

SOUTH PANOLA SCHOOL DISTRICT APPOINTS DR. DEL PHILLIPS AS SUPERINTENDENT

Del R. Phillips, III, Ph.D., superintendent of Sumner County Schools in Gallatin, TN, has been appointed as the new superintendent of South Panola School District. The board selected Dr. Phillips after narrowing the list from 14 applicants to two finalists who were interviewed by the board.

“We are excited to have Dr. Phillips as our next superintendent. He brings a wealth of educational knowledge and student advancement; we look forward to achieving to be one of the top school districts in the State of Mississippi” said Sandra Darby, Board President, South Panola School District.

Dr. Phillips has 27 years of experience in the field of education—25 of which have been in various administrative positions. He has served as a teacher, athletic director, principal, and assistant superintendent, and superintendent.

As superintendent of Sumner County Schools, Dr. Phillips:

- Served as co-chair and drafted the Sumner County Financial Modernization Act, which was passed by the Tennessee legislature. The act consolidated back-office services of the county and school system, creating efficiencies by moving from a laborious paper system to an ERP solution;
- Created a curriculum plan to implement a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) focused strand in all high schools, awarded the first two STEM-accredited schools in Tennessee by AdvancED, and led the effort that resulted in 18 STEM-certified Sumner County Schools out of 38 STEM-certified schools in Tennessee;
- Led development of a comprehensive technology plan to include infrastructure and end-user issues, increased annual expenditures for classroom technology from \$20,000 to \$2 million per year, and invested more than \$20 million since 2019 to advance student device technology;
- Drove a \$30 million effort to increase teacher pay;
- Increased registered nurses on school campuses from 12 to 50, placing a school nurse on each campus;
- Initiated a program that allowed licensed social workers to work directly with schools and school counselors to support students in crisis;
- Led the effort to improve security by partnering with the sheriff to place a School Resource Office (SRO) in each school, resulting in funding for an additional 47 SROs since 2012;
- Recognized by the Tennessee Department of Education for the highest number of TDOE-certified trade and technical career pathways by any school system in Tennessee;

- Supported co-curricular student and team activities with more than ten team State Championships since 2017, numerous individual State Champions, and State and National Champions in DECA, HOSA, FFA, and Fine Arts; and
- Successfully mediated two contentious lawsuits filed by the ACLU and local teachers union.

His background experience includes advocating legislators to support education, implementing policies, managing annual budgets, overseeing dual credit for area high schools, hiring teachers and support staff, securing partnerships with community organizations, maintaining a safe environment for students, and staying updated with current practices, trends, and curriculum.

“I am so excited to be back home and once again a part of the Tiger family” Dr. Phillips said of his appointment. “I want to thank the South Panola School Board and community for their support. We’re always going to be focused on how to serve students well and support teachers as we provide the best education possible to every child. Go Tigers!”

Dr. Phillips, a product of Corinth, MS, is a graduate of Mississippi State University where he received a bachelor’s degree in technology teacher education and marketing. He received his master’s degree in educational leadership and his doctorate degree in educational leadership from the University of Mississippi.

Dr. Phillips has received the A.F. Bridges Sportsmanship Award for School System Administrator of the Year by the Tennessee High School Activities Association (2018-2019) and named “Best in Business” Award finalist by the Nashville Business Journal (2016).

Dr. Phillips currently serves as president on the Tri-Star Hendersonville Medical Center and United Way Sumner County. He serves as a board member on the following board of directors: Union University Hendersonville, Hendersonville Chamber of Commerce, Sumner Insurance Trust, Sumner County Health Department, Sumner County Commission, and Forward Sumner Economic Council.

Dr. Phillips will assume his leadership position as superintendent of the South Panola School District on July 1, 2023.