

Meet The Finalists

RPS Announces Finalists For The District's Top Job



Dr. Dana Tyrone Bedden

Dr. Dana Tyrone Bedden holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a master's degree in Educational Administration from Pennsylvania State University. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Florida, completed post-doctoral courses in School Business Leadership at Wilkes University and attended Harvard University Graduate School of Education Leadership Institute for Superintendents.

An accomplished, creative, high-energy leader with 20 years of experience in administration and leadership, Dr. Bedden has a results-oriented record of improving academic achievement, working with diverse groups, increasing parent/community involvement, implementing systems-thinking, and providing a positive school and work environment. Dr. Bedden has demonstrated effective leadership skills in standards and performance based practices, human resource management, fiscal management, and school/community partnerships.

In his most recent position as superintendent of the Irving (Texas) Independent School District, Dr. Bedden oversaw an economically and socially diverse school district with 4500 employees serving 35,111 students representing 90 countries and speaking over 50 languages on 38 campuses. The position also entailed overseeing the development and management of a \$260 million general fund budget and approximate \$400 million total budget. His responsibilities included implementing a new multi-year strategic plan for the school district, developing a strategic communications plan for improvement of both internal and external communication. Dr. Bedden led Irving ISD through one of its most difficult financial periods resulting from state funding reductions while maintaining the District's strong AA+ and Aa2 bond ratings and earning recognition from the State Comptroller as a five-star district from 2010-2012 for financial management and academic progress (highest rating for improving student achievement while keeping expenditures relatively low).

Superintendent Bedden provided guidance and professional learning for his leadership team on systems-thinking and the use of balanced scorecard to support organizational improvement. During his three year tenure, the district expanded its Advanced Placement course offerings and increased the percentage of students taking: AP courses by 13.6%, AP exams scores by 23.6%, AP Scholars recognition by 14.4% and the SAT participation rate from 39% to 85%. His system-wide reading and math extended learning program for grades K-11 provided 85,000 books for summer reading and math enrichment activities. During the 2011-2012 school year, each comprehensive high school began implementation of signature programs in the areas of: Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE); Aviation and Bio-Medical Science; Energy and Environmental Entrepreneurship as part of twelve career and technical education pathways. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses taken by students increased over 50%. Fine Arts enrollment also experienced a significant increase in enrollment of approximately 18%. In

2012 and 2013, two of the four Irving ISD high schools received Silver Medal Recognition by *U.S. News & World Report* as being in the top 8% of more than 21,000 high schools. In 2013, two of the four high schools were also selected for Newsweek's Best High Schools. The District's graduation rate increased from 78% in 2009 to 86% in 2013.

Prior to Irving ISD, Dr. Bedden served as superintendent for Richmond County (Augusta, GA) where he also had two high schools recognized in the top 200 schools in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*. Particularly noteworthy were the improvements in academic performance in multiple areas. Along with an increase in the percentage of schools making adequate yearly progress (AYP), the percentage of students graduating increased from 63.8% to 77%. In addition, seven out of eight comprehensive high schools increased their graduation rate during his tenure as superintendent.

He has also served as a Regional Superintendent in Philadelphia Public Schools, High School Principal at School Without Walls Senior High School in Washington, D.C., a public, urban college preparatory school, Subschool Principal in Fairfax County Schools, Director of Athletics and middle school teacher in other school districts.

Dr. Bedden has extensive experience serving on local, state and national committees and boards of community and business organizations as well as a being a speaker on important educational issues. He has published, contributed or been featured in several professional publications such as Phi Delta Kappa, Executive Education, District Administrator, and SMARTBUSINESS.



Dr. Anthony Jackson

Anthony D. Jackson, Ed.D., Superintendent of the Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools (NRMPS) in Rocky Mount, NC, serves at the helm of 29 schools educating 16,400 students and employs 2100 licensed and support personnel. Prior to coming to NRMPS, Anthony served as the division Superintendent of the Henry County Public School System located in Collinsville, Virginia.

Dr. Jackson's 25-year educational career began as a teacher's assistant, and has matriculated through the public school ranks as a music teacher, assistant principal, principal, and various central office administrative posts in several Virginia and North Carolina districts. Prior to accepting his inaugural superintendency, Dr. Jackson worked as the principal and Chief Administrative Officer of the Arts and Technology Academy Public Charter School (ATA), a highly successful public charter school in Washington DC. He also served as a Regional Vice President for Curriculum and Instruction with a charter school management company.

Under his leadership at NRMPS, Dr. Jackson has introduced and pioneered several curriculum initiatives designed to improve student achievement and outcomes. Most recently, Jackson has implemented a full-scale transformation of NRMPS' instructional model, by implementing a district-wide initiative focused on K-12 Literacy and the iConnect 1:1 Digital Learning Initiative. This \$10 million initiative provides iPads and Mac Book Air laptops to all students in grades 4-12 and serves as the guidepost for increasing student engagement, while also providing strategies for differentiation of instruction and the enhancement of academic rigor. Understanding the ever-growing presence of social media, NRMPS has increased the number of communications opportunities via various genres of social media. Every student is afforded the opportunity to take full-advantage of on-demand learning anywhere, anytime supported by a wealth of high-quality aligned digital resources.

Jackson's commitment to higher level academic coursework is evidenced by a significant increase in the number of middle school students enrolled in Algebra I by 8th grade, in addition to, the exponential growth in the number of students identified and served as Academically Gifted. Since the development of the clearly articulated course pathways, students are now better prepared to successfully take and pass advanced level courses in high school. The redesigning the district's alternative educational program has provided a safety net for students at-risk for school failure and/or dropout. Under Jackson's leadership, the on-time cohort graduation rate in the NRMPS has increased from 70.8 percent to 79.4 percent.

The NRMPS' fully implemented Common Core Standards, accompanied by Common Core Curriculum Guides, has been attributed to Dr. Jackson's leadership. Also included is the strengthening and expansion of professional development opportunities for teachers and support staff, to ensure that teachers and instructional support staff are well-equipped with the skills and capacity to deliver high quality instruction that is deemed as rigorous and relevant.

Other administrative accolades while leading NRMPS, include developing protocols and procedures to ensure that all schools are safe, orderly, and efficient learning environments for all students. Fostering collegial and productive relationships with members of the Board of Education and other local elected officials has translated into the needed resources to install access control systems at the entrances of every school. The district's executive leadership has developed a clear and cohesive strategic plan, a 10-year Facilities Master Plan and has successfully completed the district's first K-12 student reassignment process in over 20 years. These efforts, in addition to saving money, have allowed the district to ease overcrowding, eliminate redundant bus routes, and decommission mobile units. Resources encumbered from these efforts have been repurposed for other strategic priorities.

As the 2013 NC Central-Region Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Jackson's formal training is inclusive of earned degrees in educational leadership (Ed.D., Walden University (2010), school administration (Master of Education, North Carolina Central University (1993), and music education (B.S., East Carolina University, (1987). He holds board membership on the Nash and Edgecombe Boys and Girls Clubs, The United Way, The Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce, The Nashville Arts Council and the Braswell Library Board of Trustees. He also holds membership in many professional and civic organizations including Rotary International and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.



Dr. Calvin Watts

Dr. Calvin Watts currently serves as an Assistant Superintendent in the Division of School Improvement and Operations in Gwinnett County (GA) Public Schools (GCPS), winner of the 2010 Broad Prize for Urban Education. As the largest school district in Georgia, and the 12th largest in the country, GCPS enrolls 169,000 students. As Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Watts provides effective leadership and oversight management to 21 principals and school facilities. Watts also supports a school improvement process for eleven (11) GCPS schools identified in Priority, Focus and Alert status according to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). His results-oriented leadership has served to improve persistently low-performing schools in GCPS districtwide.

Prior to his current assignment, Dr. Watts served GCPS as an Associate Superintendent and Area Superintendent. Watts has also been employed in GCPS as an assistant principal, an elementary and middle school principal, and an area director of staffing in the Division of Human Resources. Before joining GCPS in 2001, Dr. Watts served as principal and assistant principal for the Archdiocese of Atlanta and also served as a middle school teacher in Carrollton, GA, Atlanta, GA, and in Seattle, WA, where he was born and raised.

Watts is currently a member of the National SUPES Academy—Cohort 2013, and he successfully completed The Superintendent Professional Development Program, sponsored by the GaDOE and the Georgia School Superintendents Association from 2005-2007. Dr. Watts earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Howard University, and completed his Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from Argosy University/Atlanta.

Watts is a lifelong learner and he participates in many community and civic activities. He is a member of numerous educational organizations, and has also been the recipient of several leadership honors and distinctions.

Dr. Watts enjoys traveling, reading, listening to music and both watching and playing sports. He is happily married to his wife, Robbye [Rob-bee] and they have one son, Devin, who is currently a 5th grade student in GCPS.