

CCSD NEWSMAKERS

Deputy superintendent is focused on big impact and big results

by Anthony Springer Jr., CCSD Communications

The Newsmakers series is beginning the 2013-14 school year with a look at the recent reorganization of five key areas that report directly to the superintendent. This week, we feature the new Deputy Superintendent of Educational and Operational Excellence, Kim Wooden.

In many cases, if you ask people to map their idealized career path, where they end up looks nothing like the map drawn in the beginning. Kim Wooden is no exception. If you asked the district's new second in command where she would end up when she started her career, administration would not have been on the map – let alone becoming the district's deputy superintendent of educational and operational excellence.

Like most administrators, Wooden's career began in the classroom, but her love for education started years before. While she cites her early teachers as inspiration, she saw the biggest impact teaching can have at her kitchen table.

"My brother struggled with reading when I was younger," Wooden said. "I watched my mother stay up late with my brother until he mastered the subject. Today he's a successful college graduate with a business degree. I saw the work it took. That's what drove me to special education."

Wooden and her older brother were the first two college graduates in the family. She earned her bachelor's degree in special education and began her career with the district shortly thereafter. Following a few years in the classroom, her assistant principal at the time suggested she look into administration. The nudge towards an office position was met with resistance, but Wooden was swayed by the possibility of making a lasting impact on more students than she would reach in one classroom.

"It was tough," she said. "My heart had always been with the kids and the classroom. I remember thinking about what that might mean. I was told I could affect so much more. That sold me."



Wooden went back to school, earning a master's in educational leadership and became an assistant principal. Her desire to impact students could not be contained by a single school. She moved from an assistant principal position back to the area of special education administration and began working with several schools. With her professional mission now clearly defined, she hit full stride.

"I wanted to touch the lives of teachers. I began to realize the impact that one person can have on the teaching and culture of schools. That's where you can do the most work."

Though rewarding work was done on the macro level with the district, a small part of Wooden missed the micro work of touching the life of a child directly.

"I miss the kids," she said. "Even being in the schools as an assistant principal. I miss the children whose lives I could have the greatest effect on and I miss the social work aspect working with the families."

She recalls solving a minor situation during her years in a school that made a major impact.

"I had a little boy who was really shy and didn't want to be on the playground," she mentioned with a smile. "He just needed a belt. He'd get in trouble because he couldn't keep his pants up. So, I bought him a belt."

Wooden never returned to the classroom, opting to climb higher up the administrative ranks. She became head of Student Support Services, the division she called home for the last 14 years before accepting the position of deputy superintendent in August.

Many of the lessons learned in SSS will carry over to her new role.

"Coming out of SSS, we had two goals: Get better results for kids and foster a culture of effectiveness and efficiency," she said. "Now, we want that culture throughout the district."

Wooden is excited about the prospects for student achievement, courtesy of the district's recent reorganization and she is excited to bring more of a results and service-oriented culture to her new position.

"There is a perception that what we do is support," she begins. "For me, the word 'supporting' doesn't mean action. I want everyone to know that we will be providing services. We can measure services. People will hear a lot about departments being there to support them. We all need to think of ourselves as action and services. You're going to hear a lot more about service being an actionable item and not just being supportive. You can be supportive in your service, but we have to be able to measure it."

For Wooden, the focus on results begins at the top with clear and honest communication.

“You have to be transparent. You can't put something out without a reason for it. I think the distrust is not in the data but people's understanding of the data. I think it's all in the communication. That's critical.”