

Thea Bowman Moves Forward

Back-to-School 2016

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GARY — Now that last year's authorizer controversy has passed, Thea Bowman Leadership Academy opened as scheduled Monday with new leadership.

Bowman had a rough few months after authorizer Ball State University announced in January it would not renew the charter due mostly to governance issues.

The Drexel Foundation, which held the charter, was replaced in late March, and Indianapolis-based Phalen Leadership Academies was selected to operate the school through the 2020-21 school year. Trine University agreed to be the school's new authorizer.

Days before the charter was set to expire June 30, the Indiana State Board of Education approved Trine's request to be Bowman's authorizer.

Earl Martin Phalen, of Phalen Leadership Academies, began on July 1 to coordinate and oversee all academic and administrative functions for Thea Bowman.

Phalen said leadership teams at the elementary and middle/high school worked all summer to prepare for the upcoming school year. Sarita Stevens remains as high school principal, and Michael Collins will continue as elementary school principal.

"We anticipate that 1,250 scholars will be enrolled on the first day of school, and we still have a few enrollment opportunities, so if parents are interested in enrolling their child, they should contact the schools," Phalen said.

"We are so proud that our most recent high school graduates will be representing Thea Bowman at universities such as Purdue, Indiana University, Central State and the United States military."

In addition, Thea Bowman high school was awarded the Bronze Medal in April for Top Ranked High Schools in 2016 by U.S. News and World Report. The magazine evaluated more than 28,000 schools to determine the top public high schools nationally. Of that number, 500 schools received gold medals, 2,173 silver medals and 3,545 bronze medals.



A Bowman student paints a youngster's face at the summer family fun festival at the high school shortly before school started Monday



Bowman shirts are available at the summer family fun festival that took place at the high school shortly before school started Monday

Phalen said the school has rehired most of its teachers and hired some new outstanding teachers and administrators. He said Bowman has 11 new teachers and a paraprofessional. Seven of the new teachers will be at the high school.

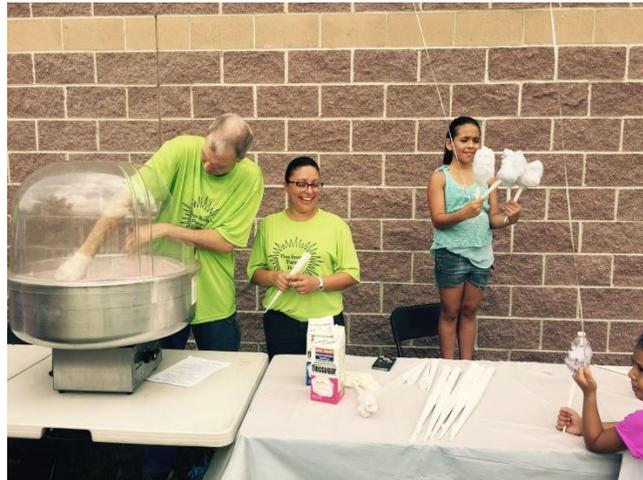
“Overall, we are just incredibly excited about the upcoming school year and doing the best that we can to provide the high quality education that our scholars deserve,” Phalen said.

SBOE member Eddie Melton, who represents the 1st Congressional District and is the Democratic candidate for state senator to replace Sen. Earline Rogers, said Bowman has been around for more than 13 years, and has done a great job in the community.

“Although we know in the last few years it has suffered academically, with this new leadership in place we expect them to move forward,” he said during a June SBOE meeting.

“I’m excited to learn that Phalen Leadership Academies and Trine University will make improvements. Parents and community members had been calling me regularly, and they are concerned about what’s next for the school.”

A parent group that had been formed to take over the school if Drexel Foundation could not find an authorizer has remained silent. Calls to parents Taryl Bonds and Tawanna Staples have not been returned. Gary attorney Tony Walker, who is a member of the Drexel Foundation, said he “personally” invited Bonds to be a member of the Drexel Foundation but said Bonds declined. Bonds could not be reached for comment.



Fun times were had at the summer family fun festival at Thea Bowman Leadership Academy’s high school shortly before school started Monday.