

November 14, 2020

Dear Jennings School District (JSD) Board of Education and Community:

We have had some unprecedented and unpredictable days. Still, it has been my most distinct honor to serve the best, wisest, and multiple award-winning JSD Board of Education. Leading and seeing JSD staff, students, and stakeholders standing together, facing everything and rising through epidemics and the current pandemic of COVID-19, have produced some of the most fulfilling days of my life. This is our Warrior Way: Loving others, uniting, fighting for what is right, leading, and teaming together to place students first to transform the community. Our work is internationally admired and exemplary to countless people. We are proof that united we can succeed at nearly anything.

As someone who was born and raised in St. Louis and Jennings, Jennings School District is home. So, it was a humbling honor when I received the call in the 2015-16 school year to come back home from Irvine, California, to lead Jennings School District as the superintendent and CEO. My elderly parents taught me to help home because home helped you become who you are today. In the interview, you asked me to take JSD to the next level and finish my career here unless called to serve at the state or federal level.

Since returning home to Jennings over five years ago, we have accomplished so much:

- Multiple graduating Jennings classes achieved 100% graduation, career, and college placement.
- Our Career Pathways and Academies from elementary through high schoolers provided real skills, jobs, and high wages for all JSD children, similar to my opportunity to become a 19-year-old certified math teacher in Rockwood School District.
- We performed at the "Accredited with Distinction" range in 2018-2019, making history: JSD is one of Missouri's first and only districts, with over 90% of students on free meals and over 90% Black students to achieve over 90% A.P.R./accreditation.
- JSD became a 1-to-1 District of computers-to-students in 2018 and 1-to-1 Chromebooks-to-students plus broadband connectivity in 2020.
- We expanded school-based clinics by creating a PreK-12 Federally Qualified Health Clinic at Fairview Elementary for all medical, dental, and mental health student needs; added a homeless shelter to reduce homelessness called Hope House II; created two grocery store food hubs for daily grocery shopping at the J Town Market and Fairview Food Hub; created Centers for Healing Engagement with Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and more.
- JSD became the first WE District in Missouri, helping 22,000 students in Missouri join WE Schools.
- JSD had budget surpluses for all six school years and grew the reserves from 21% to nearly 30%.
- \$10 million was raised externally to provide extraordinary student programs and engagement.
- We reopened Gore Elementary School as the Gore Community Elementary Center as a small business incubation center by starting the first Raising STL Hub with BJC providing parent mentors and nurses for pregnant mothers, fitness programs, and a new alternative education program for court-appointed youth.
- As the only public district in St. Louis County and City to resume in-person schooling (P-12 grade) in July 2020, JSD has had zero confirmed student transmitted COVID-19 cases to date.

Still, to everything, there is a time and a season. Endings are inevitable. They are essential for new beginnings and continual progress.

At the September 2019 Board meeting, I relayed to the JSD Board of Education that the 2020-21 school year would likely be my year of retirement. As a board, you graciously issued me a stellar 2020 performance evaluation and a contract through 2023. Throughout my tenure, you supported me in leading other work with business leaders and organizations because it boosted the goodwill and support of Jennings School District and enhanced the support and the success of the region.

Together, we have transformed this community, state, nation, and beyond, having led:

- In public education and trailblazing how to do schooling well, even during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Mental health and trauma-informed/wellness initiatives nationally and internationally with Mental Health America and WE Mental Health;
- Workforce development initiatives regionally to nationally with JAG and CPB American Graduate;
- On the Governor's COVID-19 School Reopening Education Taskforce; and
- Diversity-inclusion-equity initiatives and conducting conversations on race, gender, and dismantling opposition with fire and police departments, many corporations, and schools/colleges.


Still, after much prayer and reflection, I am publicly formalizing my year-and-a-half old pronouncement to you to retire during 2021 from the Missouri K-12 Public School System. I am retiring from the system, but not our mission as a chief warrior in this war against ignorance. At our first press conference in February 2016, our charge was to take Jennings to higher levels from accredited to the accredited with distinction range together. We, the students, staff, administrators, board, and stakeholders, did just that for multiple years. We have made JSD history in many ways. Most of all, we loved and led our children and the community together.

A sincere thank you to all the JSD Warrior staff, administrators, board and supporting partners for your unyielding labor of love, without whom success would be impossible and with whom nearly any success is possible. To the parents and students, I love you and always will. On June 30, 2021, I plan to retire as the Jennings School District Superintendent and CEO, but I will always be a JSD Warrior. Thank you for helping to make this true.

For me, retirement means tiring myself again doing what I love. Bridgebuilders are needed more than ever, today. I am humbled to have been called to empower people and lead regional, state, and national initiatives as a bridgebuilder.

No matter my title, everyone who knows me understands precisely what I plan on doing for decades to come, here and abroad: ***Educating as if our life, legacy, and liberty depend on it because they do; severing attainment gaps existing in society.***

Fondly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Art McCoy". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Art" and "McCoy" being capitalized and prominent.

Art McCoy, PhD