



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

Name

Dr. Kacey Cottrill

**Franklin Local School District
Duncan Falls, Ohio**

INTRODUCTION

Education

Abilene Christian University, Doctorate in Organizational Leadership I 2022

Ashland University, Superintendent's License I 2003

Muskingum University, M.A. 2003
Leadership and Curriculum & Instruction

Muskingum University, B.A. 2000
Elementary Education

Experience

Franklin Local School District

Caldwell Exempted Village School District Ohio University

Zanesville City Schools

Athens City Schools

Northridge Local School District River Valley Local School District

Maysville Local School District

2021-Present I Superintendent

2016-2021 I Superintendent 2011-Present I Adjunct Professor

2010-2016 I Middle School and Elementary
School Principal

2008-2010 I Elementary Principal

2004-2008 I Elementary Principal

2003-2004 I Middle School Assistant Principal I Assistant Athletic Director

2000-2003 I 5th Grade Teacher and Team Leader

Outstanding Achievement(s)

- *2024 Innovative Superintendent of the Year Finalist, sponsored by Sibme
- *Awarded the "Golden Viking" award from Northridge Local School District for outstanding leadership
- *Chosen to be one of the first eight "Purple Heart" schools, as selected by the Department of Education, at Caldwell Exempted Village School District
- *Twelve times nominated for "Principal of the Year" at the Ohio Department of Education by staff members
- *Eight times nominated for "Superintendent of the Year" from the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) by staff members and board members
- *Three times awarded the "Muskingum County District of the Year" by the Muskingum County Library System
- *Ohio House of Representatives Award for being named Outstanding Superintendent in the area while Superintendent in the Caldwell Exempted Village School District and the Franklin Local School District
- *Numerous outstanding program awards from the Ohio School Boards Association
- *Earned over \$250,000 for writing and submitting Ohio's Striving Readers' Grant for the Caldwell Exempted Village School District
- *Successfully applied and won over \$850,000 for educational programming through the Ohio Department of Education while Superintendent
- *Honored with the Philo-Duncan Falls Business Association Partner of the Year in 2023 and 2024 for leadership in the Franklin Local School District
- *Named the Margaret Carol Barringer Scholarship Committee and Leisure Family Scholarship Chairperson
- *Elected President of the Maysville Regional Water District

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today's Superintendent.

The role of a school superintendent has evolved significantly to meet the demands of today's educational landscape. Superintendents are not just administrators; they are visionary leaders responsible for shaping the future of education in their districts. Here are some key aspects of their role in today's society:

1. Educational Leadership

- Set the vision and mission for the district.
- Ensure curriculum and instruction align with state and federal standards.
- Promote student achievement and equity for all learners.

2. Policy Implementation & Compliance

- Oversee the enforcement of educational laws and policies.
- Work with school boards to develop and implement policies.
- Ensure compliance with state and federal education mandates.

3. Financial & Resource Management

- Manage the district's budget and allocate resources effectively.
- Secure funding through grants, bonds, and government programs.
- Ensure financial transparency and accountability.

4. Community Engagement & Public Relations

- Act as the public face of the school district.
- Communicate with parents, students, and the community.
- Build partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and higher education institutions.

5. Teacher & Staff Development

- Support professional development for teachers and administrators.
- Promote initiatives that attract and retain quality educators.
- Ensure staff morale and a positive working environment.

6. Crisis Management & School Safety

- Address emergencies, from natural disasters to security threats.

- Implement policies for mental health and student well-being.
- Work on anti-bullying and diversity initiatives.

7. Adaptation to Technology & Innovation

- Integrate new technology into classrooms and administration.
- Oversee digital learning programs and IT infrastructure.
- Address challenges related to the digital divide and remote learning.

Conclusion

In today's rapidly changing world, superintendents must be adaptive leaders, capable of navigating political, social, and technological shifts while ensuring that schools provide high-quality education. Their role extends beyond school walls—they are key figures in shaping communities and future generations.

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

After two to three years as a school superintendent, my perspective on the role likely deepened in several key areas. Here are some new understandings I have acquired through experience:

1. The Complexity of Leadership

- I realized that leading a district is more than implementing policies—it's about **managing relationships** with school boards, teachers, parents, and the community.
- Balancing **political pressures** while staying true to your vision for education is a constant challenge.

2. The Power of Community Engagement

- Genuine **collaboration with stakeholders—parents, businesses, and local organizations**—can make or break initiatives.
- Transparency and **consistent communication** help build trust, even when tough decisions must be made.

3. The Importance of Adaptability

- The educational landscape is always changing, whether due to **new laws, societal shifts, or technological advancements**.
- I've learned to navigate crises—whether **budget cuts, teacher shortages, or**

unexpected events like a pandemic-with flexibility and resilience.

4. Student-Centered Decision Making is Key

- Policies and strategies mean little if they don't **positively impact student learning**.
- Equity has become even more of a focus-you now recognize that **each student has different needs** that require tailored support.

5. Budgeting is More Political Than Financial

- Financial management is not just about numbers; it's about **advocating for resources, navigating funding constraints**, and making tough choices that affect students and staff.
- I've learned how to **strategically allocate limited resources** while maintaining transparency and accountability.

6. The Role of Technology in Education

- Whether through remote learning, digital resources, or data-driven decision-making, technology has **reshaped how education is delivered**.
- I've learned to balance the benefits of technology with the **challenges of access, cybersecurity, and digital literacy**.

7. Change Takes Time (and Buy-In is Critical)

- Big initiatives don't succeed through mandates alone-you need **teacher, staff, and community buy-in**.
- I now understand that **small, incremental changes** often lead to more sustainable progress than sweeping reforms.

8. The Well-Being of Educators is Essential

- **Teacher burnout and staff retention** are major concerns, and supporting educators has become a top priority.
- Investing in **professional development, mental health resources, and work-life balance** leads to better outcomes for both staff and students.

Final Thoughts

After many years as a superintendent, I've learned that **education is both deeply rewarding and incredibly complex**. The biggest lesson? **Lasting change doesn't happen overnight-but with strong leadership, collaboration, and persistence, real progress is possible.**

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

One innovative idea that I have brought to my colleagues is the "**Community as a Classroom**" Initiative.

The Idea:

Instead of limiting learning to traditional classroom settings, this initiative transforms the entire community into an extension of the school. The goal is to create **immersive, real-world learning experiences** by partnering with local businesses, organizations, and government agencies.

How It Works:

1. **Partnerships with Local Businesses & Organizations**
 - o Students engage in hands-on learning with **STEM companies, hospitals, farms, and arts organizations**.
 - o High school students can participate in **internships, mentorships, and job shadowing** experiences.
2. **Project-Based Learning in the Community**
 - o Instead of only writing research papers, students **work on real-world problems** in collaboration with local experts.
 - o Example: Instead of just learning about environmental science in a textbook, students help **solve local pollution issues** alongside environmental scientists.
3. **Flexible Learning Spaces**
 - o School libraries, parks, museums, and even coffee shops become **alternative learning hubs** where students and teachers meet.
 - o Virtual learning is blended with in-person experiences, allowing **flexibility in when and where learning happens**.
4. **Community-Led Courses & Workshops**
 - o Community members and professionals offer specialized workshops on **financial literacy, entrepreneurship, AI & coding, trades, and the arts**.
 - o Example: A local chef teaches culinary arts, or a tech startup founder guides students in app development.

The Impact:

ti Increases student engagement by connecting education to real-world experiences.

ti Builds career readiness through hands-on exposure to different industries.

ti Strengthens school-community ties, making education a shared responsibility.

tJ Addresses equity issues by giving all students access to learning experiences beyond their schools.

This approach not only **reimagines education** but also **empowers students to see learning as a lifelong process** beyond school walls.