

Board Selects County Schools Superintendent

By **SCOTT SHANE**
Staff Writer

A weary, divided Guilford County school board late Thursday named Robert M. Boggs as its choice for superintendent of the 25,000-student county school system.

The selection of Boggs, the 40-year-old superintendent of Alexander County schools, is subject to contract negotiations set for this weekend and a final, public vote at Tuesday's board meeting. No public vote was taken Thursday night when board members emerged from a three-hour closed session and Chairwoman Ann Talbert announced the board consensus.

Details such as salary and when Boggs will start work will be discussed this weekend.

The announcement ended a tumultuous, three-month search for a replacement for former Superintendent Douglas Magann, who was removed by the board majority in June after three years in the job. Magann had replaced E.P. Pearce, who served for 19 years.

Boggs, who was raised in the Forsyth County town of Lewisville, started his career in 1964 as a teacher in Yadkin County. From

1967 to 1971 he was principal of elementary schools in Yadkin and Caldwell counties.

In 1971, he became assistant superintendent in the Yadkin County system and from 1975 to 1979 he was superintendent in the 3,000-student Clinton school system in eastern North Carolina. He has held the top post in the 5,000-student Alexander school system in western Piedmont North Carolina since 1979.



Boggs

In Alexander, a rural county of furniture factories and tobacco farms, Boggs has built a reputation as a leader able to unite traditionally feuding geographical sections into a working whole. He is given credit by county observers for helping to sell a \$4.75 million school bond issue to county voters in October 1980.

During his administration, the Alexander school board for the first time began to rotate

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meetings between various sites in the county instead of holding them all in Taylorsville, the county seat. He introduced pre-school screening and testing at every grade level, oversaw a review of the entire curriculum, conducted a formal survey of the school buildings' condition and started an annual report to the people on the schools.

"I can't imagine Dr. Boggs not being able to get along with anyone," said Alyce Joines, who covers education for the Taylorsville Times, in a recent telephone interview. "He's able to talk to all kinds of people. He's outgoing — not the type to shut himself away in his office. We would hate to lose him. He's been very effective in getting our school system in good shape."

Reached by telephone before Thursday night's meeting, Boggs briefly discussed his educational interests.

"I've done a lot of work in the area of leadership and management styles," he said. "But I've tried to concentrate on what actually affects the classroom. I believe the superintendent has to be someone who is an instructional leader first of all. Most of what matters in the educational process is focused in what takes place between that teacher and that student."

Boggs, who holds a doctorate in educational administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, is said by Alexander County observers to enjoy good relations with the elected school board there.

The process that will apparently end Tuesday with Boggs' formal appointment was plagued with pickering between board factions.

Chairwoman Talbert, Betty Smith, Carolyn McGee and Vance Pegram, who voted to remove Magann, sought candidates with experience as superintendents in North Carolina. They traced the friction with Magann, who was associate superintendent in Columbia, S.C. before coming to Guilford, to the fact that he had worked primarily in urban school systems and had never been directly responsible to a school board.

But Evon Dean, Nancy Jo Smith and Dot Lambeth, who opposed the decision to buy up the fourth year of Magann's contract, said they wanted to see candidates with experience in school systems as large as Guilford's. They said they would prefer candidates holding lesser posts in large school systems to superintendents who had worked only in small systems.

The conflict came to a head this week when the three minority members announced publicly that they were not happy with the two remaining finalists, Kinston Superintendent Duane O. Moore and Boggs. Two other finalists named by the board, Burlington Superintendent James E. Surratt and Orange County Superintendent R. Mike Simmons, dropped out after expressing concern about division on the board.

The board reached what members described as a "consensus" on Boggs Thursday after hearing from two education professors who visited Boggs' and Moore's home districts. Joseph E. Bryson of UNC-G and William C. Self of UNC-Chapel Hill had talked with colleagues and community leaders in Kinston and Alexander.

Bryson, who taught Boggs at UNC-G, visited the Kinston system. Self reported on Boggs' Alexander County work. The two consultants worked for expenses only.

In the public session after Talbert's announcement, several parents complained that the public had not been sufficiently involved in the search process and that the applicants were from school systems much smaller than Guilford.

Bryson defended the finalists, calling them "superb, splendid school administrators" and noting that Greensboro school Superintendent Kenneth Newbold came to the 25,000-student city system in 1978 from 8,000-student Scotland County.