

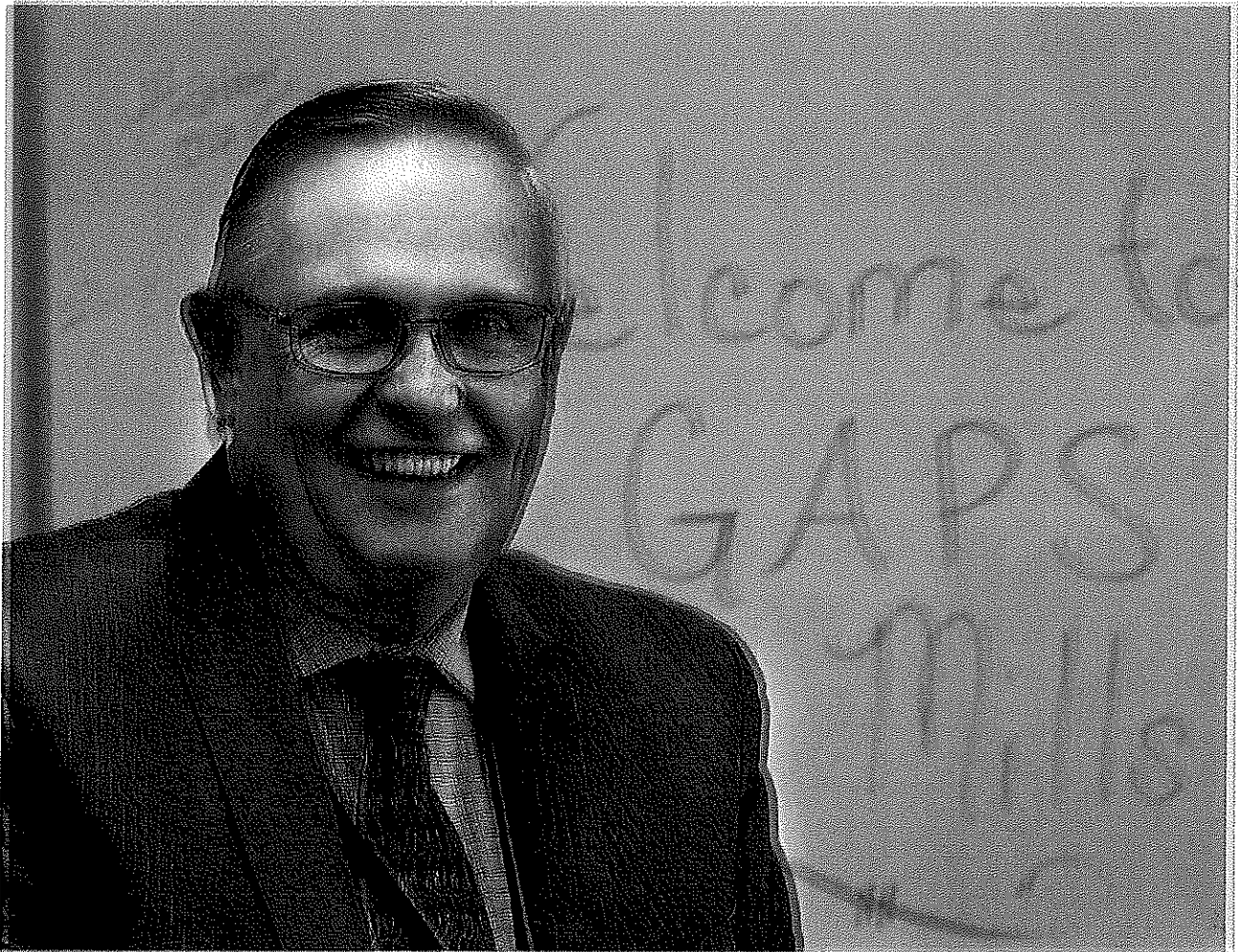
https://democratherald.com/news/local/education/a-good-year-of-education-interim-superintendent-takes-the-reins/article_6371bdc7-0962-542f-b1d4-2414b1152aa8.html

FEATURED

'A good year of education': Interim superintendent takes the reins in Albany

JENNIFER MOODY Albany Democrat-Herald Sep 3, 2018

TRY 1 MONTH FOR 99¢



Tim Mills, the interim superintendent for the Greater Albany Public Schools district, was welcomed to his p messages from his new staff members on a whiteboard in his office.



In that time, Mills said, he'll hold to the same educational philosophy he's always had: "First and foremost, nothing in a community is more important than education."

Mills developed that mindset growing up in Golden, Colorado, where his grandmother became his primary caretaker when he was 2 years old. She had just an eighth-grade education herself and held teachers and the local minister in the highest esteem.

"She was such a believer in education," Mills said. "From the time I was pretty small, she talked about how great it would be if I was a teacher."

Mills agreed, especially because his own teachers were among his strongest mentors and supporters. He learned to play the trombone in fifth grade, an instrument that led to a scholarship to the University of Colorado College of Music, where he studied education to become a band teacher.

Mills taught band for 11 years, then went into administration. He has served as a middle school principal, an assistant principal and an executive director of high school education. Three of his years as a superintendent were in the North Clackamas School District, just prior to his five-year stint in Bellevue.

While in Bellevue, a longtime problem came to light involving a high school football team that had been improperly recruiting student athletes. The situation predated Mills, but once in the open, he helped make sure the coaches involved did not retain their district contracts.

Problems could come up during his time in Albany, Mills acknowledged — also ones that stem from earlier situations, and ones that may not be able to be resolved fully during his time here.

But being an interim superintendent won't change his approach, he said.



It isn't easy, taking a job that's meant to be a placeholder for someone else. But Tim Mills, interim superintendent for Greater Albany Public Schools this year, has a plan.

Mills, who turned 66 last week, relocated from Littleton, Colorado, to steer the school district while the Albany School Board seeks a successor to Superintendent Jim Golden.

A 40-year educator with 18 years of experience as a superintendent, Mills took a year off after retiring from his last position, superintendent of the Bellevue School District in Bellevue, Washington. It was a good year — but he missed being around schools. When the Albany opportunity came up, he put in his name.

Albany board members hired Mills on a contract with a base salary of \$12,000 per month. The contract doesn't have an expiration date, but both Mills and the board say they're expecting it to last about a year.



"You start by listening, to really understand," he said, adding that it's easy to make assumptions about situations that often turn out to be layered and complex. "Then it's identifying, who do we pull together for solutions? I believe strongly in collaborative approaches."

If he can help find a solution, Mills said, he will. If he can't, he'll track the problem and make sure his successor is fully informed about taking it on. And true to his philosophy, he said, in no case will he lose sight of the true goal: children's education.

"Through education, we give children a chance to really have a full life," he said. "It's my mission drive."

Mills, who arrived in Albany late Aug. 28, said he plans to spend the first few weeks of the school year getting to know staff, parents, board members and leaders in the community. He said he's not yet sure how he'll structure them, but would like to hold some forums with students to learn more about their thoughts.

He's also interested in talking with the parent-teacher groups at each school. "This is about listening, and understanding how we can provide the type of support every family needs," he said.



Mills is renting a furnished apartment for the time he'll be in Oregon. Gail, his wife of 34 years, will spend some time here, too, but both also will be returning to Colorado occasionally, where they share a home with four generations: Gail's mother, one of their daughters, and a 2 1/2-year-old grandson. The Mills have three grown children and five grandchildren in all.

Mills said he'll work closely with the Albany School Board as board members go through the screening process for a new full-time superintendent. The bottom line for the year, however, will be: "How do we focus on our students and give them a good year of education?"

