



SPOTLIGHT ON DIANE PORTER!



Diane Porter is Chairperson of the JCPS Board of Education, the first African American woman to hold that position. And she is more than qualified as she has been in almost every role in public education in this community.

She started school at Louisville's Virginia Avenue Elementary, which at that time was segregated. Upon graduating high school, she attended the University of Louisville where she received a degree in education and later, a Masters in Counseling. In our schools, she has served as teacher, guidance counselor, principal, and central office administrator. She was a JCPS parent as well.

She's been praised as being **kid-centered** throughout her career: a vocal advocate for equity for students across zip codes and neighborhoods, unafraid to stand up for all of the city's children.

She has been honored by the Muhammed Ali Center as a "Daughter of Greatness," which recognizes prominent women engaged in social change, activism, and pursuits of justice. Diane says this recognition was very meaningful to her because Muhammed Ali

was her friend when they were young, and they often walked to school together—though she noted, he was just as likely to run.

Governor Andy Beshear has appointed her to the University of Louisville Board of Trustees.

She was also awarded Louisville's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Freedom Award, given to citizens who dedicate their lives to justice, peace, freedom, nonviolence, racial equity and civic activism. Of that choice, Louisville Urban League President and CEO Sadiqa Reynolds said, she's the "embodiment of King's values — the "caring, dedication to her community, commitment, compassion, belief in others." Bruce Williams, senior pastor of Bates Memorial Baptist Church, said, "She gives people hope, is what I think. Especially people in the community who are vulnerable...she doesn't sit back, complain and wish things would improve — she puts some "feet on her faith" and gets involved in the process,"

In accepting the MLK award, Diane said to the mayor, "I don't ever think about awards, I just get up every day and do what's in my heart to help kids."



LOUISVILLE, Ky. (WDRB) -- Jefferson County Public Schools' Board of Education Chair Diane Porter has a new role as a University of Louisville trustee.

Porter and consultant Alfonso Cornish were appointed to the U of L Board of Trustees by Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear.

Porter graduated from U of L before working as an educator for nearly 40 years. She is replacing Bonita Black, whose term has expired.

She is set to serve as a trustee until 2026.

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In 2020, She was honored as a Daughter of Greatness by the Muhammed Ali

The “Daughters of Greatness” breakfast series honors prominent women engaged in social change, activism, and pursuits of justice. The stories and reflections they share are motivational to some people, transformative to others, and inspirational to all. The Daughters of Greatness series provides a place for dialogue and discussion on current issues of justice, community engagement, and social movements within the Louisville area and beyond.

In accepting the MLK award, she told the mayor, “I don’t ever think about awards, I just get up every day and do what’s in my heart to help kids.”

Education is one of the things we can work on

Diane Porter, 'advocate for the least of us,' gets MLK Freedom Award

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2019/01/18/diane-porter-icps-chair-mlk-award-vocal-advocate-louisville-children/2579118002/>

When Diane Porter is having a bad day, she visits an elementary school.

She'll hang out in a hallway and, before long, children surround her, offering hugs, pulling her down the hall to class. They cheer her up, she says, but it's likely they also remind her why she does what she does.

The 39-year Jefferson County Public Schools employee, now chair of the school board, has been kid-centered throughout her career: a **vocal advocate for equity for students across zip codes and neighborhoods, unafraid to stand up for all of the city's children.**

"She gives people hope, is what I think. Especially people in the community who are vulnerable," said Bruce Williams, senior pastor of Bates Memorial Baptist Church, 620 Lampton St. "They know, even if they don't have a voice anywhere else, they have a voice through her."

Porter is **this year's recipient of the city's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Award, bestowed to citizens who dedicate their lives to justice, peace, freedom, nonviolence, racial equity and civic activism.**

It's a **perfect pick, many say, given Porter's years of work and embodiment of King's values — the "caring, dedication to her community, commitment, compassion, belief in others,"** said Sadiqa Reynolds of the Louisville Urban League, 1535 W Broadway.

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She knows, as King once said, that change doesn't roll in on the "wheels of inevitability," Williams said. She doesn't sit back, complain and wish things would improve — she puts some "feet on her faith" and gets involved in the process, he said.

Porter, who became the **first African-American woman to serve as JCPS board chair in 2012**, began her education in then-segregated Virginia Avenue Elementary School. She spent her entire career working in JCPS in a host of positions, including teacher, counselor, assistant principal and principal.

When she was approached to run for school board, she said she'd only stay for one term. People responded with polite smiles and nods — which Porter only understood later.

"It's not a one-term thing," she said last week in an interview with the Courier Journal that, fittingly, took place at an elementary school.

There's always more work to be done, Porter explained.

In her years with the board, **she's been a strong supporter of the district's equity efforts, including the racial equity policy and the W.E.B. DuBois Academy**, the all-boys school which will grow to serve students through grade eight and **feature a curriculum grounded in African-American history and culture**. The school is named after the civil rights activist and renowned scholar who became the first African-American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University, the Courier Journal previously reported.

Looking forward, she said she's focused on meeting the requirements set by the state Department of Education so the district can go "full throttle" moving forward and continue to thrive.

John Marshall, JCPS' equity officer, calls Porter "Mother Chair," a nickname that dates back to her first time in the leadership position.

"What she is now is what she's always been: consistent, kid-centered, caring, sharp," Marshall said. "She's just always been a true advocate for the least of us."

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And while she may not be the loudest voice in the room, she is a "quiet storm," according to Reynolds: "Very calm, but able to do what needs to be done."



Porter often stresses the importance of accepting children where they are and giving them the opportunity to grow and excel. Having preconceived notions of people based on where they come from or what they look like is "ridiculous," Porter says.

"I've said before, at board meetings, if we do that, I wouldn't be sitting on this board," said Porter, who lives in zip code 40211 on Louisville's West End. "It's important to take young people where they are, and to assume that they will reach high levels."

Marty Pollio, JCPS' superintendent, said Porter has given her life to the students of Jefferson County Public Schools, always coming from the angle of what's best for children. And he believes the best is yet to come.

"I firmly believe that when we are all finished with this and we see, I believe, a reduction in the achievement gap, when we see more African-American students achieving higher education, when we see new schools and renovated

schools in West Louisville, I think her legacy is going to be being the leader of helping to lead this work," Pollio said.

"I think her legacy is still ahead of her."