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CHRONICLE

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 2005

Burke takes job with schools

Mayor Pro Tempore will work to curb student absenteeism

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke is going back to her educational roots.

She has signed a contract with the city-county school system for the upcoming 2005-2006 academic year to work with students in Alternative Learning Centers, or ALCs. The centers, usually mobile classrooms, have been set up in recent years at all of the system's 10 high schools.

Students with multiple visits to the principal's office for minor infractions or who have accumulated at least 10 days of out-of-school suspension are assigned to ALCs for as little as a week or as long as 90 days.

Assignment to an ALC is punitive. Students are physically separated from their classmates and teachers, and much of their classwork is done independently.

Students assigned to ALCs have less than 80 percent attendance, said John Siskind, the system's alternative education chief. Burke will work to develop a relationship with ALC students and their parents to learn the root of their absenteeism. Her work may be used to devise strategies to increase attendance among ALC students.

See Burke on A11



Burke

Piggott will give new Atkins his all

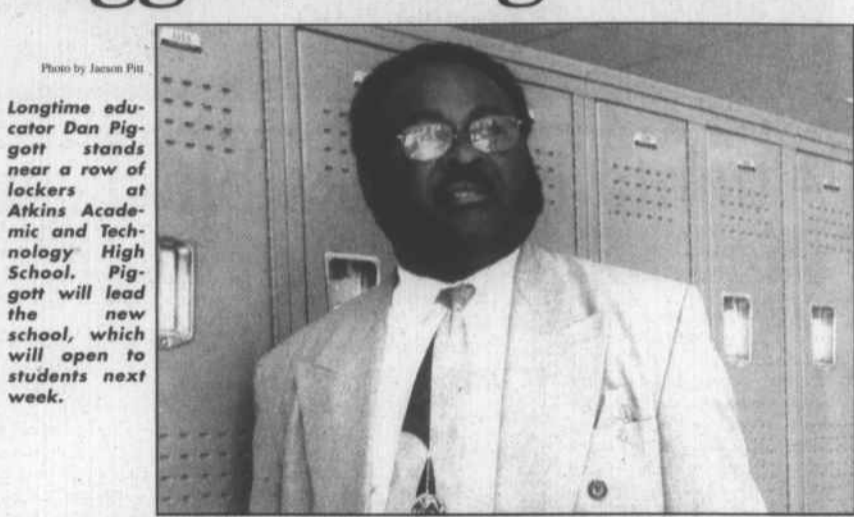


Photo by Jason Pitt
Longtime educator Dan Piggott stands near a row of lockers at Atkins Academic and Technology High School. Piggott will lead the new school, which will open to students next week.

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Dan Piggott walks through the sunlight-drenched halls of the new Atkins High School like a man without a worry in this world. He greets members of his staff with friendly nods, calls cheerleaders and athletes by their first names, and glances approvingly at construction workers still making last minute additions. Not even the constant pages on his walkie-talkie and the frequent buzz of his cell phone seem to unravel

Piggott. He is the captain of a \$22 million vessel that will introduce a new brand of high school education when the school opens a week from today. Furthermore, Piggott's school has big shoes to fill. It carries the name, mascot and colors of the original Atkins, a high school that educated generations of leaders before it closed in the 1970s. Some of alumni of the original Atkins are waiting to see if the new school will also borrow the success and achievements of their alma mater and not



Martin

See Atkins on A10

A NEW ERA

Young pastor takes over at United Metropolitan

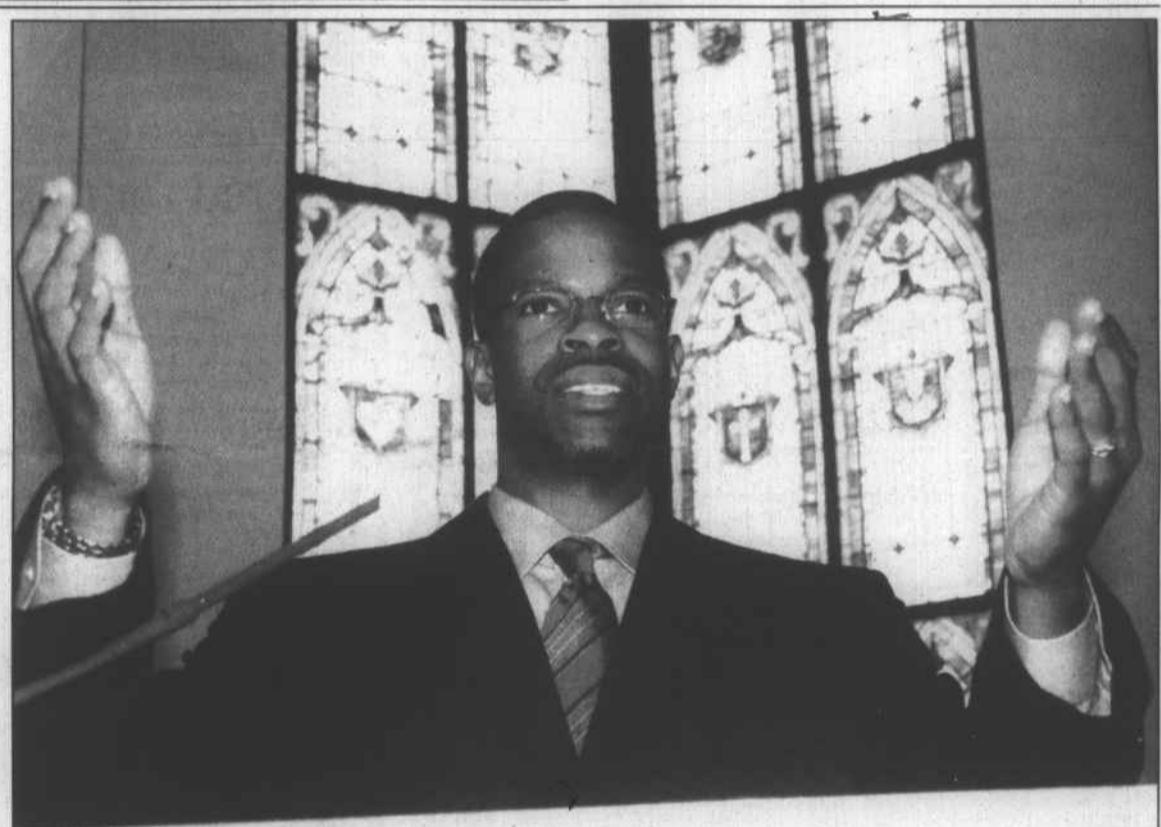
BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Rev. Prince Raney Rivers has received a welcome befitting his majestic name from the congregation of United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church.

Members have embraced the young pastor and prepared their hearts and minds for his message and mission. Rivers has felt the love, and it feels good, he says.

"This is a very strong church. The congregation is very ministry-minded," he said Monday from his church office that he is still settling into.

Rivers succeeds a giant at United Metropolitan. The last man who stood behind the church's pulpit had often been hailed as one of the city's best preachers. The Rev. James Don-



Rev. Prince Raney Rivers' first day at United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church was Aug. 1.

Photo by Jason Pitt

ald Ballard had plenty of time to perfect his signature technique. He spent 45 years as pastor of United Metropolitan, stepping down late last year to enjoy retirement.

Rivers, a native of Decatur, Ga., was well aware of Ballard's lore before he got the job

at United Metropolitan. He had seen Ballard preach before and was impressed with Ballard's style and erudition of The Word.

Rivers knows that comparisons between him and the man who preceded him are inevitable. But he says he did

not come to United Metropolitan to fill Ballard's ample shoes, but, rather, to make a path in his own shoes.

"God had Rev. Ballard here for 45 years because of the gifts that Rev. Ballard had. God has called me here because of the gifts that I have," Rivers said.

"We are not the same people, but we serve the same God."

To outsiders, it may appear that the church's search committee went with someone who is the polar opposite of Ballard. Rivers is half Ballard's age.

See Rivers on A4

WSSU students get campus shuttle



WSSU's Jonathan Martin talks to the media about the new shuttle.

Photo by Courtney Gaillard

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

What's red and white, seats 28 people and moves on wheels? Give up?

It's the new Winston-Salem State University Ram Express.

Last Friday, the new high-tech shuttle rolled onto campus just in time for the start of the WSSU fall semester, which will begin next week.

University officials expect the shuttle service will help them meet the needs of their rapidly growing student body.

Enrollment at WSSU has grown by some 7 percent since last year. The school has also experienced a 72 percent increase in its enrollment since Chancellor Harold Martin took the helm of the school five years ago.

"It represents our commit-

Surry blacks are chronicled in book

Author Thompson attended WSSU

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Evelyn Thompson never met Grace Gates Smith, but an old picture of the Surry County woman in tattered clothes haunts Thompson. Grace Smith is believed to have lived to 125, after spending most of her life as a nurse to some 22 children on the Bunker Plantation. Born into slavery, Smith became a wedding gift to a couple in Trap Hill. She died in 1915.



Thompson

"I look at her clothes. She looks like she's rapped up in

rags. But I look at her face and her stature, but the stress that comes through that photograph, to me, is uplifting," said

Thompson, author of "Black America Series: Around Surry County."

A copy of Smith's death certificate appears below her picture in the book, which includes more than 200 pictures, some never before published, of Surry County African-Americans dating

back to the 1800s. Thompson chronicles their lives and work in the farming region up until

See Surry on A10

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