Orange County Public Schools

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To Whom it May Concern,

This reference letter is in support of Dr. John Edwards in his pursuit of the superintendency of a school district. Dr. Edwards is a career educator that has distinguished himself at all levels of his involvement.

I have known Dr. Edwards for approximately 15 years. I was familiar with his reputation as a successful educator for slightly longer than that. His progression from the classroom to the senior executive level of a large school district is a testament of his work ethic, intelligence, and drive; characteristics that will serve him well at the next level.

Dr. Edwards was a successful principal at one of our larger high schools. I promoted him to associate superintendent in the curriculum department. The move was made at a critical period in the district's effort to turn around its low performing high schools. Dr. Edwards developed a plan to improve reading in the lower quartile of students in that area. The positive results from that intervention and other good work by him convinced me that he would be an effective area superintendent supervising schools. Since that move, John Edwards has guided his schools through ever changing standards and budget cuts. His leadership and insight was valued throughout.

If selected as superintendent, you will get a no-nonsense leader with a sound understanding of curriculum and instruction. You will have someone who is familiar with the current issues surrounding education reform. Finally, you will have someone who believes in public education and its value in today's society.

Respectfully,

Ronald Blocker
Superintendent

"The Orange County School Board is an equal opportunity agency."

Members of the School Board and Search Committee
Orange County Public Schools

November 29, 2011

I am writing this letter of recommendation on behalf of John E. Edwards, EdD, for the position of Superintendent of Schools. I have known John for twenty three years. In 1988 while serving as Superintendent of the Orange County Public Schools, I had the pleasure of appointing him as an assistant principal at Winter Park High School where, among other responsibilities, he oversaw the International Baccalaureate program. I saw him then as an outstanding young instructional leader. After three years in that position, I thought he had incredible potential to go well beyond building level leadership. To prepare for that I thought he needed some different experiences.

So in 1991 I appointed him assistant principal at Jones High School to address some issues related to equity and providing higher level educational opportunities for minority students. He made it happen. I left the superintendent position in 1992. And it didn't surprise me when he became principal of Apopka High School a year after I left the system. Much later I renewed my relationship with John as we served together as members of the Orange County Blue Ribbon Panel. I know him well.

John has a truly unique academic background. He has an undergraduate degree in business management and later earned teacher certification in economics and history. His graduate work ended with a Master in Business Administration and a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. When you combine his outstanding intellectual achievements with his extensive leadership experiences ranging from an assistant principal to an area superintendent, one can see he is uniquely prepared to be a successful superintendent of schools.

The position of superintendent is an extremely complex and challenging assignment. John is a person who understands that complexity. He knows the range of responsibilities. He is committed to the public schools, understands their purpose, knows how to lead and bring about change responsibly, and understands how to deal with the political and power issues involved in all leadership acts related to individual schools and the district. He cares about all students regardless of how humble or exalted their backgrounds. He respects the contributions made by staff, parents, and members of the community.

To be a successful superintendent of schools, you need to be trusted. Trust comes from a variety of sources – including one's knowledge, competencies, and integrity. John above all else is a good and decent person. He is driven to do the things that need to be done based on a high moral purpose. Without that, nothing else really matters. I highly recommend John Edwards for the position of Superintendent of Schools, Orange County, Florida.

Sincerely,

James L. Schott, Assistant Professor, National Louis University

University of Central Florida

Morgridge International Reading Center
Centro Internacional de Lectura Morgridge
Centre International de Lecture Morgridge

December 8, 2011

Superintendent Selection Committee
Orange County Public School

Dear Committee Members,

I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Dr. John Edwards for over twenty years. During this time, I have learned to regard him as an innovative, strong leader who always bases his decisions on what is best for students. Due to all of the years I have known John, along with my background in education which has included being a Superintendent of Schools and a Department Chair of a major university, I feel that I am in an excellent position to discuss his potential to be a successful Superintendent of Schools.

I first knew Dr. Edwards, when I was Principal of Edgewater High School and he was the Dean. I was later involved in making the decision to have him appointed as the Principal of Apopka High School.

Dr. Edwards is an analytical person who has the exceptional ability to listen to diverse opinions on a subject and to form an opinion that he feels is best. He is a person who sees the big picture and has the ability to inspire others to "get on board." John is the total package when it comes to being a candidate for Superintendent of Schools. He has a strong business background including school finance. In addition, Dr. Edwards has superior knowledge of curriculum. He has been actively involved in school reform and understands how students learn and what it takes to have a successful school. I have always characterized him as an innovator and doer. He also has strong people skills. Dr. Edwards will relate well to board members, the general public, and will certainly have the respect of teachers and administrators.

The State of Florida has been inundated with legislative changes that have impacted education. Although there is sometimes a desire to look outside the state for school leaders, I feel that it is advantageous to consider a strong, proven leader who will not need a learning curve regarding educational policies in Florida. I believe Dr. Edwards is an outstanding candidate for Superintendent of Schools in Orange County. I, therefore, without any hesitation give him my highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Williams

Robert D. Williams, Ed.D.
Morgridge International Reading Center
University of Central Florida

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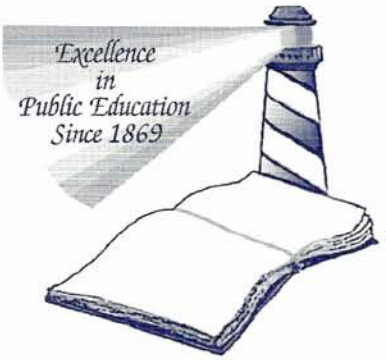
Joseph G. Joyner, Ed.D.
Superintendent



November 16, 2011

Dear School Board Members,

It is an honor for me to recommend Dr. John Edwards as the next Superintendent of Schools for Orange County.

I have known "of" John since he was in high school and worked directly with him for 13 years. Dr. Edwards replaced me as principal of Apopka High School in 1990, and I served as his immediate supervisor until I was appointed Superintendent of Schools in St. Johns County in 2003.

John is a person of very high moral character, dispatching his duties with a strong conviction of what is in the best interest of children. I was impressed by his strength of character on many occasions as we worked through a multitude of issues together. Dr. Edwards always cared more for what was right, regardless of how it reflected on him personally. To this day I recall him as one of the leaders I worked with who displayed the highest integrity, while at the same time being remarkably humble.

Intellectually, Dr. Edwards possesses exceptional analytical skills and superior discernment. As a problem solver he was outstanding and could always be counted on to drive toward the best solution for students. His ability to analyze data, particularly student achievement data, impressed me early on and I would constantly seek out his advice. Even after a nine year separation I will call John if I need an opinion on school grading or overall accountability. He is the best I have seen in this area.

Dr. Edwards also has a keen eye for personnel, hiring the best person for the best spot. He demonstrated this skill when he became a principal at Apopka High and the school became stronger and stronger by his ability to hire high quality teachers and support staff. Although I have not
seen his work directly as an area superintendent, I am certain that he continues to place the right person in the right position.

School Board | Beverly Slough District 1 | Tommy Allen District 2 | Bill Mignon District 3 | Bill Fehling District 4 | Carla Wright District 5

My tenure as a superintendent has taught me the importance of maintaining a collegial environment, communicating effectively and respectfully with all constituents and maintaining a positive attitude. Dr. Edwards excels in all of these areas. My experience has also taught me the importance of working closely with School Board Members and respecting their work in moving the school district forward. I am certain John possesses these skills.

In closing, I do not think you could make a better choice to lead Orange County. This is a leader I know very well and I am absolutely convinced he will make an outstanding superintendent. John has followed me in three jobs now and exceeded my work in every one. I continue to care deeply for Orange County. I grew up there and spent 23 years in the school system there. John Edwards is the servant leader you need to lead your district.

Sincerely,

Joseph G. Joyner, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JGJ/vm