



### **Thomas Named New THS Principal**

**TUPELO, Miss.** — In her 19 years as an educator, Dr. Melissa Thomas has worn many hats, including teacher, coach, principal and curriculum director.

On Tuesday at the April Tupelo Public School District Board of Trustees meeting, she was entrusted with another at the largest high school in Mississippi.

Following the recommendation of Superintendent Dr. Rob Picou, the Board unanimously approved her appointment as the new Tupelo High School principal. She replaces Art Dobbs, who stepped down after five years to take a central office position overseeing educational enhancement and workforce development.

“I have had an opportunity to see teaching and learning on every level within K-12 education,” said Thomas, a 1998 graduate of Nettleton who earned both her Bachelor’s and Doctorate degrees from Ole Miss, while also being a member of the Rebels’ national-ranked track and field team. “Each of these opportunities has expanded my ability to see the big picture in educating a child from start to finish. I’m very grateful for Dr. Picou and the Board for this opportunity. I feel this is my calling.”

Thomas, who began her educational journey at Coldwater High School as a teacher and head softball coach, is no stranger to Tupelo High School.

An eight-year veteran of TPSD, she served as an assistant principal before being named principal at Lawndale Elementary. Three years ago, she was promoted to Secondary Curriculum Director, where she vigorously worked with secondary students and staff to raise the level of academic expectations by establishing a well-designed course to success.

“Dr. Melissa Thomas is one of the best instructional leaders that I’ve had the pleasure of working with my entire career,” Picou said. “She’s a natural motivator and gifted public speaker, and she’s very skilled at establishing a culture of mutual responsibility. She is personable, approachable, compassionate, and truly dedicated to the well-being of all students and staff.

“In addition, she has a strong moral compass that allows her to treat all students fairly, while also holding them to a high level of expectation. She’s an expert trainer in Capturing Kids’ Hearts, Safe and Civil Schools, curriculum development and in instructional practices that produce high levels of academic achievement.”

Prior to making the transition to TPSD eight years ago, Thomas spent 10 years with the neighboring Nettleton School District. Just like her time in Tupelo, she proved to be a valuable asset, succeeding in various roles, from teaching and coaching to being a principal at different grade levels.

In her current role, she’s helped develop and implement new curriculum paths and models to better prepare students for life beyond THS. She’s also worked with PACE students, a program designed for those who have fallen behind to catch up with the assistance of accelerated programs, and she’s been instrumental with science curriculum and classroom upgrades in grades 6-12.

Earlier this Spring, she and the THS administrative team were recognized for winning the PREPS ACT Growth Award.

“Ever since I began teaching, a quote by Benjamin Franklin has been of great inspiration to me,” Thomas said. ‘Tell me I forget, teach me I remember, but involve me and I learn.’

Thomas believes this quote represents her passion and shows her commitment to sparking student and teacher interests, discovering their abilities to learn and teach, and developing a rapport with each.

Thomas and her husband, Daniel, of 13 years, have two daughters — Maliyah (11) and Mia (9).

She officially assumes her new role on July 1.

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