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Passing the Teaching Torch

Retiring Medlock Bridge Elementary teacher replaced by former kindergarten student

After 30 years of teaching in Fulton County – 22 of them in a kindergarten classroom at Medlock Bridge Elementary - Carrie Miller is turning over her grade book. She is passing it on to her replacement, a former student who sat in one of her classrooms 30 years ago.

Alisha Phillips, in her first year as a Fulton County Schools teacher, took over Ms. Miller's kindergarten class three months ago, bringing with her memories from her days as a student and valuable advice from her teaching mentor.

“She has shared with me that I should take things slowly and be flexible as I approach each day with my students,” said Ms. Phillips. “If I do the things she advises, I am sure my students and I will be fine.”

Ms. Phillips, who has always known she wanted to teach, began her career in education at a private kindergarten and spent several years as a paraprofessional in Fulton County. When she made a decision to return to teaching, she was unsure what opportunities would be available.

“I never expected to be at Medlock Bridge Elementary, but when I learned I was taking over for Ms. Miller, I knew I had to come,” she said.

The two teachers have compared notes about changes in the profession over the years, particularly with the use of technology. “Technology keeps improving, but the students stay the same,” said Ms. Miller, acknowledging that she is taking three decades of memorable school moments with her into retirement.

In fact, 30 years ago, Ms. Miller took time off for maternity leave, and her class made her new daughter a birthday card. Ms. Phillip's childhood drawing and words of congratulations on the card are front and center. Now that she's retired, Ms. Miller plans to spend more time with that daughter and her three-year-old grandchild.

When teased about having a lot to live up to in terms of tenure, Ms. Phillips says she is prepared. She loves the sense of community and continuity Medlock Bridge Elementary provides, noting that she remains friends with

some of the students who were with her in Ms. Miller's class, and she continues to be inspired by her former teacher's commitment to her students.

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About the Fulton County School System. The Fulton County School System is the fourth largest school system in Georgia. Approximately 95,000 students attend 106 schools in the cities of Alpharetta, Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Johns Creek, Milton, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, Sandy Springs, South Fulton and Union City.