

Christina S.D. passes referendum, names new chief



*Former **Capital School District** Superintendent Dan Shelton becomes new **Christina School District** superintendent.*

Earlier this month Christina School District voters overwhelmingly approved the school district's referendum request, a huge victory for a district that has struggled to win voter support in the past.

The school board also made leadership changes at the district level, including hiring an experienced superintendent with deep roots in the district. Add to that state and district investments in Christina's city schools, and the district is looking forward to a promising new school year.

We asked incoming superintendent Dr. Dan Shelton - the Capital School District superintendent who will take the helm in Christina on July 1 - to share more about his excitement for the district.

What experience do you bring to the new job?

I have more than 22 years of experience as an educator and administrator, most recently as superintendent for the Capital School District since 2015. Most of my career, though, was spent in the Christina School District. Early in my career, I worked as an educator in our city schools at Drew-Pyle and Bayard. Later, I served as school leader at Gallaher, Maclary, Christina Early Education Center, Smith, and Kirk. I know the district well and am excited to have the opportunity to lead.

Why is the successful referendum so important?

All four parts of the referendum received more than 65 percent of the more than 14,500 votes cast. That was a record voter turnout - and one during the current state of emergency for COVID-19. That shows strong community backing of the district. Residents want strong schools and are willing to invest in the students and educators working in their community.

Had the referendum failed, the school board was faced with making \$10 million in cuts to its operating budget, including the reduction of 136 jobs - many of them teachers - and the elimination of all sports and extracurricular, Chinese Immersion, and gifted and talented programs. Thanks to voters' support, the district will be able to restore previous budget cuts, allowing Christina to reduce class sizes and pay for a new elementary English language arts curriculum.

Thanks to the community's backing, we will be able to start rebuilding Christina's programming and providing students with the education they deserve.

What work is underway this summer in Christina's city schools?

At Stubbs Early Education Center and the Dual Generation Center, handicap accessible bathrooms, stairway, ramps and an elevator are being renovated for access to the Dual

Generation Center. The school board in partnership with the City of Wilmington approved funds to support new playground equipment in Kirkwood Park, which is adjacent to the school.

At Bayard, two roofing projects are in progress, as are new drinking water fountains and new carpeting. Bancroft has chiller and boiler projects scheduled and classrooms also will be painted this summer. A large classroom renovation also is scheduled to make two rooms to accommodate growth. And planning is still underway in hopes of a new school on the city's east side.

What will be your first priorities when you start the new job on July 1?

In order to rebuild trust, I hope to engage the community in a comprehensive strategic plan. When I was in Capital, the community appreciated open dialogue and the ability to voice their opinions, while the professionals appreciated that it was not a fix-the-squeaky-wheel solution. I hope to engage stakeholders in Christina to find a common direction so we can focus the work where we will make the most difference, improve outcomes and provide equitable access to programs and services. The public school system should be center of the community. The community should feel intimately connected to their schools. Students should feel safe and supported. Families should be confident that their children are getting what they need. If we have a great school system and continue to invest in our students, we not only build a better community but we attract new businesses, increase the value of our homes and make certain that the next generation will be prepared to support the future community. We are all in this together.