



When you think of the Women Education Leaders in Virginia (WELV), you think of Margaret Blackmon. Margaret has served as the executive director of WELV since 2006. She has led this group with the greatest of enthusiasm and commitment. Margaret decided to retire this year but agreed to remain executive director emeritus and to mentor the new executive director during the next few months.

I am so proud to have been selected to be the new executive director of WELV. I know filling the shoes of Margaret Blackmon will be no easy task. However, I know she continues to be involved with WELV and will be there to support and guide me. I so appreciate the Board of Directors' vote of confidence in selecting me to lead WELV as executive director.

For those of you who do not know me, I have served K-12 and higher education in Virginia for 40 years. I recently retired from the University of Virginia. I served on the faculty of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies. I earned both my M.Ed. and Ph.D. from the Curry School at the University of Virginia. I am passionate about the University and remain an avid fan of the Cavaliers.

I feel blessed to have been a teacher at the elementary, middle and secondary levels. I recently connected through Facebook with one of my students who I taught at Prospect Heights Middle School in Orange, Virginia. She now works in the operating room at a local hospital and has five children. She remembers me as "one of her favorite teachers." Oh, the impact of a teacher can last through the ages.

I don't think I have stopped being a teacher in my heart although I served as assistant principal in Albemarle County, assistant superintendent in the Town of West Point, and director of elementary education for Shenandoah County.

From 2004 to 2010, I had the joy (yes, this is the correct word) of serving as superintendent of schools in Westmoreland County. With an amazing school board and dedicated staff, we were able to bring inaugural state accreditation to all four schools.

I also served at the state level, twice working for the Virginia Department of Education. For nine years, I served as the executive director of the Southside Virginia Business and Education Commission at Longwood University.

I bring to the role of executive director vast experience, a strong network of colleagues in Virginia, and a passion for the WELV mission. It gives me the opportunity to continue the agenda for women educational leaders started decades ago in Virginia by true pioneers of our profession. I remain grateful to those who led the way for female leaders in Virginia. I walk humbly in the shoes of Margaret Blackmon and others who came before me.

Elaine Fogliani, Ph.D.