



**National Association of
School Superintendents**
United in Common Purpose: Each Other's Success

Demetrus Liggins, Ph.D., Superintendent

Fayette County Public Schools • Lexington, Kentucky

INTRODUCTION

Education:

Ph.D., K-16 Educational Leadership and Policy – 2014, University of Texas
M.Ed., Educational Administration – 2005, Stephen F. Austin State University
M.A., Education – 2002, California State University
B.A., English – 2000, California State University

Experience

Superintendent, Fayette County Public Schools, Lexington, KY | 2021-Present
Superintendent, Greenville Independent School District, Greenville, TX | 2016-2021
Area Superintendent, Grand Prairie Independent School District, Grand Prairie, TX | 2013-2016
Principal (High School, Middle School, Elementary School) TX | 2006-2013
Classroom Teacher and Assistant Principal | 2000-2006

Outstanding Achievement(s)

Top 50 Under 50 Influential Leaders in the Bluegrass, 2023
ProtectED Healthy and Safe Learning Environment Superintendent of the Year, 2023
PTSA Honorary Life Recognition, 2021
Superintendent To Watch, 2020
AASA National Superintendent Certification, 2020

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's superintendent role is a multifaceted challenge that requires resilience, vision, and a deep commitment to one's community. Leading in a post-COVID era has unveiled and exacerbated many existing inequities, demanding urgent and thoughtful responses. The pandemic has left educators grappling with significant learning loss, mental health crises, and widening achievement gaps. Addressing these issues means confronting not just academic challenges but also systemic barriers such as poverty, limited access to technology, and the effects of community violence.

Additionally, the modern landscape presents its own set of issues, such as integrating technology in a way that is equitable and effective, and preparing our students for an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The job requires a holistic approach to education, recognizing that students' success is deeply influenced by their overall environment, including their home lives, community contexts, and mental health. Being an effective superintendent means being a visionary leader, a compassionate advocate, and a resilient manager, all while maintaining a focus on creating an inclusive and supportive educational system for every student.

What new understandings did you acquire after two or three years on the job?

One of the most eye-opening realizations I have come to appreciate is that the role extends far beyond merely focusing on student achievement. While academic success remains a central goal and the superintendent's responsibilities encompass a wide range of areas to ultimately impact student outcomes, much of the job involves carefully navigating the political landscape of one's local community, state, and national politics.

Another eye-opening realization after serving in this role two to three years was how the position is often viewed more as a title rather than as a person. This means that the individual in the superintendent's seat often becomes a focal point for criticism and scrutiny, sometimes receiving harsh and unfiltered feedback. People often forget that behind the title is a dedicated individual striving to make a positive impact.

Share an idea to use or something you've learned with your colleagues.

I've learned to never underestimate the power of listening. Amid the hustle and bustle of leading a large urban school district, it's easy to get consumed by administrative tasks, strategic planning, and Board issues. However, taking the time to genuinely listen—to students, teachers, parents, and community members—can transform your leadership.

To facilitate this, I have implemented several forums specifically designed to foster open communication. One such initiative is SuperChats, a bimonthly meeting where I meet with an appointed or elected individual from each campus. These representatives bring prewritten questions from their campus peers, and I address as many as I can during a 90-minute session. For any questions I don't get to, I follow up with a Q&A document.

This process is mirrored for each campus's PTA, with representatives primarily consisting of parents. Additionally, I hold similar sessions with principals. Importantly, I do not delegate these meetings; it is me, personally, engaging with the representatives. I am the only one in the room with them, ensuring that their voices are heard directly, and their concerns are addressed promptly. This approach has significantly enhanced trust and collaboration within our district.

Submitted by:

Demetrus Liggins

June 21, 2024

Name/Signature

Date