

Superintendent Finalist Biography – Dr. Mark Bedell

From Educational Leadership Search Firm Ray & Associates

Dr. Mark T. Bedell, assistant superintendent for high schools at Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS), believes that empowering others to reach their full potential is paramount in the field of education. And who better than Bedell to exemplify the enormous strength of a powerful mindset? Born to a 16-year-old high school dropout, he grew up in a drug-infested home with seven siblings and an abusive stepfather. He believes that it is by the grace of God he that he ended up to be the only one of his siblings to graduate from high school.

He credits his love of and success in basketball as a factor that motivated him to stay in school. After becoming ineligible to play once because of his grades, he swore to himself that he would never let it happen again and began attending summer and night school. He ended up making the honor roll, graduating with a 3.12 GPA, and being accepted at Fisk University.

An honor roll student at Fisk, Bedell led the nation in scoring for Division III basketball. He also met his wife, Robyn, at Fisk and decided to focus on academics first and then athletics. He graduated from Fisk University with a degree in history and education and accepted a job there as a basketball coach while continuing to working on a master's degree in educational leadership from Tennessee State University.

Before joining BCPS four years ago, he worked for Houston Independent School District for 12 years (three as a teacher, four as assistant principal, three as principal, and two as a school improvement officer). While in Houston, he received the Young Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award two years in a row; the Feeder Pattern Principal of the Year Award for the 2007-2008 school year; and the Outstanding Educator Award from Texas A&M University in 2009. In 2010, Bedell was selected to serve as a field supervisor at Rice University for the Rice Education Entrepreneurship Program, an MBA/Administrator Certificate program designed to prepare students to become assistant principals and principals upon graduation.

Bedell has presented at several national and state-level conferences on best practices in education and completed his doctoral dissertation at Nova Southeastern University on school culture, climate and dropout prevention for ethnic minority students from low economic strata. This topic is close to his heart as he has lived through and witnessed how students often drop out of school when there is no one to advocate for them.

For BCPS, Bedell created a systematic approach to curtail dropouts in 2012. The BCPS graduation rate surged to 87.6 percent for the Class of 2014, up nearly four percentage points from 2012 -- leading to a 2014 District of Distinction Award from *District Administration* magazine. In addition, suspension rates at BCPS have decreased from 8.3 percent to 5 percent from 2012 to 2014 – a 54 percent decrease. Finally, the participation rate of juniors taking the SAT increased from 38.1 percent in 2012 to 87 percent in 2015 through the implementation of a countywide SAT Day in 2013.

In December 2015, Bedell was elected by the board of directors of the National Association of School Resource Officers to serve a two-year term on the board. Bedell will be one of two representatives of the education community who serve on the school policing organization's board of directors.