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New leaders for city schools

33 principals named, more to be selected by August

By Sara Neufeld

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The Baltimore school board has appointed 33 new principals so far and plans to name about a dozen more before the new school year begins in August.

The principal is at the heart of city schools chief Andres Alonso's plans to reform a troubled system. Next school year, principals will have significantly more autonomy in exchange for accountability. Every principal appointee was recommended by a school community and interviewed by Alonso.

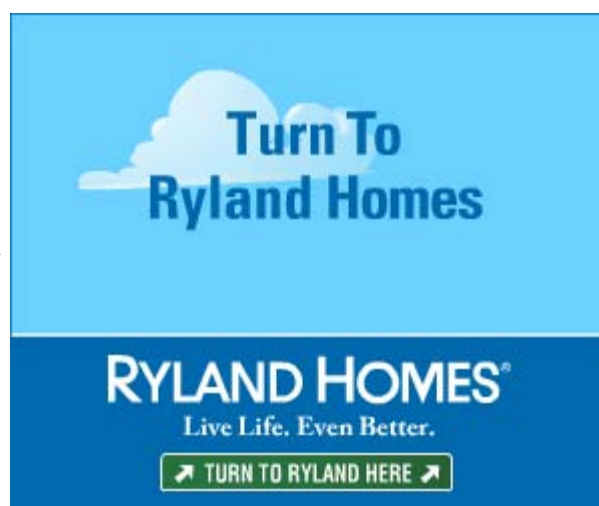
Alonso has said he expects about 45 new principals in place by the start of the new school year Aug. 25. A review of school board minutes shows that about 30 schools had new principals last year.

Four of the new principals were named yesterday at a meeting where the board approved dozens of new appointments in anticipation of the new fiscal year beginning Tuesday. While many of the appointments were routine - assistant principals, for example - several central office administrators were also transferred into new jobs.

The system's budget for 2008-2009 cuts 310 positions at the central office and hands many responsibilities to schools. Displaced central office employees were offered jobs elsewhere in the system, often in schools. Some of the new principals were previously central office administrators.

Also yesterday, the board signed off on putting principals in place temporarily, through Sept. 26, at eight schools while officials either look for a new leader or assess whether to keep the current principal in place. Four of the eight are alternative schools, which are undergoing a massive restructuring. Rosetta Stith, who has been the principal for many years at Laurence G. Paquin Middle/High, the city's school for pregnant girls and teen moms, was only reappointed through Sept. 26.

Reginald F. Lewis High, the school that made national headlines this spring when a student assaulted an art teacher and a cell phone video of the incident was posted online, is among those that will have new principals. The system has advertised for applicants for the job, but so far, no replacement for Principal Jean Ragin has been announced.



The schools where new principals were named yesterday are Beechfield Elementary and Chinquapin Middle and two charter schools, Inner Harbor East Academy for Young Scholars and Baltimore Freedom Academy.

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