

Brown named principal at Estes

BY SCOTT HAGERMAN
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Sarah Brown has been named the next principal of Estes Elementary School.

Owensboro Public Schools Superintendent Wendy Duvall made the announcement during a welcome reception Thursday afternoon at the school.

Brown, who officially begins the position July 1, succeeds Ryan Williams, who is retiring at the end of the school year after having served as Estes' principal since 2020.

"I just feel really honored," Brown said. "I've been

working with the Estes staff for the past few years, but from a district role. So I'm not here all of the time, I'm just in and out. But I always see the energy that is here, the passion from the students and the commitment from the community, and I'm just really excited to get to be here full-time and be a part of this family."

Brown has been a part of the OPS district since 2018. She has served as a science and biomedical teacher at Owensboro High School, and she most recently served as the math and science instructional coordinator, a role she has held since 2023.

Prior to her time at OPS, Brown served as a program coordinator for both Fayette and Clark county schools in central Kentucky.

The experience Brown brings from having been both in the classroom and in a district-wide position is something Duvall believes has Brown set up for success in this new role.

"Dr. Brown has been a rising star in this district for several years, and we are thrilled for her to have the opportunity to lead Estes Elementary into this next era," Duvall said. "Her passion for learning and enthusiasm in teaching others will allow

her to be able to connect with the students and their families, make learning fun and engaging and continue to build on the success that Mr. Williams has established."

Brown said she will bring a "focused leadership style" to the position, in which she wants to do "what's best for every student."

"I know being able to step into the role as a principal here at Estes that I can help coach and guide our teachers if they need that extra support," Brown said. "I can work with students that need that extra support, work with parents and really bring that community together to do

what's best for each kid." Brown said having worked with teachers and students in all of OPS' buildings through her current role will provide benefits as principal.

"If I'm going around to five elementary schools, two middle schools, high school, I can really see the vertical path for each student, so I know what happens when they leave fifth grade," she said. "I've seen our sixth-grade classrooms, so it really helps me know how to prepare them, and to prepare the teachers to prepare them."

"I can also see the differences between each building, and that gives me

a lot perspective to bring stuff here."

Brown earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Master of Arts in Science Education from the University of Kentucky. She also holds an education specialist certificate in instructional leadership and a doctorate of educational leadership from the University of the Cumberland.

"I believe in the power of building a strong culture rooted in education and collaboration and am excited for this next chapter," Brown said. "I look forward to leading the students and families of Estes into the future."

DANCING

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years," adding that dance is often popular during the school ages, but finding places for adults to continue dancing is often not easy.

"We wanted to create a space for those people to dance after they graduate, whether that's after they graduate from high school or after they graduate from college. They can still continue to dance and improve their skills, and, most importantly, just dance," he said.

Birkhead, who spent time crafting his skills in Los Angeles before the COVID pandemic, said that, "if it wasn't for dance, I don't know if I'd be able to hold a conversation," adding that dancing has given him confidence and allowed him to express vulnerability on stage.

Clark said that he has a combination of "Three Cs" when he thinks about how dance can improve the lives of his students — confidence, coordination and creativity.

"(Dancing) is a great way to improve your confidence, coordination and creativity," said Clark. "And dance is cool because I can help students with the ultimate goal of bringing the vision in their heads into reality. We all see ourselves dancing a certain way. You play your favorite song. You see yourself dancing a certain way...but then you try to do it, and it's like, 'That's not what I saw in my head...What I saw in my head didn't look like that.'"

He continued, "The cool thing about dancing is that as you practice it, as you improve your skills, eventually, the goal is to be able to get what you see in your head, and actually be able

to do it and bring it into your reality so you can experience it and others can experience it as well."

Birkhead said that music lovers will often find dance enjoyable, too.

"People who are obsessed with music in general, I think, you kind of just find out ways to express that love for music. Some people pick up an instrument. Some people sing," he said.

Plus, the duo agreed, that dance provides a creative and fun outlet to encourage people to get up and get moving.

"Dance is one of the best ways to improve your mobility and flexibility and that coordination," Clark said.

The studio hosts classes for toddlers all the way through to adults, including options for new dancers and advanced dancers alike. The Groove Lab also focuses on, "hip hop, funk, breakdancing, house dancing," which Clark

describes as a "very footwork-based style of dance."

"The styles that we do stay away from here are ballet. We're cool with ballet. We love ballet, but we focus on these other styles," Clark said.

And helping people "find their groove," Clark said, is another mission of the studio.

"And we're growing really, really fast," he said. "In the past about two months, we've added 50 or 60 new students. We've had great results. ...We're getting off to a great start."

Clark and Birkhead are currently organizing the studio's first showcase,

scheduled to be held on Saturday, May 16, at the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum.

More information about The Groove Lab can be found on the studio's Facebook page, by calling 270-713-1774 or by visiting groovelabdance.com.

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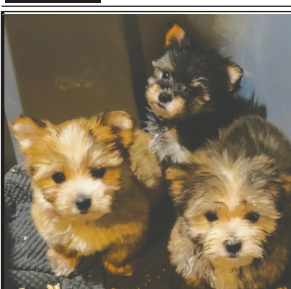
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