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Drakes Creek names new principal

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Bonnie Spears is welcomed as the new principal of Drakes Creek Middle gymnasium.

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Drakes Creek Middle School students and staff welcomed their new principal to the school on Wednesday with cupcakes and a resounding “Go Gators!”

Bonnie Spears, who currently serves as principal of Chandler’s School in Logan County, will begin the formal transition to Drakes Creek in January.

Spears said she took an interest in Drakes Creek in the hopes of “growing myself as an educator” and added she hasn’t stopped smiling since she accepted the position.

“Looking back to when I taught middle school, being in a setting where I've had a range of ages, I'm drawn to middle school, that's where I want to be,” Spears said. “So being back in a middle school, that was (why I accepted) — and it being Drake's Creek.”

Former principal Daryl Woods served for 11 years before taking the district position of director of secondary instruction earlier this year.

Spears said the community relationships built at Drake’s Creek quickly caught her interest in the search process.

“That's one of the things that I know they do without even being in the building yet because they have such great success,” Spears said. “Warren County's got a great district.”

As an added benefit, Spears said green and yellow — the school’s colors — already make up a large part of her wardrobe.

“I’m really excited about the school colors, I’m not going to lie,” Spears said.

Spears began her career in Simpson County in 2003 teaching middle school for six years. She then taught 8th-grade Language Arts for seven years in Logan County.

Spears then began work with the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative as a cognitive coach where she toured schools across the region, primarily middle schools, to work with teachers on educational strategies.

Her work with GRREC often centered around “flip learning models” — prioritizing active work in class and leaving things like reading and lectures for home — and digital learning, both of which she said became crucial during at-home COVID-19 instruction.

Spears has been at Chandler's for eight years, serving as an assistant principal for six and principal for two while overseeing preschool through 8th-grade students.

Spears graduated from Western Kentucky University in 2003 with a Bachelor of Science in Middle Grades Education. She received her Master of Arts in Education in 2010 and obtained her Rank 1 in Leadership and Administration in 2018 from WKU as well.

She also received her National Board Certification in early adolescent reading in 2013 in Arlington, Virginia.

Spears will remain involved at Chandler's through the transition period to make sure her replacement is well prepared, but said she plans to be at Drake's Creek "as much as possible."

"It's really important that I can help make that transition (easier) for the interim that takes my place, just to make sure we've put forth some great routines, scheduling, some things that are really important to our building that I want to make sure that individual understands," Spears said.

She added that the transition period may be as short as a few weeks if Chandler's can hire someone over winter break.

Warren County Superintendent Rob Clayton said Spears was chosen among three "quality candidates" in part because she "understood the importance of developing positive relationships with students."

"She understands that communication is essential to being an effective leader," Clayton said. "I think her experience (is valuable) — being able to have an individual that has not only led a school that has gained that wisdom and experience that comes from being in that lead position."

Clayton said while it's not ideal to bring in a new principal mid-year, he's confident that Spears has the experience and support to make it work.

“We've done this before, so it's not unprecedented,” Clayton said. “We're just very optimistic that it will be a smooth transition for all parties involved.”

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