



August | 01 | 2016

### Meet the District's New Administrators



#### **Special Assistant to the Superintendent – *Melissa Kates***

Ms. Kates has an extensive history as an attorney representing school districts as general counsel and as board counsel. Prior to joining Duncanville ISD, she helped Underwood Law Firm establish its Dallas-Fort Worth presence in 2013. Ms. Kates is well-versed in school law matters, district policies and open records. She received her Bachelor of Business Administration in Management from

Texas A&M University and her Juris Doctor from Dedman School of Law at Southern Methodist University. Ms. Kates is presently working toward her master's degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at University of Texas at Arlington.

#### **Assistant Superintendent of Operations – *Andrea Hill Fields***

Ms. Fields brings 37 years of experience in public education to Duncanville Independent School District. Previously, she was the Deputy Superintendent for District Services in Longview ISD. Her journey included service as a teacher, assistant principal, supervisor and director. Ms. Fields earned her bachelor's degree in Education at Louisiana Tech University and a master's degree in Secondary Educational Administration from Stephen F. Austin University.



### First Day of School is Coming Soon



The first day of school is August 22 for all teachers and students.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone on the first day and EVERY day this year to make it the best yet for Duncanville ISD!

### 2016-2017 Calendar Allows More Training



**Chief of Schools – Ed Hernandez**

Dr. Hernandez joins Duncanville Independent School District from Crowley ISD, where he was most recently a Chief Academic Officer and oversaw the district’s oversight for college and career readiness, federal programs, state assessment and school improvement. Prior to Crowley, he was a principal in Terrell ISD and spent 13 years in Dallas ISD, where he was a teacher, principal and executive director. Dr.

Hernandez received his undergraduate degree in Finance and Political Science from Texas Christian University and earned his master’s degree and doctorate in Education from Texas A&M – Commerce.



The 2016-2017 school year will begin Monday, August 22, 2016 and end Thursday, June 1, 2017.

Due to a State Legislative change to the definition of a school day, the district has the opportunity to implement additional staff training days throughout the school year. On these district training days, students will be off but school staff will work to improve the quality of education provided to students.

View the complete calendar [here](#).

**Chief of Schools – Thurston B. Lamb**

Dr. Lamb arrives in the district from DeSoto ISD, where he was the Executive Principal at DeSoto High School. Prior to that, he was an administrator in Crowley ISD and Plano ISD. Dr. Lamb is no stranger to Duncanville. He was an assistant principal at the high school more than a decade ago. In addition to being a former United States Marine, Dr. Lamb earned his bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from the University of Central Arkansas, a master’s degree in Education from Texas A&M – Commerce and a PhD in Educational Leadership from Capella University.



**Director of Staff Development – Crystal Cross**

A familiar face is moving within the district. Ms. Cross is leaving Hardin Intermediate School after five years as their principal to join the Duncanville ISD Central Administration team. Ms. Cross has also worked in Rockwall ISD as a Title One Instructional Facilitator and in Alief ISD as an assistant principal for the intermediate, middle and elementary school levels. Prior to that she was a teacher in Alief ISD.



**Board Approves New Budget: Highlights Include Staff Raises, New Teacher Salary Increase, and Teacher Leaders**

During a Special Board Meeting on Monday, June 27, the Duncanville ISD Board of Trustees approved a balanced budget that provides a district-wide employee raise and increases the starting salary for new teachers to \$50,000. The Board also made pay grade adjustments to ensure

**Director of Human Resources – Alexis McClendon**

Ms. McClendon comes to Duncanville Independent School District from Rockwall ISD, where she was the Director of Human Resources. Previously, she held the position of Coordinator for Human Resource Services in Mansfield ISD for approximately eight years. Ms. McClendon earned her Bachelor of Business Administration-Management from Southwest Texas State University, and her Master of Arts in Human Services from Liberty University. Ms. McClendon said that she chose a career in Human Resources because she loves helping and connecting people.





**Director of Special Education – Mackenzie Casall**

Ms. Casall joins Duncanville Independent School District from Irving ISD. During the past year, she has been the principal at Wheeler Transitional Center, an Admissions, Review and Dismissal (ARD) placement option for special education students who show an inability to function of their home campus. The program’s goal was to improve student social skill level to a point where

the student is able to return to the home campus. Ms. Casall has also been a Special Education Coordinator in Irving ISD, Lead Diagnostician in DeSoto ISD and Special Education Teacher in Garland ISD. She has a bachelor’s degree in General Studies from Texas Tech University and earned two master’s degrees - Special Education and Educational Administration - from the University of North Texas.

**Director of Assessment and Accountability – Nneka Bernard**

Ms. Bernard is moving from Duncanville High School to take a new role as Duncanville ISD’s Director of Assessment and Accountability. Ms. Bernard joined the district in October 2015 as the DHS 9th grade principal. She served as a principal, assistant principal and high school teacher in Grand Prairie ISD before coming to the district. Ms.

Bernard earned a Bachelor of Arts from Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi and a Masters of Business Administration from Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. She is currently working on her doctorate in curriculum and instruction from Texas A&M University. In her new role, Ms. Bernard hopes to help Duncanville ISD become more data literate and intentional in its systems of continuous improvement.



**Director of Safety and Security – Chad Wilhelm**

Mr. Wilhelm comes to Duncanville ISD from Marshall ISD, where he was the Chief of Police overseeing the Marshall ISD Police Department. This move is actually a return home, because his parents lived in Duncanville when he was born and his first home purchase was in Duncanville. Mr. Wilhelm is a former United States Marine with established experience in school policing leadership. He has served as Police Chief for Kerens ISD and was once a K-9 Officer and



School Resource Officer in the Hunt County Sheriff’s Office. Mr. Wilhelm has also earned his Master Peace Officer License. He is a recent graduate of the Leadership Command College at Sam Houston State University.

salaries within Duncanville ISD are competitive with comparable school positions across the area. Trustees placed a priority on adopting a balanced budget for fiscal year 2016-2017 after adopting a deficit budget four of the last six years.

**Employee Raises**

The Board of Trustees worked diligently to provide a 1% raise in the 2016-2017 budget while enhancing academic programs and prioritizing fiscal responsibility.

The pay raise positively impacts all employee groups.

**New Teacher Salary Increase/Pay Grade Adjustments**

After reviewing the results of a compensation study presented to the Board in June, it was determined that the starting salary for Duncanville ISD teachers was below that of others in the area. To be more competitive in the hiring market and to draw talented new teachers, starting pay for beginning teachers will increase from \$49,000 to \$50,000.

**Classroom Support**

One high point of the 2016-2017 budget for classroom support is the addition of 12 Teacher Leader positions. The Teacher Leaders will provide mentoring and curriculum support. They will be housed on individual

**Director of Purchasing and Warehouse –  
Christi Courson**

Ms. Courson comes to us from Somerset Independent School District, where she was the Executive Director of Finance and Business Service. She has nearly 20 years of experience working in schools, including periods of time in LaMarque ISD and Dickinson ISD. Ms. Courson earned a Bachelor of Business Administration - Accounting from Stephen F. Austin University.

Ms. Courson's philosophy is to give our students the tools they need to have the best education and achieve every opportunity for success.



campuses and will provide training and coaching to continue the implementation of the district's new curriculum which began in the 2015-2016 school year. To view the presentations shown during the Special Board Meeting on Monday, June 27, 2016, [click here.](#)



**DHS Executive Principal – Tia Locke-Simmons**

Ms. Simmons has taken the helm at Duncanville High School and became the first woman to hold the position in school history. She was most recently the Principal at Spring High School, which is located about 20 miles north of Houston. She previously served as a Director of Accountability in Spring ISD and an Associate Principal in Klein ISD. Ms. Simmons has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Our Lady of the Lake University and a Masters

of Education in Educational Leadership from Stephen F. Austin University. She is currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Sam Houston State University.

**Duncanville ISD  
Transitions to New  
Student Info System**



**Principal Byrd Middle School – Kendria  
Davis-Martin**

Ms. Davis-Martin joins the Duncanville Independent School District family from Mansfield ISD, where she was an Associate Principal at Summit High School. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Texas at Arlington and her Master of Science in Educational Administration from Texas A&M University at Commerce. Ms. Davis-Martin believes in servant leadership.



Online registration for the 2016-2017 school year began in mid-July, and will be a little different this year. Duncanville ISD has transitioned to a new student information system, Skyward. Parents will no longer use Home Access Center to register their students or look up grades during the school year. Instead, parents will use Skyward's Family Access. A letter was sent home with instructions on how to log in and register your student for the 2016-17 school year. For additional questions, click [here.](#)



**Principal, Merrifield Elementary – Tanji Towels**

Ms. Towels joins us from Irving ISD where she was an elementary school principal. She was also a principal in Manor ISD and assistant principal in Richardson ISD. Ms. Towels earned a Bachelors of Science Elementary Education from Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma, and a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Texas at Arlington. She values

student success and a growth mindset in her staff.

**Principal, Hardin Intermediate – Pamela Brown**

Ms. Brown comes to Duncanville Independent School District from Lancaster ISD, where she was the principal at Lancaster Middle School. Previously, she also served as a middle school dean of teaching and learning in Grand Prairie ISD, a district mathematics coordinator in DeSoto ISD, and a teacher in Dallas ISD. Ms. Brown received a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at Prairie View A&M University and a Masters of Public Administration at the University of Texas at Arlington. She has 14 years of experience in education and has a passion for kids.



**Upcoming Events:**

**Convocation**, August 11, 9:00 a.m. at DHS's Alexander Auditorium.

**Meet the Teacher**, 6-8 p.m.

*Elementary* - August 18

*Intermediate* - August 23

*Middle* - August 25

*High School* - September 8



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