

SUPERINTENDENT OF PROVO SCHOOLS RESIGNS

Superintendent Randall Merrill, after serving 10 years as the top of the Provo School District, resigned abruptly on Tuesday. On Wednesday morning, the Provo School Board met to appoint Human Resources Director Bob Gentry as the interim superintendent while the board searches for a new leader. The search will be conducted nationwide. "This is something I'd been thinking about for some time," Merrill said Wednesday. Merrill did not mention his plans with the school board until he announced his retirement on Tuesday. "The main thing that has motivated me is what I want to do with my life, in the working years and the active years that I have left," said Merrill, who is 60 years old. Merrill also said that no single event prompted his immediate retirement but that he is interested in other opportunities. He would like to teach at the college level and would like to spend time with his parents in Brigham City. In recent weeks, Merrill has taken heat from parents who are upset about an investigation into Timpview High School football coach Louis Wong. The investigation is led by the district and focuses on the fundraising activities of Wong. A Facebook group called 'We Love Coach Wong' was created, which has been joined by a thousand people in the fear that Wong could lose his job. A December meeting held to support the coach featured one hundred supporters. On Wednesday, Gentry said he hopes to aid the district in moving ahead after problems in the recent past. Those problems stemmed from an investigation into a very popular employee within the district. Gentry did not name the employee involved in the investigation because it is ongoing but he did say that the problem had been discussed publicly previously. "It became evident there's a rift in the community," Gentry said. "Our major goal is to heal the community, heal the staff, bridge any gaps that might have occurred and move forward. We want to make sure we are focused on what's best for children." Merrill also worked as a science teacher and a high school principal during his career. He will serve as a part-time consultant for the Provo School District until his contract ends on June 30. Merrill's salary in 2008 was \$132,139. Gentry said that the school board plans to perform a nationwide search and have someone new hired by July 1. Kristine Manwaring, the President of the Provo School Board, said that the board is 'grateful' for the service of Merrill over the years. "Merrill led Provo School District from a tenuous financial condition to a much more stable condition and guided the district through tough choices during historic economic downturns," she said. "He led the adoption of many new learning programs which receive statewide and national recognition, and he increased the overall academic performance of our students."

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