



October 16, 2023

School Board, Staff, and Community:

The purpose of this letter is to announce my formal retirement as superintendent of the School District of River Falls, effective June 30, 2024. My overriding feelings are those of gratitude and appreciation for the many blessings of my eleven years in this position.

Students are atop my list of these blessings, not only for who they simply are as young people but also, my pride in knowing the many and varied student growth opportunities provided by our district. We have smart, kind, and talented kids in River Falls who benefit greatly from their experiences afforded by this district. Great kids; great parents; great families; great community.

Thank you to the Board and community for trusting me with this honor and responsibility of serving as your superintendent, as well as the incredible support that came with the position. I have grown personally and professionally during my time here, and I thank many people – the Board, faculty and staff members, students and their families, and the community. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served the River Falls community alongside so many talented people.

Fond memories will include the relationships with current and past faculty, staff, Board, community members, and parents. The blessings are largely about the people that have supported the district's collective commitment to our community's children, and the proof in knowing that results and relationships can live side by side.

During my tenure, the school board remained true to keeping the best interest of children at the center of their decisions. I want to publicly thank all of the Board of Education members (past and present), for hiring me in 2013 and for giving me the opportunity to serve the School District of River Falls over these eleven years – it has been an honor. Through effective policy governance, Board members helped shape one of the highest quality educational institutions in Wisconsin – one of which we can all be very proud.

I will reflect fondly on our family-friendly workplace, collaboration and continuous learning with staff, advancing professional growth, our commitment to mission, values, and strategic improvement plans. Our culture is built on character education, upholding values of our community, ensuring a constant and relentless focus on each and every child regardless of background and/or abilities.

I will always respect and appreciate the amazing faculty and staff who pour themselves into the work, knowing what they do matters, always searching for ways to improve, and enduring the adversity that comes with their calling. These are very special people in our community.

There will always be memories of a community that puts children first with their time, talent, and treasure – continuously showing unwavering support for our schools and students. I want to thank the many parents and community members who have served on committees, PTO's, Forward Foundation, booster groups, volunteered, served as youth coaches, club advisors, and the list goes on... The work of these people provided the children of this community experiences (and role models) that will mold future generations to come.

I want to acknowledge our administrative and supervisory team who have provided servant leadership in this district over these past eleven years. They hold tough jobs that require creative talents to find solutions that cannot be found in any playbook. These leaders are good people who I tremendously respect and enjoy working with on a daily basis.

My 39-year career in education was filled with many challenges, and without my wife's support I would have never enjoyed 8-years as a teacher, 31-years as a school administrator, 26 of those years as a superintendent. My wife (Jan) sacrificed much as I attended graduate school, pursued career advancement, worked some long days, and endured a few stressful work-challenges. She has been a rock in our family and made me a better leader, husband, father of three children, and grandpa to seven. I carry my family values to work every day.

I am proud of our district values and culture of loving children, prioritizing their best interests, and producing high student achievement results while providing an incredible variety of student learning opportunities inside *and* out of the classroom walls.

In my time as Superintendent, we have presented balanced operational budgets that stayed under the statutory revenue cap limit every year, all while preserving and adding necessary staff largely focused on student support for special education needs, counseling/mental health support, growing advanced programs, and improving opportunities for *all* students.

Now, in February 2024 we will lean on community support through a local referendum to repair our future budget deficit, caused by a broken state funding system. In the coming months, much of my work will be to help educate the community so they can make an informed decision related to their two referendum votes (operational budget and capital/facility needs).

I look forward to our continued work together as I complete the remaining months of my career in education. I am in 100% full support of the Board's plan for my successor and will do everything necessary to ensure a smooth transition.

I will always love this School District of River Falls and our community.

Once A Wildcat, Always A Wildcat!

With gratitude,

Jamie Benson  
Superintendent