Two Spring ISD principals return home to lead

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On the first day of school this year, the scene outside Hirsch Elementary was the typical back-to-school rush of parent drop off, reluctant kindergarteners, and school buses idling out front. Right outside the main doors – wearing Hirsch yellow – stood LaToya Patterson, greeting parents and high-fiving students as they entered the building for a brand new school year.

It was a familiar place for Patterson, despite the fact that it was her first year as principal. That’s because she had walked the halls of Hirsch Elementary years before as a student.

“I think it’s important for the students to be able to see that I am from where they are from,” Patterson said. “Of course a lot of things have changed in the neighborhood, but a lot is the same. There’s really great families and they want the best for their kids. They’re sending the very best that they have every day, and it’s important to not lose sight of that.”

Her path to Hirsch wasn’t exactly linear.

Despite the fact that her math teacher in high school encouraged her back then to become a teacher, Patterson pursued a math degree and a consulting career.

But after being furloughed due to the economic downturn, she took up substitute teaching and returned to one of her original loves, the theater. While working with multiple professional theaters in Houston, she also worked with educational outreach programs in schools. That return to campus sparked her interest in education, a fact she shared with her high school math teacher, much to his delight.

She started as a math teacher at Dekaney High School, in that school’s second year of existence. She eventually moved to Anderson Elementary, where she taught math and art. She stayed at Anderson for 12 years, with four years as assistant...