



AIKEN COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 24, 2017

Aiken County Community:

What an exciting four weeks we have shared together across Aiken County!

Nearly one month ago to the day, we embarked upon a series of town hall meetings designed for members of our leadership team to present valuable information on a variety of important topics in convenient locations across the District, and to receive valuable feedback from our community stakeholders. Across the length and breadth of Aiken County, we met with as many of you as possible. This effort – as evidenced by the more than 1,000 people who have attended the six meetings – was a success.

Please accept my personal thanks and the utmost gratitude on behalf of our Leadership Team for your attendance and participation during our town hall meetings. You have shown tremendous support for our students and schools. The gatherings were often mislabeled and mischaracterized as “discipline” meetings, but those in attendance and those who followed know that our meetings were so much more. As an organization with 3,200 employees serving nearly 25,000 students, we desire and are prepared to receive feedback from the community and stakeholders.

Although topical organization for the town hall events was pre-arranged, we remained flexible and responsive to your concerns. We also made necessary adjustments to our format as the meetings continued based upon emerging topics of interest. We heard your concerns regarding discipline and safety and addressed them openly, both during and following our meetings. We remain amenable to further discussion and transparency regarding discipline, our Code of Conduct, or any other matters of concern. Moving forward, we will continue to focus on correcting misbehavior in our students and supporting our teachers with additional training. We will not tolerate severe disruptions and violence in our schools – period.

While the foundational topics for our town hall meetings did not lead many television newscasts, this information remains crucial to our community in the immediate days ahead. Thanks to you, we succeeded in our ultimate goal – to present factual, reliable information on items of great importance to our District and community. We covered Aiken County enrollment trends, current and future school capacities, and a heavy westward expansion and demographic shifts in our student population, including a lack of balance in some middle schools. We addressed the need to establish common and appropriate start and end-of-day times by school level, our accelerated learning initiatives for all middle school students and our first Community Day of Caring event coming March 1.

As we look ahead to the remainder of our 2016-17 school year, your valuable feedback – both verbal and written – will continue to serve us for many weeks to come. Members of our Area Advisory Councils will work to summarize the data while assisting our District leadership team in creating a list of recommendations for board consideration in the spring.

You continue to provide the information we need to move forward in our effort to establish the Aiken County Public School District as The Premier School District in South Carolina. With your outstanding participation in our town hall meetings, you have provided an invaluable service to our District staff, our dedicated school-level administrators, our talented teachers and, most of all, our hard-working students. I thank you.

We look forward to speaking with you again soon!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Alford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean Alford, Superintendent