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Gregory-Portland Independent School District

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G-P Junior High Principal Xavier Barrera to Retire after 46-Year Career Serving Wildcats

Not many can say they have worked for every Superintendent in the history of the Gregory-Portland Independent School District ... except, perhaps, Mr. Xavier Barrera. When he was hired as a Music Teacher in 1967, it had been only 17 years since the community voted to establish a consolidated school district (under one Superintendent) serving students from both Gregory and Portland. Since then, Mr. Barrera has established himself by running the gamut of leadership roles — spanning 46 years of service from the classroom to the Administration Building, and everywhere in between.

“Mr. Barrera has contributed to the success of G-PISD in more ways than I can count,” said Dr. Paul Clore, current G-PISD Superintendent of Schools. “His transformative leadership style has left an indelible mark on our district. I am extremely grateful to have served with him during his career, and I have relied on his knowledge and ingenuity for the past 15 years. He has been a great leader for our students, and he is among those to credit for leaving the district even better than he found it.”

Mr. Barrera’s employment history with the district includes 46 years of service, and two unrecorded years following his first retirement in 2003. “I tried to retire once already, but I was asked to serve as a substitute administrator. Then, I added a few more responsibilities to that list ... and before you knew it, I was back on the payroll. I just couldn’t stay away from doing what I enjoy most.”

Dr. Clore said that, while serving in many capacities including having been a former Educator, Principal, Executive Director of Operations and Director of Curriculum, Mr. Barrera’s vision and strategic decisions have made a real difference in student success.

In the last 10 years alone, Mr. Barrera has been at the helm of accelerating academic progress for the district in his role as Principal at Gregory-Portland Junior High School. He successfully incorporated differentiated instruction at his campus through Reading and Math Reinforcement classes for 8th grade students who did not meet standard on 7th grade assessment tests, Academic Focus classes for retained 7th graders, The Opportunity Program (TOP) class to provide accelerated instruction for severely at-risk students, and the Grand Central Station program where struggling students receive intensive academic intervention and improve study and organizational skills in a lab setting.

Meanwhile, Mr. Barrera dramatically expanded opportunities and participation in Academic U.I.L. events, implemented a Robotics Club to engage students in additional STEM projects, and initiated a Diplomats Club where peers welcome new students and aid in academic and social transitions. He has also promoted student participation in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*’ South Texas Regional Spelling Bee, provided more incentives that have improved student attendance, and has maximized the efficiency of campus operations while reducing teacher-to-pupil ratios by hiring additional, well-qualified educators and support personnel.

New science and math labs have been added on his watch, and he has found ways to remodel existing space in an aging 51-year-old building to enhance the Life Skills classroom and expand



multiple offices for new and existing personnel. He installed two more computer labs (for a total of six), added Distance Learning technology, upgraded instructional software, and purchased more hardware (devices, computers). He supported the effort to install a high-tech security system at his campus and others, and his leadership among colleagues and community helped reinforce the need for this project. In addition to district support, these changes were made possible thanks to Mr. Barrera's conservative fiscal management at the campus.

Mr. Barrera collaborated with the community to establish an Academic Booster Club, as well as a Dedication Garden that memorializes and honors individuals who made an impact at G-PJH. He recently received a \$3,400 grant to install an Outdoor Classroom, thanks to the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc. and his hard work.

The strategic plan he created to elevate curriculum and programs has resulted in the campus receiving several distinctions from the Texas Education Agency, including having formerly been a TEA Recognized Campus (2009-2010), earning the TEA Science Distinction Designation (2014), and the Top 25% Closing Performance Gaps Distinction designations for two years (2013 and 2015).

"His professional achievements and reputation precede him," said Dr. Clore. "As an example, in 2015 he served as a subject for a doctoral dissertation on transformational leadership — a fitting candidate, indeed."

Dr. Clore mentioned that it is not uncommon for leaders in education to serve in multiple school districts. When asked why he chose to stay with G-PISD throughout his entire career, Mr. Barrera said with a smile, "The people. They are the reason. The students, the teachers and staff. It's great to come to work every day with them, doing what we do for our students in this district. There is no place like it, and nowhere else I would have rather been."

Mr. Barrera's last day of employment at G-PISD will be June 16, 2016. Regarding his plans for the future, he laughed and stated that his lovely wife and his to-do list at home has been waiting for him ... for about 46 years.

For more information, contact Crystal Matern with G-PISD Communications: (361) 332-1476.

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