

McDowell County Board of Education Announces Brian Oliver as Interim Superintendent

The McDowell County Board of Education has announced the selection of Mr. Brian Oliver as the district's interim superintendent.

Mr. Oliver will assume the duties of interim superintendent on July 1, 2022. He is expected to serve until the Board elects the next full-time Superintendent. The School Board shared a timeline on Monday night and plans for the Superintendent search process to begin in December.

"After careful consideration and a lengthy discussion among nine school board members, the board unanimously selected Mr. Brian Oliver as the interim superintendent for McDowell County Schools. Mr. Oliver has the qualifications, experience, ability, and leadership capabilities to continue our course of direction in making McDowell County Schools one of the top systems in North Carolina. Over the past nine years we have enjoyed substantial growth in all aspects of education, athletics, facility improvements, student opportunities, and growing great leaders. As one of the top administrators in our system, Mr. Oliver has played a huge role in making McDowell County Schools a system that has attained state, national, and international recognition. He is a true leader with a proven track record to continue the success of MCS," said Board Chair Terry Frank.

A veteran educator with nearly 26 years of experience, Oliver is currently serving as the Assistant Superintendent for Operations in McDowell County Schools. A native of western North Carolina, Oliver has had an extensive and successful career in North Carolina's public education system. He began his career as a teacher and coach at Watauga High School in 1996 before becoming Assistant Principal. He was the NW 4-A Conference Wrestling Coach of the Year in 2000, and became a principal later that year. His first principalship was at Forest Hill Elementary in Burke County for the 2000-2001 school year. He then returned to Watauga County to serve as principal at Blowing Rock School (K-8) from 2001-2004. Mr. Oliver returned to Burke County in 2004 as the principal of Freedom High School. He served in that role until he was called back to active duty by the Marine Corps in January 2009. He completed his active duty assignment in July 2010 and was named principal of Hibriten High School in Caldwell County. He served there until being recalled to active duty again in July 2012. In all, Oliver served as a principal for over eleven years prior to his arrival in McDowell County in September 2013. He served as the Executive Director of Administration for almost eight years prior to being named Assistant Superintendent in July 2021.

In defense of our Country, Oliver has served as a Marine Corps officer for almost 30 years. He was selected as an officer candidate in 1983 and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1985. During his career he held command at the platoon, detachment,

company, battalion, and regimental levels. He was mobilized three times after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. He was promoted to the rank of Colonel in 2008. His senior active duty assignments were Regimental Commander and Chief of Staff at 2d Marine Logistics Group, Camp Lejeune, NC in 2009-2010 and Director of Operations for Marine Corps Logistics Command, Albany, GA in 2012-2013. His personal awards include the Legion of Merit and three Meritorious Service Medals. He retired from the US Marine Corps Reserve in January 2015.

Among his many awards and achievements, schools have been named N.C. Schools of Excellence four times and one N.C. School of Distinction award. He has also led schools to recognition as U.S. News & World Report Bronze Medal High Schools three times.

Mr. Oliver is honored to serve as Interim Superintendent. He is “deeply honored to be selected by the Board for this tremendous opportunity to serve the district that has been my professional home since 2013.” He added “One of the most impactful mentors of my life was McDowell County legend Johnny Anderson. Coach Anderson was our Defensive Coordinator and Track Coach while I was a student athlete at Freedom High School. The lessons he taught all of us have helped guide me throughout my careers both as a Marine and public schools educator. It is special for me personally to continue to serve and give back to the county that raised Coach Johnny Anderson.”

Oliver was born in Caldwell County and grew up in Burke County where he graduated from Freedom High School in 1982. He is a graduate of Appalachian State University, earning his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in 1985. He also attended Troy University, earning a Master of Science in Educational Leadership and induction into the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Honor Society in 1996.

Mr. Oliver is the son of Diane Buchanan Oliver and the late Larry Norris Oliver. He and wife Leigh Anne live in the Lake Hickory area of Caldwell County. Oliver says his “greatest blessings” are his three children and three grandchildren.

During his time as Interim Superintendent, Oliver says he looks forward to “working with the outstanding team that we have at MCS as we enhance our focus on all students, and continue to build on the growth and success that we have enjoyed under Mr. Garrett’s leadership.”

His new assignment will begin on July 1.