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Press Release

ACS Announces Changes in Leadership for 2022-2023

JEFFERSON — Ashe County Schools is excited to announce several changes in leadership for the 2022-2023 school year. The district welcomes two new principals, one new assistant principal, a new director, and a curriculum coordinator.

“It is an honor and pleasure to promote and grow leaders who are invested in Ashe County Schools,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Eisa Cox. “Each of these leaders bring energy, a growth mindset, a passion for education and a commitment to the students and families of Ashe County.”



Dustin Farmer

Ashe County High School will now be led by Dustin Farmer who will be the school’s principal. More recently he has served as the principal of Ashe County Middle School.

Farmer has worked in education for a total of 19 years. Throughout his career he has spent 9 years as a teacher and 10 as an administrator.

What he looks forward to most as the principal of ACHS is a new personal/professional challenge and the interaction with students.

“Several of these students I will have had the opportunity to have seen as elementary students at Westwood, middle school students at ACMS, and now high school students ready to graduate,” Farmer said.

He is thankful for the opportunity that Dr. Cox and the Board of Education have given him, saying there is so much to look forward to.

He would like the Ashe County Community to know that he is a principal, pastor, husband, and dad. He is a product of Ashe County Schools and a graduate of Northwest Ashe High School. He considers himself blessed to work in Ashe County for the entirety of his career thus far. Farmer has three children enrolled in ACS so he has a personal interest in the system, K-12.

“I have always tried to make decisions not only with students' best interest in mind, but as if I were making the decision with my own child's best interest in mind,” Farmer said. “I am excited about the challenges that await ahead and look forward to working with all stakeholders to make ACHS one of the top high schools in the state of NC.”

A quote he chose to describe himself is the following by John C. Maxwell, ““Students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

“I am super excited to work with the ACHS staff, students and families to create a vision for the future,” Farmer said. “I am eager to learn the ins and outs of the high school process as students enter as freshman and leave as senior graduates ready for the real world. I am thrilled to work with the staff to make the decisions that will hold students accountable, but also recognize them for meeting their goals.”



Dr. Susan Mochen

At Ashe County Middle School both the principal and assistant principal position will see changes. Dr. Susan Mochen, who joined Ashe County Schools at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, will take on the role of principal. Sherrie Hines, who formerly taught at Ashe County Middle School, will be the school’s assistant principal.

Mochen started her journey in education over 20 years ago as a middle school teacher for exceptional children. Throughout her career, she has also gained experience at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She describes middle school students as being at a pivotal age and she was glad to be back with her favorite age group last summer when she was named assistant principal at ACMS.

“Now as the principal, I am looking forward to keeping the middle school the awesome school that it is and making it even better,” Mochen said. “Every school has room for growth and that is what I plan to do, bring ACMS to the next level. I want our students to reach their fullest potential in all aspects: academically, socially, emotionally, and I want them to experience as many learning opportunities as possible. I hope to share the vision of ‘growth mindset’ with our staff, as we dive in more deeply to this concept. I look forward to the continued relationship with the amazing teachers and support staff, guiding them on this journey to excellence.”

She wants ACS families and the community to know that she is here for them and their children. She believes that every child can and will learn, and it is her honor to guide the teachers leading children toward their personal best.

“Middle school is a time of exploration, uncertainty, and a chance to dream big,” Mochen said. “It is not easy being a parent/guardian of a middle schooler, but together we’ve got this.”

A quote by John Quincy Adams that she loves and she feels describes herself is, “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”



Sherrie Hines

Hines has been in education for 20 years during which she has taught grades 6-10 and been both a secondary instructional specialist and an assistant principal.

What she looks forward to most in this new role is serving the students, faculty, staff and parents of Ashe County.

“I’ve been away from ACMS for almost ten years and it feels great getting the opportunity to return to the school where I first started my career,” Hines said. “Middle school is such an awesome time for students and I hope to make their seventh and eighth grade years educational and fun. I also look forward to seeing the amazing teachers at ACMS in action and assisting our wonderful principal in providing an environment where all students can learn and grow.”

She wants ACMS families to know that she is dedicated to doing her absolute best to ensure that all students are safe, loved, and supported. She always wants them to know that if there are ever any questions, concerns, or suggestions, her door is always open.

When asked what quote she would choose to describe herself, she chose the following quote by Albert Einstein, “The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”

The Central Support Services office welcomes Tammy Woods as the Child Nutrition Director and Casey Smith as the K-5 Curriculum Coordinator.



Tammy Woods

Woods has worked in education for almost 20 years and is the former CTE Secretary and Child Nutrition Administrative Assistant. Upon the retirement of former Director of Child Nutrition Martha Turner, Woods was promoted to the Director of Child Nutrition.

What she looks forward to most in her new role is that it will allow her to be part of the department that nourishes students, faculty, and staff.

“I plan to cherish the students, build and develop along with the staff, and offer good food,” Woods said. “I will work diligently and loyally for each of you.”

She would like Ashe County families and the community to know that she is honored to work with her fellow staff and work for the students of Ashe County.

A quote she chose to describe herself is a Chinese proverb which reads, “Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”



Casey Smith

Smith has worked in education for 17 years and more recently served as the Literacy Specialist at Blue Ridge Elementary School.

She looks forward to working with teachers in her new role because it was one of her favorite parts of being a Literacy Specialist.

“I believe in the power of collaboration and teamwork.” Smith said. “I have learned and witnessed the truth behind the well-known proverb, ‘It takes a village to raise a child.’ I believe it takes a village to educate *a* child. I look forward to supporting teachers across the district in the learning and implementation of the Science of Reading in classrooms. I can’t wait to see the positive impact these instructional practices will have on our students. The ability to read is the gateway to being successful in school and life. It is up to us, as educators, to provide our children with best-practice instruction so they have the opportunity to be strong leaders with bright futures.”

She would like the Ashe County community to know that she has lived and worked in Ashe County since 2005. She and her husband have two kids, Libby age 10 and Cale age 7. Their family loves the outdoors, sports and spending time with family and friends. She believes that it was “meant to be” when she was hired at BRES many years ago where she had the opportunity to learn from some of the best and build relationships with many people. She described her coworkers as being a great inspiration to her personally and professionally.

A quote that she chose to describe herself is “Be the change, leave a legacy.” This quote was inspired by the ACMS 6-Word Memoirs project.

“Ashe County is a special place to live,” Smith said. “I am grateful to be here.”