

Superintendent finalists speak

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on supporting
students, increasing opportunities

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Content

Community members heard from another finalist for superintendent of Lancaster County School District on Wednesday night, also at USC Lancaster.

Dr. Kathie Greer, a Lancaster County resident and Buford High School graduate, addressed the community Sept. 13 in the Pete Arnold Special Events Room.

Background

Greer currently serves as the director of alternative education for Greenville County Schools and is a consultant and coach with the National Dropout Prevention Center and Successful Practices-Network as a nationally certified dropout prevention specialist and trauma-skilled schools specialist, according to LCSD public information specialist Michelle Craig.

Greer also served as director of adult and community education for Lexington District 5, was principal specialist at C.A. Johnson High School, principal at A.C. Flora High School and both principal and assistant principal at Chester Senior High School. She was the director of communities and schools for Rock Hill School District 3 and served as a clinical psychologist for the S.C. Department of Mental Health.

Greer graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Winthrop University and a master's degree in clinical psychology from Augusta University. She also has a doctorate in educational administration from USC.

Wednesday's session

Greer spoke for about 22 minutes and then had 15 minutes to answer community questions. She started her speech by talking about how her work at Rock Hill's alternative schools changed many students' trajectory.

"I started at that alternative school as a teacher and counselor, and progressed to principal at the alternative school there," Greer said. "During that time, we were able to transform that program to the point that students were able to successfully transition back to traditional schools. Prior to that, honestly, it was just kind of a place that kids were put to be forgotten."

While there, Greer's team implemented teen programs, a teen parent program with Planned Parenthood with free childcare, partnered with the YMCA to offer PE classes and partnered with churches. They also implemented paid internships for students and credit-based workplace learning.

Greer also worked with an inner city school with a 97.9% poverty rate and significant gang activity.

"It was slated for state takeover because of persistent low performance. In one year, we were able to have that school removed from the state watch list in terms of takeover," Greer said. "After year two, they were completely removed from technical assistance."

Greer also said the current generation of students' misconduct is at an all-time high nationwide, along with record numbers of suicide deaths, substance abuse and self-medicating or addiction among students.

"Learning cannot occur until we have assurance that students can feel physically, psychologically and emotionally safe," Greer said. "Training and implementation of intentional, purposeful practices in all schools and all buildings across the county, along with effective behavioral and mental health interventions and supports will ensure that all students can be prepared to learn."

She also said that Lancaster is a great place to live, but it also needs to be a great place to work, so students educated in the county will want to continue living and working here, and have the opportunity to do so.

"I read every one of the input documents in which residents identified the preferred skills and characteristics of the next superintendent, and as I identified those things that were the boxes that I felt like I could check, I begin to think and feel that everything that I've done in my career has led me to this moment and to this opportunity," Greer said.

Q&A session

Greer answered three questions, regarding threat assessment protocols, support for special needs students and those at risk of dropping out, and how she would support students in mental health crises as superintendent.

Greer emphasized the need for communication across all situations, and alluded to her experience with organizations in each area.

"First of all, staff members have to be trained, because that's not something that everybody knows how to do. Our response, oftentimes as adults, is to get defensive, perhaps say something back or to try and force," Greer said.

"I tell people they don't understand that every day in school, we have school, because let kids let us have school," she said. "We need to start tapping into an understanding that the fair mentality of understanding your responses and managing that more effectively."

Remaining public sessions will be Thursday, Sept. 14, to hear from Preston Heath Branham; Monday, Sept. 18, with Paul Spadaro; and Wednesday, Sept. 20, with Matthew Hayes. All sessions are at 6:30 p.m. at the USCL Arnold Special Events Room, 476 Hubbard Drive, Lancaster.

Child images

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