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Rockwall ISD Superintendent Burton to retire at end of current school year

by [J.J. Smith](#) of [TheRockwallNews.com](#)

As superintendent of Rockwall schools, Dr. Burton has played an integral part in shaping the district.

After almost nine years as the Rockwall ISD Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Gene Burton announced at Monday night's Board of Trustees meeting that he will retire at the end of the current 2009-2010 school year.

Dr. Burton has served as superintendent since May, 2001. His career with RISD began in July, 1994, when he was hired as the assistant superintendent for business operations.



Dr. Gene Burton receiving an award from the Phi Delta Kappa Chapter at Texas A&M-Commerce.

According to Board of Trustees President Craig Zurek, the Board will begin the process of finding a new superintendent of schools immediately so Dr. Burton's replacement can be on staff by mid-March.

"We will post the open position as soon as possible," said Zurek. "The Board will then begin the process of finding the person who will take on the responsibility of leading our school district into the future."

"We expect to be able to name our intended replacement for Dr. Burton as early as February so that our next superintendent of schools will have the opportunity to be on staff as early as mid-March. We want to give the new superintendent the opportunity to use the remainder of this school year to establish, in conjunction with the Board, the goals and plans for the district for the 2010-2011 school year and beyond while Dr. Burton is still on board."

Although Dr. Burton's future plans are still undecided, he said they will include spending time with his wife, Julie, who recently retired as director of personnel for the Highland Park ISD, said RISD Communications Director Sheri Fowler. He also wants to spend more time with his daughter, Cecilia, her husband and his first grandchild, Liliana Faith.

"It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to serve the employees and families of Rockwall ISD," said Dr. Burton. "The staff, the parents and the community as a whole have always shown me unyielding support and I am forever grateful for all those who have worked side-by-side with me to help provide meaningful learning opportunities for children."

Prior to becoming employed with RISD, he was a teacher/coach and principal in the Italy ISD, a teacher/coach in the Waxahachie ISD and superintendent of the Frost and Giddings school districts.

As superintendent of Rockwall schools, Dr. Burton has played an integral part in shaping the district. He executed the 2001 bond program which totaled \$139,165,000 and included the construction of Rockwall-Heath High School, working with students, staff, parents and the community at large to help RISD smoothly transition into a multiple high school district.

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He also provided oversight for the development and implementation of both the 2006 and 2007 bond programs totaling \$62,550,000 and \$198,150,000 respectively. The programs have included new schools, additions, renovations, infrastructure and technology upgrades at every campus, as well as a new aquatic center, a new middle school, a completely renovated football stadium, two new performing arts facilities and major additions at both high schools.

One of his favorite initiatives, as he has previously said, has been the development of the first "Rachel's Challenge" program in the nation. Rachel Scott was the first victim of the Columbine High School shootings in April, 1999. Before she died, she had a vision to start a chain reaction of kindness.

Working together with her parents, Darrell and Sandy Scott, Dr. Burton spearheaded what is now the model district for a comprehensive kindergarten through twelfth grade Rachel's Challenge initiative, a kindness and compassion program that takes a proactive approach to school safety. He currently serves on the Foundation's National Educational Advisory Board.

In 2004, he also assisted in the development of the RISD Education Foundation, Inc., with the purpose of awarding innovative teaching grants for the classroom.

"Under Dr. Burton's leadership our school district has grown and developed to where it is today, one of the most respected and admired districts in Texas," said Zurek. "RISD is now a standard bearer in education, in the safety and health of our students and staff, in fiscal responsibility and in teaching our children the value of care and compassion."

"Thanks in great part to his vision and oversight, our schools give every child who attends an opportunity to access an education that will prepare them to be leaders in the 21st century. Dr. Burton will be missed for all that he and his vast skills have brought to our schools, to our children, and to our community."

On a larger scale Dr. Burton recently used his expertise to help shape the future for students across the entire state. He and 34 other Texas school superintendents engaged in several brainstorming sessions which produced a report called Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas.

"These district leaders created the document to serve as a framework for conversation about a preferred course for 21st Century education," wrote Fowler in a news release.

"Their goal is for this report to serve as a foundation for developing an understanding and commitment to the shared set of values and common vision for public education in Texas, ultimately leading to major transformations in all aspects of public elementary and secondary education."

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