

Distinguished career comes to an end after 35 years

After 35 years in education, seven of which have been superintendent of the fastest growing school system in North Carolina, Dr. Ed Davis has decided it's time to call it quits.

"Seven years is a long time to do this job and do it well," he said. "I put my heart and soul into something when I do it. I burn brightly for a good while, but it's hard to go beyond this point in time and give this system what it needs. I've given about all I can give.

"I've done the best that I could," he added. "Even though you might not agree with everything I've done, I've always tried to do my best. And my only agenda has been to try to do what's best for kids first and teachers and staff second."

Davis announced his retirement plans at the January Board of Education meeting.

"You've always been a man of honor and integrity," said Board of Education Chairman Dean Arp, after the announcement. "The system is a success and an envy of many in the state due to your direct leadership. It's been a pleasure to be on the board under your leadership."

In his seven years as superintendent, Davis said he doesn't think he had even one year of calm. "About the time the building crisis ended, the budget crisis picked up," he said. "The building crisis was like a toothache. It was very intense. But the budget crisis has been like the flu. It just kind of hangs on and will not go away. And it hurts every part of the organization."

The school system's ability to deal



UCPS Superintendent Dr. Ed Davis ends a 35-year career with Union County Public Schools, retiring June 30, 2012.

with the growth and the budget crisis effectively have been two tremendous challenges, but Davis feels very good about the way those have turned out.

structural programs to help kids be successful."

Davis said he bases all his decisions on how they will ultimately affect students. "Sometimes people may not understand my reasoning, but they don't have my perspective, either. This is a very unique position. Nobody else has this perspective."

Davis credits UCPS staff with much of the system's success. "They're good people," he said. "To be the great school system that we are, you can't have a weak link in the chain. From the parent, to the student, to the classroom teacher, principal, the directors, the assistant superintendents, the superintendent, to the Board of Education, I think we've got strong links at all levels. I've enjoyed seeing how the whole organization works together."

As for what he will not miss, Davis said, "the petty politics of education," which he called a necessary challenge to the educational process, and can be either about ideology, philosophy or finance.

"There's a lot of fussing and fighting over every dollar," he said. "I know that's part of the system, but I won't miss that because I don't think all decisions are always made with the best interest of kids at heart."

One of his favorite parts of being superintendent has been watching inspiring, dedicated principals make big changes in schools, and transforming those schools and communities.

"Just like when I was a principal, it was very satisfying to see a teacher who was just as green as grass, grow into a master teacher," Davis said. "It's been very satisfying to see a principal grow and blossom into a great school leader, to see not only what that does for them in their career, but also what it does for that school, the students and that community."

There are areas that Davis feels very good about as far as his input and influence on the school system, which, he said, continues a long tradition of leadership that was started before him. "It goes back many superintendents before me," he said. "We've continued improving the graduation rate, decreasing the achievement gap, and increasing the percentage of students on grade level across the board. Our SAT scores are higher than the state and national averages."

"My years as superintendent have been bookends of building crisis and budget crisis, but the common thread through those seven years is that we've continued to flourish and grow, as far as student achievement, and innovative and creative instructional programs to help kids be successful."

-- Dr. Ed Davis
UCPS Superintendent

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'Battle of Bosses' raises \$2,600 for Foundation

*By: Wendy Mays
Marvin Elementary Communicator*

There was plenty of athleticism, humor, and school pride to be found in the Weddington High School gym Tuesday night (Feb. 21, 2012).

Administrators and coaches from the Weddington (The Green Machine) and Marvin Ridge (Orange Crush) clusters met for a first Battle of the Bosses, a volleyball free-for-all fundraiser for the newly formed UCPS Education Foundation.

Dressed in team shirts from the foundation and sponsors, athletic wear from the high schools, and various hair colors and pigtailed, the typically professional educators left it all on the court. And then some.

With board members, other principals and superintendents in attendance, Superintendent Dr. Ed Davis took the chair of referee.

Davis, who had officiated at little league baseball games in college, said this was his first time officiating a volleyball game.

As he's retiring, the chair was made to be very comfortable, complete with a foot stool and a blanket. Dr. Davis,



UCPS administrators and coaches from the Marvin Ridge cluster huddle during the first Battle of the Bosses volleyball game, a free-for-all fundraiser for the UCPS Education Foundation.

however, had jokes of his own in his bag of tricks -- literally, including a "sucker" for the Marvin Ridge team for falling for a play and a baby bottle for the Weddington team for whining and crying over his calls.

While the volleyball skills were unspeakable, teams were also permitted to purchase points, so the play was often paused for patrons young and old running to "bribe" the referee and the scorekeepers, as well as for such theatrics as surfing to "Wipeout."

In spite of the interruptions and the non-traditional rules, the games were close, each within three points.

Weddington took the first, Marvin Ridge came back strong in the second, and, in a nail-biter, the Weddington cluster took the trophy.

However, with the proceeds going to the UCPS Education Foundation and the spirit displayed by all, the students of Union County Public Schools were surely the winners.

When all was said and done, organizers found that entrance fees, concessions and donations managed to raise about \$2,600 for the foundation.

Foundation Executive Director Dick Baker said that approximately 400 people came to see the game.

"I was very, very pleased," Baker said, "with the turnout, the participation of the teams and the fans."

Even though the Weddington Cluster won this year's trophy, it will go to every school in the cluster for about a week and then be returned to Weddington High School until the next tournament.

The Weddington cluster includes Weddington High School, Weddington Middle School, Antioch Elementary School, Wesley Chapel Elementary School and a portion of Weddington Elementary School.

The Marvin Ridge cluster includes Marvin Ridge High School, Marvin Ridge Middle School, Marvin Elementary School, Rea View Elementary School and Sandy Ridge Elementary School.



UCPS Superintendent Dr. Ed Davis referees from a comfortable "retirement seat."



Interim Director —

Filter is interim director of CTE

Robert Filter, currently a UCPS Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum coordinator, will serve as the interim director of CTE until June 2012.

Filter replaces Dr. Lorraine Collins who has accepted a position with the San Diego, California Community College.



Robert Filter
Interim Director of CTE

In the spotlight —

Robinson wins 2012 HeART of the Arts Lifetime Achievement Award

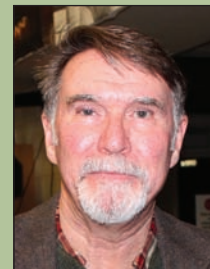
Central Academy of Technology and Arts theater teacher **Larry Robinson** has won the 2012 HeART of the Arts Lifetime Achievement Award presented recently by the Union County Arts Council.

This award is given to an individual who, during his lifetime, has made significant contributions to the cultural arts in Union County.

Referred to as an "art champion," the council said that Robinson was chosen because of his dedication to public education, his vision that the arts are vital to the overall learning process of children, and because of his efforts which have demonstrated an impact on advanc-

ing the arts and quality of life for residents of Union County.

Robinson is no stranger to accolades. His play, "Illuminations" was named the winner of the 2011 North Carolina New Play Project by the Greensboro Playwright's Forum. He also recently won the John Parker Award for Directing.



Larry Robinson
Central Academy

Professional News

Unionville Elementary's Kyra Gunn named UCPS AIG Teacher of the Year

Unionville Elementary teacher **Kyra Gunn** has been named the UCPS AIG Teacher of the Year.

Kyra, a 16-year-veteran teacher, said her initial reaction to the news was embarrassment.

"I mean, there are so many talented teachers in our system," she said. "I was certainly honored, but I recognize the talents of so many others as well."

Some of the criteria for winning this recognition are to exhibit outstanding



Kyra Gunn
Unionville Elementary

qualities related to gifted education in the areas of teaching, curriculum development and adaptation, working with gifted children/youth, and exhibiting a strong commitment to gifted education through professional experiences, professional organizations, and services in the area of education for the gifted.

"Kyra never likes to be in the spotlight," said her principal Sharyn VonCanon. "She is an incredibly creative and gifted teacher. She amazes me with the level of engagement with her students. She truly gets the importance of teaching the connection of globalization and technology to students to prepare them for the world in which we live. We are blessed to have her on our staff."

Ashley Ponscheck named Region Six Middle School Teacher of the Year

East Union Middle School teacher **Ashley Ponscheck** has been named the Region Six Middle School Teacher of the Year.

Ponscheck was named at the North Carolina Middle School Association's 37th Annual Conference, held this year in Greensboro.

UCPS Director of Middle School Education Dr. John Jones said the UCPS



Ashley Ponscheck
East Union Middle

middle schools were well-represented at the 2011-2012 Awards Banquet.

The conference also named the Buccaneer Team from Porter Ridge Middle School as the Teaching Team of the Year. Teachers on that team are **Angela Monell, Brittany DeLucia and Shannon Mathis**.

Kim Lynch, a teacher from Porter Ridge Middle School, has been sworn in as president-elect of the North Carolina Middle School Association.

Region Six includes all middle schools in Cleveland, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Lincoln, Gaston, Cabarrus, Rowan, Stanly, Anson and Union counties.

Employees receive certification

Several employees in the UCPS Finance Department have received additional certification.

Denise Helms, a UCPS Accounts Payable Specialist; **Terrie Outen**, a UCPS bookkeeping specialist; **Shanna McLamb**, a UCPS senior accountant; and **Anna Austin**, a UCPS senior accountant, received certified school business management recognition at the North Carolina Association of School Business Officials (NCASBO).

Budget videos posted on UCPS web site

In his ongoing efforts to keep Union County Public Schools employees informed about possible state, federal and local budget cuts for the 2012-2013 school year, Superintendent Dr. Ed Davis will continue to post informational videos, news articles and letters to staff on the UCPS web site.

In his most recent video, Dr. Davis describes the current state of UCPS and the possible effects that the 2012-2013 budget will have on the upcoming school year.

To view the videos and read budget-related items of interest, go to the UCPS homepage, and click on the 2012-13 Budget Outlook icon.

2012

SCHOOL WINNERS

OF THE YEAR

TEACHERS

The following teachers were named Teacher of the Year at their schools. The 2012 Teachers of the Year will be honored at the annual Teacher of the Year Banquet on April 26 at Rolling Hills Country Club.



Kristen Bruch
Antioch Elementary



Dawn Moretz
Benton Heights



Elaine Holeman
Central Academy



Sarah Stott
Cuthbertson High



Christopher Webb
Cuthbertson Middle



Kristie Scholz
East Elementary



Maxie Johnson, Jr.
East Union Middle



Melanie Podpora
Fairview Elementary



Mario Donato
Forest Hills High



Tamalia Williams
Hemby Bridge Elementary



Erica Southard
Indian Trail Elementary



Jennifer Sinople
Kensington Elementary



Sarah Horton
Marshville Elementary



Moira Hancock
Marvin Elementary



Crystal Powell
Marvin Ridge High



Theodora Rossano
Marvin Ridge Middle



Chevy Coffey
Monroe High



Heather Teff
Monroe Middle



Mindy Pope
New Salem Elementary



Sheila McManus
New Town Elementary



Nicholas Paquette
Parkwood High



E'a Lynn Christenson
Parkwood Middle



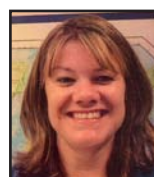
Angela Medlin
Piedmont High



Courtney Campbell
Piedmont Middle



Michelle Ruby
Poplin Elementary



Katherine Riedinger
Porter Ridge Elementary



Jessica Briggs
Porter Ridge High



Christena Reiser
Porter Ridge Middle



Karen Picerno
Prospect Elementary



Lori Sgan
Rea View Elementary



Dianne DeNino
Rock Rest Elementary



Shelley Holland
Rocky River Elementary



Susan Risk
Sandy Ridge Elementary



Jennifer Caldwell
Sardis Elementary



Carrie Ganc
Shiloh Elementary



Kevin Luke
South Providence



Emily Tucker
Stallings Elementary



Clenzetta Evans
Sun Valley Elementary



Angela Weed
Sun Valley High



Michael O'Hagan
Sun Valley Middle



Nathan Walbruch
Union County Early College



Kelley Contrera
Union Elementary



Elizabeth Pressley
Unionville Elementary



Jessica Suyat
Walter Bickett Ed. Center



Jarren Harrell
Walter Bickett Elementary



Maureen Stuka
Waxhaw Elementary



Helen Wallon
Weddington Elementary



Jeffrey Wnek
Weddington High



Kathryn Sneary
Weddington Middle



April Newell
Wesley Chapel



Annette Martin
Western Union



Shane Rimmer
Wingate Elementary



Teresa Antol
Wolfe School

TQ Share Day involves teachers teaching teachers

If you want to know the “best practices” in the classroom, talk to the people who teach in those classrooms.

That’s what Total Quality Share Day is all about. In its tenth year, this year’s event, held at Piedmont High School Friday (Feb. 24, 2012), featured about 50 break-out sessions that addressed innovative ways to teach students.

The sessions included information on technology, professional learning communities, educational data and continuous improvement. All presenters were Union County Public School educators.

Director of Staff Development Jimmie Quesinberry, who coordinated the event, said this year’s theme was “Innovation in Education.” Sessions were taught by teachers, principals, assistant principals, curriculum and media coordinators and department directors.

Some of those sessions were “Digital Notetaking in a 1-1 Classroom,” “Going Paperless With Moodle,” “Beefing Up Your Teacher Website,” “Going Global in the Elementary Classroom,” and “Tweeting for Instructional and Professional Benefits.”

The TQ Share Day wasn’t just for teachers, however. Some of the sessions were geared toward principals and assistant principals, as well.

Kelley Zorn, an assistant principal at Sardis Elementary, said as an administrator the TQ Share Day gives her the opportunity to learn best practices that are being used in other schools. “I know that now I have a connection in the school system for when I have questions,” she said. “Now I can go to them and say, ‘Help me. I’m struggling. I need your insight.’”

Zorn said the event was especially effective because it allows teachers to learn from their peers. “They hear about what others are doing in their classrooms, what’s working for their students. It’s



Terri Fleck, a teacher at Weddington Middle, speaks to Union County educators about interdisciplinary teaching through problem-based learning models. Fleck presented during this year’s UCPS Total Quality Share Day.

important because our teachers don’t get the opportunity to go and learn from each other very often. That’s really important.

“Innovation drives the train and makes things happen. Without innovation, our aim at globalization and graduation won’t happen.”

— Rob Jackson
2011 North Carolina Principal of the Year

Deputy Superintendent Dr. David Clarke said this year’s event was designed a little differently. “It’s a different set-up this year,” he said. “We have a staggered schedule, with elementary going first and then middle and high school.”

This year’s TQ Share Day featured keynote speaker Rob Jackson, the 2011 Wells Fargo North Carolina Principal of the Year. Jackson, the principal at Cuthbertson High School, spoke on the importance of innovation in the classroom.

“Innovation drives the train and makes things happen,” he said. “Without innovation, our aim at globalization and

graduation won’t happen. It’s really all about students – the kids who walk into our classrooms and trust us to make sure they get what they need to be successful.”

This event has grown tremendously since it began 10 years ago. The first year, the share day had about 20 presenters and 100 participants. This year’s event had about 75 presenters and 700 educators attend. Quesinberry said the event was held on a “bank day”

when students only had to attend half the school day.

“We transitioned nearly 2,000 people in and out of here in about 30 to 45 minutes,” he said. “We brought elementary school participants in one way, and that filled one of the school’s parking lots. We sent students out another way, while the middle and high school participants came in another entrance.”

UCPS Superintendent Dr. Ed Davis commended all UCPS educators in attendance. “Our school system is in great shape because of our quality teachers,” he said. “Quality teachers result in quality education.”



Keynote speaker Rob Jackson, the 2011 Wells Fargo North Carolina Principal of the Year, speaks on the importance of innovation in the classroom.

Employee News

Births

Congratulations to **Deb Coates Bledsoe**, UCPS Communications Coordinator, and her husband, Bob, on the birth of their granddaughter, Anwyn Elizabeth "Ellie" Womack on Feb. 7, 2012, born to her daughter, Jenna, and son-in-law, Reid Womack.

Congratulations to **Brenda Bigham**, guidance secretary at Parkwood High School, and her husband, Larry, on the birth of their granddaughter, Finley Love Page, on July 1, 2011, to their daughter Amanda Page.

Congratulations to **Natalie Mead**, a teacher at Weddington Middle, and her husband, Andrew, on the birth of their son, Thatcher John, on Sept. 26, 2011.

Deaths

Heartfelt sympathies are extended to the friends and families of the following:

Lisa Moree, UCPS accounts payable specialist, on the death of her father, Larry Joe Clark, on Oct. 8, 2011.

Beth Broadway, NCWISE Coordinator with UCPS Technology Services, on the death of her father, Bynum Lee (Bob) Broadway, on Jan. 30, 2012. Condolences also to **Sandra Fugate**, a teacher at Porter Ridge High, on the loss of her grandfather.

Christine Miller, a teacher at Rea View Elementary, on the death of her father, Jeffrey Grant Coon, on Feb. 8, 2012.

Scott Sofsian, assistant principal at Cuthbertson Middle, on the death of his father, Walter Sofsian, on March 3, 2012.

Don Novak, UCPS School Security Coordinator, on the death of his mother, Mary Ann K. Novak, on Feb. 29, 2012.

Marriages

Congratulations to **Brenda Bigham**, guidance secretary at Parkwood High School, and her husband, Larry, on the marriage of their son, Andrew Bigham, to Shelby Fox on June 18, 2011.

Congratulations to **Mary Locklear**, a teacher at Poplin Elementary, and her husband, Ron, on the marriage of their daughter, Anna-Maria Locklear, to Corey Allen Hunt on Oct. 16, 2011.

Newsletter Policy

ATTENTION:

Employee News items older than six months when submitted may be omitted due to lack of space.

Davis

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Davis said he has been very pleased with the outcomes of his GIG (Globalization, Innovation, Graduation) initiative. "I'm very proud of what we're doing in global education. I'm very proud of what we're doing in technology and the academy approaches to education. And I'm very proud of what we've done with the graduation rate, in helping students to find multiple pathways that help kids get that diploma."

Davis is confident UCPS will reach a 90 percent graduation rate by the end of the 2011-2012 school year. There has been a steady climb in the percentages over the past several years. In 2007, the graduation rate was 77.3 percent. That number increased to 84.2 percent in 2009-2010, and then increased again in 2010-2011 to 89.1 percent.

As for his legacy, Davis said, like the superintendents before him, he hopes that he leaves this already great school system just a little better than it was when he became the leader of the system. "And I think who ever takes over for me, that will be their goal - that on their watch, they'll be able to move the ball forward; to leave it better than they found it."

Davis equates the role of a leader to that of an artist. "Truly gifted leaders are just like artists. They take a blank canvas and they paint a picture that tells the story of their leadership."

As for what kind of leader he considers himself, Davis said, "You need to have a servant-leader attitude and work along side your staff, not lord over them. If you have that attitude, I think people will respect you for the authentic leader that you are and they'll buy into your vision for the system. That's what I tried to do."

Davis began his teaching career in 1977 when he took a job as a special education teacher in the Monroe Schools. He taught for about 10 1/2 years and then became an assistant principal at Piedmont High School, followed by a principalship at Wingate Elementary in 1990. He moved to the high school level in 1994 when he became principal at Parkwood High School.

He joined Central Services in 2000 as assistant superintendent under the leadership of Dr. Jerry

Thomas, who became Davis' mentor. He then took the proverbial helm in 2005.

Davis said he will miss those individuals he's worked with for the past 35 years. "I'll miss the people who do the work - students, teachers, principals, parents, Central staff," he said. "I like being around young people, whether they are in kindergarten or 12th grade. I'll miss seeing all the great things that are going on in their lives; seeing them being shaped by a school system that I had the privilege to lead. That's a tremendously satisfying thing."

"I'll miss the satisfaction of knowing that the decisions I make or the leadership I provide have a direct and positive impact on their lives. That's the thing I'll miss the most."

Davis gives a lot of credit to his wife, Kathy, his two children, Jake and Ashley, and his son-in-law, Ben, for their support. "I wouldn't have been able to do this job if I hadn't had the support of my wife and family. They've been tremendously supportive."

Kathy retired in 2008 after teaching in UCPS for 31 years. "She's made a lot of sacrifices along the way, in terms of being a mom and in her career in order for me to be able to pursue these goals," he said.

As for the future, Davis will continue to teach as an adjunct professor at Wingate University, where he currently teaches education law, superintendency and executive leadership in the doctoral program. He's also planning to travel, hopefully visiting portions of the continental U.S. later this year.

There may even be a book or other published articles on education in the not-too-distant future.

"One of the things I love the most about being a superintendent, and I loved it as an elementary teacher, is reading to young children," he said. "I may even try my hand at writing children's books. That's something I've always been interested in."

Looking back over the past 35 years, Davis said one thing is for certain. "I've always done my best. In some cases it was very good; in some it was okay; and in some it wasn't quite good enough. But I'm only human and I've always done my best. I hope people will judge the work as a whole."

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