



TONY WATTS NAMED SUPERINTENDENT OF NEWPORT INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Watts previously served as Newport High School principal

NEWPORT, Ky. - Tony Watts, the former principal of Newport High School who currently serves as a top administrator in the state's second largest school district, has been named superintendent of the Newport Independent Schools.

Watts, 49, will replace Newport's current superintendent Kelly Middleton, who is retiring at the end of the school year after eight years leading the district. The Newport Board of Education voted unanimously to hire Watts during a March 4 special board meeting. He will join the district in mid-April and will work with Middleton on the transition during the remainder of the school year.

"I am excited to be coming back, especially as superintendent," said Watts, who was principal of Newport High School for four years. "I wanted the experience of working in a large district with a lot diversity to help me prepare to work as a superintendent, so this opportunity has panned out just as I had hoped".

"I truly enjoyed my time at Newport," he said. "We were able to make some changes and get things moving in the right direction. Mr. Middleton has done a great job. We have some things to work on, but we also have some great opportunities and I'm looking forward to get started and keeping things moving forward."

Watts, principal of Newport High School from 2011 to 2015, is now the chief of schools for the Fayette County Public Schools. In the role, he oversees five of the district's 12 middle schools. With more than 41,000 students, Fayette County Public Schools is the second largest public-school system in Kentucky, trailing only the Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville and ranking just ahead of the Boone County Public Schools.

"We had some remarkable candidates for the position of superintendent," said Ramona Malone, chairwoman of the Newport Board of Education. "But Tony stood out. He has passion, integrity, experience and is a proven and successful leader. He knows our district and our community from his time here, sees the opportunities we have, understands and is ready to confront the challenges

we face and is prepared to lead our district so that all of our students have the chances they deserve."

Watts is familiar with Northern Kentucky's education community. In addition to serving as principal of Newport High School, Watts was the assistant principal of Conner High School in Boone County and the dean of Holmes Junior-Senior High School in Covington. For two years Watts worked with Dayton High School as an Educational Recovery Leader (ERL) for KDE. He also spent time in the classroom as an eighth-grade English teacher and elementary physical education teacher.

Watts also holds a master's degree in teaching and instructional leadership from Northern Kentucky University, where he also earned his supervisor of instruction certification and superintendent's certification.

Watts and his wife, Renata, are the parents of three children: Sydney, 26 is a graduate of the University of Louisville; Nicholas, 23, and Lauryn, 20, are both studying at UofL. The family also has two dogs, a Goldendoodle, Vinny, and a Cane Corso, Diesel.

"We are empty nesters, but now we have two dogs," he said.

Watts holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Mississippi State University, where he played basketball and was an All-Southeastern Conference performer. Watts, a member of [Bulldog Hall of Fame](#), is the son of former [NBA guard Slick Watts](#).

When he was inducted into the Bulldog Hall of Fame, Watts was quoted in a press release saying that his "goal is to one day become a (school) district superintendent".

That dream has come true.

"It became apparent during the selection process that Tony has been preparing for this his entire academic career," said Newport Board of Education member Julie Smith-Morrow. "Hiring Tony concludes a very rigorous process. Our search committee received 20 applications, and after interviewing several very strong candidates we settled on who we believe is the best match for Newport schools right now.

"What impresses me the most about Tony," Smith-Morrow added, "are his strong commitment, his strong leadership and his proven success in helping kids and schools achieve success. I'm thrilled that he has accepted the offer to be our next superintendent."