

**ASHEVILLE CITY SCHOOLS  
NEWS RELEASE**

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**Asheville High School Names Athletic Director Duo**

Despite an impressive 27 years' worth of accolades, a strong resume and more than a handful of opportunities, Sonita Warren-Dixon had never before held the title of Athletic Director.

It had to be the right opportunity, she said. The proper place and time.

The 2019-2020 school year is just that. Starting Monday, August 12th, Warren-Dixon will become Asheville High School's first female, African-American Athletic Director.

"I think that's important," she said. "You want girls to see that they have the ability. I'm probably the only African-American, female Athletic Director in the state of North Carolina. And, it's important for me to remember that. I have the chance to open up doors for future generations by taking on this role."

The three-time State Champion Head Coach for Girl's Basketball began her Asheville City Schools tenure in 1991 as a Physical Education Teacher at Hall Fletcher Elementary School. She then became Vance Elementary's School Counselor in 2000 before moving to Asheville High as a School Counselor in 2003. After two years of serving as the Sophomore and Junior Class Counselor, Warren-Dixon transitioned back to her first love of physical education in 2005. Since then, she has been responsible for planning and the implementation of developmentally appropriate physical education for students in Freshman PE, Weight Training and PE 3 for student-athletes.

Outside of the classroom, Warren-Dixon's coaching experience has included everything from assistant coaching Asheville High's Volleyball and Softball Teams to being the Head Coach in both Girl's Track and Field Hockey. She too led the Asheville High School Girl's Basketball Team from 2002 - 2011 as well as the Boy's Basketball Team from 2011 - 2016. And, good news for Cougar Fans; in addition to her current role as Asheville High Athletic Director, Warren-Dixon will continue to serve as Asheville High School's Head Girl's Basketball Coach, a role she's held for the second time since the 2017-2018 school year.

"One of the biggest assets I bring is the ability to communicate with people of every level," said Warren-Dixon. "I understand the viewpoint of an athlete, coach and school counselor. I've

coached both female and male athletes and have learned something new with each team I've worked with. I think that's only going to help me in this role."

Warren-Dixon holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Therapeutic Recreation, a Bachelor of Education degree in Physical Education as well as Master's degree in School Counseling, all from Western Carolina University. She is also a three-time Western North Carolina Coach of the Year as well as a two-time runner-up for the state of North Carolina's Coach of the Year.

In addition to Warren-Dixon's new role, the 2019-2020 school year will also be the first time in Cougar Sports history that Asheville High School has an Assistant Athletic Director. Long-time Asheville High School Assistant Football Coach/Assistant Baseball Coach, Jesse Swain, has earned this new distinction.

An Erwin High School alumni, Swain has been with the district since 2009. He began as Asheville High School's In-School Suspension Coordinator before become Claxton Elementary School's Physical Education Teacher in 2011. In fact, Swain was Claxton's Teacher of the Year in 2012.

And, while he's enjoyed planning and implementing physical education activities using a variety of motivational and implementation strategies to engage his elementary students these past eight years, Swain very much looks at his move to Asheville High School as "coming home."

"I love our district, and I love the students that we serve," he said. "One of the neat things I've already seen is former Claxton students that are now Asheville High School students, so I'm excited to be able to reconnect with those guys and meet new student-athletes through this journey."

In preparation for his new role, Swain has served as Asheville High School's Assistant Football Coach and Assistant Baseball Coach. Additionally, he's been the Future Cougar Baseball Camp Coordinator since 2009. He was also voted the Western Mountain Athletic Conference's Assistant Baseball Coach of the Year in 2018 and was named the Asheville Chevrolet Coach of the Month this past May.

A Cougar through and through, Swain is "excited to work with [Warren-Dixon] and glean as much as [he] can from her because she's one of the best coaches in the state of North Carolina," he said. He's looking forward to the new challenge because he knows "we're now in a position that we can really grow our athletic program and provide even better opportunities for our student-athletes and coaches to succeed."

Both Swain and Warren-Dixon were approved by the Asheville City Board of Education during their August 5th meeting. The duo will officially begin in their new roles next Monday, August 12th.