

Antwan Wilson
Morgan County School District RE-3, Fort Morgan, CO - Superintendent (86)

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COVER LETTER

Cover Letter

Please type your personalized cover letter here.

Cover Letter

December 18, 2020

Dear Morgan County School District RE-3 & Members of the Superintendent Search Committee:

This letter is to express my interest in the Superintendent role with the Morgan County RE-3 (MCSD RE-3). I am a passionate 25-year educator and leader who has worked as a classroom teacher, middle and high school principal, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, Educational Leadership Consultant, and University Professor. Providing a quality education is the means by which a community helps young people reach their full potential. I feel strongly that a successful educational system serves as an important unifying source of pride for communities. As an educational leader, I have experience recruiting and supporting talented educators who work collaboratively to produce meaningful results for children. MCSD RE-3 is a community focused school district, with dedicated educators, and a diverse student population. It is my desire to lead in a community such as MCSD RE-3 that cares about people in the school district, the students, and the community. I am confident that my collaborative, values-based leadership would be beneficial to MCSD RE-3 ongoing efforts to provide high quality educational options for its students.

Schools should be committed to ensuring all students receive a quality well-rounded education. This education should help every student maximize their academic potential and help them grow into the best person they can become. Schools systems that do this are typically aligned around a set of shared values. These values typically reflect a commitment to excellence, putting the needs of students first, and a commitment to supporting educators while working in a collaborative environment engaging all stakeholders - educators, staff, students, parents, school board, and community partners. As a leader, I have significant experience improving academic programs and implementing efforts to support the academic, social, and emotional growth of students. This includes partnering with organizations such as the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Aspen Institute, which included serving as a commissioner on the National Commission for Social Emotional and Academic Development. This commission produced the From A Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope national report, which promoted embedding SEL with cognitive development as necessary approaches to maximize the learning and all-around development of all students.

In addition to supporting social emotional development, my work also involved leading efforts to improve access into rigorous programs in Denver, Oakland, and D.C. This work included developing compelling visions that prioritized college and career readiness within the district improvement strategies. Aligned with the vision for excellence and equity into rigorous K-12 programs, we developed intentional strategies and metrics to guide and measure our progress. The results included significant measurable increases in Advanced Placement access and performance throughout the district, increased enrollment and performance in concurrent enrollment college courses, and the development and implementation of additional programs such as International Baccalaureate (IB), integrated and performing arts programs, dual language academies, and international studies programs. Additionally, I have led efforts to increase access to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. In supporting efforts to improve student achievement and access to quality schools, I am proud that these efforts were designed inclusive to serving the needs of English Language Learners and special education students. Considering that MCSD RE-3 has a significant ELL student population and is committed to quality instruction for all students, I know there is an interest in preparing all students for postsecondary success. As the MCSD RE-3 Superintendent, I will ensure that every student is a priority and that our work is done with the best interest of all within the community.

Along with improving opportunities for our students through these efforts, the teams of educators I have led were able to establish and nurture partnerships with universities, private sector businesses, community groups, and nonprofit organizations. One of the efforts I am extremely proud of is increasing access and engagement in visual & performing arts, extra and co-curricular, and athletic programs in Denver and Oakland.

I strongly believe, and the research bears out, that students who are meaningfully engaged in these programs led by skilled educators, coaches, and sponsors are much more likely to graduate high school prepared for college and career success. These programs also supported whole-child development efforts. MCSD RE-3 being a tight knit community that supports its schools, I am confident that I will provide leadership that supports educators in their efforts to help all students succeed.

I believe in the potential of every student. During my career I have intentionally decided to lead in districts where the work was extremely complex. In doing so, I have been able to achieve meaningful success. In choosing to work in districts with complex needs, my goal has always been to ensure students receive the chance that I had as a child. That is to attend good schools that prepares them to pursue their dreams. I have also experienced adversity and throughout all of my experiences I have maintained a love for students and a strong belief in educators. My experiences have solidified my resolve and I am confident that I have the vision, the values, the passion, and the skills to work collaboratively to lead the educators and staff within MCSD RE-3 in the desired direction. This would continue to include being a student-first district committed to excellence, and one where students, parents, employees, and the community are proud to be a part of and support.

As a values-based leader, I lead through my personal educational values of Student's First, Integrity, Equity, Teamwork, Excellence, and Joy to emphasize a philosophy of Success for All - No Excuses. Leading in education allows me to positively influence the lives of students I serve to meet high educational outcomes and to graduate from school ready for college, career, and community success. While these values are a lens through which I approach the work, I entered the field of education in part because I see education as a means to ensure all students receive a quality education that prepares them to succeed in a country I love. My work is about ensuring every student has the chance to reach their full potential as I did.

I am interested in pursuing opportunities where I am working with equally committed individuals who are also influenced by a strong set of shared values. Currently, I work as a professor at Nebraska Wesleyan University preparing undergraduate pre-service teachers for the classroom and supporting veteran teachers earn their master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. I remain excited by the work educators do teaching and supporting their students. In addition to this work, I work with school system and school leaders as an educational consultant leading Schoolwise Education Consulting LLC to help them meet their organization goals. I coach these leaders with implementing their organizational vision and mission, with their professional development plans, with their budget and collective bargaining efforts, and their strategic planning among other things. As your superintendent I would work collaboratively with the school board in partnership and mutual respect to ensure the community is proud of the school district. This means prioritizing communication, transparency, and continuous improvement personally as a leader and collectively as a district.

My last district leadership position as Chancellor of DCPS did not end the way I would have liked. Much of the coverage of my transition from the district did not provide an accurate picture of the circumstances at play. I mention it here because it is important to me to be upfront and transparent as I express my interest in discussing the leadership role in MCSD RE-3. To be clear, I always operate with integrity and did so there, and I am proud of what we accomplished in DCPS under my leadership. These accomplishments include improving professional development for teachers and leaders, resulting in improved academic achievement throughout the district outpacing the state growth and a reduction in achievement gaps. Additionally, we integrated social and emotional learning with academic programming, and this helped improve student achievement and student engagement in schools. I enjoyed serving DCPS. I have learned a great deal from that experiences, I have reflected deeply, and I welcome the chance to discuss that experience and my other experiences fully, which have all taught me important lessons which will benefit your community should I be selected as your Superintendent.

I have always worked hard and to be successful it is important that I pursue leadership opportunities within communities that care deeply about student success. This involves working within a community that shares my commitment to the work and treating all people with respect and dignity in order to provide the best service to students and families. This is even more important considering the challenging issues communities face in the present educational climate the pandemic has created. My family lived 10 years in Colorado, and we would love to move back to the state. Considering we have family living in Colorado and Nebraska, in addition to allowing us to be closer to my parents, living in the Fort Morgan community would also allow us an easy connection to our daughter attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. While I do not have intimate knowledge of the community, I can share that I love Colorado, I have been to Fort Morgan several times, and believe I would enjoy assimilating into the community. Again, I know that I would provide positive leadership for MCSD RE-3. I am a proven leader who continues to grow and how has a desire to lead a school district for several years. I hope to have an opportunity to discuss my goals and answer your questions about how my leadership could prove a match for the direction the district is moving. Please contact me at antwanwilson40@gmail.com or at (303) 524-4129 to schedule a time to discuss my interest in serving your community.

Respectfully,

Antwan Wilson

MORGAN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-3, CO - CRITERIA

Morgan County School District RE-3, CO - Criteria

Please describe your

strengths and abilities as it relates to the listed criteria.

The Morgan County School District RE-3, Fort Morgan, Colorado, Board of Education, is seeking a highly qualified and fully certified Superintendent with the following desired characteristics:

- Leader – A strong innovative, collaborative leader who possesses the skills to bring staff together while listening, supporting and motivating them, encouraging success and succession while having the ability to problem solve and make difficult decisions. A leader who can develop and maintain a school budget and understands the Colorado School Finance laws.*
- Visionary – An individual who can provide vision for our district enhancing and embracing the current strategic plan.*
- Communicator - A strong communicator who can partner with all stakeholders providing for a strong flow of information between buildings, staff, board, community and state.*
- Visible - A highly visible advocate for our school, community and state, who will actively involve themselves in school, community and professional organizations.*
- Diversity – An individual who will embrace our community with understanding and acceptance of our cultural and academic diversity and believes meeting the varied needs of all students is a top priority.*

I am a leader who leads aligned with my values of student's first, excellence, equity, integrity, teamwork, and joy. I have experience as a leader moving into a community and meeting with multiple stakeholders intimate settings to learn their interests in order to develop a strategic plan that reflects a compelling vision and aligned set of priorities.

As a students first educator, I believe that schools must be places that students learn and enjoy attending. In order for this to happen, they must be taught by educators who are valued, who feel supported, and feel like they are contributing to a team effort where they are heard. Therefore, as a leader I commit to spending time in our schools, visiting classrooms, meeting with school leaders, listening to and learning from educators, and connecting with students so that I can provide the best leadership possible. Additionally, as a leader, it is important that the school board and superintendent are aligned in the work prioritized by the district. This requires a consistent structure for two-way communication and partnership that communicates mutual appreciation and respect. I would share strategies I have used in the past and would adapt them to ensure they are structured to create the cohesiveness needed for a successful collaboration.

As a leader who believes in excellence and equity it is important to engage with stakeholders, whether they be in the community, whether they be postsecondary partners, or with the state to ensure we provide the standard of excellence in education desired by the community. From an equity standpoint, I understand how diverse the community is, and the need to listen and trying to facilitate partnerships that benefit the students within the community. As a leader, I am visible and I focus on inclusion of all students. I have lead efforts to improve academic achievement for all students. Furthermore, I have trained educators on topics of cultural proficiency and equity.

As superintendent, I commit to prioritizing the needs of the school district and ensuring we recruit, support, develop, and work to retain talented people within schools and the school district. I also commit to ensuring the community receives transparent communication from the school district that keeps them informed and involved in the work of the school district. All of the characteristics outlined here speak to an ability to lead as a team. My value of teamwork is about working to establish an environment where everyone on the team feels valued and supported. This also means striving to create a work environment where team members enjoy their work, where they are recognized for great work, and where they share in the decisions made on behalf of the school district. This partnership is something I value and would model as a leader within the school district.

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OBJECTIVE

To lead a **values-based** organization committed to nurturing equitable and excellent environments helping young people feel valued, productively challenged, and holistically prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. I desire to partner with talented and passionate people who work as a team, prioritize student success, facilitate adult efficacy and engagement, and create a positive organizational culture committed to reaching ambitious organizational goals.

QUALIFICATIONS

Throughout my career working as a University Professor, Educational Consultant, Chancellor, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Principal, and teacher I have prioritized continuous professional and personal growth while serving the community in the interest of providing young people a quality education. My work has involved developing, implementing, and supporting continuous improvement efforts through collaboration with multiple stakeholders, engaging in data analysis to improve student outcomes, promoting leader agency, striving for teacher efficacy, and supporting holistic student growth and development. I have led and supported efforts to improve schools, improve working conditions and compensation for educators and staff, improve student outcomes, improve employee diversity, improve and/or expand social-emotional learning and wrap-around initiatives, strengthen community partnerships, and increase access to college and career programs.

EDUCATION AND AWARDS

- Doctoral Candidate Creighton University Interdisciplinary Leadership Ed.D. Program (Present)
- Honorary Doctorate of Pedagogy – Nebraska Wesleyan University (2017)
- Broad Superintendent’s Academy (2014)
- Public Education Leadership Program Harvard (2009 & 2010)
- Master of Arts in School Leadership - Friends University Wichita, KS (2000)
- Bachelor of Arts in History-Social Science Education – With Distinction: Emphasis: Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies - Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, NE (1995)
- Oakland NAACP Branch and Chapel of the Chimes Service to Community Award (2016)
- California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators Award for Equity and Access (2015)
- The EduCenter (Denver, CO): Solute to Excellence School Executive of the Year (2014)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

(August 2018 – Present) DISTINGUISHED VISITING PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (LINCOLN, NE)

- Currently serving in the Educational Department at Nebraska Wesleyan University where my work consists of teaching undergraduate and graduate students and supporting efforts to promote the success of the Education Department and the University
- Partnering with education department colleagues to expand the department and to educate culturally proficient teachers to succeed in urban, suburban, and rural teaching positions

(April 2018 – Present) CEO of SCHOOLWISE EDUCATION CONSULTING LLC

- Supporting educational system and school leaders (traditional school districts and charter) to accomplish the goals within their organizations
- The work involves executive coaching of leaders, quality reviews, support with strategic planning and monitoring, facilitating professional development, and counseling on operations, budgeting, and collective bargaining
- Serving as Chair of the Community Multicultural Advisory Task Force for Lincoln Public Schools supporting racial equity improvements on behalf of the Superintendent of Schools and School Board

(February 2017- February 2018) CHANCELLOR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA)

- Negotiated a new contract agreement with the Washington Teachers Union within first six months on the job despite the previous five years without a deal between WTU and DCPS
- Leadership efforts resulted in the first significant reduction in the academic achievement gap in over a decade
- Invested in additional middle school programming to include accelerated math classes, computer science, and extra-curricular programs throughout the district
- Launched the Reign Initiative aimed at the empowerment of girls and young women of color
- Expanded the Empowering Males of Color Initiative
- Launched Excellence Through Equity funding which targeted additional resources to schools with the highest concentration of low performing students in order to support academic, attendance, and social emotional growth of students
- Created and rolled out a new strategic Plan, [A Capital Commitment 2017-2022](#), focused on embedding social, emotional, and academic development throughout the district while increasing early childhood literacy programs postsecondary outcomes, and performance of schools throughout the city
- Visited all 115 schools in my first four months on the job through a series of academic classroom walks, faculty meetings, and community engagement meetings
- Improved student performance of the PARCC assessment, outpacing all urban school district's growth on the assessment
- Implemented Social Emotional Academic Development and Equity training for all teachers and school leaders

(2014-2017) SUPERINTENDENT OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (OAKLAND, CA)

- Improved Graduation Rates for African American, Foster Youth, and Special Education Students as well as completion of A-G courses
- Collaborated with the Mayor of Oakland to launch the Oakland Promise, a birth to career college promise initiative aimed at tripling the number of college graduates over the next 5 years
- Worked to successfully pass a tax measure to provide \$13 million dollars to implement career pathways across all Oakland Unified High Schools which will ensure all student have access to college level Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, International Baccalaureate, and/or Career and Technical Education Classes
- Reduced student suspensions, particularly accelerating the decrease in over suspension of African American males who were being disproportionately suspended and expelled
- Developed data warehouse systems and a continuous improvement cycle to inform district and school level investments
- Facilitated process leading to the adoption of the unanimous [Pathway to Excellence](#) Strategic Plan
- Organized the “Oakland Equity Pledge”, which was a District-Charter Compact focused on cross-sector collaboration and alignment on the operation of public schools in Oakland
- Negotiated contracts with all 6 labor unions resulting in the first contracts for all labor unions in twenty years while providing double digit salary increases, increasing school site autonomy, and establishing some differentiated pay structures for some employee groups
- Implemented revenue sharing model with major labor unions
- Improved central leadership functions and improved support school sites
- Facilitated process to complete backlog of required state audits, leading to earning a top tier credit rating after 5 years without a rating
- Implemented new educator effectiveness pilots in a collaborative process with teacher and school leader unions
- Successfully sold General Obligation Bonds, resulting in over \$30 million dollars in savings for the property owners
- Implemented a new school accountability system (School Performance Framework) used to provide recognition, incentives, and organize supports to school leaders and schools in general
- Expanded the African American Male Achievement Program while implementing program for Young Girls and Women of Color, Latino, and Asian Pacific Islander Achievement
- Implemented Social Emotional Learning (SEL) throughout district schools – including SEL standards, and programs such as Restorative Justice (RJ), No Nonsense Nurturing (NNN), and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

(2009-2014) ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT - POST SECONDARY READINESS (DENVER, CO)

- Led the Denver Public High Schools and Middle Schools, Office of School Turnaround, Intensive Pathway Schools, International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs, Advanced Placement (AP) Programs, Concurrent Enrollment Programs, Counseling Programs, Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs, Athletic Programs, and Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) Programs
- Supervised district High, Middle, Turnaround, and Intensive Pathway School's Instructional Superintendents, Executive Directors, and Deputy Directors
- Increased the number of high school graduates to highest numbers in the past nine years – including consecutive years of the largest growth in on-time graduation rate in the state of Colorado (a pace that has been sustained to date)
- Increased access into rigorous academic programs resulting in 200% growth in AP enrollment and qualifying scores (3-5), and 300% improvement in Concurrent Enrollment access and successful completion (students earning grades A-C)
- Increased the number of DPS graduates enrolling in college after high school and persisting in collaboration with the Denver Scholarship Foundation
- Lead and supported efforts to provide high quality educational options resulting in increased student enrollment and achievement in previously low performing/under-enrolled regions of the city
- Facilitated the development of a Personalized Pathway program focused on increasing achievement for all students and preparing all students for rigorous postsecondary opportunities. This has led to the establishment of Response to Intervention efforts in all high schools and middle schools, unit and credit recovery, four regional Engagement Centers to recover/prevent dropouts, the implementation of new Multiple Pathway Centers focused on increasing graduation rates and a significantly decreased dropout rate from double digits to under 5%
- Led efforts to establish community partnerships resulting in increased funding for Career and Technical Education Pathways and additional funding for athletics and activities for middle and high school students

(2008-2009) INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERINTENDENT FOR HIGH SCHOOLS (DENVER, CO)

- Supervised high school principals, supported with implementing Instructional Rounds, Data Teams, and College Readiness strategies
- Led the selection process for new high school principals and assistant principals
- Increased high graduation rates
- Decreased dropout rates
- Improved high school attendance rates
- Increased student academic performance
- Promoted the growth in college readiness programs district wide, leading to growth in Advance Placement program, Concurrent Enrollment, and Career and Technical Education programs
- Implemented district wide credit recovery program

(2005-2008) MONTBELLO HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL (DENVER, CO)

- Implemented a comprehensive school reform plan with lead to the school receiving a \$1.4 million Federal Small Learning Communities Grant
- Increased number of graduates earning dual college credit from three students to 156 in three years
- Implemented a Response to Intervention system to improve academic growth and student responsibility
- Facilitated the growth of professional learning communities and the use of data to inform instruction
- Increased the number graduates from 190 to 250 students 3 years and improved academic growth
- Opened access to Advanced Placement classes and increased participation by 300%
- Established a credit recovery component that became the model for larger district implementation
- Managed the School Budget and significantly increased school resources
- Coordinated a professional development plan aligned to school mission and [The Denver Plan](#)
- Supervised and evaluated school personnel

(2003-2005) PLEASANT VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL (WICHITA, KS)

- Created and Implemented a comprehensive School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Coordinated professional development plan and implemented a Results Based Professional Development plan
- Researched, wrote, and implemented a federal comprehensive school reform grant to transform the school
- Improved school math, reading, and writing scores significantly – Helped a low performing school make AYP in reading and math by increasing student achievement for all demographic groups including a significant English Language Learner population
- Established process for integrating Response to Intervention
- Facilitated the development of professional learning communities
- Built the master schedule
- Supervised and evaluated school personnel

OTHER LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

2001-2003 Wichita High School South Assistant Principal (Wichita, KS)

2000-2001 Lincoln High School Instructional Coordinator (Lincoln, NE)

1998-2000 Wichita High School East Administrative Intern (Wichita, KS)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lincoln High School – Lincoln, NE (2000-2001)

Wichita High School East – Wichita, KS (1996-2000)

West Lake Middle School – Raleigh, NC (1995-1996)

Lincoln Northeast High School Student Teacher – Lincoln, NE (Spring 1995)

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Upward Bound Teacher/Counselor – Lincoln, NE (1991-1995)

COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Chief's for Change (Member, Past-Board Member) – A bi-partisan organization of State and District Chiefs aimed at influencing policies that promote all students having excellent educational options and improved academic outcomes

National Commission on Academic and Social Emotional Learning (National Commissioner) – A National Commission led by the Aspen Institute with the goal of providing guidance to districts, schools, and affiliated organizations on how best to implement social emotional learning and academic development into the everyday business of educating children. Outcomes include the release of the From A Nation at Risk, To A Nation at Hope report

Oakland National Association for the Advancement of Colored People – Historical Civil Rights Organization focused on creating equal opportunity under the law

Oakland Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority Past Co-Chair – Collective impact table made up of the city, the county, and the school districts elected officials and staff focused on improve outcomes for youth in the city and county

Oakland Thrives Leadership Council Past Co-Chair – Collaborative group made up of local business and community members with working with the charge of making Oakland the “Healthiest City in America”

Council of Great City Schools – Member of organization representing the 50 largest urban school districts in the country

Past Member Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) – Organization representing school and systems leaders in California

Denver Kids – Past Board of Directors for this organization which is a collaborative effort between Denver Public Schools and this nonprofit organization focused on ensuring students graduate high school with the skills necessary to succeed in life

Colorado I Have a Dream Foundation – Past Board of Directors. This organization adopts elementary classes of students and supports them through to graduation and helps with paying for college

Past Member Governor's Job Council – Served on a team of leaders from throughout the state to inform Governor Bill Ritter's plan to improve employment opportunities in the State of Colorado.

Past Member Governor's P-20 Education Council – Worked with leaders from throughout the state on issues of education reform and policy aimed at increasing college graduates in the State of Colorado

Past Member Denver Urban League – Supported efforts to improve school performance, providing mentoring and tutoring for students, increase parent/community empowerment, and increasing student engagement