

Dear Providence Community:

I'm writing to inform you that I intend on stepping down from the role of the Superintendent of Providence Public School District over the summer. In coming to the decision at this time, I hope that I am able to provide ample time and support for a smooth transition for the next leader of this district.

My wife and I plan on remaining in Providence and continuing to enroll our three sons in the Providence Public School District. They have received an excellent education to date, and I have no doubt that will continue given the incredible individuals we have working throughout our district.

Throughout my career, I have always sought out opportunities to address the inequities in our society. Public education has the potential to break the vicious cycle of generational poverty that persists in America. And when it is done well, I do not believe there is any work more important or honorable than the work that we do to support children, as families, teachers, principals, staff, and community members.

While I have held many challenging positions in my life, the role of the Superintendent is a particularly humbling one. Now well into my fourth year in the role, I can say it has been both the most rewarding and challenging position I've ever held (apart from being a father).

I am lucky to serve the students of the Providence Public Schools District. Their power, brilliance, diversity and potential both inspire and amaze us every day. The teachers, principals and staff who serve our students do incredible work in classrooms, in schools, in cafeterias, in gymnasiums, on buses, in central office, and in the community, and do not get enough credit.

Let there be no doubt that we have to do much better for our students. The gaps that persist within our country and state for children of color and children of poverty are overwhelmingly evident in our district. There is much work to be done.

But I'm incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together during my tenure as Superintendent. And I'm particularly proud of the work we have done to address these issues of equity.

As a community, we led the fight to include funding for English Language Learners in the state budget, righting a historical wrong in this state.

With the knowledge that our students will rise to the challenge when presented with rigorous instruction and high expectations, we have almost doubled the number of students taking college credit-bearing courses in Providence high schools, and expanded our advanced academic offerings in middle schools.

Due to the significant trauma that so many of our students have to overcome, we have greatly expanded social emotional supports and mental health programs for our students, and opened a Newcomer Academy.

We have honored the diversity of our student learners by significantly improving the personalization of our instruction, opening two new student-designed high schools, tripling the dual language programs in our schools, and - maybe most importantly - by listening to our student voices and working with them to create Ethnic Studies classes.

Our expansion of personalized learning has been uncommonly successful, and is viewed by many as a national model. That is because we have done it with our school communities, and not to them. School-based decision-making has been at the center of its success. The strength of our implementation has been based on great teaching - using technology as a tool of instruction, not the center of it.

From my first day on the job up until now, and every day in between, I have been strongly supported by our School Board. You will not find a group of individuals more dedicated to the children of Providence. I would particularly like to thank our Board for demonstrating a dedication to an equity agenda through the passage of the Racial and Ethnic Equity Policy, Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Policy, and a new Code of Conduct focused on restorative practices. These policies are not always politically popular, but they are written with the best interests of all of our students in mind, and they will outlast many of us in our roles.

One thing I have learned as Superintendent is that a public school district cannot function without a close relationship with other areas of government. Working with the Mayor's Office on the By All Means initiative, we have greatly expanded summer learning opportunities for students, increased high-speed internet access for families, and created School Culture Coordinator positions to improve the community's access to our schools.

The Mayor's Office and City Council should be applauded for their leadership in investing in our school facilities. The responsibility for maintaining warm, safe and dry school buildings – which should be a bare minimum in our society – has been shirked for decades in Providence, leaving our students, teachers, and principals to try to learn in shameful conditions. The long-term plan that our city leaders are putting in place, in partnership with significant support from the state, will improve the conditions of each and every one of our schools.

In looking at all the work that has happened and continues to evolve, while it is clear that we must make significant improvements to address the inequities in our district, I am proud of what we have accomplished and I want to thank all of you for the role you played in it. And that is one of the reasons why it has been so difficult to come to this decision.

Nothing in life is more important than family, and that belief is at the root of my decision. It is no secret that the demands on an urban Superintendent are both immense and intense. I knew that when I took on the role, and my dedication to the students and the community I serve has been unwavering. You may have disagreed with some of my decisions, and you may think I've made mistakes – to be sure, I have made many – but no one can say I haven't given everything I have to the job. The students - and the teachers and staff that serve them - deserve no less.

However, as my own children have grown in the past four years, and we now have sons who are older and will soon be leaving our home, my responsibilities as a father have been calling me.

Thank you to the School Board and the Mayor for giving me this opportunity. Thank you to the principals, teachers, and staff for the hard work you put in every day. Thank you to the Providence community for both supporting us and holding us accountable. And most of all, thank you to the students and families. The honor and privilege to serve you has been mine.

Sincerely,

Christopher N. Maher  
Superintendent  
Providence Public Schools