Tennessee Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn visited South Knoxville Elementary School last week. She spoke at the school's graduation and had a question and answer session with third and fourth grade girls at the school's library Wednesday morning.

Penny Schwinn visits South Knox Elementary

By Steve Lady

Tennessee Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn made a visit to South Knoxville Elementary School last week.

Schwinn was greeted by a group of incredibly excited and hyper fourth grade girls, who had prepared a list of questions for her.

Schwinn also participated in a question and answer session with the school's graduating class.

Schwinn was pleased to make the trip and was told the 30 minute drive from her office would be worth it.

"My sister told me that I should come to a school visit sometime and I was thinking to myself, I've lived here for seven years and I've never been to a school visit. I've been to Knoxville, I've been to Tennessee, I've been to Nashville, I've been to Memphis, I've been to Chattanooga and I've been to Jackson, but I've never been to a school visit. And I'm so glad that I did," Schwinn said before reading to students. "I love coming to Knoxville. I'm excited to be here and to visit with these girls."

Schwinn, a former school teacher, principal and district leader, has spent more than two decades in education, but her family and her decision to become a teacher and later an education administrator stemmed from her own childhood.

"I wanted to be a teacher, and my mom knew both my parents were teachers," Schwinn said. "I was a very clever child and I thought I was very smart. I was a very bossy child, and I thought I was very smart. And I remember telling my mom that I wanted to be a teacher, and she said, 'Penny, you're not smart enough to be a teacher.' And I remember thinking to myself, I'm going to show her. I'm going to be a teacher and I'm going to be the best teacher that I can be."

Schwinn's parents were both educators, and she said she was inspired by their work ethic and their dedication to their students.

"My parents were incredible educators, and I'm so grateful for the work ethic that they instilled in me," Schwinn said. "I'm so grateful for the love that they showed for their students, and I'm so grateful for the way that they showed me what it looked like to be a great teacher."

Schwinn also spoke to the students about the importance of education and how it can open doors for them in the future.

"I'm so excited to be here and to talk to you about how important it is to be a student, to be in school, to be learning, to be growing, to be developing, to be thinking about your future and what you want to be when you grow up," Schwinn said. "I'm so excited to be here and to talk to you about that."

Schwinn's visit to South Knoxville Elementary School was her first visit to a school in Knox County since she was appointed to her position by Governor Bill Lee in December 2018.

Continued on page 2

What is a majority in the upcoming city election?

By Mike Hardy
mike@knoxville.com

According to the Knox County Election Commission, the race for mayor will be one of the most contested in the city's history. The election will be held on Aug. 6, and if no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, the top two candidates will advance to a runoff election on Nov. 5.

Rodger Mills, who has been the Knox County Election Administrator since 2014, said he expects the runoff election to be held on Nov. 5.

"I think we have had a runoff election in the city's history," Mills said. "I think it was in 1991. I think it was between Victor Ashe and Randy Tyree. I think Victor Ashe got 51% of the vote and Randy Tyree got 49%. I think that was the only runoff election we've had in the city's history."

Mills said that even if a candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, he or she is not guaranteed to win the election outright.

"If a candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, but there is a write-in candidate who receives more than 50% of the vote, then the write-in candidate will win the election," Mills said.

Mills said that he has been in contact with the candidates' campaigns and that he has been impressed with the level of professionalism he has seen.

"I've been very impressed with the campaigns that I've been in contact with," Mills said. "I've been very impressed with the professionalism that I've seen from the candidates' campaigns. I've been very impressed with the way that they have conducted themselves throughout the campaign."

Continued on page 2