



Sparks Named Rankin Principal

TUPELO, Miss. — A familiar name has been cast into the role of principal at Rankin Elementary — Dr. Taylor Sparks.

The Tupelo native, who spent this past year as assistant principal at Tupelo High School and was approved Wednesday at a special called board meeting, served in the same capacity at Rankin the previous five years.

He replaces Dr. Heather Cartwright, who was named the new Tupelo Middle School principal in April.

“It has been an honor to serve the Tupelo Public School District community as a teacher and assistant principal for the past 14 years, and I’m deeply humbled to step into the role of principal at Rankin Elementary,” he said. “As we look ahead, I’m excited to build on our strong foundation of academic excellence, collaboration and engagement. At Rankin, we will embody the motto *All Effort. All In. All Stars*. It’s a shared reflection of our shared commitment to excellence in everything we do.”

A 2007 graduate of THS and decorated member of the marching band, Sparks recently completed his doctorate degree from Southern Miss in 2023. He earned his bachelor’s from Samford in 2011, while receiving his master’s from William Carey in 2018.

“It has been an honor to serve as principal of Rankin Elementary, and I can think of no one more deserving or better prepared to lead Rankin than Dr. Sparks,” Cartwright said. “Having worked alongside him for five years, I’ve witnessed firsthand his unmatched dedication, passion and commitment to the Rankin students, staff and community. Rankin is in excellent hands, and I am confident he will continue to inspire excellence in every classroom.”

After graduating from Samford, Sparks returned to the Tupelo Public School District as the band director at Milam. In 2014 he transitioned to the middle school for two years before taking over as the music director at Lawndale, where he was named the Teacher of the Year in 2018, while also receiving Teacher of Distinction honors.

Success followed him to Rankin, where as the assistant principal he was instrumental in the 3-5 school garnering three A-rankings by MDE.

An Eagle Scout, Sparks is also a long-time member of the North Mississippi Symphony.

“Dr. Sparks will be a tremendous fit at Rankin,” superintendent Dr. Rob Picou said. “He’s a proven leader who has had success at every level in the district, and his track record speaks for itself. I know the staff and parents at Rankin are extremely excited, and I’m confident he will continue the standard of excellence set by all the previous administrators. He’ll work hard and be a strong advocate for every teacher, staff member and student at Rankin.”

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