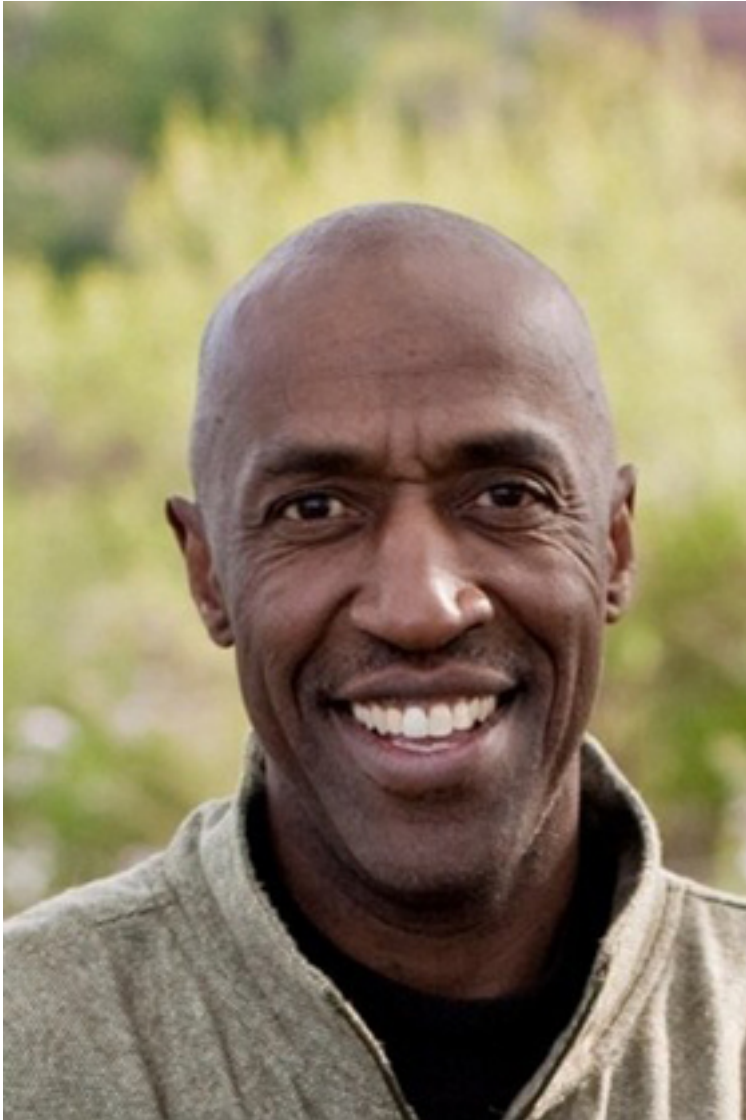


MPS scores former NBA star as next athletic director

Written by
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Trent Tucker, a former University of Minnesota standout and NBA champion, has been named athletic director for Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). Tucker replaces John Washington, who retired last fall.

Since retiring from professional basketball in 1993, Tucker has enjoyed a successful motivational speaking career and a stint as broadcast analyst for the Minnesota Timberwolves. More recently, Tucker has devoted his efforts to advancing educational opportunities for at-risk youth through philanthropic endeavors. In 2008, Tucker founded the Trent Tucker University Scholars Program, which provides after-school opportunities that empower underprivileged youth to make positive life choices through education, mentorship and community partnership.

The scholar program underscores the importance of early college awareness and stresses core subject areas such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Students in grades six through eight are introduced to learning activities at corporate locations, as well as to the University of Minnesota campus, staff, faculty and students.

"I am honored to be selected for this important position," Tucker said. "I've always placed a huge value on the role athletics play in the development of children. I am committed to

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strengthening Minneapolis Public Schools' athletic program through teamwork, community-building and partnerships."

Dr. Bernadeia Johnson, superintendent of schools, will announce Tucker's hiring at tonight's meeting of the Minneapolis Board of Education.

"Trent's commitment to increasing opportunities for youth aligns with MPS' efforts to prepare every child for college and career," Johnson said. "Through his foundation, Trent has provided students with the tools they need to succeed in college and life. I look forward to working with him to strengthen both athletic and academic programs in MPS."

Tucker, who grew up in Flint, Mich., said his goal is to create an environment where students attend and compete for their neighborhood schools.

"When students stay in their neighborhood, they start to see the value they bring to their community," Tucker said. "They can help build pride in their schools, their neighborhood and bring people together. I remember the North High and Patrick Henry days. The communities were vibrant and there was excitement because everyone followed the same teams. I would love to recapture that once again for MPS."

Tucker said he understands first-hand that academics and athletics go hand-in-hand. After leading the University of Minnesota to a Big 10 championship in 1982, Tucker left the school without earning his college degree. While he enjoyed a successful NBA career, Tucker said he later missed out on an opportunity to serve as assistant coach at his alma mater because he was not qualified.

"That hurt me more than anything," Tucker said. "I wasn't denied the job for any reason other than the fact I didn't do my job and complete my degree. All of the experience I had and my basketball background didn't matter. In case the opportunity came down the road again, I went back and finished my degree. I didn't want to take myself out of the equation a second time."

Mark Bollinger, chief administrative officer, said Tucker's work in advancing the lives of young people put him above all other candidates.

"Trent was selected as the next MPS athletic director because of his dedication to the importance of education, his varied experiences, his philanthropic activities on behalf of children and his desire to empower youth through academics, athletics and social skills," Bollinger said. "His wish is to make a positive difference in the lives of youth by stressing the importance of education aligns with the vision of our school district."

The sixth overall pick in the 1982 NBA Draft, Tucker played nine seasons with the New York Knicks before joining the San Antonio Spurs for one season. After one year in Texas, Tucker headed to Chicago for the 1992-1993 season, where he played alongside Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen and John Paxson. The Bulls went on to win the 1993 NBA Championship. Tucker retired after the championship season.