

# Booker

(Continued from Page 1)  
day on Monday.

"I always say thanks to the children for coming to school," Mathis said.

Booker, formerly Highland Elementary, is an award-winning school with a history of excellence. Williams, formerly Madison Elementary, has a rich history, and it was recently redesigned and rebuilt on its same site; however, it wasn't deemed necessary to move the students off the campus during construction.

Booker is a smaller lot size and the district and administrators determined that "they could get it done faster by closing the campus completely," said District C School Board Trustee Shirley Barber.

Mathis credits the district

the district yet.

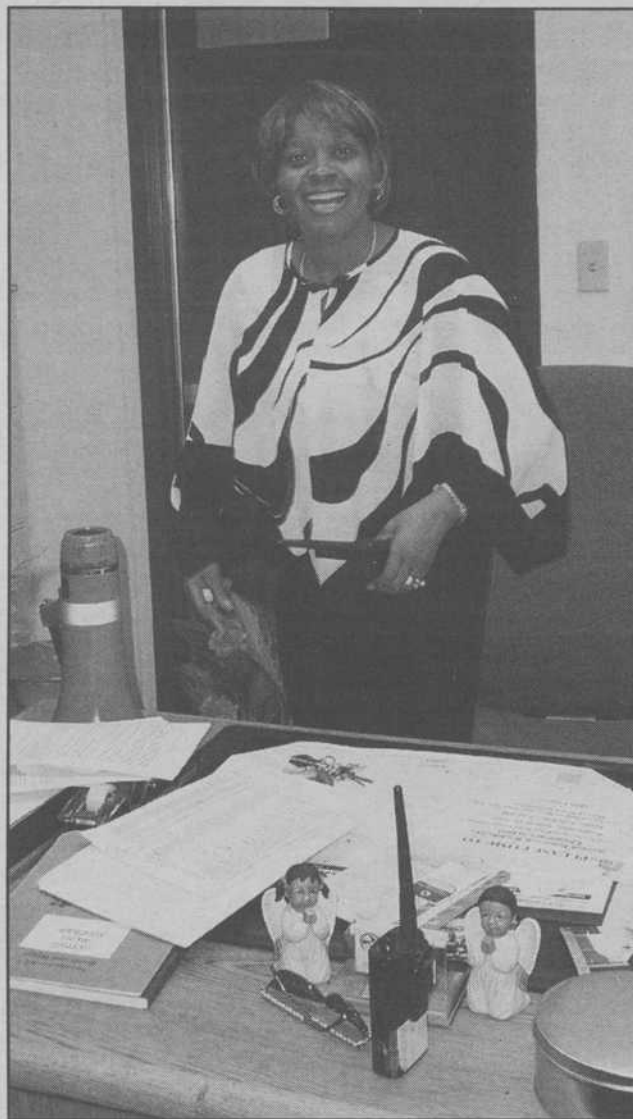
So, how will two highly experienced school principals, more than 900 students, including pre-K, on one square block of land co-exist for the 2005-2006 school year?

Fabulously, if you trust the confidence of the two leaders who each say they will not allow it to fail.

Barber had nothing but the highest compliments for her principals and the way they mutually worked out the details for effective educating in the unique setup.

"It's going to work," she said without hesitation.

Both Mathis and McKinney, independent of each other, said they "worked together" well from the very beginning when the shared campus was decided. Before



Sentinel-Voice photo by Parker Philpot

**Booker Principal Beverly Mathis plans to use the shared space with Williams Elementary to maximize learning.**

the start of school, the two shared a Bar-B-Que get-together for their instructors and staff with Williams hosting.

McKinney explained how the arrangements will work. "Instead of having two half-day schools, [we decided] to avoid confusion, we'd have a staggered school schedule." She continued, "Booker lets out at 3:30 in the afternoon and we [Williams] are already out and off the campus by 2:35 [approximately]." She added, "We won't have cross traffic."

In the morning, the two

schools start about one hour apart. Booker classes convene at 8:30.

In addition, the structure and placement of the multipurpose rooms and other facilities foster a sense of separateness without overlapping between the two schools. McKinney praises the efficient new design of Williams on its functionality for an unplanned joint occupancy.

# First day of school

By Parker Philpot  
Sentinel-Voice

Vyktoria Myles, 5, told her mother Eryka Drumgoole that she likes school "a lot" and said she learned "a little" on her first day of Kindergarten—and, of course, she was happy she got to "color."

Drumgoole has two other daughters, ages 9 and 8, who attend Kermit Booker Elementary School in its new temporary location on the campus of Wendell P. Williams Elementary at 1030 "J" St. at Madison. The 51-year old Booker structures are being razed for construction of a replacement school and the new school is slated to open in January 2007, according to officials at the district.

On the Williams campus, Booker students in grades 1 through 5 are housed in brightly decorated portables—or "learning cottages" as Brenda McKinney, principal of Williams, prefers to call them.

In the interim, buses provided by the district to transport Booker students to and from school to avoid youngsters walking about a quarter-mile route that would take them across busy streets, such as Martin Luther King Blvd.

Drumgoole is eligible to use the free transportation (See School, Page 4)

Perfect compromise, but what about competition between the school heads or student body?

Mathis said that "some activities" will be shared, but mainly they operate autonomously for the most part. One shared event is the scheduled fire drill.

McKinney quickly dispels any idea that anything other than "commitment to education" will take place. "The education will not be compromised," she asserts. "We are all really one."

The parents were advised of the change during the last months of school earlier this year.

Several meetings were held to answer questions and get input, according to the

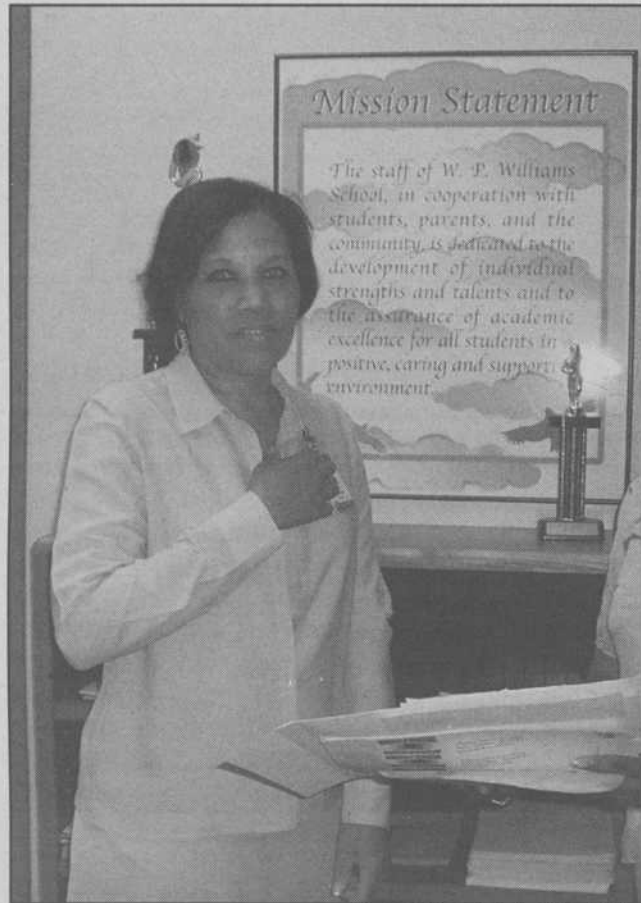
principals and Barber.

"Initially, the parents were concerned, of course..." McKinney recalled. After meeting with them at the end of the semester, she said they gave a "pledge of support." McKinney and Mathis grew up in the neighborhood, are dedicated to the children, and they know many of the parents.

Overall, the first day "went well," said Mathis and staff members who commented.

"[Monday] was the smoothest day... It was the best ever," said McKinney.

So, there should be a happy ending, since it looks like there's nothing ahead but the best of times in the story of the two schools.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Parker Philpot

**Williams Principal Brenda McKinney says sharing space with Booker Elementary should be a benefit to both schools.**

with allowing the buses so that Booker students would not have to "walk to school in danger" along Martin Luther King and other busy streets.

Barber explained that the rebuilding of Booker has been on the drawing board for about three years.

"We've got some great architects," she said, noting that the design was created by an African-American, Winston Henderson.

"I think we'll be very pleased with it. That will certainly make a [positive] difference to have a real nice school," Barber said. She estimates the work at Booker will be completed in about 18 months, but said she has not been given many specifics by

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