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Superintendent Brian Harvey announces retirement

By Hayden Walker
associates editor

After serving the Oxford School District for 26 years, Superintendent Brian Harvey announced that he would retire from his position at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. The announcement was made at an Oxford School District Board of Trustees meeting on Thursday, November 19. Harvey is a graduate of Oxford High School, and he has held many positions in the district. He has been the superintendent for the past nine years.

"I will always be related to Oxford School District in some capacity and I will seek to help wherever I can be of assistance," Harvey said. "This is my home and it has been a big part of my life and my family's life, and I continue to owe a debt of gratitude to this school district and this community."

In his time working for the Oxford School District, Harvey has worked as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent.

"I was a student at Oxford High School, and [working for the Oxford School District] has been the only job I have ever had," Harvey said. "In 1995 I was hired as a teacher and a coach and I did that for ten years. Then, I moved into to administration and have been there for the last 16. Hopefully, the Oxford School District is in a better place than it was nine years ago when I took over as superintendent and hopefully the young people that I've had a chance to work with are better because of my involvement with it."

Harvey had been considering retirement before the pandemic began.

"It [retiring] was certainly a thought before [2020]," Harvey said. "Once you reach retirement age, then the opportunity to pursue some other passions become available. It was just the right time for me. It wasn't a spur of the moment decision, it was something that my wife and I have been discussing for some time and this just seemed like the right time to do it."

While being superintendent allows Harvey to be in a better position to accomplish his visions for the district, he does not have day-to-day interactions with students like he did early in his career.

"As superintendent, I don't really work with students at all. I do miss that because you get into education to be around kids, to be around students. That truly is a love and passion of mine and as you move up, the opportunity to do that somewhat disappears," Harvey said. "I think the other thing is being able to work with the great professionals that we have here. They are the ones that truly

touch the children's lives now. Being able to work with them and help them to do their jobs has been tremendously fulfilling."

Harvey has accomplished a lot during his tenure: starting a universal pre-kindergarten program located at Bramlett Elementary School, creating the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at OHS, organizing the Charger Health and Wellness Center and developing the "Portrait of a Graduate," which is a collection of qualities that students should have upon graduating from Oxford High

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- Brian Harvey
Superintendent



School. He has enjoyed seeing the growth of extracurricular programs at OHS over the years.

"I'm proud of our activities and athletics programs and the success that they have had. When I moved here as a student in 1987, the Oxford School District didn't have many of those programs," Harvey said. "To see the drama department, the band and chorus department, our athletics and activities department grow to be one of the most successful in the state, that's something else that I'm particularly proud of having a hand in as both a teacher and a coach and also as an administrator and superintendent."

According to Harvey, being familiar with Oxford has helped him immensely in knowing how to best help the school district.

"I already had prior knowledge of the community, the school, the teachers and the staff," Harvey said. "I think that helped me in being able to forge a path forward. That doesn't mean that I made all the right decisions and made every-

body happy all the time, but I think it was beneficial for me."

Harvey says his best piece of advice for the next superintendent would be to be confident in his or her decisions, but he would also be willing to give more specific advice over the phone.

"I would probably give them my phone number and just say 'call me if you want to talk,'" Harvey said. "I guess the best advice is try not to be reactive. Be proactive in your approach, that's probably the best advice, but it would be followed with my phone number."

The Oxford School District Board of Trustees voted December 11 to coordinate with the Mississippi School Boards Association in the search for Harvey's successor. For Assistant Superintendent Bradley Roberson, who is applying for the position, having Harvey as a mentor and coworker has been extremely impactful.

"Brian and I go back about 20 years. When I came out of Ole Miss, I helped Brian as an assistant baseball coach. He was the head baseball coach at Oxford High School at the time. I've worked with him ever since," Roberson said. "I've learned a lot from him. He has had a profound impact on my career as an educator, and I'm very thankful for his leadership and for his friendship over the years."

While he is thankful for Harvey's mentorship, Roberson also admires the long and impressive list of accomplishments that the Oxford School District has achieved under Harvey's leadership.

"If you write down all the achievements and things he's accomplished, I think that you would be astounded at what all he's done," Roberson said. "But what makes him special is the fact that you will never hear him say that he is responsible for any of that. He would say it's because the Oxford School District has excellent students, excellent teachers, excellent administrators, and excellent parents and a community. He'll never take credit for any of that which is truly what makes him special, and at the same time it's also what has made him successful. If you look at his tenure at the Oxford School District, I dare say that there's not another superintendent in the state of Mississippi or maybe even around the country that has had the impact on their school district as much as he has at the Oxford School District."