



100 Mount Clinton Pike, Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2507
540-564-3200 • 540-564-3241 (fax)
www.rockingham.k12.va.us

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Contact:

Carol S. Fenn, Superintendent
Rockingham County Public Schools
540-564-3230

Renee Reed, Chair of the Board
Rockingham County Public Schools
571-643-5079 C

ROCKINGHAM SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT FENN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Harrisonburg, Va. – Tonight, at the Rockingham County School Board meeting, Dr. Carol Smith Fenn, Superintendent of Schools, announced that she will complete her service as Superintendent at the conclusion of the 2016-17 academic year. The June 30, 2017, date marks Fenn’s 10th year of service as the school division’s chief executive and administrative officer who is responsible for the leadership of 25 schools, 11,300 students, and 2,500 employees. She is one of the longest-serving current division superintendents in the region.

Upon announcing her retirement, Fenn took time to reflect upon the last 10 years, giving credit for accomplishments to devoted teachers and staff, dedicated school board members, and to a very supportive board of supervisors. “As I look back on the amazing experience of the last 10 years, I am humbled and proud of what—together—we have accomplished in challenging economic times, enormous demands on educators, and profound changes in technology,” said Fenn. During Fenn’s decade of service, the school division has:

- Undergone county-wide redistricting based on school capacities and construction of three new schools built three years consecutively, including Rockingham’s fourth high school, through successful partnering with the School Board and local government leaders;

- Managed a fiscally-sound school division budget, currently over \$131 million, securing funds from federal, state, and local resources, including during strained economic times and the loss of state funds which resulted in staff reduction of over 100 employees through attrition, protecting all jobs division-wide;
- Introduced the Digital Conversion comprehensive 5-year plan to provide digital resources for learning to students and staff, including infrastructure, bandwidth enhancement, and K-12 classroom pilot initiatives. The device deployment to students and staff, an ongoing budget commitment, has been embraced by county leaders;
- Established its commitment to community experiences and business partners through a history and business tours program for administrators, including leadership visits to Dynamic Aviation, Donnelly, Beam Brothers Trucking, Pilgrim's, Heritage Museum, Zenda, Civil War sites, etc.;
- Fostered and participated in numerous regional programs including the Massanutten Environmental Science Governor's School, the Regional Special Education Program, Head Start, Massanutten Career and Technical Center, and the Blue Ridge Grad program for special needs students;
- Increased enrollment at Massanutten Technical Center to over 1,000 high school students from Rockingham and Harrisonburg schools, with students earning industry certification and college credit in 18 of 20 programs in conjunction with Blue Ridge Community College, Dabney Lancaster Community College, Mary Baldwin University, and James Madison University through programs including Health and Human Services, Science and Technology, Auto/Diesel and Metalwork Technology, and Construction Trades;
- Hosted annual meetings with area school boards and local members of the General Assembly to garner support for public education;
- Received National Schools To Watch designation for two of its middle schools, based on strong faculty instructional leadership and school community involvement;
- Received recognition by U.S. News and World Report as among the top 45 Virginia county high schools;
- Increased high school AP course offerings and was named to the College Board's "AP Honor Roll" for simultaneously increasing access to AP courses and raising achievement on the AP examinations;
- Introduced STEM and environmental education throughout the division, including elementary school participation at the Children's Engineering Conference;
- Continued PBIS program in all schools, ensuring safe school climates and student recognition. RCPS is a leader among school divisions in Virginia and is recognized by the Virginia Department of Education for effective school-wide discipline;

- Implemented new high school programs in agriculture science including equine science and biotechnology. Alternative education programs include a tiered system, service-based CTE, and blended instruction;
- Continued its partnership with Rockingham Education Foundation for student scholarships and teacher incentive grants over \$40,000 annually;
- And received recognition annually through the Governor's Virginia Index of Performance awards for advanced learning and achievement.

Fenn also commented that she had not yet made definite plans post retirement. "I anticipate new doors opening and will appreciate spending time in special projects, teaching, and simply following my passion to be an active part of a community through giving, drawing on my passion and experience for what will have been 38 years in public education," she said. Prior to serving as superintendent, Fenn had been a classroom teacher, an elementary and middle school principal, director of K-12 instruction, assistant superintendent of personnel, and interim superintendent. Fenn received her undergraduate degree from Bridgewater College, Masters from Virginia Commonwealth University, and doctorate from the University of Virginia. She is the first woman superintendent of Rockingham County Schools.

Renee Reed, chair of the school board, thanked Fenn for her many years of service. "I want to thank Dr. Fenn for her tremendous service to our school division. Throughout her time in Rockingham County, Dr. Fenn has displayed a deep commitment to our schools and community. Her tireless leadership and shared passion for providing an innovative, exceptional education for all students is evident in the many division accomplishments during her tenure. We wish her the best in her retirement." Other board members added their congratulations and expressed appreciation for the accomplishments achieved even during challenging budget times. For the balance of the year, Fenn indicated her focus and intensity will be no less as she works with the board and others to continue to accomplish and make progress on the school division's goals in her remaining time:

"I find it a privilege every day, even during the long and sometimes challenging days, to have been entrusted in this service to the county and its students and families," Fenn said. "I look forward to the months ahead in continuing to work hard with others to serve our students and the board. Our focus this year is active and engaged learning with new student devices, ensuring our vision to develop our students for their future."

Reed outlined that the school board will take time to carefully chart a course ahead as it begins the extensive process of selecting a new division superintendent. According to Reed, the community and staff will be kept apprised of the process and be invited to participate. "No doubt, the selection of a division superintendent can be one of the most, if not the most, important decision that a school board makes in its governance role. In Virginia, school boards are solely responsible for the hiring of a division superintendent, but we will very much want input from all our stakeholders." Reed indicated that a timeline has not yet been established but

the board likely will want to make a selection well in advance of July 1, 2017, when a new superintendent's term of office would begin.

The Rockingham County Public Schools Division is located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley. Governed by a citizen-elected, five-member board, the school division consistently strives to provide an innovative, exceptional education that guides students to reach their highest potential both academically and as responsible citizens: *Educating Today's Learners, Developing Tomorrow's Future.*

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