

School system shuffles principals

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Prince Frederick, MD - The sudden departure of a high school principal has required Calvert County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Daniel Curry to amend an appointment he made just a few weeks ago.

During the June meeting of the Calvert County Board of Education (BOE), Curry had recommended Southern Middle School (SMS) Principal Jaime Webster for appointment as principal at Northern Middle School (NMS). Curry recommended Huntingtown High School Vice Principal Sabrina Bergen to be the new principal at SMS. Webster was replacing NMS Principal Darrel Prioleau, who resigned from Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) and has since moved to Pennsylvania.

Bergen and Webster began their new assignments July 1. However, Patuxent High School (PHS) Principal Michael Watson (pictured, below) notified CCPS officials that he was leaving the system for St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS). On Thursday, July 9, SMCPS officials announced Watson has been appointed principal at Leonardtown High School.

That same day, Curry informed the BOE of Watson's departure. The superintendent then recommended Bergen's new assignment as PHS principal. Curry recommended SMS Vice Principal Mandy Blackmon for appointment as that school's principal.

The BOE voted unanimously to accept Curry's recommendation.

Watson became PHS principal in 2013 after Nancy Highsmith was appointed interim superintendent of schools, a post she was elevated to following the abrupt resignation of Dr. Jack Smith.

During his 12-year career with CCPS, Watson served as a teacher and administrator.

In addition to Watson, Dr. Jeffrey Walker, a longtime CCPS administrator and most recently, middle school guidance counselor, is also leaving for St. Mary's County. Walker has been appointed assistant superintendent of supporting services in the Division of Supporting Services.

During his 23-year career with CCPS Walker served in several capacities, including principal, director of Curriculum and Instruction, director of Instructional and Informational Technology, and assistant superintendent of Administration.

Russ retires

During the open forum segment of the BOE's July 9 meeting, outgoing Calvert Education Association President Debbie Russ announced the organization will officially have a new leader July 15. Russ, who is retiring after a long career in education, frequently addressed the BOE at monthly meetings, missing only a few sessions during her tenure as president. She noted that she would frequently remind the school board that the county's teachers "are working harder than ever."

Now that summer vacation has arrived, Russ declared, "I hope they are relaxing more than ever."

Currently, CEA leadership is renegotiating with CCPS administrators in hopes of presenting a contract that association members will ratify. The pact that was tentatively agreed to in late spring was voted down by members.

Russ' successor, Dennis Mooney, told the BOE he would continue his predecessor's effort of "working for a happy, more healthy education system."

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