

Working to improve Norfolk schools

During her 24 years in education, Eleanor Renee Rodriguez has taught children others said couldn't learn, has motivated teachers who couldn't motivate students, has found productivity in schools that weren't producing before.

Now Norfolk stands to benefit from her drive.

Rodriguez was recently named the new assistant to the superintendent for quality and instructional management. She will help supervise the departments of staff development; special, adult and vocational education; and alternative schools.

The position, once called the assistant superintendent for continuous education, had been vacant for more than a year after Fred Oliver resigned to take an assistant superintendent job in Georgia.

Rodriguez is looking forward to working in the school division after years of being an independent educational consultant.

"The biggest difference will be being able to see the difference," Rodriguez said. "When you're consulting, you do some things (with clients) and you don't know if they've implemented them or not.

"With this, you're monitoring and adjusting and being able to see what you're accomplishing."

Before her work as a consultant, Rodriguez worked in the North Chicago Community Unit District 187 as an assistant to the superintendent and served one year as acting superintendent.

She's worked as a principal, special education classroom teacher and adult basic education coordinator. Rodriguez has worked with Norfolk's superintendent, John O. Simpson, in North Chicago and Oklahoma.

Rodriguez said one of her goals will be to find the initiatives in Norfolk that work and spread the wealth.

"If we have a program we know is working, we have to duplicate it," Rodriguez said. "You can tweak it but do what has to be done so that more children can benefit from that greatness."

Name: Eleanor Renee Rodriguez

Nickname: Renee

Birthplace: Omaha, Neb.

Birthdate: Dec. 16, 1952

What brought you to Norfolk?
The challenge of educating everybody's children

Occupation: Professional educator



Staff photo by BETH BERGMAN NAKAMURA

Marital status: Happily married

Children: None

Last book read: "One Day My Soul Just Opened Up" - Iyanla Vanzant

Favorite movie: "Imitation of Life"

Favorite magazine: Black Enterprise

If you could trade places for just one day with anyone in the world, who would it be and why?
Oprah Winfrey. I would be in a position to either change the lives and/or provide an opportunity for people to actually think about how our attitudes affect the aptitude of our children on a daily basis — around the world.

Biggest accomplishment: Helping a former teen-age student do several things:

1. Not commit suicide
2. Believe in herself (and others)
3. Learn to read

Most embarrassing moment:
My most embarrassing moment I guess must be now: I can't think of one.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

My ability to be more patient and consider the source when adults make decisions that negatively affect children

Perfect way to spend the day:

Spending quality time with my hero, husband, friend, Joseph H. Rodriguez Jr., walking my American Eskimo four-legged friend, communicating with relatives and friends, reflecting on lessons learned and creating new learning opportunities.

Favorite vacation spot: The world

Pet peeve: Others lack of sensitivity and disrespect of other human beings

First job: As a teen-ager — Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) and Greater Omaha Community Action (GOCA) Recreation Assistant

Worst job: All my jobs have been learning experiences. If I learn something or had the potential to grow, I met one of my goals.

Hobbies: traveling, walking, reading