

Fruitport Welcomes New FCS Superintendent



by Calvin Holtrop

Meet Jason Kennedy, the new superintendent of Fruitport Community Schools. He's a family man, an educator, a team-builder, and a school designer, and is excited to become a part of the Fruitport community.

Jason and family

Jason and his wife, Beth, have been married for twenty years and have three children, who attend Fruitport Community Schools and are very involved in sports. Brayden, a senior at Fruitport High School, is active in golf and loves football and basketball. Christian, a sophomore at Fruitport High School, plays tennis, basketball, and baseball. And Kolten, a fifth-grader at Edgewood Elementary School, who is active in travel hockey and baseball, also enjoys playing football and is interested in learning to play lacrosse.

The Kennedys recently sold their home in Ludington, where he has been superintendent for the last four years, and are looking for housing in the Fruitport community.

"We are excited to be Fruitport Trojans," said Kennedy, "and we look forward to serving the community and being actively involved in Fruitport. Please be sure to say hello when you see my family and I out and about."

Jason as an educator

"I am entering my tenth year as a superintendent of a Michigan school," Kennedy explained. "I have been the superintendent of Holton Public Schools and Ludington Area Schools prior to being appointed as the superintendent here in Fruitport. Prior to my time as a superintendent, I worked for Oakridge Public Schools and was a teacher, coach, club adviser, middle school principal and athletic director, and high school principal. I was also an elementary school principal for a few years in a dual superintendent / principal role while at Holton Public Schools. In total, I have been in education for 20 plus years in Michigan.

"As a superintendent, I successfully led a large-scale construction project in my former school district that included the design and construction of an elementary school, a middle school, a high school, along with improvements to athletic facilities, career and technical education spaces, and performing arts spaces."

Kennedy also led the Ludington school district to establish the Mason County Promise Zone and to sell Lakeview Elementary School.

As Dave Hazecamp, president of Fruitport's board of education, told Ludington Daily News, Kennedy "has a unique ability to get teams to work together to get good things done for kids."

LASD board president Steve Carlson also gave a good report of Kennedy to Ludington Daily News. "He has been, by any account, a great superintendent. He has built up a great rapport with the staff and district. He is very well liked in the district and [has] been a very dedicated and hard-working superintendent."

Jason Kennedy's success in improving students' academic performance for all rankings really caught Hazecamp's attention during the search to replace superintendent Bob Szymoniak, who retired in July. The choice that Kennedy be Fruitport's new superintendent had unanimous board approval.

"When Bob retired, we had a very specific set of goals that we wanted to see in our next superintendent," Hazecamp told the Grand Haven Tribune, "and Jason fit that very nicely."

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Though Ludington Area Schools will miss Kennedy, they wish him the best.

Kennedy is confident that LASD and Fruitport both "are finding their way through the transition to new leaders. While it will take time for both leaders to become fully acclimated to the districts they serve, every day is spent getting to know the community, listening to stakeholders, and supporting the work of the district."

Jason with Fruitport Community Schools

"I really believe Fruitport Community Schools is one of the premier school districts within Muskegon County," Kennedy told the Grand Haven Tribune. He plans to build positive relationships with students, staff, and the Fruitport community.

"Visibility, presence at events, and active listening to the voice of students are key to building positive and successful relationships with students," said Kennedy. "My goal is for the student body to not only know who the superintendent of schools is, but also for students to feel comfortable in raising their voices to me so that the continual growth of our organization is built upon the feedback and input received from students in our school community.

"Most importantly, I strive to attend as many student events as possible," Kennedy said. "I strive to be the number one cheerleader and advocate (aside from parents and family) for all of our students in all of the programs and activities that we offer. Students who are actively involved and engaged in activities, programs, and events, often are also highly engaged in the learning process, so I love to support our students. I encourage students, parents, and families to stop by and say hello to me when they see my family and I at any of the Fruitport events."

Kennedy puts a priority on unity of school staff, as well.

"Trust is the key to establishing and building relationships with staff and the community. In addition, being supportive of our staff as they implement best practices is also key to building a solid relationship with our staff. I will actively listen to staff and stakeholders, build trusting relationships that are supportive of our staff, and be visible and present at events to further support the great work of our people."

Kennedy also intends to put his skill set into "leading the district through current and future projects to support the long-term vision of the district." This vision, the Facilities Master Plan, contains a 50-year plan, which started in 2016, to replace the district's antiquated school buildings, starting with the high school.

With hiring Kennedy, who well understands the school construction process, the school board hopes to succeed, on the long term, in the district's Facilities Master Plan.

"The facilities plan webpage identifies all of the upcoming plans for you to review," said Kennedy. See <https://www.fruitportschools.net/bondinformation/fcs-facilities-master-plan/> for a video and further details.

Students, families, and members of the community can contact Jason by email at jkennedy@fruitportschools.net, or by phone at (231) 865-4007. They can also "follow me on Twitter at @TrojanSupt for now," said Kennedy, "and I will be communicating other means of connecting with me on social media in the near future."

Let's give Jason Kennedy a big welcome as he begins his first year as superintendent of Fruitport Community Schools.

Letter to the Editor: Local Family Helped a Stranger

October 25, 2021

Hello,

My name is Sandy and I am from Plainwell and wanted to share something wonderful with you. I just wanted to pass on that you have a local family that lives on Bridge St in your community that went WAY WAY out of their way to help total strangers last night, those strangers were my husband and myself. Short story, our car broke down in the dark and rain and the Wilder family stopped to help, and help they did..., 2 trips to get parts over 2 hours and Jason replaced our alternator and had us back on the road.

Sandra Lamorandier
Plainwell, MI 49080

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