

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Escambia County Board of Education

## **MEET ESCAMBIA COUNTY'S NEW SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT**

She's been a teacher, a curriculum supervisor, an assistant principal, a principal, and a director of teaching, learning, and assessment for the largest school system in the state. And on September first, Michele McClung will bring all those different points of view with her when she assumes the role of School Superintendent.

She's determined to simplify things, and as a former math teacher, use several common denominators to make Escambia County Schools among the top in the state. It starts with having the backs of teachers and spending time with them. "It's important that we know how to make teachers' lives easier. And make teaching fun. If you want to make your system thrive, you need to get in the classrooms. You have to build relationships." She also doesn't believe in "teaching to the test," a concept which often leaves students without the skills they need. "Teach them what they need to learn... better educated students will be the result."

Another common denominator: discipline. McClung believes in a positive discipline approach noting the standards need to be the same from kindergarten through high school. "Teach every child what is to be expected. They must act responsibly, be respectful, and be resourceful. That needs to be a common goal in every grade. The faculty and staff in each school need to remind students they are loved by us all. We are here for them." McClung, involved in several charitable organizations, also believes in showing kids the importance of giving back. The former math teacher has a simple equation when it comes to education. "Outstanding teachers plus strong leadership equal a well-educated child."

During her time at the blackboard, McClung brought "math to life" in order to keep the interest of students. "It's important to convince kids concepts are relevant to them." She taught statistics and fractions by using different colored M&Ms, and ratios by showing students how they could use their arm length and height measurements to determine if they were in the middle of a growth spurt. "When kids love what they're learning, discipline problems disappear."

She hopes to make things easier for parents as well, using the new “Power School platform” to send progress reports every Friday. This doesn’t create any additional work for teachers, as the system takes the grades entered by teachers and automatically sends them to parents in an email. Keeping parents in the loop is critical to the academic success of students. “Please encourage your child, stay on top of things. Be involved.” She believes there is no greater return on investment than the time parents spend with their children being actively involved in the school and community. McClung hopes every student has at least one adult in their school each can go to with problems.

She learned from personal experience how important it is for students to keep trying, even if they fail the first time. As a teacher, McClung was selected to go to NASA’s Space Academy and was chosen to be the commander of a flight. She crashed the shuttle on the first try, but begged for a second chance. The subsequent mission was a success. NASA later contacted her and she developed a solution for a crystal that was placed on a payload in space. She also had her students enter a writing contest about space and her students won a personal flight with the legendary pilot, Chuck Yeager.

She’s been the principal of the Alabama Teacher of the Year, and her school received the Alabama Performance Excellence Award and National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Lighthouse Award. Her school was home to many National Board Certified Teachers, several Presidential Award for Excellence Teachers of Math and Science, Dolly Parton’s Chasing Rainbows Award Teacher and the Chiquita Marbury Technology Award. As a leader, McClung believes it is her job to create a culture of excellence by putting students first.

McClung, the daughter of an airline executive, moved a lot as a child, living in Louisiana and Colorado before settling down in Mobile as a teenager. She’s worked in the Port City’s school system nearly thirty years. She has a son and a daughter along with two grandchildren. When asked what she does for fun, she said, “Family is everything. I really enjoy slumber parties with my ten-year-old granddaughter. I love cheering my son on in golf tournaments. I enjoy my job working with children.”