



NEWS RELEASE

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CCS Says Farewell to Veteran Cabinet Members

With a combined 163 years of experience, five CCS cabinet members set to retire

Fayetteville, NC – As the 2021-2022 school year comes to a close, five long-time Cumberland County Schools (CCS) cabinet members are retiring. During the Cumberland County Board of Education’s regular June meeting, CCS and the Board recognized these long-standing premier professionals to thank them for their dedication and service to the district.

Dr. Mary Black, Associate Superintendent of Student Support Services; Joe Desormeaux, Associate Superintendent of Auxiliary Services; Clyde Locklear Jr., Associate Superintendent of Business Operations; Betty Musselwhite, Associate Superintendent of School Support; and Ron Phipps, Associate Superintendent of Data and Accountability will leave CCS with a combined 163 years of experience.

“These five educators have dedicated countless hours to ensuring that every student in CCS succeeds,” said Dr. Marvin Connelly, Jr., superintendent. “Over two years ago, before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, several members of our district’s senior leadership team were eligible to retire. When the pandemic threw CCS into unknown territory, they chose to stay aboard and see our district through one of the most challenging times in public education, and for that, we will forever be grateful. While we will miss them, we wish them all the best. We will rest easy knowing that we can still count on them as strong supporters of public education.”

Dr. Mary Black, Associate Superintendent of Student Support Services

Throughout Dr. Black’s career, she has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards including District and Regional Teacher of the Year and District and Regional Principal of the Year. She co-founded and was the visionary of the PRIDE PACT Leadership Academy for Girls. She has also represented the district on numerous community boards.



Most notably, the late Mayor J.L. Dawkins proclaimed November 19, 1993, as Mary A. Black Day in Fayetteville when she was announced as the Southeast Regional Principal of the Year.

"It has been an honor to serve in the Cumberland County Schools community, and may the work I've done speak for me...I will always be a professional educator," Dr. Black said.

Joe Desormeaux, Associate Superintendent of Auxiliary Services.

Desormeaux has nearly 40 years of experience in maintenance, construction and planning in both CCS and Wake County Public Schools. He has overseen \$300 million budgets and completed a \$940 million Capital Improvement Plan. A retired United States Air Force Officer, Desormeaux implemented a new recurring 7-year \$2.2 billion construction plan that included 18 new schools and 16 major renovations.



"I have met and worked with a lot of professionals in both the public and private sector over 20.5 years in the Air Force and 21 years in K-12 education," Desormeaux said. "Without a doubt, I believe that education professionals are at the top of the list. CCS leadership and Auxiliary Services personnel have been a prime example of that belief. It has been great to work in CCS."

Clyde Locklear, Associate Superintendent of Business Operations

Locklear has more than 30 years of experience in finance for K-12 public education. He has handled a wide array of school business functions including budgeting, payroll, auditing, accounting, insurance, benefits, facilities and more. He is a certified School Business Administrator and is a member of numerous associations for business officers.



He currently serves as the co-chair of the School Business Systems Modernization Committee for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

"My time in Cumberland has allowed me to grow professionally, work toward personal and professional goals and to meet and work alongside some dedicated and knowledgeable educators," Locklear said.

Betty Musselwhite, Associate Superintendent of School Support

Although Musselwhite has only served in her current role since 2009, her entire teaching and administrative career has been with CCS. Musselwhite began her teaching career at Seventy-First Elementary School, where she eventually became the assistant principal. When the school closed as an elementary school, she moved with the staff to Loyd Auman Elementary.



From there, she worked at Westover High School and then served as the principal of District 7, Cliffdale and Vanstory Hills elementary schools.

“As a life-time resident of Cumberland County, I am proud to have attended elementary, middle and high school in the Cumberland County School System,” Musselwhite said. “It has been a great honor to serve as a teacher, serve as a school leader, and serve as an advocate and supporter for principals in CCS. I've never strived to be the leader that others choose to follow; but instead, I chose to be an encourager and developer of leaders.”

Ron Phipps, Associate Superintendent of Data and Accountability

Phipps has more than 30 years of experience with CCS, working in the district for his entire career. He began as a teacher and coach at Anne Chesnut Junior High School and moved on to serve as an assistant principal and principal across the county. From there, he worked as the director of Elementary Education, Executive Director of Testing and Assistant Superintendent of Evaluation and Testing.



In this time, Phipps has received numerous employee awards. Most notably, in 2017, he was named the Region 5 Testing Coordinator of the Year.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my entire career in education, all of it here in Cumberland County Schools,” Phipps said. “Over the years, things changed—policies, practices, leadership, etc.—but what did not change were the relationships formed and built with students and adults. I will miss those more than anything! Our school system is in great hands, and I cannot wait to see the progress continue through the years.”



(l-r) Betty Musselwhite, Associate Superintendent of School Support; Clyde Locklear Jr., Associate Superintendent of Business Operations; Dr. Mary Black, Associate Superintendent of Student Support Services; Joe Desormeaux, Associate Superintendent of Auxiliary Services; and Ron Phipps, Associate Superintendent of Data and Accountability

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