

## Media Release

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## NEWS RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 6, 2020

### **Lexington District One board conducts superintendent's performance review** *Board recognizes Superintendent Little's 'outstanding performance.'*

LEXINGTON, S.C. — On October 6, 2020, the Lexington County School District One Board of Trustees met in executive session to conduct the 2019–2020 performance evaluation of Superintendent Gregory D. Little, Ed.D.

This annual evaluation, required by board policy and by the district's employment agreement with the superintendent, focused on the school system's 2019–2020 academic year accomplishments under Dr. Little's leadership.

Lexington District One is one of the fastest-growing school districts in the state, ranking sixth in total enrollment. During the past 10 years, from the 2009–2010 academic year to the 2019–2020 academic year, Lexington District One's average daily membership grew by 4,751, an average of 475 new students per year.

The district currently serves 27,363 students from Prekindergarten to Grade 12 with more than 3,900 employees (not including substitutes) and 31 schools (17 elementary schools, eight middle schools, five high schools, one technology center). The district also has alternative education services designed to help students at risk of expulsion.

In a board workshop and meeting held Sept. 15, 2020, the board reviewed in detail the district's progress on its 2018–2021 Strategic Plan by examining the district's academic achievements, lessons learned during COVID-19, strategic plan key strategies, portfolio projects, and the goals for 2020–2021.

In open session tonight, after meeting in executive session to finalize Dr. Little's review, the board publicly expressed its approval of his performance and overall vision for Lexington District One and pointed out his effective performance in the following areas:

- increasing the number of students taking advantage of rigorous coursework opportunities. Since the 2017–2018 school year, students enrolled in dual credit courses has grown from 357 students to 526 students. The number of dual enrollment courses taken has risen from 985 to 1,542 courses, with students earning 4,426 college credits in the 2019–2020 school year for an estimated college savings of about \$2.3 million.

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- implementing a general fund budget for the 2019–2020 school year that showed a commitment to teachers and classrooms by maintaining student-to-teacher ratios, reaching the district's Drive to \$35 goal of starting teacher pay at \$35,000, and making salaries across the district more competitive by including a step increase for all eligible employees, adding 77.55 positions (including Beechwood Middle School) to accommodate growth and provide more generous support for our students with the greatest needs, and continuing to protect the safety of staff and students by providing more School Resource Officers and mental health counselors across the district.
- working to continue to decrease middle school fees in 2019–2020 and followed that in the 2020-2021 budget by eliminating the \$6 kindergarten consumable fee, high school \$5 consumable fee, and \$5 language arts parallel reading fee. The district also reduced the \$25 parking fee at high school to \$5 and the \$28 fee in grades 1–5 to \$20.
- making progress in 2019–2020 on the district's two portfolio projects (areas of focus based on the strategic plan). As part of Project Hope, the district committed to a full-time mental health counselor at each school and additional staff training for mental wellness issues. These resources played a significant role as the district entered the pandemic. The Lexington District One Executive Leadership Program's training and recruitment, as well as the hiring of teachers and administrators, are more critical than ever due to the increased number of end-of-career teacher and administrator retirements and a shortage of college education graduates.
- adding The College Center, housed at Gilbert High School, where a cohort of freshmen are immersed in a rigorous college-readiness curriculum, paired with high levels of academic and social-emotional support within Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) electives with the goal of partnering with the University of South Carolina Sumter, other local businesses and community groups, and AVID.org, to identify students who may benefit from a non-traditional approach to both high school and college-readiness preparation.
- increasing participation in rigorous coursework by our historically underrepresented groups. Since the 2017–2018 school year, the number of minority students enrolled in honors coursework increased by 25% and 47% in AP, IB, and dual credit courses.
- encouraging teacher leaders to advocate and creating an atmosphere where teachers feel valued and appreciated. For instance, they held a second annual Pizza and Policy night event focused on advocacy for legislators and other key community leaders.
- successfully constructing and opening a new elementary school, Centerville Elementary, remodeling/rebranding of Gilbert Elementary, and building new Pelion Middle and Lexington Middle schools, adding classroom wings at Oak Grove Elementary and White Knoll High, beginning construction of new performing arts centers at Gilbert High and White Knoll High.
- his skill in creating meaningful partnerships with Nephron, the USC Palmetto College, Chamber of Commerce, Lexington County Council, and other private and public sector businesses and governmental agencies in order to expand educational opportunities for students.
- adding lab sites and model classrooms and redesigning the middle school day to capture more time for instruction.

Scores released by the South Carolina Department of Education show Lexington County School District One continue to outpace national and state averages on nationwide assessments with a combined average SAT score of 1051 with 1,111-student test-takers.

In September, Lake Murray Elementary was named one of the highest achieving schools in the United States and recognized its high scores on national and statewide standardized assessments when named a 2019 National Blue Ribbon School.

(MORE)

## Page 3 — Lexington District One board conducts superintendent's performance review

The board recognized Dr. Little's leadership in the face of the March closure of all buildings due to COVID-19 and the immediate switch to an e-learning initiative. The district successfully planned and provided five high school graduations in a safe environment.

They commended his nimbleness and willingness to create and roll out the district's first Online Learning Academy and hybrid (AA BB) model, to transparently anticipate and answer parent questions through the district's Together Talk series, to provide, as available, technology and the software needed for e-learning, and to serve 819,380 meals from March 18 to August 14 to students.

Board Chair Cynthia S. Smith said, "Dr. Little and his team have done a remarkable job in pivoting in response to the pandemic."

Board Secretary Dr. Brent Powers reflected, "Lexington District One would be very different if we did not have Greg Little as our superintendent. He is an inspirer and enabler. He has been approachable, available, and engaged. The Together Talks series was brilliant. It encouraged dialogue between the district and the community during uncertain times."

Board Member Tim Oswald said, "Dr. Little has worked incredibly hard to ensure equity in resources for all communities in the district."

The Board of Trustees asked Dr. Little to focus on communication and work to reopen schools for five-day a week face-to-face instruction, while keeping staff and students safe and healthy.

As a result of his outstanding job performance evaluation, the board acted to extend the superintendent's contract term for an additional year (through June 30, 2026). Dr. Little asked that he receive no salary increase since no other employees received a salary increase.

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NOTE: Information about the district is available on the district's website at <https://www.lexdistrict1.com/about/overview> in school report cards on the S.C. Department of Education's website.