

Thomas J. Pharis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Over 30 years of service as a superintendent, central office administrator, principal, assistant principal, and teacher attesting to a commitment to ethics and the expertise to pinpoint needs, devise cost-conscious solutions, and guide stakeholders to bridge differences and progress toward ambitious goals attuned to a vision of academic excellence
- Current: Third year of service as assistant professor at Murray State University, with teaching emphasis focused on providing authentic, candidate focused instructional activities that prepare candidates to lead in our dynamic public school systems.

KEY STRENGTHS

- School Adm. Development
- Board Relations
- Communication
- Compliance Monitoring
- Community Partnerships
- Consensus Building
- Financial Management
- Human Resources
- Research & Analysis
- Policies & Procedures
- Public Speaking
- Relationship Building
- Classroom Instruction
- Resource Allocation
- Strategic Planning
- Training & Development

EDUCATION

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY, Valdosta, Georgia
Doctor of Education, 2003

VALDOSTA STATE COLLEGE, Valdosta, Georgia
Specialist in Educational Leadership, 1984

Master of Educational Leadership, 1981

Teacher Certification, 1976

Bachelor of Business Administration, 1973

SOUTH GEORGIA COLLEGE, Douglas, Georgia
Associate of Arts, 1971

LICENSES & CERTIFICATIONS

- Leadership Certificate (L-7 Level), State of Georgia

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Superintendent

GRADY COUNTY SCHOOLS, Cairo, Georgia, October 2007 — June, 2013

- Serve as the **Chief Executive Officer** of a system with **seven schools (one high school, one 6-8 middle school, two PK-8 schools, and three PK-5 schools)**, a **\$35.2 million budget**, **300 staff**, **359 professionals**, and **4,500 students**
- Act as a **steward** for a system that engages students, parents, teachers, staff members, and external partners in a **learning community** that prepares young people for success in postsecondary education, careers, and society
 - Build and maintain as sound infrastructure based best practices, current research, evidence-based initiatives, and ethical practices that provides for accountability and projects a **model of excellence to all stakeholders**
 - Project an image of professionalism, tact, and courtesy in representing the educational community, acting as an **organizational advocate** in marketing ideas to win the support of individuals and constituent groups
 - Continuously reexamine the **physical, financial, technological, and human resources** to ensure they are aligned with changing needs and priorities to a maintain safe, secure, and effective learning environment
 - Manage **financial matters**, leading the district through three years of budget cuts by prioritizing needs and making strategic reductions to sustain stability and quality while operating with a leaner organization
 - Administer the **annual budget using zero-based methods** to attain optimal **ROI**; research and cultivate additional avenues of funding, including applying for **grants** from public, nonprofit, and private sources

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- Gather and use **performance data** to drive **instructional and extracurricular programming**, focusing on **student indicators** relating to such factors as achievement, attendance, interventions, system benchmarks
- Produced a **graduation rate five points above state average** and distinguished **Grady County as Southwest Georgia's highest ranking system in graduation rates** through emphasis on student-centered strategies
- Enhanced **academic programming** by implementing pre-advanced placement allowing 8th graders to earn four high school credits; expanded advanced placement for high school students to 12 courses
- Enhanced **Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE)** programs to address unmet needs students requiring remedial classes and extra motivation to instill confidence and overcome obstacles
- Reframed the high school's structure and **transitioned from a 4x4 block to a seven-period per day model** after researching other systems and tailoring methods to the profile of the system's students
- Evaluated a lapsed and outmoded **Strategic Plan** whose effectiveness had been impeded by the lack of input from internal and external stakeholders, initiated the recommendation to craft a new document, and led a cadre of volunteers in crafting a plan that clearly articulates the school system's **core beliefs, vision, and mission**
 - Secured approval from the **School Board** in **December 2010**, launched the **Strategic Planning Process** in **February 2011**, and spearheaded a year-long project to produce a plan for adoption in **December 2011**
 - Recruited and united **400± individuals** from the school system, businesses, professions, community groups, and local government in a **collaboration** to identify issues, formulate forecasts, and chart new directions
 - Facilitated **cross-functional decision making** to instill trust, negotiate compromise, and achieve consensus between members of the **Strategic Planning Committee** with differing areas and levels of expertise
 - Played an integral role in all facets of the **Strategic Planning Process**, participating in **20+ meetings**, leading general sessions, and delegating control of breakout sessions to the appropriate team members
 - Synthesized findings and oversaw the writing all **five components of the plan** which were approved, introduced, and evaluated in stages to measure effectiveness and adapt strategies to operational reality prior to adoption and launch of the full **Grady County Strategic Plan: January 2012 — June 30, 2015**
 - Implement, monitor, evaluate outcomes, and make strategic adjustments to a forward-thinking **Strategic Plan** that addresses the key factors required to deliver a top-quality education focused on students, *e.g.*:
 - Provide for **Safety and Student Support** to protect the welfare of students, staff members, and visitors
 - Set criteria for **Student Achievement** based on the philosophy that all students can learn and acquire the tools for academic, career, and personal success if they have access to the right resources, are held to high expectations of behavior, and are accountable to age-appropriate disciplinary practices
 - Encourage **Authentic Stakeholder Engagement** to welcome and recognize the value of the talents, energies, and time contributed by students, teachers, parents, and strategic partners in the community
 - Recruit, hire, train, develop, and nurture the talents top-notch **Personnel** throughout all job levels, and provide opportunities to form collaborative peer relationships that facilitate the sharing of ideas
 - Maintain **Fiscal Responsibility** and ensure transparency in formulating budgets, allocating public funds, and demonstrating flexibility in adapting strategies to shifts in the financial climate

Interim Superintendent

GRADY COUNTY SCHOOLS, Cairo, Georgia, June 2007 — October 2007

- Collaborated with the board in leading an educational system with **4,386 students** through an administrative transition with a goal to optimize the performance of county schools by establishing a foundation to enhance internal and external communications, student achievement, financial oversight, and community relations:
 - Administered a budget of **\$35.7 million**; led **19 administrators** who supervised **628 employees**
 - Instituted a weekly e-mail update of district activities to members of the board in order to facilitate the timely sharing of information with objective justifications to guide decision making on key matters
 - Provided briefings to advise the board on key issues, forecasts, and emerging trends in education
 - Reenergized relationships with the schools, parents/guardians, and community organizations to establish a broad base of grassroots support for meaningful change and academic excellence

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

GRADY COUNTY SCHOOLS, Cairo, Georgia, 2000 — 2007

- Assumed **district-wide responsibility** for the planning, improving, implementing, and monitoring of instructional programming, applying 23 years of experience in teaching and school administration:
 - Administered a budget of **\$2.5 million**; led **eight principals** who oversaw a total of **365 employees**
 - Enhanced financial resources by identifying new sources of funding and developing successful grant proposals, which included securing **\$96,000** to fund the expansion of technology in instruction
 - Established collaborative relationships with other educators, parents/guardians, community partners, and other stakeholders founded on respect, professional ethics, and an expectation of excellence
 - Pioneered the development and introduction of the county's curriculum alignment-implementation process in 2000, placing the district ahead of the curve and ready to meet subsequent state criteria
 - Implemented the **Georgia Performance Standards**, led the annual **School Improvement Process** for seven years, and introduced **Learner Focused Schools** based on instructional best practices
 - Developed **after-school programs**, increased the emphasis on serving **gifted students**, and expanded **advanced placement opportunities** in high schools to meet changing needs of a diverse student body
 - Enhanced capability of school faculty and administrators to support district goals for student achievement by developing a systematic **Professional Development Program** aligned with identified academic needs

Principal – Eastside Elementary School

GRADY COUNTY SCHOOLS, Cairo, Georgia, 1993 — 2000

- Took charge of an underperforming school with **600 students (grades K – 5)**, pinpointed issues of concern, and initiated actions to turn around morale, instill pride, and improve student performance:
 - Created a culture of professionalism, encouraged open communication, earned trust based on mutual respect, promoted high expectations for teachers and students, and devised accountability measures
 - Set the **highest student achievement scores in school history** for straight three years (1998 — 2000)
 - Transitioned the school from whole language to an integrated approach to the teaching reading skills
 - Spearheaded the development of a **School-Wide Title I Model**, a values-based educational program, the implementation of a **Parent Volunteer Program**, and a site-based textbook adoption process

Principal – Shiver Elementary School

GRADY COUNTY SCHOOLS, Pelham, Georgia, 1983 — 1993

- Oversaw administrative functions, daily operations, and personnel of an elementary school with an enrollment of **350 students (grades K through 8)**, introducing innovations that included:
 - Opened the school's first **Computer Lab** to keep pace with technology in the classroom
 - Initiated a **Parent Volunteer Program** to encourage involvement and enhance resources
 - Organized an **Academic Boosters** group, bringing together teachers, parents, and members of the community to support the academic process and recognize student achievements
 - Positioned the school for success in its first accreditation review by the **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**, in addition to a subsequent five-year study

Assistant Principal — Washington Middle School

GRADY COUNTY SCHOOLS, Cairo, Georgia, 1981 — 1983

- Demonstrated exceptional job knowledge, organizational skill, and commitment to service that earned rapid advancement from novice teacher to second-in-command of a public school with **800 students**

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY, Murray, Kentucky, 2013-present

- **Provide instruction** in School Administration and Leadership for graduate-level students seeking Rank I Administrative Certification
 - Fall, 2013: School Leadership and Culture, Socio-Political Dimensions of School Leadership, Seminar in School Administration
 - Spring, 2014: Developing Human Potential Seminar, Educational Policy and Ethics
 - Summer, 2014: Organization and Operation of Schools, Practicum in Organization and Operation of Schools
 - Fall, 2014: School Leadership and Culture, Strategic School Leadership, Legal and Ethical Issues in Schools, Strategic School Leadership
 - Spring 2015: Instructional Leadership for Diverse Learners, Principal Internship III, School Wide Instructional Leadership, Development of School Personnel
 - Summer 2015: Organization and Operation of Schools, Practicum in Organization and Operation of Schools
 - Fall 2015: School Leadership and Culture, Strategic School Leadership, Legal and Ethical Issues in Schools, Strategic School Leadership
 - Spring 2016: School Wide Instructional Leadership, Development of School Personnel, Instructional Leadership for Diverse Learners, Principal Internship III
- **Assist** in the process of course development, correlation of standards to activities, including development of **Hybrid** Delivery Coursework
- **Conduct research** in the field of educational leadership: Current Focu-First Year Implementation of TPGES in Rural Kentucky High Schools (to be completed May, 2016)
- **Participate** in faculty development activities to improve delivery of instruction
- **Mentor and advise** candidates in the Regional Principal Development Partnership
- **Mentor** alternative certificated School Administration candidates, including responsibility to maintain required University and Kentucky Department of Education documentation
- **Assist in Planning/Implementing Candidate Recruitment/Selection** activities for School Administration program

Adjunct Faculty

TROY UNIVERSITY, Albany, Georgia, 2005 — 2007

- Teach occasional weekend classes in **Educational Research** per year for graduate-level students seeking Masters degrees or Specialist credentials, managing an enrollment of **15± students** per class section
- Contribute to the professional development of educators to prepare successors with a commitment to academic excellence, while capitalizing on opportunities to learn from other generations

Adjunct Faculty

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY, Valdosta, Georgia, 2002 — 2007

- Teach a course in **Educational Leadership** to graduate-level students seeking Masters degrees or specialist credentials, managing an enrollment of **15± students** per class section
- Contribute to the professional development of educators to prepare successors with a commitment to academic excellence, while capitalizing on opportunities to learn from other generations

Classroom Teacher – **Washington Middle School** (7-8), Cairo, Georgia, 1977 — 1981

- Taught **Social Studies** to 7th and 8th grade students at a school with a total enrollment of **800**

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

- ELC Executive Committee Member
- Faculty Senate, ELC Representative
- Chair, Faculty Senate Governmental Affairs Committee
- Media Advisory Representative, ELC

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Kentucky Leadership Academy

- Participate in Western Cadre, Kentucky Leadership Academy activities primarily focusing on TPGES implementation in western Kentucky school districts.
- ***Kentucky Association of School Administrators***

CONTINUING EDUCATION, MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

Activities focused on Teaching and Learning, including

- Experiential Education Workshops
- Student Engagement Faculty Workshops
- Google Docs, Collaborative Learning Faculty Workshops
- Learner Centered Instruction Faculty Workshops

Accreditation Team Member – Board of Examiners

GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COMMISSION, Atlanta, Georgia, 2004 — current

- Participate in site visits to colleges and universities to investigate, evaluate, and develop reports with recommendations to approve, qualify, or deny accreditation status to **teacher certification programs**

PUBLICATIONS

- School Council Member Perceptions and Actual Practice of School Councils in Rural Schools, *The Rural Educator*, Volume 26, Winter 2005.

HONORS & AWARDS

- **Candidate of the Year**, Valdosta State University Department of Educational Leadership, 2003

PAST PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Georgia Association of Educational Leaders
- Georgia School Superintendents Association
- Professional Association of Georgia Educators
- **Georgia School Superintendents Association**
Superintendents Professional Development Program, 1997 — 1998
 - Curriculum and Instruction
 - Facilities
 - Funding Public Education
 - Human Resources Management
 - Individual/Group Dynamics
 - Leadership Development
 - Organization Development
 - Personal Leadership Plans
 - Planning and Budgeting
 - Role of Research
 - Technology
 - Professional Standards of the Superintendency

Other GSSA Programs:

- Leadership Coaching Training, 2010
- Human Resource Institute, 2004
- School Finance Institute, 2004 & 2005

Southwest Georgia RESA

- Common Core Curriculum Planning, 2007 — 2013
- Data Analysis Techniques, 2007 — 2013
- Learner Focused Schools Training, 2003 — 2013
- Developing and Expanding Leadership Skills, 2001 — 2013

Georgia Department of Education

- Charter School Planning Workshops, 2007 — 2013
- Georgia Performance Standards Leadership Development, 2004 — 2005

Valdosta State University

- Georgia InTech Training, 2002

Center for Creative Leadership

- Georgia Leadership Academy, 1998 — 2001

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- **Murray Lions Club** –2013--2015
- University of Georgia** – Grady County Archway Program, Executive Board, 2011 — 2013
- Cairo – Grady County Chamber of Commerce**, Board of Directors, 2007 — 2013
- Grady County Board of Health**, Board of Directors, 2007 — 2013
- Salvation Army** (Thomas–Grady–Brooks Chapter), Board of Control, 2007 — 2013
- Grady County United Methodist Men’s Association**, Vice President, 2005 — 2013
- Cairo Kiwanis Club**, Member, 1998 — 2013; President, 2006 — 2007; Past President, 2007 — 2008
- Cairo First United Methodist Church**, Former Sunday School Teacher
- Youth Athletics** – Grady County Recreational Department, Former Coach (baseball, tennis, and soccer)
- Cairo High School**, Former Volunteer Coach (tennis and soccer)
- First Baptist Church**, Former Deacon – Sunday School Teacher – Youth Group Mentor
- Gordon Heights Baptist Church**, Former Sunday School Director – Teacher – Youth Group Mentor

PERSONAL/FAMILY ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS:

- Support for wife and daughter in music endeavors (violin, viola, clarinet)
- Outdoor activities, including camping, hiking
- Active member, Murray First United Methodist Church

