

# Jefferson County School District Year in Brief - 2019



## Message from the Superintendent

Dear Citizens of Jefferson County:

With pleasure, I submit the Third Annual Report of the Jefferson County School District, and to share that the district is better today, both academically and financially, than it was four years ago. For the District, improvement is a continuous

process, a cycle of reflection and revision of goals and processes because the expectations of our education system will continue to rise. To be sure, progress is a result of effort and focus on the goals, the challenges, and the rapidly changing education landscape. Our progress is a collaborative effort with everyone engaged – teachers, school administrators, support staff, parents, volunteers, the charter governing board, district staff, the school board and many external partners who share their energy and expertise to ensure that Jefferson County has a high quality school system; to everyone involved, I give my heartfelt thanks.

Sustainable change is hard work and sometimes presents conflict; we are not immune to those forces, but remain fierce in our mission to achieve the goals we established at the beginning of this journey – to raise the grades by at least two levels, to increase the student population by at least 20 percent, and to achieve financial stability and fiscal transparency

As your superintendent, I am unwavering in my commitment to improve the quality of education for all county students, to support school choice and to insure the sustainability of our education system. It is with these goals that I present the year's review.



## Academic Progress

A school district's primary focus is teaching and learning. Academic quality is the most important consideration for any school district, and that is the case in Jefferson County. The most important aspect of the charter agreement pertains to academic improvement. The charter established its academic goals for FY18-19, as well as for the remainder of the charter agreement (Chart 1), and the goals were subsequently approved by the Jefferson County School Board.

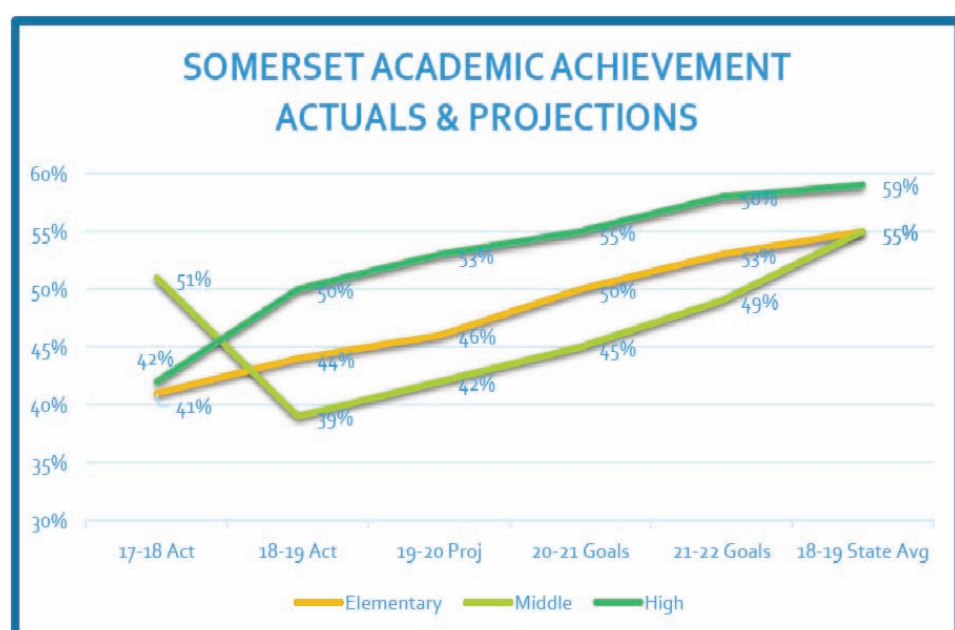
At every year end, the District compares the goals to actual outcomes as one of the charter performance measures. In Florida, academic quality is measured by school grades that represent the degree of achievement for various academic milestones, the most important being the percent of students who are proficient or higher in various subject areas.

The Department of Education measures school success by as many as 11 different elements of student achievement, with each element worth up to a maximum of 100 points. Schools earn points based on standardized test scores and learning gains. High schools have additional measures such as graduation rates and industry certifications earned by students. The points earned translate into a range of percentages that are further identified by letter grades A – F as shown below. These metrics are subject to department modification from year to year.

### School Grading Percentages for SY19-20

- A = 62% of points or greater
- B = 54-61% points or greater
- C = 41-53% points or greater
- D = 32-40% points or greater
- F = 31% of points or greater

The chart below shows, by school, the percentages earned in FY2017-2018 and FY2018-2019. Percentages for FY 2019-2020 and beyond reflect Somerset's expectations and stated goals. The trend line reflects consistent increases in student achievement and learning gains under Somerset's administration with the one exception being last year's elementary school grade.



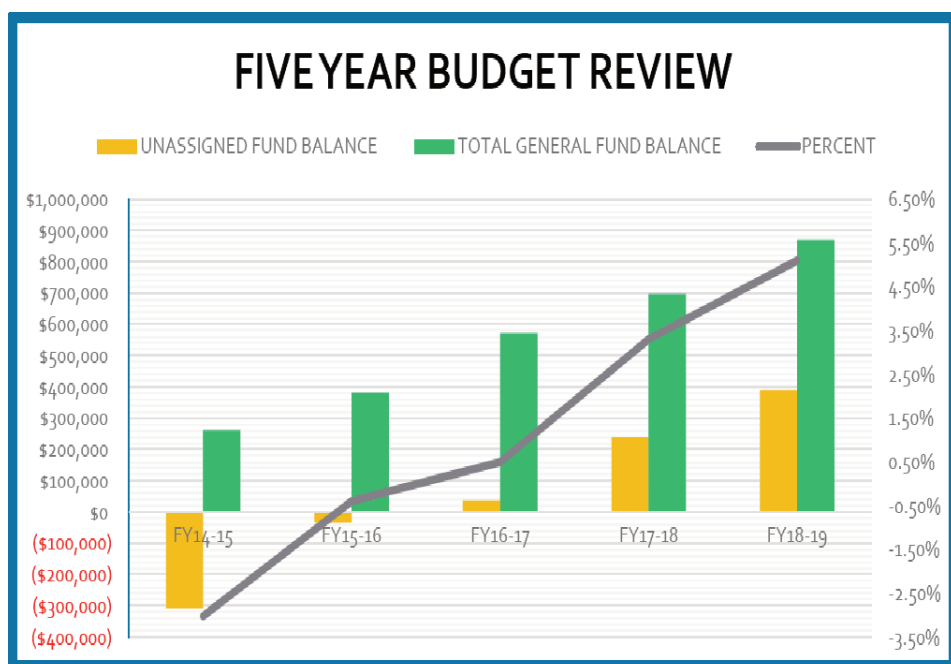
## Financial Accountability Fund Balance

Florida school districts are required to maintain a minimum ratio of 3

percent of the unassigned general fund balance to recurring revenue. The Jefferson County School Board policy is more stringent as it requires a balance equal to 5 percent. In August of 2016, the Florida Department of Education declared the Jefferson County School District in an official State of Emergency because of the District's failure to provide a budget compliant with fund balance requirements. As of July 1, 2016, the District total fund balance was \$381,686.23 with an unassigned fund balance of negative \$33,047.60, or negative 0.4 percent of the total General Fund revenues.

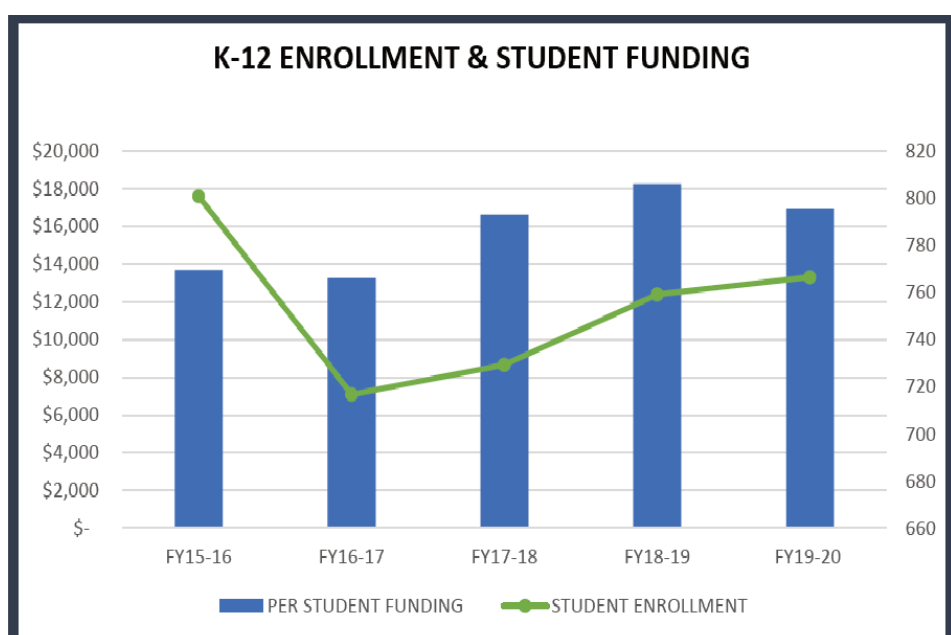
The graph below shows that at the end of fiscal year 2018-2019, after adjustments and transfers out, the District had a general fund balance of \$868,563 and an unassigned fund balance of \$388,583 or a positive 5.10 percent financial ratio. The change in unassigned fund balance represents a 962 percent improvement over FY2018-2019.

Of the total Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) funding for FY2018-2019, the District retained just \$271,557, which is less than 4 percent of the FEFP and 0 percent of the Capital Outlay 1.5 millage tax funds, funds which are used for facilities maintenance, improvement and equipment and educational materials purchases district-wide.



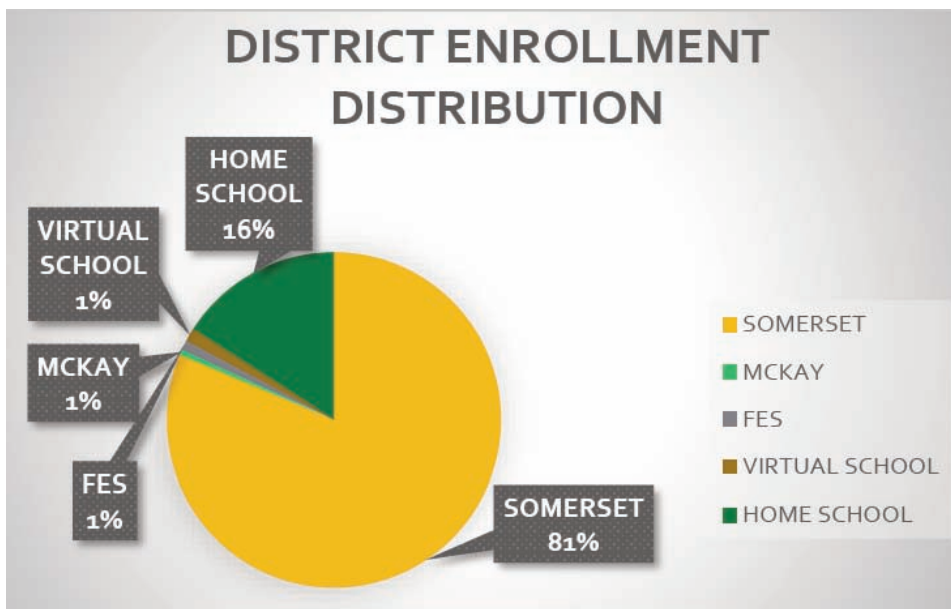
## Student Enrollment

Another of the District's goals is to increase student enrollment in the schools. The chart below shows student enrollment over the last five years, as well as gross per student funding calculations. Based on Somerset's projected enrollment of 766 students for FY2020-2021, enrollment will have increased by 3.16 percent over the prior year, and 5.19 percent over FY2016-2017. As enrollment increases and funding is stabilized, per-pupil expenditures are expected to decline.



## County-wide Enrollment

In addition to charter school enrollment, the District also monitors student enrollment in other schools as a function of choice options. This chart does not include students enrolled independently in private schools, or schools out of county.



## Community Involvement

The year was filled with community engagement – volunteers, mentors and other valuable partners ready to assist when needed. Somerset had its first annual Student Government Gala, a formal event sponsored by students and attended by parents, district and school administrators, and many community stakeholders who value education and recognize the importance of participation and support. Another milestone in community involvement was the reactivation of the Jefferson County Education Foundation. During the year they reorganized, raised funds and obtained the matching grant funds from the state foundation – the first time in many years that this has happened! The matching grant funds infused an additional \$20,000 into the school system with focus on students who did not meet assessment proficiency levels.



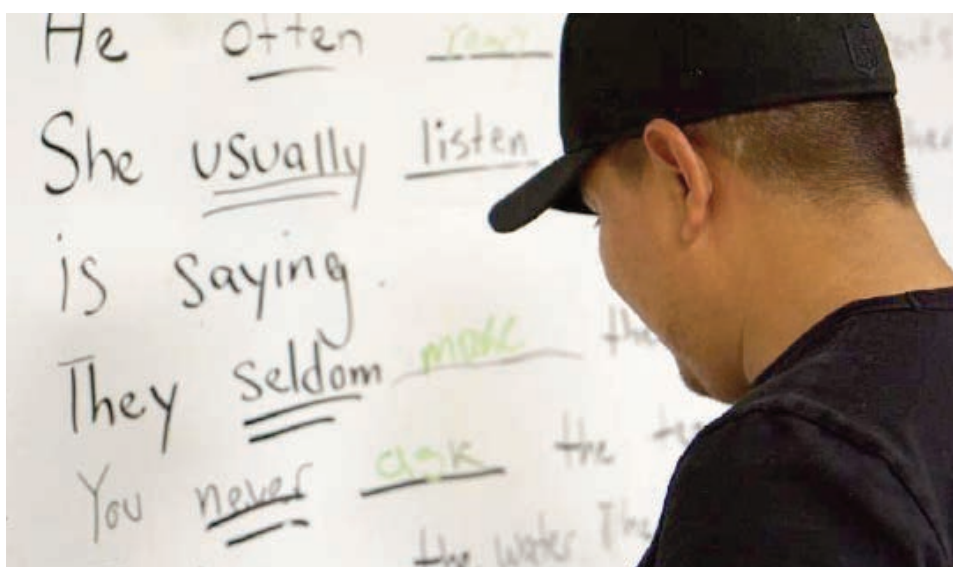


## Investing in the Workforce and Job Preparedness

The Adult Education Program is growing in important ways. The District continues to engage with current students, potential adult learners and community partners – the result being a restructured course schedule and addition of new on-site classes, services and training opportunities.

### English Language Learners

Twice-weekly evening English classes for adults continue into a second year. Now with two class levels, a curriculum aligned with standardized assessments, a schedule change to better accommodate learners and thus positively impact attendance, and two new master's level instructors with nearly three decades of combined adult ESOL teaching experience, we are on the way to substantial learning gains for our adult English language learners and a solid, highly effective and sustainable language program that will help families in our community. It is notable to mention that this program was initiated, in part, as a way to help non-English speaking parents help their children (our students), with their studies.



### GED Preparation

The District started on-site Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes in late 2019. These classes, also known as pre-GED classes, meet twice weekly in the evenings as well. So many of our adult learners shared a preference for on-site classes with a trusted instructor and a small-group format for lots of personalized attention, so we made it a priority to meet that need. We have built a safe learning space and a collaborative learning community and continue to help guide learners toward academic success and career exploration and opportunities. Virtual ABE coursework is still an option for those who prefer to study on-line.



## Early Childhood Professional Certificate Program

A new partnership with North Florida College (NFC) is developing now, to the great advantage of Jefferson County residents with an interest in a career in early childhood education. The School Board has been instrumental in helping identify and recruit participants for the Early Childhood Professional Certificate (ECPC) program NFC will offer on site in Monticello. Adult Education staff and the Federal TRIO Program Specialist from FAMU work each week on site with potential participants, helping with applications for college entry, the TEACH Grant and FAFSA, and volunteer placement at local licensed childcare centers (a requirement for TEACH funds). Through the ECPC course, local students and employers will benefit from programming made available through the District's efforts.

## More Collaborative Partners

A new partnership with the Appalachian Center will allow Adult Education staff to provide research-based literacy instruction to adult clients who struggle with reading. The Center's Adult Care Manager reached out with a query for one client, and now that we are identified as a basic literacy provider referrals for that service will no doubt continue to grow. Another partnership we have developed is with the Capital Area Community Action Agency. They are referring participants from their Getting Ahead program for enrollment in the Adult Basic Education courses in the evenings. These partnerships illustrate how rich, targeted connections can meet education and employment goals for our residents, and we seek more such partnerships each day.

Adult Education staff continue to provide learners with wrap-around

support through resume development, employment application assistance and guidance toward other academic and certificate programs. Staff helped adult learners to enter the CDL and Associates Degree programs at NFC and several are renewing their Early Childhood Certificate through the NFC partnership. These partnerships broaden staff knowledge helping to bring information to the community and shepherd adult learners into programs that work for them.

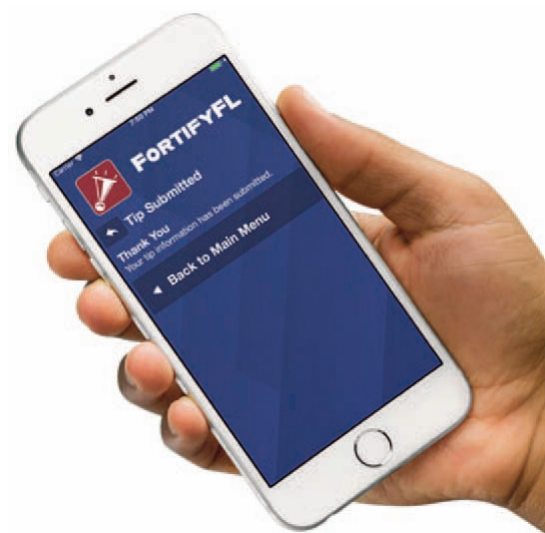
To summarize, Adult Education services have grown substantially in the last year, and the District will continue to pursue essential workplace skills initiatives and certification programs for the betterment of our students and the economic health of the County.

## Student Engagement



Over the last two years, Junior Achievement has partnered with District schools to bring its excellent programs to our students. Along with the other community volunteers, I had the pleasure of delivering the Junior Achievement Career Success curriculum to a class of high school students. This was the second year that I instructed a Junior Achievement class on workforce skills consisting of four themes necessary to be successful in today's workplace, including soft skills. It was exciting to work with our high school students as they unpacked all the skill sets they would need to successfully navigate employment or post-secondary enrollment. After weeks of instruction, the class participated in a field trip to the Challenger Learning Center in Tallahassee, compliments of a grant provided by one of our School Board members, Mrs. Roann-Watson. The full day program was a facilitated experience where students went on a NASA mission to Mars and each student had to perform a real NASA job. Hands-on learning brings education to life and serves to engage students in meaningful ways. The Challenger program facilitators remarked at how engaged our students were – how seriously they assumed their roles in the scenarios and worked like a real NASA team. It was a really good day, and I am looking forward to this year's trip!

## School Safety and Security



Student safety continued to be a leading priority, as the District, school administrators, law enforcement and health officials continued collaboration, while the School Board adopted additional policies enacted in the legislative session and updated safety plans. For example, the School Board adopted the FortifyFL application tool, recommended by the Florida Office of Safe Schools. The FortifyFL application allows someone to report, anonymously, suspicious activity that is instantly relayed to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school district officials. It is available to anyone with the ability to download the application on their phone. Lastly, the District, working with Somerset, administered state and federal grant applications and provided procurement services to support structural improvements to school facilities campus-wide. This work is ongoing and will continue through the school year.

## Summary

Change is the new normal – COVID-19 has taught all of us that lesson. Whether social distancing, school closures or virtual learning, we continue to solve old problems, and work to prevent new ones, never taking our eye off of the goal. Every day the District looks for ways to make our school district better. Every day we ask how to better serve our students and our community; your feedback is important. I will continue to lead based on my principles of equity, fairness, and transparency. The District, working closely with the School Board and our charter partner, will continue to improve performance, deliver high quality education, and be financially prudent and efficient. It is an honor to serve as your superintendent, and I thank you for the privilege.

