

THE BILOXI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2001-2010 - Vol. 3

Zan Skelton

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Special Acknowledgment

**Vincent Creel, Biloxi Public Affairs Manager, Author/Editor, City
and Biloxi Schools Publications**

Tracy Campbell, BHS *Indian Echo* Yearbook Adviser, Journalism Teacher

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The lengthy acknowledgments in the second volume of the history of the Biloxi Public Schools include references to people who have been invaluable to me in my professional life. Beginning in 1953 and continuing through the present, my fifty-seven-year association with the Biloxi Public Schools has been marked by rewarding and satisfying relationships with members of the administration, members of the School Board, and teachers and students who enriched my own school history. Writing a history of a school system requires the assistance of a great many people, and I will not repeat here the names of those individuals whom I acknowledged earlier. My gratitude to each of them for their help and support over more than half a century is as deep and wide as the years themselves and remains as strong today without further references.

It is appropriate, however, to express my appreciation here to people who have been particularly helpful to me in my work in researching and writing the third volume in this history. Among those I first wish to acknowledge are Dr. Paul A. Tisdale, superintendent of the school district, and Mrs. Lee Ann Dubaz, who succeeded Mrs. Ruth Huls Hunt as Biloxi Schools Historian. They were instrumental in initiating and supporting the continuation of the history of the schools that began in 1979 under the direction of district superintendent Dr. Olon Ray, editor Mrs. Julia Guice, and authors David Wheeler and Stephanie Richmond.

Former superintendent Dr. Larry A. Drawdy has always been most helpful in ensuring that the history of the school district continues to be recorded and in sharing his knowledge of events connected with key administrative roles from 1975 to 2004. With full attribution to the sources, I have sometimes included entire articles or other reports by both Dr. Drawdy and Dr. Tisdale, who have been in unique positions to discuss matters concerning district operations, financing, school needs and challenges, instructional goals, personnel assignments, curriculum, activities, long-range plans—everything about the schools! Members of the School Board, who are represented with repeated references and pictures throughout this volume, have been supportive, and I am grateful.

In my research and in the final text, I have often depended on sources written by Vincent Creel, public affairs manager for the city of Biloxi and author of *The Windtalker*, *The Arrow*, Biloxi Public Schools newsletter, and author/editor of his comprehensive quarterly report to the community. Frequently I have reproduced entire articles or extensive excerpts from reports written by Creel, whose publications for both the city and the school system are informative, accurate, and exceptionally well-written. I hope that I have properly given full credit to him for his work.

For pictures, I have more often than not used photographs from Biloxi High School journalism teacher and yearbook adviser Tracy Campbell's *Indian Echo* yearbooks. The annuals—outstanding in every facet—have been helpful beyond measure, and I am grateful for her generous sharing of her work in this continuation of the history of the Biloxi schools. She and former journalism teacher and yearbook sponsor Sheri Clement continued to add to the Biloxi Public Schools Collection I donated to the library in 1999 as part of Biloxi's Tricentennial Celebration.

In addition, I have been the beneficiary of assistance by Biloxi genealogical and historical librarian Jamie Bounds Ellis and assistant librarian Jane B. Shambra. They carefully supervise and maintain the Biloxi Public Schools Collection, including Biloxi High School yearbooks from 1937 through 2010.

Among others whose help I wish to acknowledge specifically are Floyd Bullock, director of print operations for the Biloxi schools for many years; print shop assistant Phil Vanderhagen; Shane Switzer, director of school business affairs; Karen Eichorn, computer systems manager; principals of the ten schools in the district.; Dr. Janice Wilson and Donna Drieling, Office of Curriculum and Grants; Betty Jean Hughes and Charlotte Breal, Biloxi Teachers' Federal Credit Union; Susan Hunt, Excel by 5 coordinator; Darlene Seymour, business office; Brenda Johnston, municipal clerk of Biloxi; Chris Murray, technology specialist, Biloxi Public Schools.

~ Z.L.S. ~

PREFACE

In 1979 the first volume in *The Growth of the Biloxi Public School System* was published—*Biloxi Public Schools – 1860-1924*, by Harry Wheeler and Stephanie Richmond—under the leadership of editor Julia Guice, City of Biloxi Historian. The history began with references to the first donation of land for Biloxi schools on May 17, 1860—only months before Mississippi declared secession from the United States in January 1861—and ended with a reference to the graduation of 53 Biloxi High School seniors in May of 1924. The donation of land to the mayor and the selectmen of the city by Gaspard Didier, Arne and Adele Bernard, and Joseph Rousell was the start of what authors Wheeler and Richmond called "the spirit of generosity which would play such an important role in the growth and development of the Biloxi Public School System in future years" (Guice, p. 8). In effect, this has been considered the beginning of the Biloxi Public Schools, a date later to be celebrated in 2010 as the 150th anniversary of the city's public schools—though the first ordinance establishing taxes to support schools for the city did not come until after the Civil War in 1866. The first volume in the history series included a wealth of statistical information, pictures and drawings of early schools, and biographies and pictures of the men and women whose later gifts of land were vital to the continuing development of the school district.

The second volume in the history of the schools—titled *The Biloxi Public Schools—1924-2001*—was written by Zan Skelton and published in 2002. Produced under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Larry A. Drawdy and Biloxi Public Schools Historian Ruth Huls Hunt, the volume traced the progress of the schools for more than eight decades. It told a compelling story of years of trial in a community tested by national economic disaster in the Great Depression and burdened by the hard realities of wars and sociological pressures that profoundly changed the total school community. It also celebrated years of extraordinary forward movement as the schools successfully coped with such challenges as ever-increasing student enrollment and faculty responsibilities, growing budgetary demands, rising construction costs, wide-ranging new governmental requirements, curricular and instructional innovations, storms wreaking incalculable damage, and demographic and ethnic shifts that required constant attention. The history also included biographies and pictures of all of the superintendents of the district for those years and of prominent individuals whose contributions to the schools were most memorable.

This third volume, *The Biloxi Public Schools—2001-2010*, was written at the direction and under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Paul A. Tisdale and Biloxi Public Schools Historian Lee Ann Dubaz. Mrs. Dubaz's commitment to carrying on the work of Mrs. Hunt has led directly to keeping alive the long and rich history of a public school system that has played such a significant role in this unique and remarkable community. Perhaps it would be both appropriate and instructive to quote a portion of the conclusion of the second volume in this history as an introduction to the third:

Obviously the history of the Biloxi Public Schools has been uneven. It has also been both exciting and rewarding. If one were to choose three words to sum up the history of the Biloxi schools, *effort* and *achievement* and *vision* might be the best choices. The words suggest both the beginning and the end of education—the unyielding determination of Biloxians to provide the best schools possible for their children and the expectation that students would take advantage of the opportunities they had been given. For the young people of Biloxi, as for American students everywhere, school has been variously described as a journey, an adventure, the opening of doors into new worlds, preparation for a future one can only imagine. It is all these things and much more. For young Biloxians it is the sum of all the experiences and training of a staff as diverse as the students themselves—of a community as rich in promise and tradition as any other in the

nation. It is not merely preparation for life—but life itself, one experience leading inexorably to another, each succeeding day changed by the day before.

Looking back at the long and honorable record of the Biloxi Public Schools is not simply a journey into the past. It also provides a glimpse into the future. The picture of the Biloxi Public Schools today may be viewed against an extraordinary history of achievement, extending from the 1860s . . . into a new century. . . . And having long ago committed themselves to the timeless values of education, Biloxians are still building—hoping to create for their children a safe haven where every day brings the joy of learning. There is every reason to believe that they have succeeded and that the next volumes in this history will be equally rich in commitment and vision and the realization of promise. (Skelton, p. 198)



Zan Skelton

Biloxi, Mississippi, 2010

Biloxi and the Biloxi Schools in the 2000s

Population, 2000 Census - 50,644

Mayor - A. J. Holloway - 1993 - Present

City Council

- 2001 - George Lawrence, Eric Dickey, Jim Compton, Mike Fitzpatrick, Charles T. Harrison Jr., David Fayard
- 2002 - George Lawrence, Eric Dickey, Jim Compton, Mike Fitzpatrick, Tom Wall, David Fayard
- 2003 - George Lawrence, Eric Dickey, Jim Compton, Mike Fitzpatrick, Tom Wall, David Fayard, Charles T. Harrison Jr.
- 2004 - George Lawrence, Eric Dickey, Arlene Canaan, Mike Fitzpatrick, Charles T. Harrison Jr., Tom Wall, David Fayard
- 2005 - George Lawrence, William "Bill" Stallworth, Charles T. Harrison, Jr., Mike Fitzpatrick, Tom Wall, Edward "Ed" Gemmill, David Fayard
- 2006 - David Fayard, Mike Fitzpatrick, William "Bill" Stallworth, George Lawrence, Edward "Ed" Gemmill, Tom Wall, Charles T. Harrison Jr.
- 2007 - David Fayard, Mike Fitzpatrick, William "Bill" Stallworth, George Lawrence, Edward "Ed" Gemmill, Tom Wall, Charles T. Harrison Jr.
- 2008 - George Lawrence, William "Bill" Stallworth, Charles T. Harrison, Jr., Mike Fitzpatrick, tom wall, Edward "Ed" Gemmill, David Fayard
- 2009 - George Lawrence, William "Bill" Stallworth, Lucy Denton, Clark Griffith, Tom Wall, Edward "Ed" Gemmill, David Fayard
- 2010 - George Lawrence, "William "Bill" Stallworth, Lucy Denton, Clark Griffith, Tom wall, Edward "Ed" Gemmill, David Fayard

Superintendent, Biloxi Public Schools – Dr. Larry A. Drawdy, 1994-2004
Dr. Paul A. Tisdale, 2004-Present

Student Enrollment in 2000-2001 school year – 5,791

Student Enrollment in 2009-2010 reported in first week – 4,719

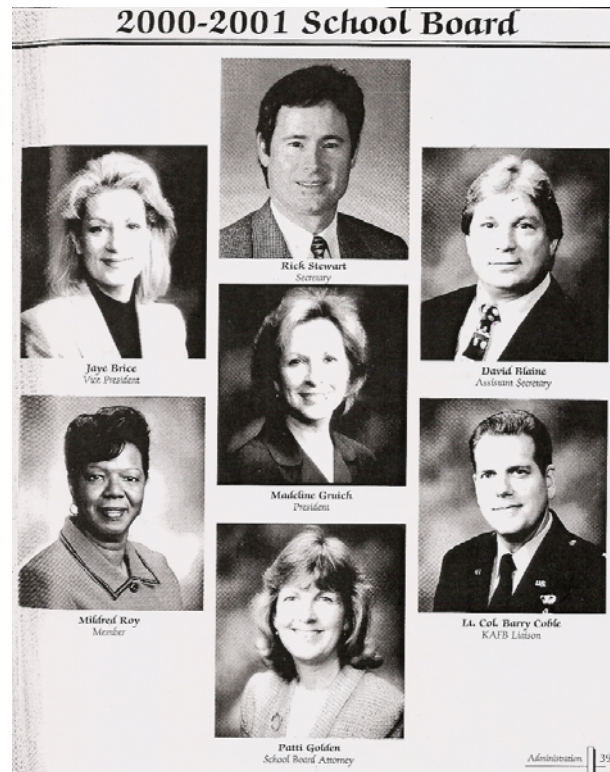
Total Budget, Biloxi Public Schools, for 2000-2001 - \$47,726,000
(includes \$5-million building program)

THE BILOXI PUBLIC SCHOOLS – 2001-2010

The life of a school system is always a series of both everyday routine activities and unexpected and unplanned-for situations involving problems demanding immediate resolution. Charged with overseeing and directing an operation affecting not only every student and faculty member but also the entire community, the administration and the School Board must plan for and deal with curriculum, staff, finance, buildings, public relations, discipline, instructional goals, long-range planning, societal changes, parent involvement, state and federal requirements—the list seems endless. An observer reviewing the work of the Biloxi Public Schools would be struck by the scope and the scale of the increasing demands—ever-changing, always challenging—placed on the schools day after day, year after year.

The Biloxi Public Schools community is a microcosm of the city, whose more-than-300-year history has been written in broad strokes reflecting the unity of a diverse population. Located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Biloxi is composed of many families with long histories as Biloxians. And the city has always welcomed immigrants who found jobs here, built their homes, reared their families, and enjoyed the benefits of a pleasant and beautiful setting, an inspiring heritage as a thriving and productive community, and a cooperative and supportive citizenry committed to the advancement of the public schools.

Writing about Biloxi High School in particular—but in words that apply equally to all the schools in the district—BHS principal Pamela Manners observed: "Our mission at Biloxi High School is to provide an educational climate where all students have the opportunity to achieve academic success, develop physical and emotional well-being, and become productive, responsible citizens. Biloxi High's staff embraces this mission, promoting it through their dedication, respect, high expectations, and a firm belief in the dignity and capabilities of each individual." Principal Manners paid tribute to the people and the businesses that have made Biloxi prosper over the years, adding a special note that "Keesler Air Force Base continues to lend our community a world focus. It is undeniable that Biloxi's unique cultural exchange is an important factor that enriches and influences the lives of our students and teachers at Biloxi High School." It is a mission accepted by the entire staff of the Biloxi Public Schools.



Leading the Biloxi School Board in the 2000-2001 session was Mrs. Madelon Gruich, president; other members of the Board were Mrs. Jaye Brice, vice president; Mr. Rick Stewart, secretary; Mr. David Blaine, assistant secretary; and Mrs. Mildred Roy, member. Board attorney was Mrs. Patti Golden.

Serving as Keesler Air Force Base liaison was Lt. Col. Barry Cable. For many years, this position has been a part of the Board's reaching out to military families who are especially important to the

community and to the school district. The liaison officer is not a voting member of the Board but is instrumental in informing the Board and command officials of Keesler—and military families—regarding particular matters related to the Keesler-connected students.

In 2001, 475 licensed, qualified personnel were employed by the district, with an exceptionally high number of teachers holding advanced degrees. Student enrollment totaled approximately 6,000. The total budget for the 2000-2001 school year was \$47,726,000 (this amount included a \$5-million building program). At the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year, the Superintendent of Schools was Dr. Larry A. Drawdy, in his eighth year as head of the school system (see "Addenda" for biography). The central office staff included Dr. Robert Bowles, deputy superintendent; Dr. Paul Tisdale, director of administrative services; Jude McDonnell, director of business management; Nolan Broussard, supervisor of support services; Beryl Dupont, coordinator of school information and community outreach; Susan Patterson, coordinator of federal programs and curriculum instruction; Diane Miller was nursing supervisor for the schools.



*Top, Right to Left- John Hall, Technology; Susan Patterson, Federal Programs & Curriculum; Sarah Landry, Exceptional Education; Beryl Dupont, Community Outreach; Nolan Broussard, Support Services
Bottom, Right to Left- Paul Tisdale, Administrative Services; Jude McDonnell, Business Management; Larry Drawdy, Superintendent; Robert Bowles, Deputy Superintendent*

Principals in the Biloxi schools were Joe Allen, Center for New Opportunities; Charles Benton, Fernwood; Susan Brand, Beauvoir; Glenn Dedeaux, Nichols; Bernell Kelly, Jeff Davis; Murray Killebrew, Lopez; Pam Manners, Michel; Melissa Nance, DuKate; Susan Patterson, Gorenflo; Andrea Petro, Popp's Ferry; Laurie Pitre, North Bay; Cecil Powell, Biloxi High; and Ken Hall, Director of the R.D. Brown Vocational Center.

Longtime support personnel included Floyd Bullock, manager of the graphics department and supervisor of the design/print shop; print assistant Phil Vanderhagen; and Betty Jean Hughes and

Charlotte Breal, Biloxi Teachers' Federal Credit Union executives who have served thousands of school employees over the years and managed with unparalleled efficiency to build a thriving multi-million-dollar business from the simple beginnings in 1965 (see "Addenda"). From the beginning, Mrs. Hughes was treasurer of the staff-created organization and soon succeeded Harold Boykin as manager.

* * *

For the Biloxi Public Schools, the 2001-2002 school year was like no other in the school district's then-140-year history. Building on the remarkable development and continuing strong growth of the Biloxi school system, particularly in the decade preceding, an unprecedented capital improvements program neared completion. The administration and the School Board concentrated on efforts to move the schools into a new century, meeting present needs with visionary planning that would affect Biloxi students—and, indeed, all Biloxians—far into the future.

Foremost among those advances was completing construction of the \$32-million Biloxi High School, which would be opened to students and faculty at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. The school was a major part of the \$52-million construction program approved by Biloxians in 1999. Plans included not only the new high school but also the new elementary school at North Bay, opened on schedule in 2000; new Gorenflo and Nichols elementary schools; major renovation to the former Biloxi High School on Father Ryan Avenue, scheduled to become Biloxi Junior High School, and to Michel Junior High School, which would become Michel Seventh Grade School. In addition, extensive renovations to Lopez, Beauvoir, Jeff Davis, and Popp's Ferry elementary schools were planned and the Fernwood facility on Pass Road would serve as the Center for New Opportunities (the district's alternative school).

The unique design for Biloxi High School, identified by Biloxi public affairs manager Vincent Creel as "the centerpiece of the construction program," included 54 traditional classrooms, with an instructional program and extracurricular activities supported by technology and architectural innovations that would become models for other districts in the state and region.

Giving a more detailed report to the community, Creel noted that a technology-career center would meet "the most demanding standards in providing broad curricular opportunities for vo-tech students." A lecture/performance auditorium for drama and speech students—and for conferences and small meetings—was a prominent feature in the district's ensuring that the arts would not be neglected in the educational plan for Biloxi students. Band and choral music rooms, with separate practice areas, art classrooms with special lighting features and work areas, a media center designed to meet both traditional needs and the demands of up-to-date technology—all were part of the city's new high school. Administrative offices were strategically placed and designed for both utility and attractive surroundings not only for teachers and students but also for visitors, especially parents.

The physical education section featured most prominently an impressive gymnasium-auditorium that could be used for athletic events and large meetings. In addition, two practice gymnasiums for male and female students and weight-training rooms were outstanding features of the physical education setting. A 7,500-seat football stadium, soccer, and track stadium, was scheduled to open for the 2003 football season. The school had a spacious and attractive exterior courtyard with an amphitheater and outdoor computer hook-ups. The cafeteria provided superior equipment and special features requiring the most demanding levels of hygiene and efficient supervision. Mrs. Sandra Fallo, longtime much admired and loved member of the support staff was cafeteria manager.

In September 2002 the *Biloxi Public Schools Staff Newsletter* reported in an article titled "Sweeping Physical and School Alignment Changes Unfold in Biloxi" a series of impressive figures that helped describe the high school in an unusual way. According to officials of Guild Hardy and Associates Architects and Yates Construction Company, the high school had over 50 miles of communication and computer cable, 125 miles of electrical wiring, 525 tons of steel, 8,500 cubic yards of concrete, 15,000 square feet of glass, 17,000 square feet of Kalwall, and 60,000 square yards of asphalt paving. The school site was approximately 328 acres.

At the same time the school system was dealing with extraordinary changes to the physical plant, plans were being made for realignment of the schools themselves. The September 2002 *Staff Newsletter* had this to say:

When school closed in June, steps were taken immediately to close Fernwood, close and demolish Nichols, and set into motion a new secondary school realignment plan producing a 7th Grade School and 8th and 9th Grade School. The old Michel Junior High School facility has been renamed Michel 7th Grade School and will serve all of the 7th graders in the district. The faculty is made up of teachers throughout the district, with Mrs. Pamela Manners and Mr. Carl Fantroy serving as principal and vice-principal respectively.

The old Biloxi High School facility is the site of the newly aligned Biloxi Junior High School, serving grades 8 and 9. Former Fernwood principal Charles Benton serves as the school's principal, and Emanuel Killingsworth and Tina Thompson are the assistants. The old Fernwood facility, located at 2829 Pass Rod, is now the temporary location of the Center for New Opportunities (the Alternative School).

You might have noticed in your travel about the city that the old Gorenflo and Nichols facilities have been demolished and new elementary schools will open on these sites in the fall of 2003. Gorenflo has moved to the Howard I facility, formerly the site of the Center for New Opportunities, and will remain there until the new school opens in the fall of next year.

The firm of Guild Hardy and Associates Architects was responsible for designs of the new schools and the renovations to existing schools. Construction management was under the direct supervision of Yates Construction Company, Inc.

In addition to construction of new schools, the administration and the Board had, in effect, promised the people of Biloxi that extensive renovations and improvements would be made to existing schools—and by the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year, that promise had been kept.

The primary goal in regard to such renovation and structural changes was to ensure that Biloxi's present school buildings would be upgraded to meet quality standards of the best schools in the area. *The Biloxi Public Schools – 1924-2001* reported the results:

Learning center additions in these schools were added to provide hands-on activities. Power upgrades and expansion of electrical service at the older elementary schools to accommodate computers and printers in each classroom were completed at the existing Biloxi High School, Michel Junior High, Lopez, Beauvoir, Jeff Davis, Popp's Ferry, and Howard II. Renovations and additions to administrative areas included additional offices, clinic space, and new finishes, with designs particular to Lopez, Beauvoir, Jeff Davis, and Popp's Ferry. Enclosed corridors to permit students to move from building to building without going outside were constructed at Biloxi High, Michel, Lopez, Beauvoir, Popp's Ferry, and Jeff Davis, together with replacing doors and hardware at these schools, upgrading and expansion of outdated intercom systems to comply with district-wide intercom system standards, and bus drop-off canopies at the elementary schools and other improvements. State-of-the-art classrooms, including necessary restroom facilities, mechanical systems and utilities were constructed at Lopez and Popp's Ferry; and

existing spaces at Biloxi High and Michel were converted to . . . discovery and language laboratories.

A 7,500-seat football stadium, soccer, and track stadium, was scheduled to open for the 2003 football season.

SCHOOL BOARD – 2001-2002



Mrs. Madelon Gruich continued in 2001-2002 to serve as School Board president, with Mr. Rick Stewart, vice president; Mr. David Blaine, secretary; Mrs. Mildred Roy, assistant secretary; and Mr. Glendon Johnson, member. Maj. John Tenaglia was Kessler Air Force Base liaison.

* * *

Budget figures provided by the BPS Business Office show that for fiscal year ending in 2002, all-funds expenditures totaled \$74,625,028 (this amount included construction costs of \$28,172,661). Expenditures less construction costs and FEMA were \$46,452,367.

Student enrollment figures for the individual Biloxi schools at the end of the first month in 2001-2002 were as follows:

Dukate Elementary – 326	Gorenflo Elementary – 400
North Bay Elementary – 669	Jeff Davis Elementary – 525
Lopez Elementary – 428	Popp's Ferry Elementary – 671
Beauvoir Elementary - 566	Fernwood Junior High – 620
Michel Junior High - 352	Nichols Junior High - 368
Biloxi Senior High - 1121	



*Top, Right to Left- John Hall, Technology; Susan Patterson, Federal Programs & Curriculum; Sarah Landry, Exceptional Education; Beryl Dupont, Community Outreach; Nolan Broussard, Support Services
Bottom, Right to Left- Paul Tisdale, Administrative Services; Jude McDonnell, Business Management; Larry Drawdy, Superintendent; Robert Bowles, Deputy Superintendent*

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF – 2001-2002

The central administrative officers of the Biloxi schools in 2001-2002 are pictured above. Standing, left to right: Mr. John Hall, Technology; Mrs. Susan Patterson, Federal Programs and Curriculum; Mrs. Sarah Landry, Exceptional Education; Mrs. Beryl Dupont, Community Outreach; Mr. Nolan Broussard, Support Services; sitting, left to right: Dr. Paul Tisdale, Administrative Services; Mr. Jude McDonnell, Business Management; Dr. Larry Drawdy, Superintendent; Dr. Robert Bowles, Deputy Superintendent.

* * *



School Board officers and members for 2002-2003 (bottom two rows) were Rick Stewart, President; Patti Golden, Board Attorney; Col. Lance Young, KAFB Liaison; Maj. John Tenaglia, KAFB Asst. Liaison; David Blaine, Vice President; Glendon Johnson, Assistant Secretary; Mildred Roy, Secretary; Madelon Gruich, Member

* * *

Student enrollment figures for the individual Biloxi schools at the end of the first month in 2002-2003 were as follows:

Beauvoir Elementary – 526	DuKate Elementary – 291
Gorenflo Elementary – 393	Jeff Davis Elementary – 597
Lopez Elementary – 313	North Bay Elementary – 752
Popp's Ferry Elementary – 635	Michel 7 th Grade – 545
Biloxi Junior High – 941	Biloxi High School - 1178

* * *

In 2002 the Biloxi Public School District was declared a unitary school district by the Fifth District Court of Appeals. The Biloxi Public School District desegregation case was dissolved and dismissed and the federal courts no longer continued to have oversight provision over the school district's operations. The Biloxi Public School District was under a desegregation order from 1963 to 2002.

* * *

The 2002-2003 school year was also highlighted by other historic events for Biloxi students and faculty—and the entire community. The beginning of that school year was described by Creel in his *State of the City—2002* newsletter as follows:

High school students opened the new school year Sept. 3 in a new \$32 million campus off Popp's Ferry Road; junior high students moved into the former high school on Father Ryan Avenue; and construction is ready to begin on two new elementary schools, at Gorenflo and Nichols. It's all part of a \$52 million construction program that voters approved in 1999.

While most residents can see the physical improvements in neighborhood schools, Dr. Larry Drawdy, superintendent of schools, noted that improvements are also being made in the curriculum. "Students in grades 7-9 will for the first time be able to study French or Spanish or Latin, and students presently enrolled in the eighth grade will be required to have a minimum of two years of a foreign language before graduating. Students in grades 7-9 also will have an increased number of choices in other curricular areas, together with expanded athletic programs."

Biloxi High School graduates, meanwhile, will far exceed the minimum state requirements for graduation. For instance, the state requires three courses in math, Biloxi requires four; the state requires three science credits, Biloxi requires four; and the state requires two credits in technology, Biloxi requires three.

Additionally, Biloxi High School offers more than 145 courses for students to choose from. Said Drawdy, "The Biloxi School District provides a program of studies and activities designed to prepare students for future employment, further education, and active citizenship. A note on our web site sums it up: Building a Brighter Tomorrow. We're well on our way." (p. 4)



Pictured above is Biloxi High School (front entrance)



Pictured above is the new Biloxi High School (view from courtyard)

* * *

With Brigadier General Michael W. Peterson, Commander, 81st Training Wing, Keesler Air Force Base, giving the dedication address, the new Biloxi High School was formally dedicated in a ceremony on May 20, 2003. Construction of the high school was the most significant single event in a capital improvements program without parallel on the Mississippi Coast—a program that also included the building of three new elementary schools in a three-year period and renovation of all other schools in the district. Present for the dedication were members of the Biloxi School Board, a number of Biloxi dignitaries and school officials, former BHS teachers, invited guests, and the students and faculty of the high school.

General Peterson, a 1970 graduate of Biloxi High School, emphasized the impressive physical features of the \$32-million facility and its \$3-million technology center, noting that when a school like this is built, the Board and the administration and architect and builders must look into the future fifty years. The scope and the scale of the school are evidence of the vision and the commitment of an entire community. He made references to his own experiences as a Biloxi High School student and to the inherent qualities of character and personality built in school that, he told the BHS students, "will become the centerpiece of your life" through the lifelong friends and memories made here. "Biloxi is a great city," he told the audience, as he praised Biloxians' building a great school at the heart of the educational system. General Peterson was introduced by Dr. Paul Tisdale, director of administrative services for the Biloxi schools and a high school classmate of the Keesler commander.

In his address, Dr. Larry Drawdy noted that "in the history of the Biloxi schools, May 20, 2003, will be one of the most important dates—not only because it is the day when we formally dedicate Biloxi High School but also because it is symbolic of a long-range vision to provide the best possible educational opportunities for young Biloxians now and far into a distant future." Dr. Drawdy's address continued:

It isn't enough simply to build a school and sit back and think that we've done all we need to do in regard to educating students. Even now the construction of this school is not complete. There are additional athletic and classroom facilities that will be added to this campus, enhancing the aesthetic and practical value to the community and to our students. But the most important point I want to make today is that a school building itself has no meaning, no reason for existence, without the students and the faculty that give it life.

As we dedicate this building today, I ask you to dedicate your lives to fulfill the hopes and dreams of your parents who have wanted only the best for you; to dedicate your talents and abilities to achieving the goals you set for yourselves; to dedicate yourselves to being the best citizens not only of this school and this community now but also of the communities in which you will live and where your children will live in the future.

Looking at this audience today—looking at you and knowing what you have already accomplished—I know that your future is secure and full of promise. I am proud of this building and of the provisions we have made for your education. But more than that, I am proud of you!

The program began with the call for Presentation of Colors by BHS principal Cecil Powell. The presentation was performed by Biloxi High School AFJROTC students, Cadet Col. Sarah Ayala, Cadet Col. Trakeila Autman, Cadet Capt. Stephanie Ayala, and Cadet Capt. Matthew Hoover. BHS student

Jerrell Javier led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by an invocation by Tabitha Williams. Principal Powell gave the welcome and introduced platform guests.

Among the dignitaries were David Blaine, School Board vice president; Mildred Roy, Board secretary; Glendon Johnson, Board assistant secretary; Madelon Gruich, Board member; and Patti Golden, Board attorney. Board president Rick Stewart was unable to attend the ceremony. In addition, Keesler Air Force Base liaison Col. Lance Young and assistant liaison Maj. John Tenaglia were introduced. The honorable A. J. Holloway, mayor of Biloxi; Harrison County supervisors Bobby Eleuterius and Connie Rocko; and other platform guests were also introduced by the principal. The design/construction team for the school were Guild Jaubert and Hardy Architects, P.A.; David Hardy, project architect; Joseph B. Crain, design architect; A. Lee Palermo, construction administration; W.G. Yates and Sons, general contractor; Chet Nadolski, project superintendent; and Joe Bryant, building superintendent.

Biloxi High School student body president Jynette Guerra made a brief address in which she expressed the pride and appreciation of the student body. Mayor Holloway recognized the invaluable contributions of the superintendent and the School board in their efforts to make vision become reality through the planning and hard work that such an enormous project required. He also told of his own life as a Biloxi High School student in the old high school building that was on Howard Avenue in Biloxi, briefly recounting experiences that represented the kinds of memories that last forever and that help to determine a young person's character and future.

Director of Career Technology Glenn Dedeaux introduced Mrs. Betty Jean Hughes, a graduate of Biloxi High School who has taught in the Biloxi schools for forty-three years. In her inimitable style, Mrs. Hughes paid tribute to the people who have contributed to the success of the high school, to the students whose lives are so deeply affected by their school experiences, and to the qualities of pride and character and vision she wished for each student. Mrs. Hughes, who teaches Latin and English at Biloxi High School, is also treasurer and managing director of the Biloxi Teachers Federal Credit Union.

Among the highlights of the dedication program, arranged and directed by Sue Durbin, director of community outreach for the Biloxi schools, were the Biloxians' rendition of the "Alma Mater," directed by choral director Tom Turner, introduced by assistant principal Gayle Bentz, and the Air force Junior ROTC award-winning drill team's performance at the end of the ceremony.

Concluding the dedication program, Board vice president David Blaine presented the dedication plaque to the high school principal. "Biloxi has a long and rich history of commitment to and support of public education, reaching back to 1860, when land was first donated for use by the public schools," Blaine said. "That commitment has endured over 142 years and is represented most significantly today in the new Biloxi High School, part of a continuing program to enhance the educational environment and strengthen the instructional program of the Biloxi Public Schools. We celebrate this day to underscore the best hopes and ideals of an entire community, represented by the students of Biloxi High School. And we now formally dedicate Biloxi High School through the presentation of this dedication plaque to Biloxi High School principal Cecil Powell for placement in the building to commemorate this ceremony. It reads: 'Dedicated to the citizens of Biloxi who believe in the timeless values of education and to Biloxi's young people for whom they built this school.'"

Mayor A.J. Holloway summed up the community's respect for and support of the Biloxi schools when he said, "We've seen some great accomplishments in our public school system in the past few years. This is due in no small part to the hard work of the school board, the dedication of Dr. Larry Drawdy and the staff, and, of course, the teachers and students, who have earned the highest accreditation level in the state." (*State of the City*—2003, p. 6)



Aerial view of Biloxi High School soon after opening in 2002

* * *

The budget for fiscal year ending 2003 showed district expenditures of \$62,382,595, with \$8,611,860 construction included. Expenditures less construction and FEMA were \$53,770,735.

* * *

The beginning of the 2003-2004 school year seemed to place Biloxi center-stage in the national world of education—with media views decidedly mixed. The two opposing attitudes toward Biloxi Public Schools' "Cameras in the Classroom" project could not be more clearly expressed than in two headlines for articles reprinted in the *Sun Herald* of August 13, 2003.

The first, from Rowland Nethaway, Cox News Service, in the Waco, Texas, *Tribune Herald*, proclaimed, "Thank God for Biloxi, Mississippi." The second, by Claude Lewis of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, protested, "A Little More of Our Innocence is Lost." Though there were many editorials and public responses and media reports supporting the placement of the Webcams in Biloxi classrooms, a review of Internet articles and reports appeared to show equal numbers of highly vocal opponents of such Webcam usage, particularly in regard to privacy issues.

The focus on the Biloxi schools gained worldwide attention following an article in *USA Today* by Greg Toppo, posted on August 3, 2003. It was titled "Who's watching the class?"

When students in Biloxi, Miss., show up this morning for the first day of the new school year, a virtual army of digital cameras will be recording every minute of every lesson in every classroom.

Hundreds of Internet-wired video cameras will keep rolling all year long, in the hope that they'll deter crime and general misbehavior among the district's 6,300 students — and teachers.

"It helps honest people be more honest," says Superintendent Larry Drawdy, who, along with principals and security personnel, can use a password to view classrooms from any computer. In an emergency, police also can tune in.

So far, Biloxi is the only school district in the nation to install Webcams in every classroom — nearly 500 so far. But school districts in cities nationwide and in England are experimenting with classroom Webcams for security reasons, installing the affordable cameras in hallways and selected classrooms and planning devices for future schools. One security firm says it's negotiating with an undisclosed urban district to install 15,000 cameras so security personnel can keep an eye on classes, hallways and parking lots.

Almost anywhere they go these days, Americans are on camera: at work, on the road, at public events. Why should schools be different?

That the Biloxi School District was identified as the nation's first "to install Webcams in every classroom" had a national impact reflected not only in newspapers and magazines across the country and in other countries as well but also in radio and television, including such programs as Bill O'Reilly's "The O'Reilly Factor" and ABC's "20/20."

Pointe Innovation Magazine in its spring 2004 issue recounted some of the background leading to the national media attention and follow-up responses from the administration.

When school started on August 11, the new era was chronicled in that day's edition of the *USA Today*, which ran a section-leading story on the 'army of digital cameras' that would be used. It was the first of many media reports about the event. To date, the subject has appeared on CNN, Forbes, various newspapers and educational publications from one coast to the other and even ABC-TV's "20/20." Larry Drawdy, the superintendent of the Biloxi School District, even appeared on NBC-TV's "Today" show regarding the subject. Mississippi was being lifted up as a cutting edge state in education and technology.

Of course, not all of the coverage has been positive. There have been numerous references to George Orwell's epic *1984*, with claims that "Big Brother" is now officially watching our children. Privacy issues have been mentioned, regarding both the students and the teachers. Previous actions have also been studied, as people looked for reasoning behind the decision. Many people assume that the cameras are a result of tragedies such as the ones in Pearl or Columbine, or September 11. While those events may have heightened the attention the project received, the plan was being put together before any of these happened.

Drawdy has become a semi-celebrity through this, as he has been interviewed countless times regarding the matter — and not just by the traditional media. He has received calls from various school districts, including ones in France and Spain. He's found himself increasingly curious through the media ordeal; what approach is this latest interview

looking to take, positive or negative? However, no matter the angle of the current interviewer, Drawdy's response is consistently the same – he made what he felt was the right move, in terms of the safety of his district and the protection of the students and teachers involved in the district. He had the chance to voice his thoughts with *Scholastic Administrator*, a long-time education-based group.

"Where can we go in our wired world these days without being filmed? We are on camera in libraries, department stores, banks, office buildings and a multitude of other locations," Drawdy said. "Numerous schools already have security cameras monitoring hallways, to parking lots or main entrances. It made sense for our district to extend camera placement to where kids spend the bulk of their school day."

An article by Sam Dillon in the *New York Times*, September 24, 2003, titled "Cameras Watching Students, Especially in Biloxi," made it all seem vaguely ominous:

Biloxi, Miss.—A digital camera hangs over every classroom here, silently recording students' and teachers' every move. The surveillance system is at the leading edge of a trend to outfit public schools with the same cameras used in Wal-Marts to catch thieves.

Fearful of violence, particularly in light of the nation's experience with schoolhouse shootings, educators across the country are rushing to install ceiling-mounted cameras in hallways, libraries, and cafeterias. But no other district has gone as far as this Gulf Coast community, which, flush with casino revenue, has hung the cameras not only in corridors and other common areas but also in all of its 500 classrooms.

That has made virtually everything that happens at any of Biloxi's 11 public schools subject to instant replay, though so far, principals report, they have used such replays to confront only humdrum problems like clarifying the disappearance of a child's ice cream money or ensuring that students do not sleep in class.

To be fair to the *Times* reporter, it should be noted that the article did cite favorable responses from Biloxi educators that supported use of the cameras, quoting Dr. Laurie Pitre of North Bay Elementary School in regard to reinforcing disciplinary measures: "Dr. Pitre and other administrators said the classroom cameras, which Biloxi started phasing in two years ago, had helped improve discipline and, as a result, raise test scores, a view also voiced by some teachers, parents and students." English and journalism teacher Twyla Moore said she and many other teachers regarded the cameras "not as an invasion but as a protection."

The *Times* coverage was a combination of both dramatic negative reactions and unqualified support. Dillon wrote that "Civil libertarians and many educators express outrage over Biloxi's surveillance experiment."

"I shuddered," he quoted Paul Abramson, a school design consultant in Larchmont, N.Y. "Kids are kids. What are we telling them when we put them under surveillance?" But he also quoted Allison Buchanan, PTA president at North Bay Elementary, who called such criticism "silly." She said, "They're just inventing a problem that's not there. In my two years on the PTA, I've not heard one parent say anything bad about the cameras."

In interviews with various media sources, Dr. Drawdy explained that the cameras would not be used to evaluate teachers and that they were visual witnesses to what occurred in classrooms—with no audio. He continued to emphasize that "Our whole purpose was to make our schools safer." In Dr. Drawdy's own words, in an article titled "You're on Classroom Camera," the media buzz had generated criticism

that he described as "mistaken." He wrote, "The Webcams . . . provide a degree of safety that we were unable to give students and faculty before. Nearly 800 Webcams monitor virtually every square inch of our schools, except in bathrooms and locker rooms."

He detailed precautions designed to respect everyone's privacy by keeping access limited to principals and assistant principals—and to parents, teachers, or law enforcement officers only with approval from a top district official. The response from school principals, teachers, and parents, he said, "has been overwhelmingly favorable." The Webcams have provided not only enhanced security, he noted, but "because students know they're being watched, they seem to behave better and thus learn more."

Teachers' unions and civil libertarians, however, sometimes expressed dismay over Biloxi's surveillance system, calling it an "Orwellian intrusion on the sanctity of the classroom."

John Stossel asked the question for "20/20" on ABC News on October 17: "What's wrong with cameras in the classroom?" He began by saying, "Today, security cameras are all over the place—gas stations, ATMs, mini-marts, sporting events, on streets. There's little doubt that the cameras make life safer. They not only deter crime, but when there is crime, cameras can reveal who did it." He continued:

Schools use them in hallways and cafeterias, but the Biloxi, Miss., school district has drawn attention to itself by becoming the first to put them in every classroom, too.

One school principal says the cameras make the school safer. "Just the idea that I might be watching acts as a deterrent to a lot of the kids," Principal Pamela Manners said.

Discipline problems are down in Manners' school and in other schools in the district. There are fewer fights, fewer disruptions, and more learning, say officials. Cameras in the hall were helpful, they say, but covering the classroom is better.

What do the kids think? None of the students we talked to said they minded the cameras, and many liked them, saying things like, kids don't cheat anymore, and they sleep less in class.

Some say the cameras make school safer. "I feel a lot more safe knowing that I don't have to worry about is there going to be a fight break out right next to me? Am I going to get hit?" one student said.

Noting that some people equate the Biloxi camera surveillance with a kind of "Big Brother in Biloxi," he quoted Jill Farrell, who represents the Conservative Free Congress Foundation, a conservative group concerned about privacy: "Just having the cameras there 24 hours a day is saying, we don't trust you," she said. He also interviewed Mary Ann Gracyzk, president of the Mississippi American Federation of Teachers, who opposed use of the cameras on grounds that they might be used to watch and evaluate teachers: "The teacher ought to be in charge and in control" and cameras are "taking away the authority of the teacher in that classroom to deal with any problems that they may have in that classroom in a professional way," Gracyzk argued. Asserting that school districts "should be able to experiment with new technologies," Stossel was faced with the response by Farrell that "There's no better technology than a human being. Human beings can set an example or make an example of a badly behaved student. Cameras can't do that." Stossel concluded by writing:

That may be. But come on, the principals say the cameras make it even safer. So do the students. Don't they get to make those decisions?

If the unions and the privacy police get to veto every new idea, good ideas will never be tried. America has real privacy concerns to worry about — identity theft, tiny spy cameras that are used in the most private areas without people even knowing. Those are threats. Cameras in classroom may be a good thing.

Give me a break.

* * *



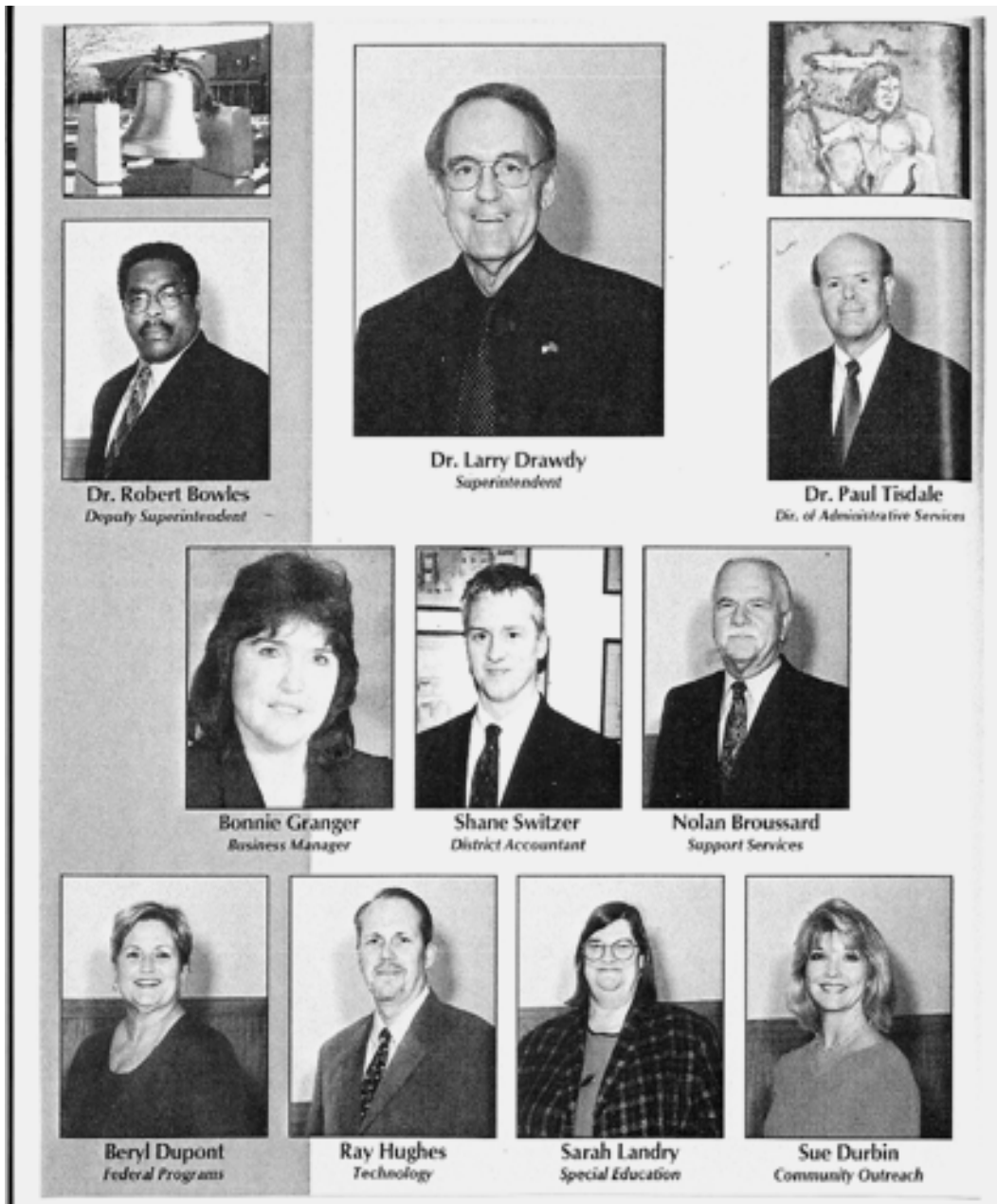
BILOXI SCHOOL BOARD – 2003-2004

Rick Stewart, president; David Blaine, vice president; Mildred Roy, secretary; Glendon Johnson, assistant secretary; Madelon Gruich, member; Major John Tenaglia, KAFB Assistant Liaison; Colonel Lance Young, KAFB Liaison; Patti Golden, Board Attorney

* * *

Student enrollment at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year (based on the first month's enrollment—August-September) showed the following:

Beauvoir – 501	DuKate- 278	Gorenflo – 358	Jeff Davis – 601
Lopez – 325	North Bay – 857	Popp's Ferry – 685	
Michel – 448	Biloxi Jr. High – 1027	Biloxi High School – 1147	
CNO (included in home school count) 25			
Total Enrollment – 6227			



CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF – 2003-2004

Dr. Robert Bowles, deputy superintendent; Dr. Larry Drawdy, superintendent;
Dr. Paul Tisdale, director of administrative services;
Bonnie Granger, business manager; Shane Switzer, district accountant;
Nolan Broussard, support services; Beryl Dupont,
federal programs; Ray Hughes, technology;
Sarah Landry, special education; Sue Durbin, Community Outreach

* * *

Mayor Holloway in his *State of the City* community report for 2003 noted that "It's been quite a year for Biloxi Public Schools, with worldwide attention as being the first school district in the nation to have cameras in each classroom throughout the district, and 'pr appears to be an even more promising year." (p. 6) He pointed to the opening of new elementary schools Gorenflo and Nichols as significant events in the life of the city's school system and referred to the special designs for each school—Nichols with "more contemporary geometric features" and "a more traditional look at Gorenflo, with a nod to the former elementary school's arches." It was expected that Nichols would house 400 to 450 students and Gorenflo 550 to 600. The new athletic stadium and locker-room expansion, near the new high school, would be completed by the coming "football season," and would feature the new artificial turf with "grass roots rubber footing to absorb shock and help prevent injuries." Expectations for the campus included plans for a new performing arts center. The mayor concluded his report on the status of the school district by saying, "We've seen some great accomplishments in our public school system in the past few years. This is due in no small part to the hard work of the school board, the dedication of Dr. Larry Drawdy and the staff, and, of course, the teachers and students, who have earned the highest accreditation level in the state."

* * *

In January 2004 Dr. Drawdy announced that he was retiring at the end of the school year after forty years as an educator, thirty-eight of those years in Mississippi. In his letter to the Board he noted that his announcement would permit the Board to have sufficient time to seek his replacement as superintendent. He added:

I will leave my position at a particularly favorable point in the life of the Biloxi School District. I am pleased to report to the community that the district is in excellent financial condition, as reported in the financial statements at the Board meeting on December 9, 2003.

It gives me the greatest satisfaction to note that during my tenure the school district moved from a low accreditation status to the highest level of state accreditation. When only district level accreditation was possible, the Biloxi district was one of only ten school districts in the state to achieve Level 5 accreditation. Under the new assessment begun this year, nine of the ten Biloxi schools achieved Level 5; one was at Level 4; and ten of the eleven schools achieved AYP under the No Child Left Behind assessments.

Dr. Drawdy noted that he had come to the Biloxi school district in 1975 as assistant superintendent and had left Biloxi in 1986 to serve as superintendent of the Picayune school system and then of the Meridian schools. Noting that the Board had brought him back in 2004 to serve as Biloxi superintendent, he added, "I know that the Board had high expectations of me, based on my experience and the promise that I brought to the district. I was charged with several specific responsibilities." Among those expectations, he wrote, were the improvement of discipline in the schools and raising school district achievement levels to meet the state's highest accreditation standards. He was also directed to plan and supervise the restructuring of the secondary schools and strengthen the curriculum. In addition, he added, the Board had expected him to take a leadership position in a community effort to pass a bond issue for a much needed and costly capital improvements program. In his retirement letter he expressed the hope that he had met the Board's expectations in all those areas and emphasized his deep regard for Biloxi and the Biloxi schools, pledging his full support of the new administration.

Alton Bankston, former School Board president and longtime friend of Dr. Drawdy, noted in a letter to friends that on June 15, 2004, a retirement party would be held in the retiring superintendent's honor. "A committee of appreciative Biloxians is making plans to recognize his outstanding contributions to the Biloxi schools and to the entire state," he wrote. "Dr. Drawdy's thirty-eight-year career in Mississippi education is highlighted by his ten years of service as Biloxi superintendent and his leading the Biloxi schools in a period of unprecedented development and academic excellence." Drawdy was honored in ceremonies at Biloxi High School prior to the end of the school year and in a community-wide ceremony later at the Maritime Museum, where he was praised for his vision for the future of the Biloxi schools, his dedication to the highest ideals of the profession, and his commitment to providing the best possible school environment for the young people of Biloxi.

At the retirement ceremony in the Biloxi High School cafeteria at the end of the school year—planned and presented by the district staff and friends of the superintendent, Bankston conducted the program and introduced members of Drawdy's family, Board representatives, and longtime faculty members.

Heading the list of speakers was David Blaine, now president of the School Board, who said of Drawdy: "His influence as an educator affected not only Biloxi students but also every student in public schools in our state. The list of his accomplishments is long and impressive, and I won't try to cover all of them today—but I do want to point out that he served as chairman of the State Commission on School Accreditation, was president of the Council of Public Schools, and was consultant for numerous educational groups and school systems. Even with all those responsibilities—while always continuing his tireless work for the Biloxi schools—he somehow found the time to be on the boards of a wide range of professional and civic organizations, to be an active and supportive member of his church, and to hold leadership roles in wide-ranging community programs."

Blaine noted that no other members of the community would be better acquainted with the retiring superintendent's achievements than the audience present at this program. It was not possible, he said, for school personnel to go anywhere in the Biloxi schools without being immediately aware of his influence, not simply in the buildings themselves but in the obvious concentration on instruction, the excellent behavior of students from the most diverse backgrounds (probably the greatest diversity that could be found in the schools of the entire state), and the pride that comes with being part of the best school district in Mississippi. Wishing Dr. Drawdy and his family well as he began retirement years, he concluded: "You have made us better, and we appreciate what you have done. Thank you for making so much of your vision for our schools a reality and for helping us take giant steps into the 21st Century."

* * *

To succeed Dr. Drawdy as superintendent, the School Board selected Dr. Paul A. Tisdale. Prior to his appointment as head of the school system, he was Director of Administrative Services for the district.. (See "Addenda" for more detailed biography.)

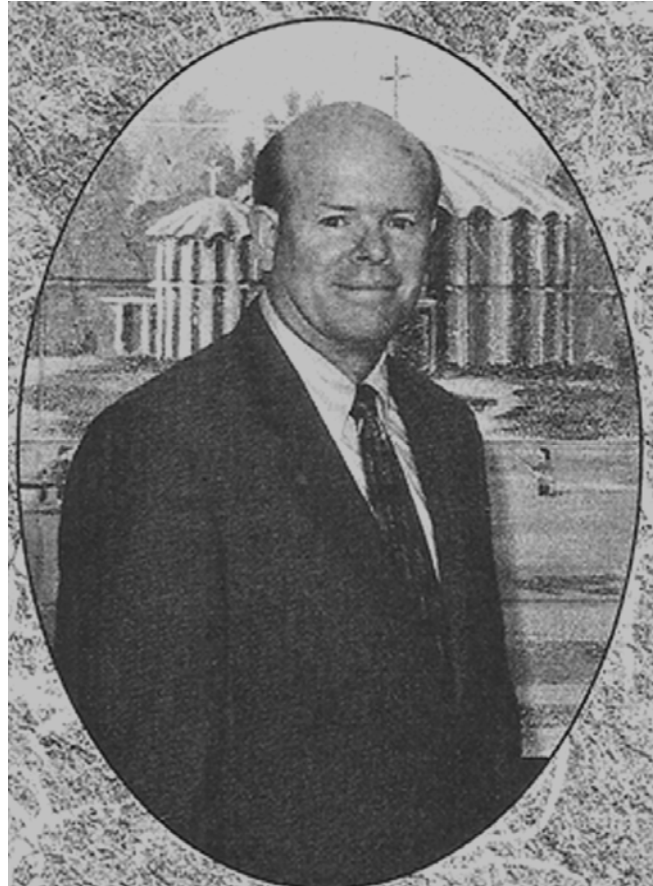
Dr. Tisdale graduated from Biloxi High School in 1970 and began his college work at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1974. He completed work for his master's degree at William Carey College in 1979 and received his doctorate from USM in 1996.

The Biloxi superintendent brought to his new position a broad range of experience in education as a classroom teacher and as an administrator in both elementary and secondary schools. From 1974 until

1980, he was an elementary teacher in the Biloxi Public Schools, moving into a position as elementary school principal in 1980 and serving the district in that post until 1990. For two years—1991-1992—he was assistant principal of Biloxi High School before leaving to become Superintendent of Schools for the Bay St. Louis-Waveland Schools from 1992 until 1996. He returned to Biloxi as Director of Administrative Services in 1996.

As the 2004 school year began, Dr. Tisdale became administrative leader of one of Mississippi's largest school districts, with a certified/licensed staff of 480 and a support staff of approximately 250. The student enrollment of about 6,100 was expected to continue to increase as the community entered an exciting period of growth and economic development.

In the fall, Dr. Tisdale presided at the dedication of two new elementary schools, Nichols and Gorenflo, which opened their doors to students in August 2004. The construction of Gorenflo and Nichols completed the remarkable capital improvements program for the school district. The new Biloxi High School and Vocational-Technical Complex had opened in 2002, following construction of the new North Bay elementary school in 2000 and extensive renovation and improvements to the five other elementary schools. In addition, the new Biloxi School District stadium, located at Biloxi High School, was completed in the summer of 2004 and hosted its first football game on September 3, 2004.



Looking toward the future, the Biloxi superintendent emphasized his commitment to the maintenance of a sound academic curriculum designed to meet the needs, interests, and capabilities of Biloxi students. He expressed the hope that he would see the Biloxi School District become a regional leader in the provision of fine arts courses and activities as vital components of a developing instructional program, making the fine arts not only more accessible but also more appealing to increasing numbers of Biloxi students. As administrative leader of the district, he said that he hoped to work with the faculty in moving beyond simply meeting federal and state requirements and guidelines and exploring areas that are not part of the usual curriculum. "Today's students," he said, "should be assisted in the development of what may be called 'employability and social skills,' including the development of a sound work ethic; learning how to meet and deal properly and fairly with people of highly diverse backgrounds and interests; and building a solid foundation for future success based on elements of good citizenship and good manners that will serve them well for a lifetime."

* * *

As required by the state, the district had begun early in the year to prepare an annual budget that could be revised under the law to meet changing circumstances. The business office reported for fiscal year ending in 2004, the all-funds expenditures budget was \$69,524,042, a figure that included \$14,610,140 for construction. Expenditures less construction and FEMA for FYE 2004 were \$54,913,902.

Student enrollment figures for the first month (August-September) of the 2004-2005 school year showed a total enrollment for the district of 6,305, with enrollment by individual schools as follows:

Beauvoir – 471	Gorenflo – 380
Jeff Davis – 576	Nichols – 303
Lopez – 323	North Bay – 847
Popp's Ferry – 704	Michel – 528
Biloxi Jr. High – 1014	Biloxi High School – 1159
CNO (included in home school count) 38	



BILOXI SCHOOL BOARD – 2004-2005

David Blaine was president of the Board in 2004-2005, with Glendon Johnson, vice president, and

Loyce Searight, secretary. Board members were Madelon Gruich and Keith Anderson.

Gerald Blessey was Board attorney. Col. Bruce A. Bush was KAFB Liaison;

Maj. Douglas E. Mullins was assistant KAFB Liaison.



ADMINISTRATION – 2004 – 2005

Dr. Robert Bowles, deputy superintendent; Dr. Paul Tisdale, superintendent;
Dr. Tim Havard, administrative services; Dr. David Spinks, federal programs;
Charles Benton, personnel; Bonnie Granger, business manager;
Shane Switzer, accountant; Nolan Broussard, support services;
Ray Hughes, technology; Debra Bowers, special education,
Sue Durbin, community outreach.

* * *

The opening of Nichols and Gorenflo schools signaled the closing and razing of the Dukate Elementary School on East Howard Avenue. The school had been built on the site of the old Biloxi High School and Junior High School buildings and had served a large number of the students who would move into the new Nichols and Gorenflo buildings. (For many old-time Biloxi residents, references to the Dukate Elementary School still meant the original building farther east on Howard Avenue that was built in

1924.) Eventually the site directly north of the community center would be cleared for construction of a new \$24-million library and civic center, with construction to begin in 2010. One fact often overlooked in references to demolishing of the Dukate school is that the auditorium from the old high school had been renovated and retained when the new Dukate Elementary School was built around it and had, in effect, been used for ninety years. Students who graduated from Biloxi High School in 1960 and earlier could still recall the programs and assemblies that had been held in that auditorium.

* * *

Beginning his service as superintendent of the school system, Dr. Tisdale chose to emphasize what he obviously hoped would be descriptive of the Biloxi schools during his administration. He first used the statement in an article he wrote for the 2004 *State of the City* publication: *Biloxi Public Schools . . . We are a learning community!* This was his first formal communication with the total school community:

For more than a hundred years, the Biloxi School District has traditionally been one of the most progressive school districts in Mississippi. Serving a student population that is perhaps the most diverse and transient in the state, the district continues to offer, and its citizens take advantage of, quality educational programs and opportunities.

Five hundred licensed staff members and 350 support personnel are knowledgeable, friendly, and committed to providing a climate of high expectations, academic excellence, learning experiences, and challenges to prepare students for success in the 21st century. Our staff makes a difference in the lives of young people every day.

The district recently completed an extensive capital improvements program that began in 1997 and resulted in the construction of three new elementary schools (North Bay, Gorenflo, and Nichols), a new Biloxi High School, new stadium, the renovation of, and additions to, Popp's Ferry, Beauvoir, Jeff Davis, and Lopez elementary schools, as well as renovation and improvements to Biloxi Junior High School and Michel Seventh Grade School. All facilities are Internet accessible.

Lack of full funding for the Mississippi Adequate Education Act in the 2004 legislative session resulted in an \$800,000 shortfall of state funding to our school district for the current school year. It appears unlikely that the legislature will fully fund MAEP during this session and that is expected to result in a shortfall of \$1.5 to \$2.5 million for school year 2005-2006. Should this anticipated shortfall occur, citizens of Biloxi are likely to see a higher pupil-teacher ratio in classrooms across the district, a reduction in class offerings, an increase in local taxes, or, more likely, a combination of all three.

A bright spot in our financial picture for the past decade has been the tax dollars generated by the gaming industry. Gaming revenues over the years have permitted the school district to provide additional supportive services, such as school nurses at each school; a lower pupil-teacher ratio at the elementary and secondary levels, compared to other districts our size across the state; a new state-of-the art high school; and a comprehensive curriculum that is envied by many high schools in the state.

The educational achievements of our students, in many instances, are among the highest in the state. Indicators associated with the No Child Left Behind Act tell us that our students are performing at or "well above" the national average at each elementary school. Scores on the state's required Subject Area Tests (Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U. S. History) in grades 8-11 validate that not only are students passing these tests at a very high rate but also, in some instances, with some of the highest test scores in the state. Extensive extracurricular opportunities and notable achievements by students have

resulted in several championships and honors, notably in basketball and swimming but also in band and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, to name just a few.

Despite the financial concerns noted previously, let me assure you that our school children will continue to receive excellent instruction and instructional opportunities from one of the state's most progressive school districts. We will continue to look for more ways to provide effective instruction.

The citizens of Biloxi have been faithful supporters of public education, and we gratefully acknowledge your continued support. (p. 4)

It is noteworthy that in the first year of his administration, Dr. Tisdale found it necessary to begin a broad discussion with the community regarding financial matters connected in large measure with state funding. In the total picture of basic district operations and instructional planning for the schools, the subject of funding, including local and federal as well as state sources, would occupy a disproportionate amount of time of the Board, the administration, and business office personnel. Reviewing the entire history of the school system, it almost seems that matters of finance head the list of problems that must be dealt with on a daily basis.

The business office reported that for FYE 2005, all funds expenditures totaled \$59,442,755, including \$2,127,036 for construction. Expenditures less construction and FEMA resulted in a final budget figure of \$57,315,719.

No one could have predicted that in the second year of Dr. Tisdale's administration even greater concerns would result from an unexpected storm that would cause enormous damage to the city and to the schools, making financial considerations only one of the almost overwhelming challenges that had to be faced immediately.

* * *

At the end of the 2004-2005 school year, the Board recognized the high quality of the Biloxi faculty in various actions at the June meeting: Pam Manners, selected as National Association of Student Councils Administrator of the Year; Popp's Ferry teacher Ellen Peresich as Leo Seal Teacher; BHS teacher Todd Boucher, Mississippi's Junior Achievement Economics Teacher of the Year; Karen Eichorn, Mississippi Department of Education Award of Excellence for quality reports to the state department.

Guild and Hardy representatives David Hardy and Lee Palermo continued to report progress in construction of the baseball field and child care classrooms.

* * *

The 2005-2006 school year began with the Board and administration continuing to deal with operating costs and ever-present financial issues. Refinancing bond issues as a result of decrease in interest notes, thereby affecting millage increase, and estimating income derived from new city property added to tax rolls were among the general monetary considerations that dominated a large portion of the Board agenda.

Apparent in board action were the growing responsibilities placed on school districts to provide not only for the academic needs of students but also for their well-being in matters related to special needs. Under requirements to use fifteen percent of the federal budget for students "at risk," an innovative program was planned to contract with the New Hope Center for three therapists to provide day

treatment services at Biloxi Junior High School, Biloxi High School, and the Center for New Opportunities. The aim, according to the administration's report to the Board, was to create a program that could be replicated by teachers, with behavior plans written and collected to help determine the effectiveness of the program. The school system also increased efforts to help over-age seventh graders through a concentrated intervention program in basic/core subjects bridging deficiencies in preparation for high school. Later, after Hurricane Katrina, an expanded School Emergency Response to Violence Grant increased counseling services and opportunities for at-risk students, displaced students and staff.

* * *

If this history were being written in chapter segments, it is likely that the next chapter in this limited account would be titled "And Then Disaster Struck!"

It was on Monday, August 29, 2005, that Hurricane Katrina forever changed the lives of Mississippi Gulf Coast residents, the landscape itself, and the long-range projections for every aspect of Coast economic life. It has been called the worst natural disaster to hit the United States.

All three coastal counties of the state were severely and permanently affected by the storm. "Katrina's surge was the most extensive, as well as the highest, in the documented history of the United States; large portions of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties were inundated by the storm surge, in all three cases affecting most of the populated areas." (FEMA, November 2005) It would be possible, of course, to write volumes about Hurricane Katrina—and, indeed, volumes have been written—but for purposes of this history, the narrative deals with effects of the storm on the Biloxi schools and highlights responses both immediate and long-range.

A report issued by the Biloxi Public School District following the devastating storm declared that "for fourteen hours Hurricane Katrina ravaged our coastline, and in her wake were billions of dollars of property damage, hundreds of lives shattered and lost, and countless dreams destroyed. No segment of life as we knew it on the Mississippi Gulf Coast was spared, not even the school district."

It is a testament to the determination not only of school personnel but also of the entire community that the Biloxi schools began almost instantly to chart the arduous journey to recovery. The schools had faced enormous and almost overwhelming difficulties in other times—but nothing comparable to the incalculable damage of Hurricane Katrina. It was reassuring to the students and parents that Superintendent Dr. Paul Tisdale, only a year in office and exerting a calm and decisive response to the historic challenge facing the entire school community, was able to make the following report before another month had passed—"After Hurricane Katrina":

Nineteen days after Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast, students were back in class adjusting to the "new normal" and taking advantage of quality educational opportunities available in Biloxi Public Schools. Of the 6,100 students enrolled prior to the storm, almost 3,200 were in their chairs on September 26, when schools reopened. Enrollment, currently at 4,500 students, is expected to increase when housing becomes available.

Several schools sustained significant or extensive roof damage; two elementary schools in east Biloxi, Nichols and Gorenflo, received eight and six feet of water respectively. When all is said and done, the cost of repairs and renovation is expected to approach \$23-million.

Students and staff from Nichols Elementary School are currently housed at the Jeff Davis Elementary School campus; students and staff from Gorenflo elementary School are currently housed at the Beauvoir Elementary School campus. Renovations to Nichols and Gorenflo are scheduled for completion prior to the Christmas holidays; students and staff will return to their 'new' schools in January 2007.

The district's fiscal outlook warrants some concern, since approximately 45% of the district's revenues comes from ad valorem or local property tax and a number of those properties no longer exist. Coupled with the state legislature's failure to fully fund the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) and reduced revenues associated with Impact Aid (federal dollars in lieu of property tax the school district receives for school children of parents in the armed forces), it will take some years to recoup the loss of millions of dollars projected to occur in the next 3-4 years.

A strategic planning initiative, begun in February, is expected to conclude in the next 6 to 12 months. Look for opportunities to consider the district's new goals and objectives and comment on them.

Although decreased student enrollment has resulted in the need for fewer teachers and support personnel, for this next school year, the district will continue to maintain a desirable pupil-teacher ratio. Biloxi Public Schools continues to offer the community it serves quality instructional opportunities and experiences.

Finally, a word of thanks to the volunteers who have helped us in our recovery, to the city officials who supported our effort to reopen the schools as soon as possible, and to school trustees and staff who offered their hearts and hands to help others in our community at a most difficult time.

* * *

Board records show that much of the attention and time and energy of the administration and Board—and the entire school district staff—focused on "recovery from the storm." Board agendas time after time list such things as emergency roof repairs to the Biloxi High School band hall, Biloxi Junior High, and Jeff Davis, with later roof repairs to all the buildings; purchases of equipment for Gorenflo and Nichols teachers and students; desks for Gorenflo and Nichols; textbooks for Nichols, Gorenflo, Lopez, Beauvoir, Jeff Davis; cafeteria tables for Popp's Ferry. Repairs to all school sites would be continuing for months after the most immediate emergency needs were addressed.

* * *

It was heartening to know that people all over the nation were united in their sympathy for people on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, with one group after another coming to Biloxi and other communities to help repair homes, distribute food, help find shelters for the homeless, build new homes from the ground up. Donations of all kinds came to the Biloxi schools from all sections of the country, with Keesler Air Force Base personnel making enormous gifts of time and work and such tangible items as computers that at least temporarily would replace computers lost in the storm. The losses were heart-breaking—but the generous responses of people from all over the world were uplifting.

* * *



The Biloxi Lighthouse After the Storm

Perhaps the picture above—showing the Biloxi lighthouse still standing strong after the ravages of Hurricane Katrina's winds and waters—is a perfect symbol of the spirit and the determination of Biloxians not only to survive disaster but to triumph! Residents familiar with the immediate area will see the complete wasteland surrounding the lighthouse (though by this time the debris had been largely removed)—and they may recall the beautiful old Dantzer House just northeast of the lighthouse that was slated to be the site of a visitors' center and Mardi Gras Museum—and the graceful old homes that once stood on the Bolton property directly west of Porter Avenue. They will remember—and they will look at the lighthouse, and like thousands of Biloxians and visitors from the world over, they will find something uplifting and beautiful and deeply hopeful in the picture. (Author's note: This photograph was taken by a gifted photographer who was not named in the source showing these and other "Katrina" pictures. Attempts to find the name of the photographer have failed. It is a truly wonderful image, a gift—particularly to Biloxians.)

* * *

On October 5, the State Board of Education granted local school boards permission to adopt individual district calendars making up lost school time, after having reduced credit requirements for instruction from 140 hours (8,400 minutes) to 130 hours (7,800 minutes). Superintendent Tisdale and his administration team presented a revised calendar—literally counting not only make-up days but make-up minutes—adopted by the Board and meeting state requirements.

* * *

With former Biloxi Public Schools administrator and University of Mississippi consultant Doug McQueen as coordinator, the district began in November 2005 a process of strategic planning that was

expected to take more than a year to produce. Serving on the committee were teachers and administrators and a number of community volunteers whose interest in the schools had been evident and whose commitment to strategic planning was vital.

* * *



SCHOOL BOARD – 2005-2006

Officers and members of the Board at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year were David Blaine, president; Glendon Johnson, vice president;

Loyce Searight, secretary; Ken Holloway, member (succeeded

Madelon Gruich as a Board member); Keith Anderson, member;

Edward "Chip" Donovan, Board attorney

* * *

Enrollment figures four months after the hurricane showed a 31% loss in the student population, from 6125 to 4247. The loss of 1878 students revealed with stunning clarity not only the damage that had been suffered by the school system but also the effect on the entire city. The greatest losses occurred in Nichols Elementary School (a 61% decrease in enrollment) and Gorenflo Elementary School (a 63% decrease in enrollment).

In a short summation that reflected the attitude of the entire staff of the Biloxi Public School District after the devastating storm, the administration and Board wrote: "Four months later the district continues to strive to provide the children of Biloxi a quality education, second to none. In spite of the psychological, physical, and financial impact of Hurricane Katrina, the Biloxi School District is evermore committed to challenging curriculums, dedicated teachers, innovative methods and techniques, clean and safe facilities, the latest technology, and a caring spirit worthy of note. We are persuaded that the students who enter our doors deserve no less."

The resolve and dedication expressed in the words themselves were also a reflection of a united community, determined in the face of almost overwhelming disaster, to continue the long and rich history of the Biloxi schools.

Administration

Dr. Robert Bowles
Deputy Superintendent

Dr. Paul Isdale
Superintendent

Dr. Tim Havard
Administrative Services

Dr. David Spinks
Federal Programs

Charles Benton
Personnel

Bonnie Granger
Business Management

Shane Switzer
Accountant

Nolan Broussard
Support Services

Ray Hughes
Technology

Debra Bowers
Special Education

40 Administration

Administration – 2005 - 2006

Dr. Robert Bowles, deputy superintendent; Dr. Paul Tisdale, superintendent;
Dr. Tim Havard, administrative services; Dr. David Spinks, federal programs;
Charles Benton, personnel; Bonnie Granger, business manager;
Shane Switzer, accountant; Nolan Broussard, support services;
Ray Hughes, technology; Debra Bowers, special education,
Sue Durbin, community outreach.

* * *

Biloxi Public Schools Enrollment Changes

School	Pre-Katrina Enrollment	Enrollment – January 2006
Beauvoir	437	311
Biloxi High	1201	945
Biloxi Junior High	982	722
Gorenflo	368	138
Jeff Davis	532	328
Lopez	316	172
Michel	488	353
Nichols	327	128
North Bay	843	695
Popp's Ferry	631	455

* * *

A newsletter to the community four months after Hurricane Katrina included the following account:

'Four Months Later' is a report to the Biloxi community on the status of the Biloxi School District (where we are, where we're going, and where we've been) four months after the storm

Four Months Later the Nichols and the Gorenflo facilities, which experienced eight feet of water, are still unusable. While work crews are busy trying to restore the two schools to pre-Katrina condition, the students of these two schools are receiving instruction in portable facilities on the campuses of Beauvoir elementary and Jeff Davis Elementary. Recently, the Board of Trustees approved a 280-day work contract for both schools, which will delay their reopening until December 2006.

Four Months Later contractors have removed all the dangerous and dead trees along with any debris on school grounds. Both Gorenflo and Nichols have been cleaned from the flood and contracts have been approved to restore them to pre-Katrina condition. Michel's roof is being replaced, with a scheduled completion date of January 9. Interior repairs will be done at Michel upon completion of the roof. January 17 is the completion date for replacing the roof at Biloxi Junior High School. Roofs on the Special Education building and the Technology building have been replaced; interior repairs are underway.

The roof at Lopez experienced major damage and will require extensive work. Bids for that project will be authorized soon. The Popp's Ferry roofing project is scheduled for completion on January 17 and all inside work will begin immediately thereafter. North Bay's roofing is still being evaluated and should be completed as soon as the architects submit a detailed list of how much roofing is to be done. The exhaust system in North Bay's cafeteria has been replaced and it needs only the electrician to wire it. January 7 is set as the completion date for the roofing project at Jeff Davis; inside repairs have begun. The roof at the Center for New Opportunities (Alternative School) has been blacked in and new shingles should be going up in two-to-three weeks. Biloxi High School will be getting new roofs as soon as the district hears from the engineers about how much water moisture is in the rest of the roof material. The roof at the BHS Vocational building is being bid out and the district should know shortly when work will begin in the autobody shop. All interior work will start as soon as the building leaks have been repaired.

* * *

An example of the responses of people all over the country to the needs of Biloxi—and other Coast—schools could be found in an article about the reopening of Gorenflo Elementary School. The story was in a Verizon Foundation and Scholastic Press news release:

BILOXI, Miss. - Surrounded by smiling second- and third-graders, legendary actor James Earl Jones spread a little holiday joy and shared his love of reading with children at the newly re-opened Gorenflo Elementary School Tuesday (Dec. 19). The school was heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina last year.

A group of 40 students listened and dozens of parents and teachers looked on as Jones, who is a Mississippi native, and the children took turns reading aloud a popular book for children, *Clifford's Family*. The reading was part of Verizon's Seasons' Readings, the company's annual employee-giving campaign that, this year, is aimed at children in the Gulf Coast region.

Over the next few weeks, the Verizon Foundation, Verizon employees and Scholastic, the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, will donate more than 40,000 'comfort kits' to children throughout the Gulf Coast. The kits, entitled *Scholastic My Time: A Box for Comfort and JoyTM*, contain books, magazines and art therapy tools that can be used by parents, school officials and community members to help children overcome stress and anxiety.

"I believe the students will love the content of the kit and really enjoy reading the books and writing in the journal, but more than that, they know that people still love and are concerned about us," said Gorenflo Principal Tina Thompson.

* * *

One unusual and especially noteworthy result of Hurricane Katrina was the publication and national distribution of a book by Biloxi school children. It was titled *The Storm* and was published by Charlesbridge Publishing in 2006. Taking advantage of a unique educational opportunity, Barbara Barbieri McGrath compiled stories, drawings, and paintings by Biloxi students and edited the collection. She was assisted by numerous teachers in several of the schools; and Nancy Hunter of the

Learning Institute helped to coordinate and support and publicize the book, with a portion of the proceeds donated to the Biloxi Public Schools. Divided into four sections, *The Storm* told of Evacuation, Storm, Aftermath, and Hope. It was an emotional journey using memories expressed in word and art that ultimately showed creativity and resilience and built something powerful and positive and instructive out of a very dark time in children's lives.

* * *

Under Dr. Tisdale's direction, the school district increasingly expanded its use of technology to inform parents through available computer-based services, such as Information on Demand (which had been used for several years) and additional Website information. The *Policies and Procedures Manual*, adopted annually by the Board as required by state law, was placed on the Website: <http://www.biloxischools.net>. In addition, complete student handbooks were made available, updated each year, in complete and easily accessible format. (In 2007 the district moved to provide Internet service and related computer hardware to Board members' homes for access to Board Book, the paperless Board meeting program that would become standard operational procedure.)

In 2005 the administration recommended and the Board approved the presentation on the Website of a School Board narrative covering all Board meetings and later a complete Board agenda made available prior to Board meetings, with public access to such items as recommended policy changes, budgetary and revenue matters, honors and awards, purchases, field trip requests, donations, academic and instructional information, calendar changes, state and federal requirements, curriculum and program of studies matters—an open and highly informative view inside the Board and the administration.

* * *

In 2005 the Biloxi Public School District was recognized as one of only fourteen Mississippi school districts to be "academic outperformers," with significantly higher percentages of students that scored proficient or above on state reading and math tests than other school districts with similar student economic backgrounds over two school years.

* * *

A report required by the State Department of Education in January 2006 regarding primary night-time residence of students was both revealing and upsetting. It is wrenching to read into the figures what must in large measure reflect the damage to Biloxi families done by Hurricane Katrina. Reporting to the community and the Board, Dr. Tisdale noted that of 4,403 students with the district in mid-January, 966 were staying somewhere other than their home. The figures that follow are from the report: 5 were living in shelters; 358 were doubled-up (living with friends or relatives); 29 were unsheltered (living in cars, parks, campgrounds, etc.); 32 were living in hotels/motels; 53 were living in FEMA trailers or places of business; 49 had not indicated where they were living; Somehow the numbers put a more disturbing face on what everyone in the city already knew about the storm's destruction.

In late March 2006 the new random drug testing procedure for the district began—after intense study and adoption by the Board, having fully communicated the intent and the content of the policy to students and parents and the community.

* * *

Much of the administration's time at the end of the 2005-2006 school year was spent in dealing with temporary classrooms. Movement, arrangement, purchase, reshuffling from one school site to another, particularly in relation to increased enrollment at North Bay Elementary School—it was like some giant trailer-chess-game. And it was a remarkable administrative performance in the face of a logistics challenge that sometimes must have seemed almost overwhelming.

Following the Hurricane, as reflected in ongoing minutes of School Board meetings, business manager Shane Switzer's responsibilities appeared increasingly demanding and wide-ranging. Site losses, insurance needs, staff benefits, routine and extraordinary supplies and equipment, construction bids, refinancing bond issues, disaster loan resolutions, employee salaries and pay schedules, budget planning, shortfalls resulting from lost ad valorem revenue, gaming revenue, audit reports—the list seemed constantly growing.

In fact, in addition to Switzer's substantially expanding role in school operations, upper level administrators under Dr. Tisdale's direction, worked cooperatively to overcome not only the ordinary problems of district management but also to deal with the unique challenges resulting from the storm.

The business office reported that for FYE 2006, all funds expenditures totaled \$66,949,99, less construction and FEMA of \$6,169,622, with a final budget figure of \$62,780,375.

* * *

Biloxi School Board – 2006-2007

New School Board members are usually appointed in March, replacing retiring members (who are appointed for staggered terms so that one member's term of office ends each year). In addition, School Board officers are elected in March each year. Pictures of the School Board in this volume are from Biloxi High School yearbooks and usually show officers and members after elections and new appointments to the Board. Appointments are made by the mayor and approved by the City Council.

Members of the School Board at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year were the same as in 2005-2006, though changes were made in officers of the Board. In 2006-2007, officers and members of the School Board were David Blaine, president (Mr. Searight became president of the Board later that year); Glendon Johnson, vice president; Loyce Searight, secretary; Keith Anderson and Ken Holloway, members; Edward Donovan was Board attorney. KAFB Liaison was Col. Rodney Croslen; and Lt. Col. Paul Valenzuela was assistant KAFB Liaison.

* * *

The continuing expanded role of public schools in the lives of Biloxi children could easily be seen in issues and innovations addressed in meetings such as the one on October 10, 2006. For instance, deputy superintendent Dr. Robert Bowles gave a brief summary of the four-week pilot run at Popp's Ferry Elementary School—Breakfast in the Classroom—where students picked up their breakfasts in the cafeteria and proceeded to the classroom to eat there. Board attorney Edward Donovan gave updated guidance from the state attorney general's office on the Surplus School Property Lease of district space to the Boys and Girls Club and Moore Community House. Special education supervisor Mrs. Delores

Bowers reported on Biloxi students who are served at different locations (residential center, etc.) and costs to the district. Dr. David Spinks discussed a mental health program funded through the United Jewish communities and the mental Health Association of Mississippi. The model program was to be set up at Nichols Elementary School, with teachers required to attend two half-days of training in November. It would deal with children's reentry to special school buildings in the Hurricane Disaster zone where few homes had been rebuilt. The Board was notified of a tentative agreement with the Gulf Coast Action Agency, Inc. Head Start program to assist in making their pre-school students' transition to kindergarten as smooth as possible. Dr. Spinks also reported on the 21st Century Community Learning Grant application designed to fund before- and-after-school programs at Gorenflo and Nichols, parents and community involvement and activities, and learning centers.

Without belaboring the point, it is obvious that a typical Board meeting deals with a broad spectrum of issues and concerns and activities overlapping as the foundation of the total instructional program of the district. Student handbooks revised as necessary and adopted each year as official statements of Board policy were published and made available to every student at the beginning of each school year, with parents properly informed through guidelines "to procedures, policies, and practices governing the operation of our schools and the behavior of our students." ("Foreword," Student Handbooks). The handbooks are also available on the district's website. One particular advantage of having such access to the handbooks is that families moving into the Biloxi Public School District will have full and complete information prior to their move about rules and regulations governing student behavior, curriculum choices, extracurricular activities, staff assistance, student disciplinary rules and consequences of misbehavior, and other matters of special interest to newcomers.

* * *

It is worth noting that the district aggressively pursued grants, local, state, and national, to fund programs that the schools would otherwise not have been able to finance. Among individual grants made to teachers for innovative teacher-produced and student-centered projects that would not otherwise be funded are those made each year by Biloxi First. The non-profit organization formed in 1989 plays an increasingly important role in providing support for teachers, having made funded 293 creative classroom projects since its beginning, totaling more than \$174,000; the foundation now has assets amounting to approximately \$560,000. (See "Addenda" for details about Biloxi First.)

It is equally noteworthy that—particularly in the direct aftermath and the two or three years following Hurricane Katrina—the administration and Board continued to express deep appreciation to the entire school community and other individuals and organizations for donations of money, supplies, equipment, computers and books, volunteer support, wide-ranging services and creative assistance from individuals, civic and church groups, towns and cities, military units, other schools and thousands of students and teachers from every corner of the nation. Board meetings, in effect, became a continuing platform featuring the heartfelt and sympathetic union of an entire nation responding to the needs of their fellow Americans.

* * *

The administration and the School Board in 2006-2007 continued to express concern about student enrollment and to make periodic reports to the community regarding a matter having such immediate and long-range consequences for school operations. In the *State of the City* report for 2007, Dr. Tisdale discussed the decline in student enrollment reflected in post-Katrina figures. Results were dramatic evidence of the negative effects of the storm on individual school populations and, of course, subsequently on all levels of funding.

Biloxi public schools continue to educate the school children of Biloxi with quality instruction in a cost effective manner although this fact may not be generally known since only one fifth of our citizens have a link to the school, their child. Our biggest concern continues to be the one over which schools have the least control, the decline in student enrollment that is attributed to the housing and insurance issues so prevalent along the Gulf Coast. Yet in the 18 months after Hurricane Katrina, the students, teachers, support staff, administration, and Board of Trustees have worked hard to continue our part in maintaining Biloxi's reputation as a great place to live . . . because it is!

* * *

Issues affecting declining student enrollment after Hurricane Katrina, as listed in the 2007 *State of the City* report included the following: (1) available housing, particularly affordable housing for young families; (2) available military housing at Keesler Air Force Base for military families; (3) availability and cost of insurance; (4) and construction and renovation costs. Those issues continued to have a negative effect on enrollment through the remainder of the decade.

The chart below reveals an immediate severe decline in enrollment in October 2005, followed by a very slow trend toward increased enrollment through January 2007.

<i>Pre-Katrina</i>	School	Oct 05	Jan 06	May 06	Aug 06	Jan 07
437	Beauvoir (K-6)	219	308	306	314	313
368	Gorenflo (K-6)	84	140	170	152	146
532	Jeff Davis (K-6)	185	324	354	360	361
316	Lopez (K-6)	119	169	195	180	189
327	Nichols (K-6)	69	133	155	149	138
843	North Bay (K-6)	572	705	774	815	810
631	Popp's Ferry (K-6)	329	472	484	527	562
488	Michel (7)	266	356	384	358	361
982	Biloxi Jr. High (8-9)	535	723	740	798	796
1201	Biloxi High (10-12)	789	951	964	1019	987
<u>6125</u>	Total	3167	4281	4526	4672	<u>4663</u>

* * *

Strategic Plan

The district's strategic plan was initiated and completed during 2006 by a committee comprised of parents, community members, teachers and school administrators and coordinated by University of Mississippi consultant Doug McQueen. The plan's goals and objectives were mailed to all households in the city for review and comment; over two hundred comments were received and considered by the committee prior to presentation and approval by the School Board of Trustees in November. Each goal shown below is clearly supported by a number of objectives which may be found at www.biloxischools.net/strategic_planning_initiative.htm.

This document was adopted by the school board at their regularly scheduled meeting, November 14, 2006:

Goal 1: Ensure an understanding of and commitment to the Biloxi Public Schools vision of excellence.

Objective 1: Communicate the Biloxi Public Schools vision as measured by school climate survey, community, staff and student surveys.

Objective 2: Encourage innovation and creativity to eliminate status quo thinking as a barrier to change through an end-of-the-year “innovation and best practices” report.

Goal 2: Provide consistent, quality instruction

Objective 1: Implement the district’s “guaranteed curriculum” (minimal, common curriculum delivered to all students) as measured by student performance on common term exams in grades 3-12 by SY 07-08 and annual state assessments.

Objective 2: Use effective teaching methods, strategies and programs as measured by student performance on common term exams and annual state assessments and teacher performance as reflected by the district teacher evaluation instrument and national assessments.

Objective 3: Apply and use consistently the teacher evaluation instrument to evaluate teacher performance as measured by documentation submitted to district level administration.

Objective 4: Recruit and employ qualified minority staff as measured by an increase in applicants over the previous year.

Objective 5: Establish educational programs to meet the needs of non-traditional learners, focusing on extended instructional time as measured by daily enrollment figures.

Objective 6: Staff that ensures the needs of all students are met.

Objective 7: Continuously replace and update technology in all schools as measured by survey, lesson plans, and software tracking.

Goal 3: Communicate openly and honestly

Objective 1: Create open, welcoming, and inviting environments for students, parents, staff, establishing a climate that promotes openness and honesty as measured by the annual school climate surveys, web site, suggestion boxes, etc.

Objective 2: Encourage interaction and participation of parents, students, school personnel, and community members in school issues and decisions, as measured by annual school climate surveys, sign-ins, etc., to determine participation levels.

Objective 3: Establish a climate within schools and school district that promotes openness and honesty, as measured by school climate surveys.

Goal 4: Increase parental involvement in educational issues

Objective 1: Develop and implement a comprehensive parent involvement plan by school year (SY) 2007-08.

Goal 5: Provide permanent school facilities that support optimal student learning and development

Objective 1: Maintain an average pupil-teacher ratio in elementary grades of 16:1

Objective 2: Ensure that facilities meet the needs of students while providing support for community activities as measured by community feedback.

Objective 3: Create and maintain a safe, sanitary, and healthy environment as measured by custodial report forms, cafeteria surveys, maintenance/grounds inspections and accident safety reports.

Objective 4: Create a Safety, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee at each school consisting of students, parents, community members, teachers, and a school administrator.

* * *

In the over-all story of funding for Biloxi Public Schools operations, gaming revenues continued to play a key role; and the administration and Board had to make budgetary decisions based on a factor that was always difficult, if not impossible, to predict with precision. At the June 12, 2007, Board meeting, members of the Board were given the following information (note: only selected representative months' figures have been reproduced here):

BILOXI PUBLIC SCHOOLS GAMING REVENUE RECEIPTS - CASH BASIS

This report has been revised to reflect the month the actual payments were received by the District

Month Received	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
July	499,193.92	652,829.49	505,414.49
August	650,247.08	527,016.99	442,703.22
September	543,796.22	514,497.76	541,685.37
October	661,701.15	611,405.92	419,006.50
March	593,692.95	359,176.11	702,874.93
June	539,425.69	398,683.86	532,669.86

Amount budgeted for FY07 - 4,600,000.00

Fiscal Year to Date Collections - 6,441,861.44

Prior Fiscal Year to Date Collections - 4,137,987.82

Two Prior Fiscal Year to Date Collections - 6,603,415.11

It is not difficult to look at the total collections for representative fiscal years and understand that the figures reflect a significant percentage of the total budget each year.

* * *

Students and staff at Nichols and Gorenflo Elementary Schools returned to their respective school campuses on December 4, 2006, when renovations totaling ten million dollars were completed. Both schools had suffered severe damage to buildings and extensive and costly loss of equipment and school supplies.



Workers with Starks Contracting of Biloxi were busy making repairs at Nichols Elementary in anticipation of its January 2007 reopening.

Starks Constructing Company workers making repairs at Nichols Elementary School prior to the expected January 2007 reopening of the school. (from *State of the City 2006*)

* * *



Biloxi High School Administrators – 2006-2007

* * *

The February 13, 2007, Board minutes reflect the continuing administrative and Board responsibilities for overseeing building projects of great significance to the district. Representatives of Guild and Hardy Architects gave updates to the Board on the Gorenflo and Nichols buildings; the renovation of the Biloxi Junior High School auditorium, which was part of the old Biloxi High School building on Father

Ryan Avenue, built in 1960; the renovation of the Biloxi Junior High School fieldhouse; and the construction of the girls' softball field at Biloxi High School.

* * *

The following section combines an article written by Vincent Creel for Biloxi's *State of the City* newsletter in 2007 and an article for the Biloxi Public Schools "Windtalker" in November 2007. Both contain information about special national honors received by Biloxi High School and BHS principal Pamela Manners.

In September 2007, in an official announcement by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, Biloxi High School was named a national BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL. Biloxi High School is one of only four Mississippi schools in 2007 to be selected for the highest level of recognition by the Department of Education. This is a first-time honor for a Biloxi school, and the School Board and school personnel have planned a Week of Celebration to highlight the achievement through various events to be announced for the week of September 28 – October 5. In November, BHS principal Pam Manners and a Biloxi High School teacher will attend award ceremonies in Washington, D.C.

The BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL program recognizes and presents model schools whose students meet either of two challenging assessment criteria: (1) at least 40% of students are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have dramatically improved student performance to high levels in reading (language arts or English) and mathematics on state assessments or referenced against national norms in at least the highest grade tested in the last year tested; (2) regardless of demographics, schools are in the top 10% of schools as measured by state tests in both reading (language arts or English) and mathematics or score in the top 10 percent on assessments referenced against national norms in at least the highest grade tested in the last year tested. Schools must also make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading, language arts, and mathematics under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Biloxi High School has an enrollment of 1,068 in grades 10-12, with a certified staff of approximately 100 (10% of the teachers hold National Board Certification). The comprehensive program of studies includes more than 160 courses, principal Manners pointed out, and students have an exceptionally broad range of choices for participation in sports, extracurricular activities that include over 40 clubs and other organizations, and curricular and co-curricular programs centered in arts studies and performance.

Seniors in the 2007 graduating class won more than \$4-million in scholarships, including one military appointment, six ROTC scholarships, twelve four-year athletic scholarships, over thirty presidential scholarships, and a record number of scholarships to both state and out-of-state institutions. Graduation rate for BHS students is more than 92%; attendance rate is 94%. The state mean score on ACT last year was 18.9; Biloxi High School's mean score on ACT was 20.6.

Manners is one of six principals nationally who will receive the Terrel H. Bell Award, an honor named for a former Secretary of Education and presented to school leaders who play a vital role in overcoming difficult circumstances.

"These awards validate our belief that Biloxi High School offers a quality education for students who embrace learning and also those students who are most challenging to teach; it's a testament to the hard work by teachers, support staff, and administrators on that campus. We're extremely proud of them all," said Dr. Paul A. Tisdale, superintendent of Biloxi Public Schools. "These awards would not be possible without supportive parents, a community that values education, and a school board committed to providing a quality education for all students. We're certainly not perfect, and can do some things better, but it's very nice to be recognized as part of an elite group that the United States Department of Education has determined is making a real difference in education."

Biloxi High School -- which has maintained the state's top-rated Level 5 rating for five years -- was recognized for having 95 percent of its students pass the statewide Algebra I test over the past three years, increasing to 98.7 percent in 2005-06, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

In post-Katrina tests of reading comprehension and writing skills, Biloxi High students scored in the Top 10 in Mississippi and were more than 20 percentage points above the state average. In fact, over the past three years, more than 96 percent of Biloxi High students passed the informative writing tests, increasing to 98.7 percent in the wake of Katrina.

"These awards are all about the excellent work being done by our teachers and students," said principal Manners, who will be in the nation's capital next week to receive the honors.

Manners has spent 20 years as an educator in the Biloxi School District. She taught at Michel for 7 years, receiving a 1992 US Department of Education Award for Innovative Curriculum for creating a 'Law-Related Reading' course for 8th graders. She was a secondary curriculum coordinator for the district for three years, then assistant principal at Fernwood Junior High before becoming principal of Michel Junior High. In 2004 she became the principal of Biloxi High School, the first woman to hold that position since 1951.

In a narrative connected with the Blue Ribbon School nomination, the principal described Biloxi High School and the school community:

In its 300 year history, the city of Biloxi has been home to a melting pot of immigrants, primarily drawn to the warm weather and abundant seafood industry. Casinos have recently replaced fishing as the number one industry, and Keesler Air Force Base continues to lend our community a world focus. It is undeniable that Biloxi's unique cultural exchange is an important factor that enriches and influences the lives of our students and teachers at Biloxi High School.

Biloxi High graduated its first class, housed near the beach in the city proper, over 100 years ago. In the 2002-03 school year, the school was moved from Father Ryan Avenue to a new campus nestled on approximately 90 acres between the Back Bay of the Mississippi Sound and Interstate 10. This facility, currently serving students in grades

9-12, includes fully equipped science laboratories; computer labs; a 200 seat performing theatre; practice and competition gymnasiums; a football stadium; a baseball stadium with indoor batting cages; a softball stadium, music areas with individual practice rooms and risers; and kilns in the art classrooms. The beautifully landscaped courtyards, maintained through a partnership with community organizations and our school environmental club, provides outdoor classrooms and computer ports.

The school is accredited through AdvancEd, formerly known as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), with over 10 percent of the 120 teachers Nationally Board Certified. The support staff is comprised of administrators, counselors, career center technician, media specialists, paraprofessionals, and two full-time nurses. One of the school's greatest successes is that, despite the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Biloxi High School's dedicated students and staff continued to maintain and in fact, in most areas, surpass, the high academic and extracurricular standards that have long been a hallmark of this district.

Manners also described the extensive extracurricular and co-curricular programs available to Biloxi High School students—and some of the prestigious awards most recently won by students and staff:

Biloxi High School has an award winning student government; a band has placed first in field and parade competitions; a competitive, award winning theatre department recently nominated in 2007 to participate in the American High School Theatre Festival in Scotland; a show choir that performed in Carnegie Hall twice and was invited to the 2008 Olympics in China; a national award winning yearbook staff; and over 30 organizations aimed at student involvement, including National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, International Culture Club, African-American Culture Club, and Key Club.

Athletic programs in football, baseball, basketball, tennis, swimming, track, golf, cross country, soccer and softball are offered. Many of our teams qualify for the Mississippi High School Activities Association Scholar-Athlete Teams, with team grade point averages 3.0 or better. Our fine arts department produces many talented young people, as exemplified by the Mississippi Theatre Association bestowing the best actress in the state award to a Biloxi High student at competitions in 2007.

A supportive community partners with the school to provide guest speakers, motivational programs, and career preparation. A project between Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and Biloxi High School has received statewide recognition for promoting career and technical training to students. Since the inception of this Career Fair there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students who elect to continue their education with a one or two year degree in lieu of immediate entry into the work force.

* * *

Increasing demands on school staff resulting from Mississippi Department of Education and United States Department of Education requirements marked the entire decade, often with unfunded mandates that left local school districts scrambling to find new sources of financing, including grants and

donations, or trying with varying degrees of success to make budget cuts. Sometimes—for many schools all over the country—this meant that entire programs were eliminated or reduced or reductions in force (RIFs) were reluctantly and painfully made. The No Child Left Behind Act in 2001-2002 was federal legislation intended to put into action standards-based education theories and often criticized for underfunding its mandates.

NCLB was passed by the House and Senate and signed by President Bush in 2001 and made special demands on school districts and teachers:

The Act aims to improve students' performance in reading and math, particularly those students with the poorest grades, such as minorities and special education students. The act requires almost all students in every school to test at their grade level for reading, writing and mathematics. Schools unable to meet those measures two years in a row would have to provide more tutoring to students or bus them to better-performing schools.

As part of the legislation, states, districts and schools have had to develop and implement unique accountability plans that are measured against the successes they are having with raising performance of students in every socio-economic class. They are also required to provide alternatives to students if they can not meet the standards they set and had approved by the Education Department.

The law mandates that teachers have a college major for every core subject they cover, a difficult requirement for small schools where teachers handle multiple subjects, say some experts. ("No Child Left Behind Gets Mixed Reviews")

During the decade since its passage, NCLB has become a focal point for widespread criticism that too often schools and teachers are forced to "teach to the test" in order to meet specific requirements of the Act. And, critics say, subjects other than math and language skills (reading and writing) are increasingly neglected for American students. Attempts have been made to negate some of those criticisms through legislative change, but the entire matter of federal mandates centered in testing is a matter for continuing debate. The local schools are, like other American schools everywhere today, still struggling in many ways to respond in the most positive ways to educational requirements that more and more are beyond local and state control.

* * *

An interesting and revealing report to the Board on March 27, 2007, in response to federal requirements, gave a breakdown of student enrollment by ethnicity. Figures were included for each school and for the district as a whole for five separate categories. The total numbers and percentages of total enrollment for the district were as follows:

Asian – 316	Black – 1591	Hispanic – 248	Native American – 8	White – 4678
7%	34%	5%	0%	54%

The breakdowns of numbers for schools and school districts under the No Child Left Behind Act are particularly important in reporting test results and in assessing levels of academic achievement and progress. One of the most common criticisms of the statistical approach to NCLB mandates is the even more detailed categorizing of students into subgroups and definitions of Adequate Yearly Progress that vary considerably from state to state. Many educators and professional organizations continue to protest

that school districts are being forced to respond to standards that should not be applied to particular students in a particular category, for example, or to restructure school systems based on federal, not local, goals. They have also questioned whether such widely varying state assessments of Adequate Yearly Progress are valid and fully based on statistically reliable information, especially in regard to subgroups of students.

* * *

In April 2007, Dr. Tim Havard reported plans for the summer school programs offered by the district. For various reasons during the past few years, summer school classes in the Biloxi schools had decreased in number and importance, as technological substitutes became more accessible. In 2006, Dr. Havard said, the district offered summer school to students in grades 7-8 and NovaNet on-line credit recovery to students who did not pass subjects in grades 9-12. He noted that the district would again offer summer school in grades 7-8 at no charge for those students who did not master the standards for those grades. For grades 9-12, the district would again conduct summer school registration, but if there were not enough students for a class "to make," NovaNet credit recovery would again be offered to Biloxi students only, for a fee, in the Career Center at Biloxi High School.

The growing connection with and dependence on advances in technology were evident in the response to summer school choices, as in so many other instructional areas as the district moved more rapidly into what was for many older residents a new and unfamiliar school world.

* * *

In the spring of 2007, the district made plans to demolish some of the structures on the Fernwood campus and asked permission of the Board to advertise for bids to do so. The main Fernwood building, where the office and CNO classrooms were located and which had served students for years prior to Fernwood's becoming part of the Biloxi Public School District in 1957, would be retained. The cafeteria/kitchen, auditorium, a steel building, and the gymnasium would also be kept.

As early as November 2007, based on a request to the School Board, the administration was beginning to consider the possibility of realignment of the secondary schools. The Board was asked to approve the selection of an architect to design/draw up plans for "possible construction, on the Biloxi High School campus, of additional space to house grade 9 students."

* * *

For FYE 2007, the budget figures were as follows: All funds expenditures--\$69,826,212; less construction and FEMA amounting to \$8,346,235; final budget figure of \$61,479,977.

* * *

In 2007 the Biloxi Junior High School auditorium—constructed in 1960 as the central feature of the new Biloxi High School on Father Ryan Avenue—underwent extensive and costly renovations. The auditorium seats more than a thousand occupants. New theater seating, handicapped seating areas, new stage flooring, and new lighting and sound systems have improved the setting for the district's large meetings, making it more attractive and more comfortable. In addition to school events, many other meetings have been held in the auditorium, including city-wide programs, business and civic meetings, student drama, choir, and band performances, symphony and community concert programs, various programs recognizing individuals and groups for outstanding achievements, staff and student

orientation events. From the start, the auditorium was highly praised, particularly by outside visitors and performers, for the quality of its acoustics, an architectural triumph of masterful planning.

* * *

Student enrollment figures for the first month of the 2007-2008 school year (August-September) were reported as follows:

Beauvoir – 330	Gorenflo – 152
Jeff Davis – 372	Lopez – 197
Nichols – 181	North Bay – 798
Popp's Ferry – 597	Michel – 395
Biloxi Jr. High – 789	Biloxi High School – 1067
CNO (included in home school count) – 41	

Total Enrollment – 4878

* * *



School Board – 2007 – 2008

Loyce Searight, president; Kenny Holloway, vice president; Keith Anderson, Secretary; David Blaine, member; Allison Buchanan, member (succeeded Glendon Johnson as a member of the Board); Col. Rodney Croslen, KAFB Liaison; Lt. Col. Paul Valenzuela, assistant KAFB Liaison.

* * *

The FYE 2008 budget report showed the following: All funds expenditures - \$67,909,902; less construction and FEMA of \$971,943; final budget figure - \$66,937,959.

* * *



ADMINISTRATION- 2007-2008

Front row: Dr. Karen Norwood, Shane Switzer, Dr. Janice Wilson;

Back row: Henry Wieniewitz; Dr. David Spinks; Debra Bowers;

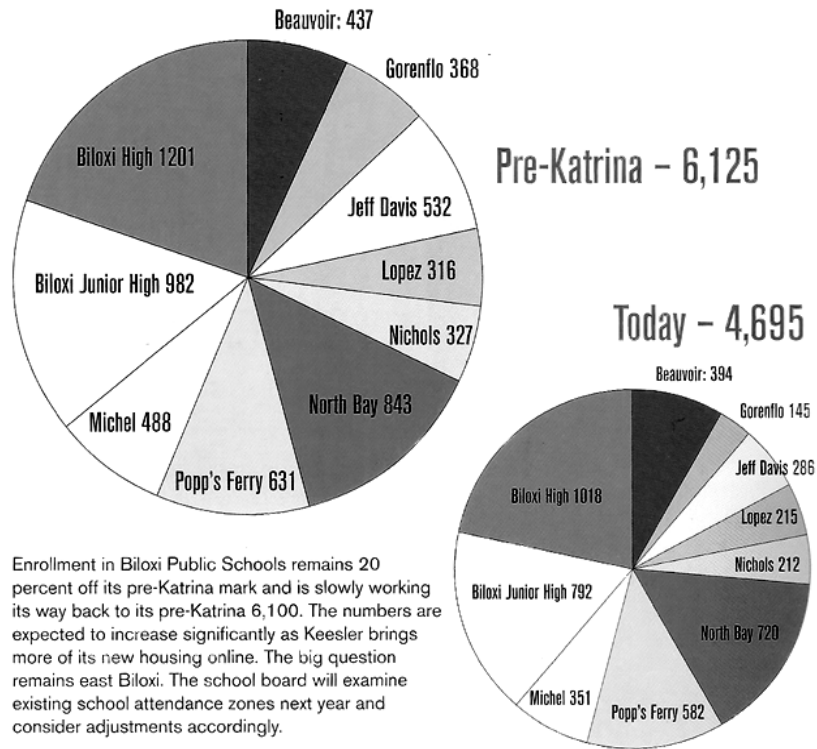
Dr. Paul A. Tisdale; Nolan Broussard

* * *

In October 2008 the first issue of *The Arrow* Newsletter for the Biloxi Public Schools, produced by district public relations coordinator Vincent Creel, introduced the community to a remarkably creative and informative source for official information about the schools. With an introduction by Superintendent Tisdale and a status report from Mayor Holloway, the publication included a wide range of stories about classes, curricular changes, plans for capital improvements, enrollment statistics, student and faculty achievements, and helpful information for parents.

One of the most instructive sections of the newsletter was a graph effectively comparing student enrollment by individual schools "Pre-Katrina" and "Today." The graph is reproduced below. It notes the dramatic twenty percent reduction in the total student population following the 2005 hurricane, with an enrollment figure of 6,125 prior to the storm and 4,695 at the time of publication.

By the numbers



* * *

In his introductory column to *The Arrow*, Dr. Tisdale wrote that the district planned to publish the newsletter three times each school year to inform the community about "what's happening in our schools, what we're most proud of, and what our greatest challenges are." He continued:

For example, Biloxi High School was recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education a year ago. On the other hand, our student population, while increasing because of new military housing in west Biloxi, is not growing in east Biloxi, due to the cost of construction, elevation requirements, and insurance costs. Our student enrollment now is about 20 percent—or 1,200 students—below the pre-Hurricane Katrina figure of 6,100.

However, the quality of education offered in our community continues to be a significant indicator noted by employers and employees who might be considering Biloxi as a future home.

You'll be pleased to know that our school district is well respected as an educational institution throughout the state and holds the state's highest district accreditation level. Additionally, our students perform well on state and national measures of standardized testing, despite a very diverse student population. But we're no different from you in one respect...we're always looking for things we can do better.

The issues that face school teachers and administrators these days have changed significantly from those that concerned educators 20 years ago...even five years ago. From fashion trends to electronic communication, random drug testing to federal requirements under No Child Left Behind...it's a different school environment.

So, whether you're a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, taxpayer or friend, we'll help you stay in touch with what's going on inside the schools that you drive by each day.

* * *

The first edition of *The Arrow* included a follow-up story about significant restructuring of the Biloxi for the coming school year, under the heading "Ninth grade to move to high school in 2009."

Biloxi Public Schools plan to move ninth grade students from Biloxi Junior High to Biloxi High School for the 2009 school year, and Superintendent Dr. Paul Tisdale says the move will offer several advantages.

The Biloxi School Board at its November meeting authorized the hiring of Guild Hardy Architects to draft preliminary designs on constructing a 30-classroom addition to the high school. The move of the ninth grade would involve more than 400 ninth graders.

"The move will provide more opportunities for ninth graders," Tisdale said. "Students will go from having the choice of two electives to being able to choose from dozens of electives offered at the high school. There also will be significantly more extracurricular activities for ninth graders."

Both Tisdale and Biloxi High Principal Pamela Manners noted that credits toward graduation begin accruing in the ninth grade, and that state and national achievement benchmarks for high schools actually include evaluation of ninth grade performance.

* * *

Construction began almost immediately in the 2008-2009 school year to enlarge the high school by adding 36 classrooms, 5 offices, two computer labs, an Internet Cafe and two staff workrooms. This new wing was completed, and almost 500 9th graders began the 2009-10 year at Biloxi High School, increasing the Biloxi High School enrollment to 1450 students.

* * *

2008-2009 Student Enrollment – First Month (August/September)

Beauvoir – 415	Gorenflo – 143
Jeff Davis – 279	Lopez – 215
Nichols – 229	North Bay – 732
Popp's Ferry – 554	Michel – 354
Biloxi Jr. High – 796	Biloxi High School – 1015
CNO (included in home school count) – 31	

Total Enrollment – 4719

* * *

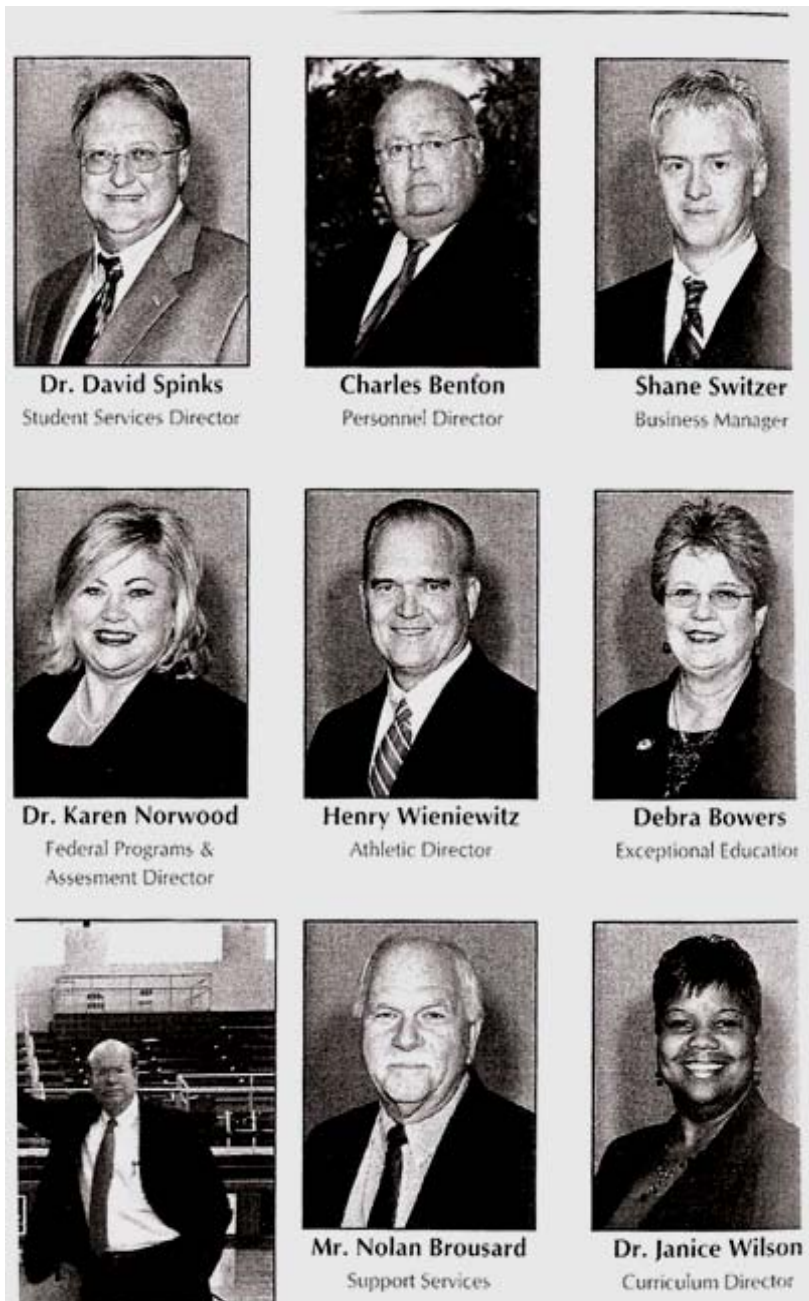


SCHOOL BOARD – 2008-2009, 2009-2010

Ken Holloway, president; Allison Buchanan, member; Keith Anderson, vice president; Edward "Chip" Donovan (attorney), Loyce Searight, secretary; David Blaine, member; Lt. Col. Rich Cole, KAFB Liaison

In March 2010, School Board officers were elected, with Ken Holloway reelected as President; Allison Buchanan, vice president; Loyce Searight, secretary. David Blaine and Keith Anderson, members.

* * *



Administration – 2008-2009

* * *

The November 11, 2008, *Windtalker* featured a story by Vincent Creel informing subscribers to the newsletter about special recognition the community had recently received. *BusinessWeek*, he said, had named Biloxi as Mississippi's best place for raising children. Staff members of the Biloxi schools could take a measure of real pride in the announcement:

The magazine said its most important factors in analyzing communities across the country with a population of at least 50,000 were school performance, affordability, and safety. The criteria also considered cost of living, air quality, job growth, racial diversity, and local parks, ball fields, zoos, recreation centers, museums, and theaters.

In a story on its online edition, *BusinessWeek* said of Biloxi, "The coastal city is going through a building boom in the wake of 2005's Hurricane Katrina. It is famous for its casinos, Gulf Coast beaches, and saltwater fishing."

The report listed Biloxi as having a population of 50,633 and a median income of \$52,766. Runners up for the Mississippi honor were Gulfport and Jackson.

* * *

In March 2009, Dr. Tisdale wrote two articles in *The Arrow* publication that dealt with several changes being made in realignment of the secondary schools and changes in attendance zones in the eastern section of Biloxi. He wrote, too, about new programs being introduced in the schools and about the new accreditation model to be implemented by the Mississippi Department of Education. *The Arrow* received wide distribution among Biloxi residents and was a new and exceptionally useful source for informing the public and explaining current school programs, activities, plans, and needs. In issue No. 2, the superintendent wrote about school matters that would affect every school family in the coming school year. The first article was headed "The Point of *The Arrow*."

It's been said that the one thing that remains constant is change. We can all relate to that statement!

Next school year will bring a number of changes to our schools and community: Ninth grade students will attend Biloxi High School; Biloxi Junior High School will serve seventh and eighth grade students; Michel will be the new home for sixth grade students; Lopez will be a multi-purpose facility serving alternative school students, pre-school students with language and speech disabilities; and more. The elementary attendance zones for Jeff Davis and Gorenflo will increase in size; Excel by 5, a community initiative to help families prepare their pre-schoolers for kindergarten is underway; a new accreditation model will be implemented by the Mississippi Department of Education replacing the familiar 5-4-3-2-1 rating system with a seven tier rating structure (Star School, High Performing, Satisfactory, Low Performing, Academic Watch, At-Risk of Failing, and Failing); new family housing for Keesler Air Force Base will result in an increase in student enrollment; and economic uncertainty will lead to difficult decisions.

In spite of all that, I believe we can all learn from the character exhibited by our state championship basketball team: work hard, change your strategy to meet situational demands, and meet challenges and uncertainty as they appear, with grace and dignity.

The second article was titled "Exciting changes in store for Biloxi Public Schools," and the story dealt with what the superintendent called "landmark changes" beginning next school year:

Attendance zones for elementary school students in east Biloxi are being re-drawn over the next couple of months, signaling landmark changes that will be arriving in Biloxi Public Schools beginning next school year. Among the changes: a new \$10 million, 36-

classroom wing will open at Biloxi High School, accommodating the move of 400 incoming ninth grade students from Biloxi Junior High School; incoming sixth grade students will be moving from elementary schools to Michel; and Lopez Elementary School will be re-purposed to host the district's alternative school and other district resources.

In short, many changes are in store for students, administrators, teachers and parents. More than 1,800 students – nearly 40 percent of the 4,700 students in Biloxi public schools – will be attending a new school next school year. "These moves will position Biloxi Public Schools to meet the challenges of education and the economy," said Dr. Paul A. Tisdale, superintendent of Biloxi Public Schools. "As difficult as it is, change is growth, and we must grow to meet these challenges." The re-purposing of Lopez will mean that 160 students in Grades K through 5 will be attending either Gorenflo or Jeff Davis Elementary schools. The bulk of the changes, however, will involve the 430 incoming ninth graders who will move to Biloxi High School and the 339 incoming sixth graders who will move to Michel. "The move will provide more opportunities for ninth graders," Tisdale said. "Students will have an expanded choice of electives to choose from at the high school. There also will be a greater selection of extracurricular activities."

Both Tisdale and Biloxi High School Principal Pamela Manner noted that credits toward graduation begin accruing in the ninth grade, and that state and national achievement benchmarks for high schools actually include evaluations of ninth-grade performance. The move of the sixth graders opens the door for the school system to consider adding pre-K classes in Biloxi Public Schools at a future date.

* * *

One of the most important changes made by the administration and the Board—and often a center of opposition—was what was called "the re-purposing" of Lopez Elementary School in 2009, to be put into effect at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. Basically the decision was made to close Lopez as an elementary school and to make it the site of the school's alternative education program, in addition to making space available for other support programs, including pre-kindergarten students with language and speech disabilities/disorders and a new Excel 5 pre-school initiative.

Communications with the Lopez parents and other Biloxians made it clear that the decision to change the focus of Lopez had been made only after thorough deliberation, covering two years of examining enrollment trends and facilities and future prospects for growth, together with budget concerns. The continuing costs to operate seven elementary schools in the city were deeply affected by changes in state funding, which for two years had been based on pre-Katrina enrollment and had been changed the year before to provide funding based on current enrollment. That had meant a \$4-million funding cut for the district!

Answering questions posed by members of the school community, particularly Lopez parents, the administration traced the history of the decision-making process and said that the re-purposing of Lopez was determined based on enrollment and cost. Having monitored school attendance after the reopening of schools nineteen days after Katrina, it was obvious that enrollment—then about half of what it was before the storm—had resulted in some classrooms with as few as eight students.

Also responding to criticism that Lopez had a higher accreditation rating than Gorenflo, which had originally been suggested for re-purposing instead of Lopez, the administration's answer referred to the obvious fact that the Gorenflo school was a new school with the most modern equipment and advantages, while Lopez was one of the oldest schools in the district. In addition, the schools—like all other Mississippi schools—would soon be undergoing an entirely new accreditation process, with Gorenflo expected to perform at a very high level under the new model. If the new accreditation model had been used in the 2008-2009 school year, both Gorenflo and Lopez would have scored at the "High Performing" level. Approximately 70% of the students who presently attended Lopez would be enrolled at Gorenflo and 30% at Jeff Davis Elementary School.

The decision by the School Board to re-purpose Lopez Elementary School was unanimous.

* * *

In 2009 it was announced that the Biloxi Public School District was one of nine districts in the state—three of them on the Gulf Coast—to be recognized for having all schools meet federal progress standards. Students scored "proficient" or "advanced" in all twelve areas of common term assessments.

"School Superintendent Dr. Paul A. Tisdale and members of the Biloxi School Board were applauded during the Mississippi School Board Association Lighthouse School leaders Awards Luncheon . . . held during the MSBA's Fall Leadership Conference." (*The Arrow*, March 2009)

The Biloxi schools had met Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks in all areas tested and obtained an average scale score of 151 or above. In addition, fifty percent or more students scored proficient or advanced in all twelve areas of the Common Term Assessments.

* * *

Attempting to communicate the administration's concerns regarding enrollment and student attendance, the superintendent—in the mayor's *State of the City* 2009 publication— emphasized several important matters related to attendance. "Students' daily attendance is key to the district's success," Dr. Tisdale wrote.

The Mississippi Department of Education recently released the Dropout, Completion, and Graduation rates for school districts throughout the state. Of our school district's 572 students who began Grade 9 in school year 2004-2005, 75 percent graduated four years later in May 2008; another 7 percent completed school through a General Education Diploma program, summer school, or online program; 16 percent dropped out of school; and 2 percent were unaccounted for.

State law requires students to remain in school until the age of 17, when most students are in Grade 11; Grade 10 if the student has been retained in grade during his or her school career.

At the end of March, district enrollment was 4,695 students. Of those enrolled, 94 elementary students (grades K-6) had 10 or more unexcused absences, absences that

cannot be accounted for due to medical or legal reasons. In grades 7-12, 192 students have 10 or more unexcused absences. 123 students from Biloxi High School alone. Seventy-seven students have unexcused absences of 15 or more.

School district accreditation ratings are heavily based on state test results. Children are not likely to learn what the State of Mississippi requires if they are not present at school. The probability of students being promoted to the next grade, in almost all instances, diminishes with excessive absences.

A large factor in state funding for public schools is student attendance, so in addition to poor academic performance by many absentee students, the district loses state funding at a time when every tax dollar counts.

High school diplomas are a greater factor than ever before in determining the likelihood of increased lifetime earnings for our children and yet we have students who don't make it to school. Parents, help us help your child ... the chance of your child receiving a quality education is significantly enhanced if your child is attending school. (p. 7)

He concluded with an appeal directed to every Biloxi student and parent: "We can't be successful without you!"

* * *

A new initiative reaching into the community is being led by the Biloxi Public School District. It is a program called "Excel by 5," and its intent is to help children from birth to five years old. An article in the 2009 newsletter told the story of its Biloxi beginning:

About a year ago, Susan Hunt, the Biloxi Public Schools community involvement coordinator, gathered a diverse group of childcare and healthcare providers and business community members—about 75 in all—to begin the process to see Biloxi certified as an Excel by 5 community in 2010.

The process is about identifying what the community is doing for children under age 5 and to try to get the community to work together to address any gaps in services that might exist for children under 5, said Carol Burnett of Moore Community House, who serves as chair of the group.

The program was developed by Steve Renfro of Chevron in Pascagoula and the Phil Hardin Foundation. It is managed by the early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University, and its partner agencies include the Barksdale Reading Institute, the State Department of Education, Health and Human Services, the state legislature, Head Start and others.

Focusing on community involvement, family and parent support, early care and education, and health and safety, Excel by 5 draws upon the expertise and commitment of community leaders and volunteers,

parents, civic and business groups, and other individuals who help to address the developmental needs of young children and thereby enrich both their lives and the life of the community as a whole.

* * *

Revenues for the Biloxi Public Schools for fiscal year 2008-2009 were listed as \$49.4-million, with a breakdown as follows: 50% state funding; 32% local – ad valorem; 14% gaming; 3% federal funding; and 1% local – other. Expenditures for the 2008-2009 fiscal year totaled \$47.9-million, with 67% of that total for instruction; 24% for instructional support; 6% for district administration; and 3% for school administration.

A demographics chart revealed that 52% of the student body are Caucasian; 36% African-American; 6% Asian; 6% Hispanic.

The page devoted to education in Biloxi showed a breakdown of assessment/tax levy figures for all Coast school districts, with the Biloxi School District having the second lowest school assessment of 38.03 mills in 2008-2009; only Harrison County, with a levy of 35.74 was lower. The Biloxi school assessment had remained the same for the past five years.

* * *

In July 2009 the superintendent emphasized upcoming accreditation demands to be required of staff members: "In the next two months the school district will be pursuing district accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement. Students benefit from accreditation because, through the process, their school district has committed to raising student performance and will be held accountable for improving student learning on a continual basis."

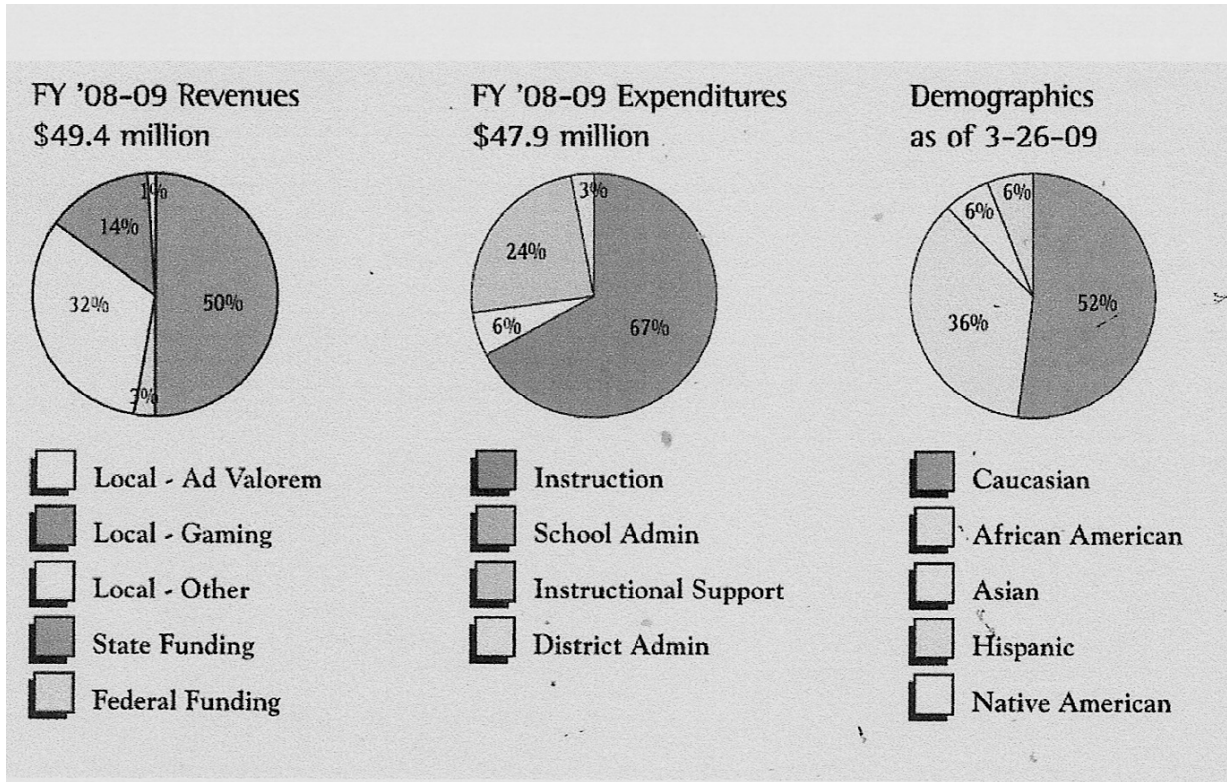
* * *

As the 2009-2010 school year began on August 5, an exceptionally large number of Biloxi students attended new schools. Most significant was the opening of the ninth grade addition to Biloxi Senior High School, a \$10-million 36-classroom wing built to accommodate the approximately 430 ninth graders who previously attended Biloxi Junior High School on Father Ryan Avenue. Lopez Elementary School became the center for alternative education, a program that had been housed at the old Fernwood School on Pass Road as the Center for New Opportunities. The approximately 200 students in grades K through 5 who previously attended Lopez were reassigned to either Gorenflo or Jeff Davis Elementary Schools. All Biloxi sixth grade students left their previous elementary schools to attend the newly re-purposed Michel Sixth Grade School.

"If it all sounds like a lot of changes, that's because it is," the superintendent said. "But the fact is, these moves will position Biloxi Public Schools to meet the challenges of education and the economy. As

difficult as it is, change is growth, and we must grow to meet these challenges." (*Arrow*, July 2009, p.1)

From *State of the City 2009*



From *State of the City 2009*

Student Enrollment

Pre-Katrina	School	Oct 05	Jan 06	May 06	Aug 06	Jan 07	Jan 08	Jan 09
437	Beauvoir (K-6)	219	308	306	314	313	315	412
368	Gorenflo (K-6)	84	140	170	152	146	150	143
532	Jeff Davis (K-6)	185	324	354	360	361	361	277
316	Lopez (K-6)	119	169	195	180	189	199	217
327	Nichols (K-6)	69	133	155	149	138	182	226
843	North Bay (K-6)	572	705	774	815	810	800	731
631	Popp's Ferry (K-6)	329	472	484	527	562	585	556
488	Michel (7)	266	356	384	358	361	399	354
982	Biloxi Jr. High (8-9)	535	723	740	798	796	774	779
1201	Biloxi High (10-12)	789	951	964	1019	987	1027	1002
6125	Total	3167	4281	4526	4672	4663	4792	4697

* * *

In what was clearly one of the most ambitious and detailed reports to Biloxians about the current status of the Biloxi Public Schools, in December 2009 *The Arrow* newsletter was mailed to all postal residents in the Biloxi Public School District. The twelve-page publication contained a lengthy explanation of the student assessments required under the federal No Child Left Behind Act; results of such assessments; an examination of the rigorous new state tests and more demanding accreditation model; descriptions of innovative efforts to help students increase their learning; an analysis of raising the stakes for Mississippi schools under the state's new accountability standards; comparisons of assessment results for the past two years; a statistical view of the length of time students spend in Biloxi Public Schools; and other matters directly affecting the future of the schools and the increasing challenges and demands faced by students. An introductory article was titled "Biloxi schools are meeting the growing challenges":

Two years ago the Mississippi Department of Education constructed more rigorous and challenging assessments for the purpose of accurately reflecting student progress that would correlate to the state's results in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test, commonly referred to as the Nation's Report Card.

During that same period a new school accreditation model was developed and is being used for the first time this year. Gone is the rating system of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, replaced with Star, High Performing, Successful, Academic Watch, Low Performing, At Risk of Failing, and Failing designations. And these designations will be harder to earn or maintain in the future, since the standards will increase in each of the next three years.

Compounding the challenge of rigorous state tests and a more demanding accreditation model is the shortfall in state funding to school districts. Having lost \$1 million in state funding a few months ago when the governor instituted a 5 percent cut, we anticipate another cut of 3 percent or \$600,000 in the near future – and next year it is anticipated that state funding to public schools will be 10 percent less than the current year, or in the case of Biloxi Public Schools, approximately \$2 million.

Despite these looming challenges, Biloxi continues to offer a quality education to children who attend its public schools, and we thank students, their parents, and school staff for their hard work. With your continued support, Biloxi Public Schools will continue to rank in the top 10 percent of our state's school districts.

* * *

A follow-up article titled "What are we doing differently to help students increase their learning?" related the district's ongoing efforts to meet new and more rigorous standards of what is, in effect, a new day in education:

Beginning with 9th grade students in School Year 2007-08, the curriculum was differentiated with students' post-high school years in mind. This differentiation has been phased in, adding one grade each year, so that all students in Grades 9-12 will be on one of the academic levels, determined by their parents/guardians and child, in School Year 2010-2011. Parents/Guardians have the opportunity to change their child's level each spring for the following school year.

The three tracks are:

- **The Honors/Accelerated Level** (28 credits) is a challenging and rigorous curriculum designed to enable students to pursue college level studies while still in high school. Students on this level should be well prepared for college and are much more likely to score well on the ACT or SAT, improving their chances for academic scholarships.
- **The College Prep Level** (26 credits) is a solid sequence of courses that provides students with the traditional college preparatory curriculum designed to prepare them for entrance into college and academic success in the college classroom.
- **The Standard Level** (24 credits) is designed to provide students with the opportunity to study college preparatory courses at a less rigorous pace, with time available in their schedule for guided study opportunities. Students selecting this level will be minimally prepared for college level coursework. The term 'standard' indicates the standard curriculum required by all students in Mississippi to graduate from any high school in the state. Of the students in Grades 9, 10, and 11 this year, 19 percent are on the Honors Level, 34 percent are on the College Prep Level, and 39 percent are on the Standard Level. The remaining 8 percent are pursuing a Certificate of Attendance (Special Education), Occupational Diploma (Special Education), or General Education Diploma (GED). Students in Grade 12 this year entered Grade 9 before establishment of the academic levels in 2007-08.

Students are expected to (1) take responsibility for their education, decisions, and actions; (2) be active and willing learners in school and the community; (3) maintain a balance between academics and extracurricular activities; (4) respect fellow students, cultural diversity, individuality, and the choices and rights of others; and (5) promote a safe and healthy learning environment.

Parents are expected to (1) become informed and knowledgeable about the curricular, co-curricular, and student support programs available to students; (2) assist their children in making important decisions; (3) engage in open and timely communication with the school; (4) become actively involved in the life of the school by attending programs; (5) help their children become responsible and self-reliant by teaching them to accept responsibility for their own learning, decisions, and behavior; and (6) create a supportive environment for learning in their homes.

School staff will (1) develop curriculum and instructional strategies that promote active involvement of students; (2) model the importance of lifelong learning through ongoing professional development; (3) act in a professional manner with integrity and honesty to develop relationships characterized by caring and respect; (4) hold high expectations for student achievement and character and help guide students to make responsible choices; (5) care for the physical environment and school property and expect the same of students; and (6) communicate with parents and each other about students.

Parents should be aware that Biloxi Public Schools has taken measures in the past few years to increase communication with parents.

We employ the Connect-Ed messaging system and Internet Information On Demand, permitting parents to view their child's grades, attendance, and discipline history daily; and we send home a course syllabus at the beginning of each term, noting what will be

taught. To increase the likelihood that students will be successful academically, they may re-test (if student eligibility requirements are met); and online Credit Recovery, for students at Biloxi High School, is available for students who did not pass courses required for graduation.

* * *

It is not at all surprising that the first decade of the new millennium should find the Biloxi schools facing financial problems—this time based largely on reductions in state funding. In an interview with WLOX television reporters and the *Sun Herald* in February 2010 and in a voluntary meeting with staff members, the superintendent tried to give a forewarning not only to the public but also especially to school employees of the real possibility of layoffs for the coming school year.

Basically, he said, the district is considering a wide range of measures to make up an expected \$3.5 million in budget cuts for the year. His comment that "just about everything is on the table" led to a discussion of such things as reductions or eliminations of some support services; unpaid leave for personnel other than teachers; reductions in technology services and textbook purchases; reductions in coaching salary supplements and the possibility of employing fewer coaches; attrition of personnel through retirement, with the probability that teachers who voluntarily leave the system will not be replaced. His conclusion that some layoffs might be possible was received by staff members at the meeting with understandable apprehension but also generally with an understanding that budget cuts should not be unexpected, given the condition of the national economy and state budgetary problems. Dr. Tisdale continued to emphasize that the provision of quality education for Biloxi students is the top priority of the Board and the administration and expressed his hope that nothing will alter the district's continuing to do exactly that.

Budget plans continue to be examined and thoroughly discussed in administrative and faculty/support meetings and the budget will be subject to hearings required under the law.

Fiscal challenges for local schools—as for public schools all over the country—are part of an old and continuing story; and it is likely that the next volume in the history of the Biloxi Public Schools will also follow a similar pattern.

* * *

The beginning—and the future

It is inevitable that the Biloxi schools—as the first decade of the new 21st Century nears its end—will continue to face and successfully deal with new challenges, some of them more or less routine and familiar, others seeming to come out of nowhere, unexpected, demanding, perplexing. Every year will bring new and exciting programs, new teachers with valuable and worthwhile ideas, new mandates and goals and methods of assessment, new technology only dreamed of short months ago. And it is completely in character that those responsible and dedicated men and women charged with providing the best possible schools for Biloxi's young people will make proactive moves to do so. They will not be satisfied merely to react—but to anticipate, research, plan, study, experiment, make choices, move! The history of the Biloxi schools foretells that. Looking toward the future, one finds it instructive to review the past.

Volume 1 in *The Growth of the Biloxi Public School System* opens with references to the beginning of the Biloxi schools, and Volume 2 begins with a review of the early history of Biloxi schools in relation to Mississippi schools. Legislation providing for public education in Mississippi prior to the Civil War was entirely permissive, and Biloxi was barely large enough to afford a public school system. An article in the *Daily Herald Anniversary Edition of 1934* cited the incorporation of Biloxi as a town in 1850.

Thirty years later the population was only 1,540. Authors Stephanie Richmond and David Wheeler wrote in Volume 1 of the Biloxi Public Schools history:

Biloxi is a city rich in its educational development. The early town leaders recognized the need for adequate free public education and for many years contributed their own personal resources to the achievement of this goal. The spirit of generosity which would play such an important role in the growth and development of the Biloxi Public School System in future years made its first appearance in 1860. It was on May 17, 1860, that Gaspard Didier, Arne and Adele Bernard, and Joseph Roussell donated to the Mayor and selectmen of the Town of Biloxi a lot 300 feet long by 270 feet wide, facing Main street near the L&N Railroad, to be used solely for public school purposes. (p. 8)

It was a gesture that would be repeated in future years as other Biloxians donated land for schools that would later bear their names—familiar Biloxi names—Howard and Lopez and DuKate and Gorenflo.

Two of Biloxi's earliest public schools were named for donors Harry and Frank Howard—and in 1924 the generosity and civic spirit of Lazaro and Julia Lopez, W.K.M. DuKate, and William F. Gorenflo were also recognized as the Board of Trustees officially gave their names to three new schools. (Guice, Wheeler and Richmond, p. 62)

On May 17, 2010, the Biloxi Public Schools will hold a 150th anniversary celebration, commemorating the day in 1860 when those four visionary and generous Biloxians donated land to be used for a public school in their community.

There will be individual school celebrations throughout the school system. There will be speeches and proclamations and resolutions. There will be programs and time capsules and mementos and music.

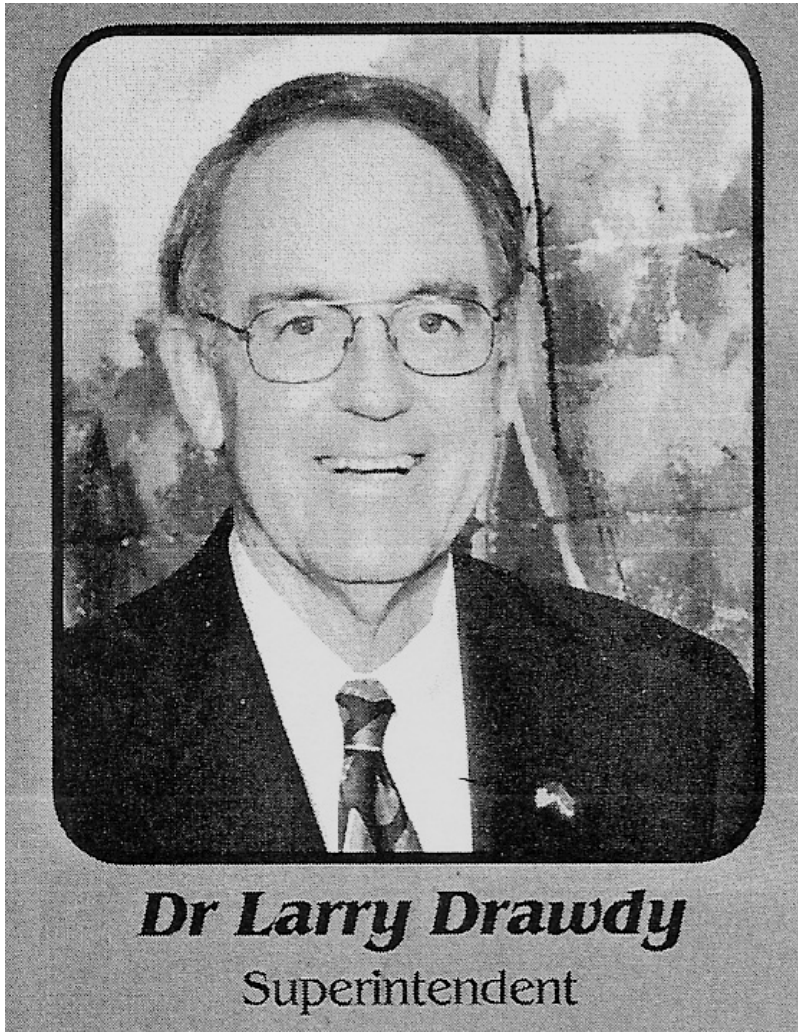
And there will be remembering.

It will be a time to remember the beginning of the schools that Biloxians have supported and enjoyed and built and loved for 150 years.

It will be another beginning.



SUPERINTENDENT DR. LARRY A. DRAWDY – 1994-2004



SUPERINTENDENT DR. LARRY DRAWDY – 1994 – 2004

Dr. Larry Drawdy was born in Miami, Florida. He attended Mississippi College, Clinton, Mississippi, where he received his B.A. and M. Ed. Degrees. In 1971 he was awarded a doctor's degree from Mississippi State University. Dr. Drawdy's long and distinguished career in Mississippi schools began at Mississippi College, where he was assistant dean of men. After teaching in the Brevard, Florida, public schools, he returned to Mississippi and was principal of Brandon Junior High School.

Following a five-year stay in the Moss Point Schools as assistant superintendent of instruction and personnel, he came to Biloxi as assistant superintendent in 1975, leaving Biloxi in 1986 to become superintendent of the Picayune Public Schools. He was then superintendent of the Meridian Public School District for six years before returning to Biloxi as superintendent in 1994.

The Biloxi administrator has served on many state and regional accrediting and other professional organizations. He served as president of the Council of Public Schools and as chairman of the Commission on School Accreditation. A member of the Board of Directors of the Southern Education Consortium, he served as president of the Gulf Coast Education Initiative Consortium and as consultant for numerous educational groups and schools, including desegregation institutes and workshops, academic and instructional workshops, and performance based accreditation.

Dr. Drawdy was named Mississippi's Superintendent of the Year in 1993, and he has received many other awards in recognition of his service to Mississippi schools and his own community. He has been active in United Way, church programs, civic organizations, charitable and arts organizations, and professional associations. He served on the Board of the Southern Education Consortium, the Gulf Coast Symphony, and other organizations. In 1998 he received the Mississippi College Service to Humanity Award.

During his tenure as superintendent, the Biloxi schools made exceptional progress in curricular and instructional programs and received the state's highest accreditation rating. He supervised the school system's development of a long-range strategic plan, expanded communications with staff and community, and directed a visionary building program for the school district, including three new elementary schools, a new junior high school complex, and a new high school for grades 10-12. In addition, all elementary schools were renovated. The school system achieved prominence and recognition through publications with nationwide circulation; and the district was named a Blue Ribbon School District by a national business organization in 1998.

Following his retirement as Biloxi superintendent, Dr. Drawdy continued his service to Mississippi schools as a consultant for The Excellence Group. In 2010 he became interim Deputy Superintendent of the Mississippi Department of Education for the Office of Improvement, Oversight, and Recovery.

He and his wife Kathleen are the parents of two sons, Allen and Brent, and grandparents of granddaughter Devin.

SUPERINTENDENT DR. PAUL A. TISDALE – 2004 - PRESENT



Dr. Paul A. Tisdale

Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT DR. PAUL A. TISDALE – 2004 – PRESENT

Dr. Paul A. Tisdale graduated from Biloxi High school in 1970 and received his Associate Degree from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in 1972. He received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1974; his Master's Degree from William Carey College in 1979; and his Doctorate from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1996.

Dr. Tisdale became superintendent of the Biloxi Public School District at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. Prior to that time, he had served the district as director of administrative services 1996-2004, after having been a teacher and then an elementary principal in the Biloxi schools from 1974-1990. For two years—1991-1992—he was assistant principal at Biloxi High School before leaving to become superintendent of the Bay St. Louis-Waveland Schools from 1992-1996 and returning to Biloxi in 1996.

As the 2004 school year began, the new superintendent became administrative leader of one of Mississippi's largest school districts, with a certified/licensed staff of 480 and a support staff or approximately 250. In the fall, Dr. Tisdale presided at the dedication of two new elementary schools, Nichols and Gorenflo, which opened their doors to students in August 2004. The construction of Gorenflo and Nichols completed an extraordinary capital improvements program for the school district. The new Biloxi High School and Vocational-Technical Complex had opened in 2002, following construction of the new North Bay Elementary school in 2000 and extensive renovation and improvements to the five other elementary schools. In addition, the new Biloxi School District stadium, located at Biloxi High School, was completed in the summer of 2004 and hosted its first football game on September 3, 2004.

The student enrollment of about 6,100 was expected to continue to increase as the community entered an exciting period of growth and economic development. That optimistic forecast was reversed by Hurricane Katrina one year later, with almost overwhelming changes in the entire city and in the district schools, affecting staff, student enrollment, loss of buildings and use of property, financing, transportation, incalculable damage to immediate and long-range planning—everything, it seemed, connected with operation of the Biloxi schools. Under Dr. Tisdale's leadership the challenges were faced—and successfully met—by the school staff and by the community.

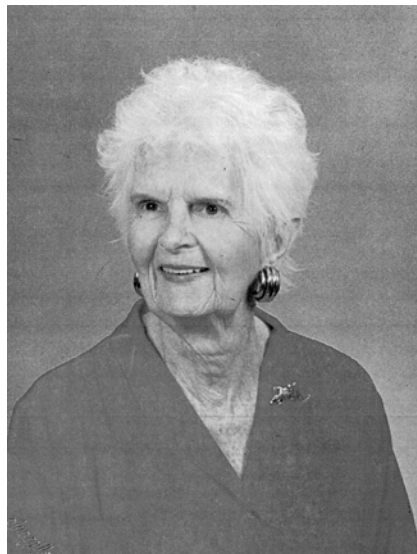
In addition to meeting the demands of his primary role in the Biloxi school system, Dr. Tisdale is actively engaged in a wide range of professional and civic organizations. He is a Board member of the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents (MASS), Program of Research and Evaluation for Public Schools (PREPS), and Biloxi First, Inc. Having served as president of the Biloxi Bay Chamber of Commerce, 2008, he is a member of Magnolia Lodge #120, F&AM; a life member of both the University of Southern Mississippi and the Gulf Coast Community College Alumni Association; and Air Education and Training Commanders' Civic Group, Keesler Air Force Base representative; Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA); Mississippi Professional Educators; National School Board and Mississippi School Board Associations; American Association of School Administrators; National Forum of Educational Statistics; and Mississippi Professional Educators.

Born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1952, Tisdale is the son of Dr. William A. Tisdale and Connie Tisdale. He married Wanda Hughes of Biloxi in 1974, and they are the parents of Errol Tisdale, Columbia, South Carolina, and Virginia Murphy, Biloxi. A member of the Church of the Redeemer Episcopal Church, he has served as vestryman for several terms.

RUTH MARY HULS HUNT

BILOXI SCHOOLS HISTORIAN

In 1999 Mrs. Ruth Hunt was officially named Biloxi Public Schools Historian, the first to hold that position, and she worked tirelessly to find ways to preserve materials related to the history of the city's schools. She initiated and coordinated the effort to continue the written history begun in 1979 under the leadership of Mrs. Julia Guice, city historian. She created a special place in the DuKate Building for prominent display of large photographs of the early Biloxi benefactors who donated land for schools later named in their honor and for framed articles and other documents presented for viewing in the area where School Board meetings are held. She collected other photographs and handbooks and news articles and school-related memorabilia and made arrangements to have them kept in the Biloxi library, where they are accessible to the public. Her love for Biloxi was always apparent in her life and in her work and she was dedicated to preserving the history of the city and the schools.



Born in 1918 in Chicago, she moved to Biloxi with her parents and brother when she was very young and graduated from Biloxi High School in 1938. She earned a degree at Morgan Park College and later taught in the Biloxi Public Schools. A member of the First United Methodist Church of Biloxi, she served as Bible School Director and was a member of the Laura White Circle and Eastern Star. She was a lifetime member of the PTA and served as president of the state organization. Her community activities included service as Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Carnival Association, and she was instrumental in establishing the Mardi Gras Museum.

In a *Sun Herald* article after Mrs. Hunt's death in 2007, reporter Melissa M. Scallan wrote that "She knew the history of the city, the history of the school district, and the history of one of this area's favorite holidays—Mardi Gras." The headline described her best: "Hunt knew, and made, Biloxi history." She began the children's Mardi Gras parade as one way of helping young people become more involved with and take pride in special community activities.

"She had limitless energy," former Biloxi Public Schools superintendent Dr. Olon Ray said of her. "She had a passion for kids and she loved this community." Always interested in and dedicated to helping children, Mrs. Hunt began the Head Start program in Biloxi with Dr. Ray, and they laid the foundation for programs designed to improve the lives of pre-school children.

Biloxi Public Schools superintendent Dr. Paul Tisdale recalled Mrs. Hunt's having "accumulated things through the years, and much of that history is hanging on the walls of the district's annex building. She was a time binder. She could tell you how we got to where we were, and I used to love hearing her talk about the history of Biloxi."

Mayor A.J. Holloway was quoted in Scallan's *Sun Herald* story: "He said he would remember Hunt as someone who loved this community and shared that love and knowledge with everyone. 'She never stopped learning,' he said. 'She was a great person.'"

Mrs. Hunt was preceded in death by her husband William Kenner "Skeet" Hunt and survived by daughters Susan Hunt and Martha Hunt Tripp, one grandson and two great granddaughters. Both Susan and Martha were longtime faculty members of the Biloxi Public Schools and continue to work with and for the Biloxi schools their mother loved so much.

LEE ANN DUBAZ

BILOXI SCHOOLS HISTORIAN

Biloxi Schools Historian Lee Ann Dubaz is secretary to Biloxi Public School District Superintendent Dr. Paul Tisdale, a position she has held since January 2006. Prior to that time she was Lopez Elementary School secretary and is completing her 28th year as a member of the district staff.



Appointed Biloxi Schools Historian in August 2008, Mrs. Dubaz succeeded Mrs. Ruth Huls Hunt in the position which involves actively gathering and maintaining items related to the history of the Biloxi Public Schools, preparing history-related materials for appropriate display, helping to increase public awareness of the importance of school history, and coordinating and publicizing events and programs connected to the history of the Biloxi Public Schools.

Mrs. Dubaz graduated from Biloxi High School in 1976 and attended the University of Southern Mississippi. She also obtained her Real Estate brokers License. She is a Certified Educational Office Employee (CEOE), holding certification with the National Association of Educational Office Personnel and has served as president of the local Biloxi Association of Office Personnel. She is vice-president of the Mississippi Administrative Assistants/Board Clerk (AABC) Association; chairperson of the Gulf Coast Chapter of the AABC; and a member of the Mississippi School Board Association and the National School Board Association. She was asked to present a workshop at the national convention in April 2010.

Mrs. Dubaz was responsible for initiating and coordinating the writing and publication of the third volume in *The Growth and Development of the Biloxi Public Schools (The Biloxi Public Schools – 2001-2010)* and is coordinating commemorative celebrations on May 17, 2010, of the 150th anniversary of the date that has been called by researchers "the beginning of the Biloxi Public Schools."

In addition to her professional activities and memberships, she served on Our Lady of Fatima School Board January 2003-May 2005 and is a member of Blessed Seelos Catholic Church. A member and past president of Oak Park Garden Club, she is also a member of Slavic Ladies Auxiliary; member and past president of the Krew of Rix Carnival Association; member and volunteer of Gulf Coast Carnival Association; member of the Biloxi Bay Chamber of Commerce, the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum, the Dogwood Garden Club, and Biloxi Yacht Club; past member of the Biloxi-Ocean Springs Junior Auxiliary and past member of Les Masque Carnival Association. She is married to Gary Dubaz and is the mother of Victoria Moon Conway and Lloyd T. Moon III.

BILOXI TEACHERS' FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

On March 4, 1965, the original charter for the Biloxi Teachers' Federal Credit Union was signed. Leading the list of charter members was Biloxi administrator Bob Cherry, who had spearheaded the development of the organization that would ultimately serve thousands of Biloxi school staff members and their families and grow into a multi-million-dollar business. Mr. R.D. Brown was superintendent of the school district at the time of the charter..

Other charter members were Olene Fowler, James A. Duncan, Charles R. Campbell, Flora D. Wilson, Lottie Ruth Smith, Midgett A. Schoolar, Holly A. Payne, Corrine L. Fornea, Lucille Lott, and Nellie Harper.

Officials in 1965 included F.E. Hood, president; Dorris Heber, vice president; Harold Boyer, secretary; and Board of Directors members Midgett A. Schoolar, Charles Campbell, Horace Flake, and Holly Payne. Credit Committee members were James A. Duncan, chairman, and members Mac Baker and Lottie Ruth Smith. The Supervisory Committee included Flora Wilson, chairman, and members Nellie Harper and Roger Weill.

Beginning with only 96 members and a total of \$975.00 per month coming into the Credit Union, the organization was founded by members who believed deeply in its eventual success and who freely gave many hours of volunteer service to ensure that it would succeed.

The original location of the Credit Union was in the vocational office in Biloxi High School on Father Ryan Avenue. After Betty Jean Hughes became the treasurer, the office was moved to her classroom at Central Junior High School on Howard Avenue. When she was transferred to Nichols Junior High School, the Credit Union was housed in the office area at Nichols. In 1975, when Dr. Olon Ray became superintendent, he directed the Credit Union move to an office in the Administration Building on St. Peters Street.

A review of the continuing impressive growth of assets of the Biloxi Teachers' Federal Credit Union is particularly revealing. In 1965, assets totaled a mere \$11,293.81. Five years later, assets had grown to \$114,074.28, followed in 1980 by what then seemed a very impressive total assets figure of \$553,120.24. By 1990, the Credit Union reported assets of \$1,678,262.73.

Today—as of March 2010—the Biloxi Teachers Federal Credit Union has assets of \$7,491,283.21.

Since its organization in 1965, the Credit Union has made 31,906 loans totaling \$72,922,784.93.

Members of the Board of Directors and committees of the Credit Union in 2010 are Carolyn Cadney, president; Perry Howard, vice president; Betty Jean Hughes, treasurer; Merry Owen, secretary; members Kathleen Malpass, Claire Turner, and Darlene Seymour. Charlotte Breal is office manager. The supervisory committee includes Merrill Goolsby, chairman, and members Martha D'Orville and Shane Switzer. The credit committee is chaired by Patsy Senseney, with members Sherry Deshamp and Lowana Ratisher. Floyd Bullock is security officer.

BETTY JEAN HUGHES and CHARLOTTE BREAL
BILOXI TEACHERS' FEDERAL CREDIT UNION



Among the best-known and best-loved members of the Biloxi Public Schools family are Betty Jean Hughes and Charlotte Breal, who manage the day-to-day operations of the Biloxi Teachers' Federal Credit Union. Mrs. Hughes has been a mainstay of the Credit Union from the beginning—at one time in the early existence of the organization operating it from her "classroom office." Mrs. Breal started working in the Credit Union office in July 1975. Together they have kept the Credit Union moving ahead on a steady course, always offering assistance and consideration to every Credit Union member.

It is widely acknowledged by people who are familiar with the remarkable growth and sound foundation of the Biloxi Teachers' Federal Credit Union that Betty Jean and Charlotte have played the most important key roles in the Credit Union's success.

Both Betty Jean and Charlotte graduated from Biloxi High School. Both have strong and enduring family ties to Biloxi. Mrs. Hughes taught in the Biloxi schools for forty-four years, retiring from teaching in 2004 but continuing her work with the Credit Union. She is an active and supportive member of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church. She is married to Kenny Hughes, Sr., and they are the parents of Kenny, Dow, and Damian, and the grandparents of Jolie. Mrs. Breal is an active member of First Baptist Church and a Sunday School teacher; in 1999 she was named Mother of the Year by the Lions Club. She is married to Harold Breal and they have three sons, Kenny, Jeffrey, and Randy, and eight grandchildren: Greyson, Hannah, Kelsie, Chandler, Abbey, Jackson, Parker, and Hayden.

BILOXI FIRST

In 1989 Biloxi First, Inc., a non-profit foundation, was organized with the specific mission of providing funds for innovative and creative teacher-designed and student-centered programs that would otherwise not be funded by the school district. The creation of Biloxi First marked the beginning of an increasingly influential community involvement in supporting Biloxi teachers.

Former School Board president Alton Bankston spearheaded the creation of Biloxi First and served as chairman of the steering committee. He was joined in the initial effort by former Biloxi administrator Charles Benton, who chaired the committee to build community support; Ann Denison, who has served as treasurer of Biloxi First for all its more than twenty years as a viable and growing entity; Rose Nelson, secretary; Col. George Long, Dr. Gilbert Mason, Larry Patterson, and Jimmie Roy, members of the steering committee; and Buddy Baker, professional committee chair; Carla Culbreath, organizations; and Carol Trahan, business. Biloxi First was formed with the full support of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tom Burnham, setting a precedent for succeeding superintendents who became members of Biloxi First and provided vital administrative support.

The kick-off program for Biloxi First came on November 6, 1989, attended by Governor Ray Mabus as guest speaker. Bankston wrote Biloxi residents to introduce Biloxi First: "Our purpose is to provide positive public leadership in education and economic development, and we need the involvement of all concerned Biloxians to build on the strong foundation we already have and to provide the best possible educational experiences and environment for our young people."

Biloxi First from the start has awarded grants to teachers, based on individual and group applications—and as of 2010 has a record of having funded 293 creative classroom projects totaling more than \$174,000. The organization operates through support from membership contributions made by individuals and businesses and civic groups—and through a unique Named Grant program, in which donors make contributions in the name of an individual or organization as living memorials, matched by Biloxi First. Teacher grants are made in the name of the person or organization, with only interest from the Foundation's assets being used each year while the principal remains intact. Biloxi First today is proud to have fifty Named Grants!

For the past eight years, Biloxi First has sponsored a "Roast" of a prominent Biloxian, which has raised each year \$25,000 to \$50,000. Past "Roastees" who have generously and graciously participated in this widely supported event and major fund-raiser are former superintendent Dr. Larry Drawdy; Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway; District Attorney Cono Caranna; Coliseum Director Bill Holmes; legislative leader and Mississippi state senator Tommy Gollott; former mayor and Mississippi Gulf Coast Housing Director Gerald Blessey; Ron Peresich, managing member of Page, Mannino, Peresich & McDermott law firm. Peoples Bank president and BHS graduate Chevis Swetman is scheduled to be the subject of the 2010 Roast. IP Casino has generously sponsored the Roast through donations of money and setting and assistance with publicity, arrangements, service and presentation. Other community business and civic groups and individuals have also sponsored the 47 Named Grants that are awarded each year.

In 2001, when Volume 2 of this history was written, total assets of Biloxi First amounted to \$120,000. In the treasurer's February 2010 report, assets totaled \$563,528.72.

President of Biloxi First is Walt Denton, who succeeded Henry Dick and Jamey Hunt in the position and longtime former presidents Alton Bankston, Bruce Stewart, and Don Mitchell II, all of them instrumental in guiding the development of this invaluable school-related organization.

BILOXI SCHOOLS

**BUILDINGS, ADMINISTRATION,
SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

BEAUVOIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Dr. Melanie Nelson – Principal, Beauvoir Elementary School

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Bachelor's Degree in Education and Psychology from the
University of Southern MS 1992

Master's Degree in Classroom Education from the University of Southern MS 1996
National Board Certified Teacher 2000

Doctor's Degree in Educational Leadership and Research from the University of Southern MS 2004

Classroom Teacher in Harrison County Schools - Woolmarket Elementary 1992 – 1994

Classroom Teacher in Biloxi Public Schools - Beauvoir Elementary 1994 – 2005

Curriculum Specialist in Gulfport School District - Twenty-Eighth Street Elementary School 2005-
2006

Assistant Principal in Biloxi Public Schools - Biloxi Jr. High 8th & 9th Grade 2006 – 2007

Principal in Biloxi Public Schools - Beauvoir Elementary School 2007 - Present

**Significant Events and Accomplishments of
Beauvoir Elementary School over the last ten years**

Level 5 AYP Achievement Award 2002 - 2006, 2007 - 2008

High Performing School 2008 - 2009

PREPS Value Added Award for School Achievement 2008 and 2009

14 teachers of Beauvoir Elementary School have achieved

National Board Certification in the last 10 years

3 Teachers have received the Beverly Briscoe Award

1 Teacher was the 5th Congressional District Teacher of the Year

4 Teachers have received the Chamber of Commerce Elementary Teacher of the Year

2 Teachers received the MAE Educator of the Year Honors

1 Teacher received the Alan R. Barton Award

2 Staff members have received the Support Services Person of the Year Award

1 Teacher received the Best Practices Teaching Award

GORENFLO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Ms. Tina Thompson – Gorenflo Elementary School Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Received her Bachelor of Education in Special Education from Delta State; Master of Education in Administration from University of Southern Mississippi; began her career with Biloxi Public Schools in August 1982 as a Special Education teacher at Dukate Elementary; Assistant Principal at Beauvoir Elementary, 1996-1998; Assistant Principal at Jeff Davis Elementary, 1998-2001; Assistant Principal at Gorenflo Elementary, 2001-2002; Assistant Principal at Biloxi Junior High, 2002-2004; principal of Biloxi Junior High, 2004-2006; Principal of Gorenflo Elementary, 2006-2010.

Gorenflo enrollment 2010 - 255

Gorenflo Elementary School Accomplishments 2001 – 2010

1. **National Board Teachers.** Gorenflo is home to many National Board Teachers including Sandra Meaut, Janet Boehmer, Shirley Jones, Laurie Johnston, Donna Munro, Kristy Arguelles, and Slajounya Gates. Joyce Christian is also a National Board Certified Nurse.
2. **Laura Bush Foundation Grant.** Rusty Hunt was awarded the Laura Bush Foundation grant to rebuild the Gorenflo library after it was devastated by Katrina.
3. **Visits from VIPs.** Many VIPs have visited Gorenflo Elementary including First Lady **Laura Bush** and "ABC Good Morning America host" **Robin Roberts** for the presentation of the Laura Bush Foundation Grant; **Fred Haise**, Apollo 13 astronaut and Biloxi native (a student at Gorenflo when he was in elementary school) to present his Ambassador of Exploration award and a moon rock for display to the school; **James Earl Jones**, legendary actor and Mississippi native; **Barrington Irving**, first African American to solo pilot around the world; and **Robert Little** a nationally-recognized, award-winning motivational speaker/trainer and author, all sharing their love of reading with the students,
4. **AYP successfully met.** Gorenflo Elementary successfully met AYP in the areas of Reading/Language and Mathematics 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2007-08.
5. **PREPS Award.** Gorenflo was awarded the PREPS (Program of Research and Evaluation for Public Schools) in 2008 and 2009.
6. **First Cup Stacking** competition in the state was held at Gorenflo in March, 2009.
7. **The Storm.** Gorenflo students participated in the production of the book, *The Storm*, recounting what they experienced in Katrina. Included were Zimyre Redmon, illustrator; Diana Nguyen, grade 1; Christian Davis, grade 2; Ro'darius Woulard, grade 6; Erica Davidson, author, grade 4; Deborah Lawrence, author; River Broussard, illustrator. Pictures in the book: Chris Fury (4), Trey Rodolfich (4), Zachary Parker (4), Marquis Harriel (4), Zimyre Redmon (4), Erica Davidson (4).

JEFF DAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Mrs. Aline Balias – Jeff Davis Elementary School Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

1984 - Biloxi High School graduate

May 1987 – Associate of Arts from Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College-Jefferson Davis Campus

December 1989- Bachelor of Science from University of Southern Mississippi-Hattiesburg Campus

May 1995 – Master of Education from University of Southern Mississippi-Long Beach Campus

August 2004 - Specialist in Education from the University of Southern Mississippi, Long Beach Campus

1990-1995 – 5th grade teacher at Popp's Ferry Elementary

1995-2004 – Library Media Specialist at Lopez Elementary

2004-2005 – District Media Coordinator

2005-2007 – Library Media Specialist at Lopez Elementary

2007-2009 – Assistant Principal at Biloxi Junior High School

2009-2010 – Principal at Jeff Davis Elementary

School enrollment as of January 2010 - 322

Significant Events/Accomplishments – Jeff Davis

2003-2004

Rookie Teacher of the Year – Crystina Moran

2005-2006

Due to Hurricane Katrina Jeff Davis took in staff and students from Nichols Elementary.

Dr. Sharon Cresinck retired as assistant principal of Jeff Davis Elementary.

2007-2008

November 2007 - Jeff Davis 4th - 6th grade CREATE students won the Vex Robotics Middle School Competition at Bayou View Middle School. Students were McKenna Rogers (Captain and Driver), Hailey Vernon, Kimberly Sanchez, Lucille Reese, Tori Schlais, and Joshua Upshaw. CREATE Teacher was Ms. Kim Clemons.

2008-2009

November 2008 - Jeff Davis 2nd-6th grade CREATE students won the Vex Robotics Middle School Competition at Bayou View Middle School. Those students were Kimberly Sanchez (Captain), Mike Howard (Driver), John Wilkins, Michael Rigby, Efe Ozurktoglu, Aby Cowan, Andrew Holmes, Adrienne Kelly, Deanna Taylor, Bradley Dahl, and Leah Jackson, John Wilkins, Coach Jim Clemons..
CREATE Teacher was Ms. Kim Clemons.

December 2008 - Jeff Davis Stock Market Game team placed 2nd in the State Fall Elementary Division of the Stock Market Game. Those students were Kimberly Sanchez (Captain), Mike Howard, Michael Rigby and Aby Cowan. Each of them received a \$50 Savings Bond to start their own investment portfolios. CREATE Teacher was Ms. Kim Clemons.

April 2009 - Kimberly Sanchez won the Merrill Lynch Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the Middle School Division. She received a plaque and \$200.

May 2009 – Ms. Kim Clemons, CREATE teacher, won the 2008 Investor Best Practices Award (Elementary Division) from the MS Council on Economic Education. She was awarded a plaque and \$500. Dr. Bernell Kelly (Principal), David Murphy (Teacher), and Patricia Nunn (Teacher) retired this year. Mr. Murphy and Ms. Nunn had over 30 years with our school.

2009-2010

Aline Balius assumed position as principal of Jeff Davis, and sixth grade teachers move to Michel.

Sherrie Treigle, 4th grade teacher, and Lisa Bouvette, Art teacher, received National Board Certification.

December 2009 - A Jeff Davis 5th grade CREATE Team won Stock Market Game, teams won the Fall Elementary Division of the Stock Market Game. Those students are LaDazea Bridges (Captain), Alexis Cowan, Deanna Taylor and Norasol Gabriel.

LOPEZ SCHOOL



Dr. Sarah Alice Duggan – Lopez School Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Dr. Duggan was 7th/8th grade science teacher at Nichols Junior High school, 1988-1989;

7th/8th grade special education teacher, Nichols Junior High School, 1989-1990;

1st grade teacher, Popp's Ferry elementary, 1990-1996;

assistant principal, Gorenflo Elementary, 1996-1997;

assistant principal, Beauvoir Elementary, 1997-2004;

principal, Center for New Opportunities (Alternative School),
2004-2009;

principal, 2009-2010, Lopez School—Center for New Opportunities
was moved from Fernwood property Lopez property and the name was changed
from Center for New Opportunities to Lopez School (Alternative School).



Lopez School Staff – 2009-2010

Standing – left to right – Gail Esters (Social Worker), Lucas Schermund (History),
Officer Niles Dunnings (SRO), Romeena Hill (Math), Victoria Williams (Behavior
Facilitator), John Huey (Elementary), Bobby Lewis (Custodian), Terry Root (SPED),
S. Alice Duggan (Principal), Donna Densford (Pre-K)
Seated – left to right – Ashley Gipson (Science), Patrick Wadsworth (English), Janie
Tisdale (Secretary), Anner Wilson (Teacher Assistant)

2001-2010

Dr. Sarah Alice Duggan, Principal - Awarded Doctorate of Education in December of 2007.

Mrs. Janie Tisdale, Administrative Assistant - Earned National Association of Educational Office Professionals Advanced III, Option II and Educational Office Employee Certification in September of 2007.

Officer Niles Dunnings, School Resource Officer - Joined Biloxi Public Schools in 2007. Previously an officer for Biloxi and New Orleans' Police Departments.

Mrs. Gail Esters, Social Worker - Joined Biloxi Public Schools in 2003. Contributed to Lopez School by implementing mentor programs, community service activities and parenting classes.

Ms. Ashley Gipson, Science Teacher - Graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi; joined the staff of Lopez School in September of 2009.

Mrs. Romeena Hill, Mathematics Teacher - Mrs. Hill was honored to receive Biloxi's Teacher of the Year for 2009 and the prestigious Beverly Briscoe Award for 2009.

Mr. John R. Huey, Elementary Teacher - Mr. Huey graduated from William Carey College in 2006 as a two-time National Dean's List representative.

Ms. Terry Root, Special Education Services - Joined Biloxi Public Schools in August of 2004. Ms. Root celebrates her thirtieth year of teaching this school year (2009-2010).

Mr. Lucas Schmermund, History/Social Studies Teacher - Joined the Staff of Lopez School in August of 2006. Granted a Master's Degree in Administration from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2010.

Mr. Patrick E. Wadsworth Jr., English Teacher - Nominated for Leo Seal Teacher of the Year for 2009. Mr. Wadsworth led the Biloxi Girls' Soccer Team to South State Championship in 2010.

Dr. Jamie Leigh Osby Williams, Mental Health Counselor - Awarded a Doctorate of Philosophy in Human Ecology in December of 2009.

NICHOLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Mrs. Melissa Nance – Nichols Elementary School Principal

Principal's Degrees – Experience

- B.S. Education
- Master's Degree
- Currently Pursuing Ph.D.
- 2003 Administrator of the Year

12 years as an administrator; Howard II Elementary (1997-2000);
Du Kate Elementary (2000-2004);
Nichols Elementary (2004-Present)

Significant Events/Accomplishments – Nichols Elementary School

- Blue Ribbon Nomination (2010)
- Laura Bush Grant Recipient (2010)
- Star School (2009-2010)
- Level 5 Superior Performance (2004-2009)
- Project Fit Participation (2007-Present)
- Resilience Grant Recipient (2005)

- **Staff**
- 2010 Teacher Brad Shonk (Biloxi's Teacher of the Year Nominee)
- 2009 Beverly Briscoe Winner
- Biloxi First Grant Recipients
- National Board Certified Teachers

- **Students**
- Robotics Team
- WKIZ Broadcast Station
- Reading Super Bowl
- International Pen Pal Campaign
- Stock Market State Winning Team
- Academic Competition of Excellence
- County Spelling Bee Participation
- District Reading Fair Winners
- Regional Science Fair Winners

NORTH BAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Dr. Laurie Aycock Pitre – North Bay Elementary School Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Dr. Laurie Aycock Pitre became the principal at North Bay in February, 2001. She earned a B.A. degree from Millsaps College, a Master's degree in Elementary Education and Administrative Certification from Mississippi College, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Assistant Principal- John Pugh

Significant Achievements

- Level 5 and AYP Superior Achievement Award
2002-2003,2003-2004,2005-2006,2007-2008
- High Performing and AYP Achievement Award 2008-2009
- Reading Renaissance Model School Award 2001-2002
- PREPS Value Added Award December 2007, December 2008
- St. Stanislaus Academic Competition for Excellence 1st place 2007
- Positive Behavior Support Model School Award 2009-2010

POPP'S FERRY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Ms. Patti Hughes – Popp's Ferry Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Degrees: Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from
University of Southern Mississippi;

Master of Education degree in Elementary Education
with Administrative Certification from University of Southern Mississippi;

tenure with Biloxi Schools—began as a teacher in Biloxi Public Schools in 1990;
assumed position as principal of Popp's Ferry: 2008

Other Administrators at Popp's Ferry: Jamie Wade, assistant principal

School Enrollment in January 2010: 461 students

Highlights of school's accomplishments for 2001-2010:

- Ellen Peresich received the Leo W. Seal Teacher Recognition Award in April 2005
- Amy Chachitz was named South Mississippi's Nurse of the Year for 2009-2010
- William Harper carried the torch through Biloxi for the 2002 Olympics
- Received a grant from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation in 2008 to fund the Project Fit America program which provided outdoor and indoor fitness equipment, curriculum materials, and teacher training
- Popp's Ferry was used for weeks as shelter after Hurricane Katrina in 2005

MICHEL 6TH GRADE SCHOOL



Dr. Vera Robertson – Michel 6th Grade School Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Degrees: B.S. Elementary Education; M.E. School Counseling;
Ed. S. Educational Administration; Ph. D. Educational Administration
Years employed with BPS: 17
Assumed position as principal: 2009
Michel Enrollment 2010: 324

Michel 6th Grade School Accomplishments

2000 MMEA District Choral Festival – Superior

2001 Biloxi Junior High Relays Champions (track)

2002 Biloxi Junior High Relays Girls Team Champions

2002 East Central Invitational – First Place Junior High 4K (track)

2003 Blue Ribbon Card Campaign, National Child Abuse Prevention Month, Third Place

2003-2004 Universal Cheerleaders Association – Superior

2004 District IV Middle School Track Meet – First Place

2004 Gulfport 7th Grade Basketball Invitational – First Place

2004 District VIII Choral Festival – Superior

2004 Universal Cheerleaders Association – Superior

2005 MMEA District Choral Festival – Superior

2005 State Choral Festival – Superior

2005 Universal Cheerleaders Association – Superior

2006 MMEA District Choral Festival – Excellent

2008 MMEA District Choral Festival – Excellent

2008 MMEA District Choral Festival – Excellent Sight Reading

2009 MMEA District Choral Festival – Superior Sight Reading

2008-2009 Undefeated Football

2009 MMEA District Choral Festival – Excellent

2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2007-2008 Level 5 Superior Achievement Award AYP

2007, 2008 PREPS Value Added Award

BILOXI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL



Mr. Carl Fantroy, Biloxi Junior High School Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Bachelor's degree: Central University of Iowa- Elementary Education- 1980

Master's degree: University Of Southern Mississippi- Educational Leadership – 2002

Currently first year as principal at BJHS

Tenure in Biloxi Schools: Spring 1993-present (17 years)

Assistant Principals:

Wayne Fortenberry: First year

Ricky Reed: First year

Dr. Lisa Suarez: First year

Significant Accomplishments

Level Five school last 9 years:

Old Biloxi High School

Housed 8th and 9th graders for the last 9 years

2009-2010 is the first year as 7th and 8th grade school

State sportsmanship award 2008-2009 school year

BILOXI HIGH SCHOOL



Ms. Pamela Manners – Biloxi High School Principal

Principal's Degrees – School Experience

Principal of Biloxi High School - 2004-present

23 years in the Biloxi School District

Degrees: Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Administration, USM,
Summa Cum Laude; Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (Pre-Law), magna cum laude

Principal of Michel 7th Grade School 2003-04

Principal of Michel Junior High School (grades 7-9), 2000-03

Assistant Principals and Other Administrators:

Beryl Dupont

Stan Partridge

Todd Boucher

Marcus Boudreaux – Principal Corps Admin. Intern

Glenn Dedeaux, Director, Career-Technical (formerly "Vo-Tech") Center

Biloxi High School Enrollment, January 2010 (grades 9-12) 1449

Biloxi High School Important Highlights 2001-2010

2001

State 5-A Boys basketball champions (Coach John Pugh)

BHS *Indian Echo* Yearbook, awarded Special Recognition by the national company,
Taylor Publishing (sponsor Jeff Campbell)

BHS Varsity baseball, State Playoffs (This team went to state play offs 7 of the
subsequent years.) (Coach Kevin Burdine)

MHSAA Coach of the Year (John Pugh)

2002

State We... the People Academic Competition Unit I 1st Place Award (T Boucher,
sponsor) (The 24 student winners went to Washington, DC for the National History
Day Competition)

District Slow Pitch Softball Champions (Coach Thomas Johnson)

Indian Echo yearbook, Best Cover design awarded by Taylor Publishing (Tracy Campbell. Adviser)

2003

Mississippi State Association of Student Councils, State Administrator of the Year (Pamela Manners)

District 8, 5-A Varsity Boys Basketball Champions (Coach John Pugh)

District Slow Pitch Softball Champions (Coach Thomas Johnson)

State We... the People Academic Competition Units II, III, V, VI 1st Place Awards, Overall 2nd Place in State hearings (The 24 student winners went to Washington, DC for the National History Day Competition)

2004

BHS Band, 1st Place in Parade and Field Show Competition, Alamo Bowl, San Antonio (Band leader Bill Lee)

State 5-A Boys Varsity Basketball Champions (Coach John Pugh)

BHS Teacher, Todd Boucher, awarded "Preserve American History" State Teacher of the Year

Girls Varsity Basketball Team, State Play offs (This team went to state playoffs four of the subsequent years) (Coach Joe Brown)

2005

(BHS housed over 800 Katrina victims for a month; a field hospital was set up on the grounds by FEMA; Red Cross set up a check distribution center on campus; during the storm BHS was used as a special needs shelter. BHS sustained comparatively little damage.)

City of Biloxi Youth Volunteers of the Year awarded to BHS Air Force Junior ROTC unit (Lt Col Ret J. Nastasi)

City of Biloxi Arts Volunteers of the Year awarded to BHS Art Club (Paulette Dove and Cissy Quinn, advisers)

Indian Echo yearbook, Best Cover design awarded by Taylor Publishing (Tracy Campbell, adviser)

District 8, 5-A Boys Varsity Basketball Champions (Coach Seber Windham)

District Slow Pitch Softball Champions (Coach Thomas Johnson)

BHS Teacher, Todd Boucher, 4th Congressional District Teacher of the Year, Alternate State Teacher of the Year, State Junior Achievement Economics Teacher of the Year

Principal, Teachers and Students featured in national children's book, The Storm, by Barbara McGrath

2006

BHS Varsity Cheerleaders, Mississippi High School Activities Association Regional Champions (J Robinson, Sponsor)

District 8, 5-A Boys Varsity Basketball Champions (Coach Seber Windham)

Mississippi State Association of Student Councils Advisors of the Year, Donna Schafer and Caroline Brooks

BHS Band, 1st Place in Class A, Parade and Field Show Competition, Liberty Bowl, Memphis, TN (Bill Lee)

Indian Echo yearbook, Best Cover design awarded by Taylor Publishing (Tracy Campbell, adviser)

BHS We...the People academic competition, 2nd place in State Hearings

2007

US Department of Education No Child Left Behind National Blue Ribbon Award, Washington, DC

US Department of Education Terrel Bell Excellence in Leadership Award, Washington, DC (Pamela Manners, Principal)

BHS Choir performed in Carnegie Hall, NYC (R. Bunch, sponsor)

BHS Drama Department, 1st place, Lynn Meadows Improv Competition (K Norris, sponsor)

BHS Mock Trial, 4th Place in State (T Boucher, sponsor)

Mississippi Business Education Association Outstanding Business Educator of the Year (Margaret Blue)

District Slow Pitch Softball Champions (Coach Thomas Johnson)

Varsity Football Play Offs (Steve Jones, coach)

2008

Girls Varsity Basketball District Champions (Joe Brown, coach)

Boys Varsity Basketball, District Champions (Coach Seber Windham)

BHS Choir performed in Carnegie Hall, NYC (R Bunch, sponsor)

1st Place, Mississippi Stock Market Game (T Boucher, sponsor)

BHS Drama Department, 1st place, Lynn Meadows Improv Competition (K Norris, sponsor)

Indian Echo yearbook, Best Cover design awarded by Taylor Publishing (Tracy Campbell, adviser)

City of Biloxi Youth Volunteers of the Year awarded to BHS Air Force Junior ROTC unit (Lt Col Ret J. Nastasi)

BHS Solar car, 1st Place fastest solar car, Dell-Winston National Solar Car Challenge, Texas (J. Hardwick, C Cotten, sponsors)

Varsity Baseball Team District Champions (Kevin Burdine, coach)

AFJROTC Drill Team National 1st Place in Unarmed Regulation (MSgt Ken Melton, sponsor)

District 7, 5-A varsity boys basketball champions (S Windham, coach)

BHS Band, All Superior Ratings, Mississippi High School Activities Assoc. State Band Festival (B Lee) This is the first time in 15 years BHS received all superior ratings.

BHS Principal, Pamela Manners, Congressional District IV Administrator of Year

BHS Principal, Pamela Manners, Alternate State Administrator of Year

BHS Jazz Band, 2nd Place, Peach Bowl, Atlanta, GA (Bill Lee)

BHS Band, Gold Rating, Parade performance, peach Bowl, Atlanta, GA (B Lee)

2009

State 5-A Boys varsity basketball champions (Coach Seber Windham)

MHSAA State Coach of the Year (Seber Windham)

BHS Dance Team MHSAA State Competition, silver medalists (Jayne Robinson, sponsor)

BHS Drama Department, 1st place, Lynn Meadows Improv Competition (K Norris, sponsor)

BHS Drama students, 1st place duet musical singing

District Slow Pitch Softball Champions (Coach Thomas Johnson)

District Volleyball Champions (Dedra Wedgeworth, coach)

State Health Teacher of the Year (Michael Reese)

MHSAA State Powerlifting 1st Place (Adam Cook, coach; James Demourelle, student)

Indian Echo yearbook sponsor awarded "Best Picture" in yearbook, nationally, by Taylor Pub. (Tracy Campbell, Adviser and photographer)

All-State Orchestra (nine students accepted into the program) (Arlene Gomes, teacher)

BHS featured in Y'All versus Us, nationally distributed book about high school rivalries

2010

Varsity Girls South State Champions (M. Mthembu, coach)

9th Grade Boys Basketball District IV Champions (Coach Michael Reese)

BHS Drama student, 1st places in female musical singing and female monologue (K Norris, teacher)

Indian Echo yearbook, semi-finalist in best yearbook of the year. Final results not in as of this date.

BILOXI HIGH SCHOOL
VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS

2001-2009

	<u>Valedictorian</u>	<u>Salutatorian</u>
2001	Rose Bui	Joo Kim
2002	Chad Carmichael	Apryle Williams
2003	Alexis Lognion	Jonathan Wetzel
2004	Jacqueline Coale	Brittini Ouellette
2005	Scott Stewart	Jennifer Morehead
2006	Manasa Reddy	Anastasia Kalinina
2007	Neal Pavlov	Chelsa Williams
2008	Michael Rewis	Nicole Novotny
2009	Hardy DeLaughter	Thuy Nguyen

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The documenting of sources in this history—through parenthetical citations in the text and "Works Cited" entries that were sometimes created to fit a particular work lacking some of the usual bibliographical information—may very likely appear unorthodox. In general, I have followed the style outlined in the *Modern Language Association Handbook* in references to published or online works. However, there are numerous acceptable ways of citing sources: the *MLA Handbook*; the *APA Manual—the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, most frequently used in works such as those dealing with scientific, business, academic, and scholarly publications; and *The Chicago Manual of Style*, for example. In some cases I have simply followed patterns that seemed to make sense to me and to include all the necessary reference information—without following specific MLA or APA guidelines. The *MLA Handbook*, for instance, omits the abbreviations for "page" or "pages" preceding page numbers in both parenthetical citations and works cited. I prefer to use those abbreviations. And the *MLA Handbook* lists "Works Cited" in its bibliographical format; on the other hand, the *APA Manual* lists "References" for this section—and I have used "References and Works Cited." I also saw no reason to list the very extensive use of School Board Minutes by date, since clear references were made to these sources in the text. I have chosen simply to cite "Biloxi School Board Minutes: Selected Minutes (as identified in text)"—a practice I also followed in connection with materials copied from or paraphrased from the *Indian Echo* high school yearbook and *State of the City* and school publications edited or written by Vincent Creel. That should be sufficient, I hope. In addition, when it seemed better to me to rearrange the order of items in works cited or used in my research—or to create formats for unusual or unique works, I have followed my own patterns. I am hopeful—and I believe—that in all instances I have sufficiently identified and credited original sources and that the information is complete and accurate, though not always conventional ZLS.

About the Author

Zan Skelton is a Mississippian whose family came to the state in the early 1800s, and, as he says, found a place they loved and decided to stay a while. Growing up in the rural South, he found his life's work in teaching.

After completing his undergraduate work at the University of Southern Mississippi, he received his master's degree in English and secondary education from the University of Missouri. He taught English in Biloxi, Mississippi, in both high school and college classes for the University of Southern Mississippi and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. He maintains an active involvement in state education through consulting services for the Biloxi schools and other school districts throughout the state.

He is the author of a number of short stories published in *Coast Magazine* and in literary magazines, including *Habersham Review*, *Oktoberfest*, *Aura Literary Arts Magazine*, and *Mississippi Review*, and other publications. His writing also includes a young adult novel, newspaper and professional journal articles, a series of *Marine Discovery* books for Gulf Coast students, teaching aids for English teachers, an autobiography titled *Mississippi Teacher*, and *Volume 2* in *The Growth of the Biloxi Public Schools – 1924-2001*, published in 2002 and available on the Biloxi Public Schools website. .



