent communicating with sheriff's office, a lot of times just the fact that they will have additional deputies in the area will often kind of squelch that but sometimes. So ultimately, those protests around dismissal time we just need to communicate with students and

Ricciardelli 1:23:31

8:10 my administrative assistant tells me about the reporter that called and said that there's potentially going to be a protest regarding the middle and high school redistricting. Again, this comes back down to communication. That happens when you don't communicate with people. So that tells me that there were no, which is not going to happen. But that tells me that there were no community meetings and opportunities for parents to come forth and share their concerns about the new redistricting.

Ricciardelli 1:24:01

But the first thing that happens is just like anytime that we anticipate or we're informed about a potential walkout or a potential whatever the situation is, we remind the administrators and the students of the consequences. We have a Code of Student Conduct that addresses that type of congregating or misbehavior or walkouts. And so we discipline accordingly. But it's a matter of reminding people of those things, and then communicating with the media. Here's what we

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

know. Here's what we can prevent. Communicating with sheriff's office, a lot of times just the fact that they will have additional deputies in the area will often kind of squelch that but sometimes. So ultimately, those protests around dismissal time we just need to communicate with students.

And really the leaders of those protests are the ones that really are the ones that can kind of usually spoil stuff. But we have to start talking to kids, the leadership director will meet with the principals and see what they know. And sometimes it just gets blown out of proportion, but we really have to investigate it from the start. And then I'll get updates from the leadership directors or the the deputy superintendent. He's probably the one who would really support the principals and the leadership directors in that area. He'll monitor that and relay the updates to me as the day goes on.

END RECORDING #1

Ricciardelli 00:35

And then 8:15 Director of Transportation calls tells us there was a bus accident. The chief operations officer will be the one who leads that and contacts the, speaks with the leadership director for the students at the Everglades City school because that's I'm assuming that's where those kids are coming from, as opposed to maybe a bus of students traveling out there for an event and figuring out what do they know what is the investigation Collier County Sheriff's Office will inevitably have some sort of report, possibly some video from the bus that'll be able to be pulled because we have videos, cameras on the buses, and then making sure that the principal is a has been in contact and communication with all of the parents. Communications office will immediately start a crafting a message to go to the parents and then also to the media and then to the community and of course to the board.

Ricciardelli 01:30

I should have also said that in a situation like that, the chief chief of staff if I'm not able to do it right away, the chief of staff is going to immediately communicate with all of you, the board members and say here's the situation. Here's this is that how the accident occurred. This is what we know about the injuries. The parents are aware of the principals gone to the hospital to be with the staff with the bus driver. Transportation is aware and we're pulling video at this point. And so continue to get updates from that.

Ricciardelli 02:01

And then 8:17 Assistant superintendent comes to my office to talk to me about mold that's been reported in several schools. That immediately is a conversation where I'm going to contact chief facilities officer and also get with the leader and to pull in the leadership director.

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview April 26, 2023

So if the assistant superintendent is aware of the schools, I'm going to ask the leadership director from each of those that that supports each of those schools to come meet with me. First thing they need to do is call their principals and find out where's this report coming from? What evidence do they have? Do they have pictures? What is their facility manager found? Do they know where it potentially could be coming from? And so then, chief of facilities officer will either send one or send one or multiple of his top supervisors out to those locations, evaluate the situation, typically we contract with a company to come in and also identify that it is truly mold and then you begin the process.

Ricciardelli 02:59

So if the process is because we found that there was a leak and in a storage closet, we didn't know there was a leak in and we can see where the mold is, Facilities will immediately probably start cutting it out but in the meantime, he'll let me know the extent of the damage. If it is truly mold, and what his plan is to rectify the situation and then the timeline will be done. Also, a principal leadership director will work with the principal if it's in a classroom or by a classroom, the leadership director will support the principal as they actually move classrooms and then communicate with the parents of the kids. So if it's a second grade classroom, where the mold might be we're going to communicate with that parents a group of parents and say your child is now going to go from room 100 to room 110. And that's where their class will be until the situation is until the till the room is we are sure that it's safe. And that is clean.

Lichter 03:56

Thank you very much. All right. Now we are moving into the final phase of the interview process. This is phase four. This is your opportunity to ask the board questions. In right now it looks like we've got a little extra time built in so we have approximately 29 minutes. So if you've got time So

Ricciardelli 04:26

Okay, so um, before I ask my questions, I would like to make a statement related to two public remarks related public remarks were made at the April 19 meeting. Two broad comments were made.

Ricciardelli 04:40

First, my commitment to want to stay here in Collier County reflected a lack of courage to depart and seek a leadership position elsewhere. And second, that I am part of the former regime, whatever that is, given I've served here for 23 years with multiple superintendents. But I would like to address each one in turn.

Ricciardelli 04:57

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

First, I've devoted my career to this district because of my commitment to the growth, well-being and overall success of students and staff. I have not sought to depart from here because as a professional, I was helping students and staff grow at all levels, and with that, contributed to the increase in student learning and graduation rates.

Ricciardelli 05:17

Additionally, I'm a parent and my child was thriving here.

Ricciardelli 05:22

At the end of the day, this is not about me. It's about the service to this district and our community, including the well being of my own child. These are the values that I live by.

Ricciardelli 05:32

When we speak about courage, let's break down what that means. Courage comes from a French word which means heart, and I make no apologies for the fact that my entire heart is devoted to this county and this district and leading it in an appropriate and successful manner. I do not need to run to other districts to test myself.

Ricciardelli 05:51

Courage is often linked to certain military virtues. During my career in Collier I have been in the proverbial educational trenches. And when the going gets tough, I do not and never have abandoned the troops when the shelling starts, or run from the trenches just to protect myself.

Ricciardelli 06:10

Second, it was stated that I needed to go because I was part of the former regime. So let's just talk about that for a moment. And I want to be clear. I serve the well-being of Collier County Public Schools. I do because I *do* have integrity, and I *am* transparent, I want to clearly and unequivocally say that my time spent as a cabinet member in the last administration taught me many things. Two of the most important were what *not* to do and how *not* to treat people.

Ricciardelli 06:40

During the years of the previous administration, my values did not change. I treated people with respect and dignity and I worked overtime and often took positions that were different from the previous superintendent.

However, as my bosses, the five of you should know that I *do* know my role. You are my boss. And just as I did with my last boss, I serve you. And when you chose me to serve as the interim, my central goal for this district was to serve the district as I always have, with a focus and attention to the well-being and the growth of students.

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 07:18

With the support of all of you, I have been able to make significant organizational and educational changes in the short period of time I've served in this role.

Ricciardelli 07:27

Finally, has been central to me to foster a positive and productive relationship with each of you built on transparency and trust. My actions and decisions have been and will continue to be future-oriented, taking into account the vision which all of you as a board have so well articulated.

Ricciardelli 07:45

So thank you for allowing me to make those statements. Now for my questions.

Ricciardelli 07:50

In 2026, we are scheduled to be debt free, but coincidentally the cost neutral referendum will end at that time. What are your thoughts and/or concerns about adding another cost neutral referendum on the November 2024 ballot?

Lucarelli 08:11

Okay, thank you for that knowing the growth that we are experiencing here in Collier County. The need as you mentioned to two new schools that will be online. I think it's going to be imperative for us to be able to put teachers in those schools as well. And so in my opinion, I think we are going to have to ask the voters again to re-approve that tax neutral referendum. Basically just as you explained it but we'll be asking the voters to move money from our capital bucket over into our operational bucket. And so we're not looking for any more money but we just want the approval of the voters to allow us to use the money the way we need to use it. Which will be you know, filling, filling classrooms, students.

Carter 09:04

So I've always tried to run this district, like I run my business and I base it on principles that you're, you're a slave to the lender. I do not want this district to be a slave to any lender. When it comes to budget you either to pay for it today or you pay for it tomorrow. If you pay for it tomorrow, it's going to be that much more expensive, especially with bond rates going through the roof. So I think we need to do the greatest gift we can give to our future generations is a tax, is a debt free government and I wish Washington would understand that too. So what we need to do is ask the voters for the approval of that referendum so we can move forward and in 10 more years, build another high school and do it with paying cash. I know it's expensive. A lot of people think growth should pay for growth. But if you do growth paying for growth, we're going to have to bond out, our bond rating is high but in this in this climate, it's going to be expensive. And the best thing we can do is live by biblical principle. We are not a slave to the

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

lender, and that's what I base my business on. And that's how I base how I look at the economy at this budget.

Lichter 10:04

It's a great question and I know we will have to build additional schools. That is without question. I would even argue the new high school would be in less than 10 years. Just with the way the growth is. I definitely think this this board with staff and with the community needs to have a real candid conversation about what this looks like. We also know that developers who have you know the impact there's there are impact fees money set aside as well. But I definitely want to have this open conversation moving forward. Go ahead, Mr. Moshier.

Moshier 10:39

I'd have to look at where the numbers are, where we're standing. See what's available, what the building costs are. And then made the decision at that point. Until we look at it, I've just been in this five months now. I haven't been able to look at all the numbers to see where we're standing. But we'd have to sit down and have a couple of workshops on this to see exactly where we are, where the money is what the future costs are going to be. I mean, we've seen in the last two years, you know, it's up 50 to 100% and all the building costs I don't know if they're gonna come back down in the next few years because of everything's been straightened out or if it's gonna go up even higher. So we're gonna have the board's gonna have to sit down and take a look at where we are financially, where the impact fees are coming on what's actually in the piggy bank to do the building and then go from there.

Rutherford 11:26

I've been around a long time. And I've been through many board members, superintendents. I remember back if I can relate this. Dr. Thompson was the superintendent and he reduced the budget tremendously. And you would have thought that whoever came in behind him would have followed suit. That did not happen. The next person that came in, squandered it as far as I'm concerned with too many extra people and too many extra things. That's just my personal opinion. But so I would say what Erick said was correct. Let's stay debt free, where we have the possibility to do it that.

Ricciardelli 12:27

Yeah, thank you. And you're right, because as soon as we put bonds out there, then there are strings that come attached those bonds and and quite frankly, with the lack of land of you know, the community uses our buildings and leases, our buildings, but we wouldn't be able to do that we wouldn't be able to support community organizations to the degree that we do, you know, because we just wouldn't be allowed to because of the of the barriers and they I guess the strings that come with those bonds.

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Ricciardelli 12:57

So as discussed in previous board meetings, two new elementary schools are being planned to meet the needs of growth in the Estates. What are the most important aspects you would like to see to make sure are in place to ensure that we are able to successfully complete the task of modifying boundaries?

Lichter 13:15

So we you start down there, or you want let a let's start with Mrs. Lucarelli. This is her question. All right,

Ricciardelli 13:24

The boundary queen.

Lichter 13:26

There we go. Go ahead.

Lucarelli 13:27

Okay. So first off, I want to thank you for allowing and in my board members, thank all of you for allowing me to be the person who is sitting in on these boundary modification meetings. The meetings happen weekly, and it has been an incredible process for me to see all of the work that goes into this. The key thing for me with modifying boundaries is, one, not to kick the can down the road so far that we are in a situation that we're in right now with some of our schools.

Lucarelli 14:04

Two: open communication with the parents as far in advance as we possibly can so that parents can plan and make arrangements if wherever those boundaries are going to be if they are not happy with it, they can. They can figure out a plan to make it what they want it to be and the more time that they have, the easier that's going to be for them.

Lucarelli 14:28

Plus, as we know, I mean, when things the way things happened, I feel like for a long time in this district, decisions were being dropped on parents, and anytime a decision is dropped on a parent and it's an it's something that's being enacted so quickly, you don't even have enough time to get your mind around it and understand the full impact of it. And so a lot of times with enough time, you get used to the idea and you realize okay, it's not as bad as I thought it was going to be. The only way to get to that point is with the added with built in time upfront. So that's what I hope that we do moving forward is provide parents with as much time as possible to know what those changes are going to be and obviously all of the work that we do in relation with the with the county and our department that deals well. All of the people from all the

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview

April 26, 2023

different departments that are that are working on this are truly looking at every single aspect where new communities are coming up roadways. How do you have I mean, down to very little things about if we're going to put a new school here, which which direction is that community going to have to turn in order to get there, you know, and we want the people to be able to make right turns to get to where that school zone is going to be? So I think I answered your question, but maybe we went a little overboard, but thanks.

Carter 15:59

So I think one of the greatest things that we have done in this district since you've been here is opening up the line of communication with all the staff so we can talk to any staff and the staff feel comfortable talking to us, I think putting a board member on certain issues to be there when they're discussing it so the board member can come back and report to us. We have Miss Lucarelli and she's very passionate about this. So I'm glad that we have her there and we've had Miss Lichter in certain things with the attorneys and stuff like that. I think that's the best thing we've done that shows the communication between us and that communication rolls downhill. So communication is vital and it's rolling downhill and we'll be able to to inform the parents. So when the parents come into the boardroom, and they say ABC, then Miss Lucarelli can attest that this district has done everything it possibly can do and that's exactly what you did was really to make these boundary modifications as painless as possible. So futuristically we need to continue that line open communication so we can communicate back to the public and I think that's what they want. So

Lichter 17:00

So this issue has been pretty much dropped on our laps since we got here. And that's one of the reasons why I recommended designating Mrs. Lucarelli to this issue because I know it was something she did speak up about at previous meetings before we got here. It was concerning to me that this issue wasn't addressed because of the campaign. I think that was a big part of it because you as you said, you're not going to make all the parents happy. It is a difficult situation. But I think what we're doing right now is the correct way to do it. We're starting early. I think the communications got to come out early. So people are prepared, because frankly, we're still getting emails from parents and school starts in August with a new opening of the new high school. This is way too last minute for parents and it's unfortunate to happen. But I think we can take it as a learning experience. What not to do moving forward.

Moshier 17:58

I would like to see some master plan. We know where the development is going. It's not going any further west, it's going east. But the schools out there and it have a master plans all developers know once we you maxed out the housing development in here this is where the school is gonna go where it's gonna go out and get like a 10 year plan out there. So people when they move into a neighborhood when the population hits X amount, we're gonna be

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview

April 26, 2023

opening up another school so they know that because it seems like from a lot of emails I've received a lot of people are in like total shock with this new high school.

Moshier 18:36

And I was just out there last weekend and that school 100 million dollar investment is less than a mile from the next county, which we're not going in and out of there. And it's we got one road in and one way out of there. And you know, I'm all over the community. I live down in Everglades City. And I talked to a lot of people up here because I'm up here this time live it was it's a bad location. And it's you know, very difficult to get in until they get the road and we got five years to the till the next roads gonna be done and I just didn't think it was, you know, a good place to put in and we're going to be facing the consequences and everyone's ridden on Immokalee Road, half those people are going to be coming down that road. So it's going to be a nightmare for a few years till we get a road finished.

Moshier 19:18

And hopefully another road put in to offset that cost of everything. But for future growth. I'd like to know where our schools are going. And then we can tell every parent every developer, maybe get with the Realtors Association and say, Listen, you know, if you're planning on moving in once the population grows because we are growing, this is where how the boundaries are going to work. And that way everybody knows. So it's not like, you know, a developer or somebody could say, Hey, you're going to be going to that school. Well, no, you will be going to that school. until this happens. And this will be happening because, you know, we're gonna get I don't know how many hundreds of 1000s of people down here in the next 10 years, which you know, it's kind of it's got its pluses and minuses so we just have to deal with them and just be upfront with everybody, you know, what's going to happen and where they're going to be at a certain point when this level reaches, you know, this percentage.

Rutherford 20:11

I think you've all probably seen the sign "plan ahead." And I think that's the answer. You have to plan so far ahead. I'm not used to planning ahead. That's probably one of my faults and failures. But we've got too many people here that know how to plan ahead, so I'll leave that part for them.

Lichter 20:33

Good answer, Mr. Rutherford, we appreciate your honesty.

Ricciardelli 20:41

As I move forward into the role of a superintendent, what is one piece of advice you would give me?

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview
April 26, 2023

Lichter 20:49

Can you repeat the question?

Ricciardelli 20:50

As I move forward into the role of superintendent, what is one piece of advice you would give me?

Lichter 21:00

Do you want me to go?

Rutherford 21:01

No, I got it.

Lichter 21:02

All right. We'll start with Mr. Rutherford and go the other direction. All right. All right. I'm putting you on the spot. Give her one piece of advice.

Rutherford 21:12

So far, you have communicated with us, I think in a grand manner. I haven't been here long enough to find all your faults. So I think you've done a tremendous job and if you get this position, I'll be right there to do anything that will be beneficial to running this humongous district. I'm not here long enough to really make decisions that I need to make a day of will because it's a learning thing for me. But I appreciate what you've done with the board as far as the time you spent with us. Thank you.

Moshier 22:05

I know it's you know, I'm kind of with Jerry here. We're just learning, new to the business and just you know, we have a lot to overcome and we've been overcoming the last six months. I mean, we've gone a lot direction. I mean, I can speak to staff really, at this point, which my understanding it wasn't able to do before, and just, you know, continue the ball rolling and get out there and you know, I see a lot of events that we go to, and just get out there and talk to the community and actually listen to what they're saying because that's basically what I'm doing. I mean, you might want to think about running for school board to get the other side of everything.

Lichter 22:45

Come on you love it. All right. So my biggest piece of advice would be always keep the mission and vision at the really at the center of everything you do and the decisions you make. And I think that will carry you far in terms of your relationships with the board and staff but really keeping the students at the at the center of everything that we do here. And that it's at the end

Leslie Ricciardelli Final Interview

April 26, 2023

of the day, the superintendent is definitely the face of the district. But it's not about self promotion at all. Perhaps that was the way it used to be and I think keeping the mission as your main focus will carry you very far. Thank you.

Carter 23:31

So there's a point out there and I can't think who wrote it, but it's a great one and it talks about what your greatest fear is. People's greatest fear is their light, not the darkness. Let your light shine, people are afraid to let their light shine because they feel inadequate or they will feel like they're not able to do that. So let me think of how it goes. Our greatest fear is not our darkness, but we are more powerful beyond measure. It is our light that frightens us the most, not our darkness, let your light shine, be you, be strong. I know you will not imitate the previous administration because that is not who you are. We do not expect that out of you. We expect you to be you and to bring collaboration which you have already done in the past six months. Thank you.

Lucarelli 24:18

Along similar lines, I guess, you've risen to where you are. And you have the reputation that you do in this community because of your your incredible work ethic, how you've treated people along the way, but most importantly, your attention to the students and your ability to do anything, anything that you can to help make sure that our students are achieving. So much in line with following our mission. It is I would tell you, keep doing what you've been doing. You just you have an opportunity now to do it bigger and better than ever and and I would say don't hold back. I think you've been held back in the past and you've always kept students at the forefront of everything that you've done and and I would want you to continue to do the same and hold everyone else to that same standard.

Ricciardelli 25:13

Thank you

25:14

Madam Chair. 20 minutes has elapsed.

Lichter 25:16

Oh, okay. Oh, so we're we don't have like extended time for the because we don't, it's done. It's done. Okay. All right.

Lichter 25:25

So we want to thank you. I know this is not an easy situation. Being in front of potentially I said this 1000s of people could be watching right now. So we appreciate your candid honesty and your willingness to put yourself out there because it's not easy. So thank you.