



February 6, 2018

Dear Waltham Public Schools,

I write to share important news that Waltham High School Principal Gregory DeMeo shared with his community yesterday: Principal DeMeo announced his intentions to retire as of June 30, 2018.

Greg and I discussed his likely announcement over the last few weeks, which I know, from our conversations, was a difficult decision to make after 35 years of service to public education. He has made clear to me that he intends to continue to give everything he has to Waltham High School. In the time that I've known Greg, he has always been a leader who does what he says he will do. I have no doubt that he will remain laser focused on the work ahead and he will continue to have my full support as he pushes an ambitious agenda.

I want to thank Greg for his leadership. Over the last three years, I've worked closely with Greg and have been struck by his deep commitment to children and his unwavering belief in providing a diverse set of educational options for all students. His knowledge and interest in Career Vocational Technical Education has always impressed me. I find it interesting that the rest of the state is now jumping on an idea that Greg has understood for a long time: career technical education pathways are important investments that keep so many students on a path toward graduation that prepares them for the demands of college, career and community.

Greg has accomplished much in his career. He is a very humble and modest leader so I am only aware of a small slice of his accomplishments since my arrival in Waltham. I know he will not trumpet his professional successes so I thought I would take a moment to share a few of them:

- Doubled the number of students enrolled in an Advanced Placement course and tripled the number of AP tests our students take while outperforming state and global averages on 13 different AP tests in 2017
- Honored by the College Board as one of only 25 districts in the Commonwealth who has worked to significantly increase student participation in AP scores, improve outcomes on AP tests and increase the number of students from historically underrepresented groups entering AP coursework. This is an award the school has won for three years
- Increased the percentage of Waltham High School graduates who attend college and, for the first time, sent a higher percentage of our students to college than the state average
- The education plan for a new Waltham High School, conceptualized by Mr. DeMeo and his team, is now being used by the state as an exemplar for other districts that enter into the MSBA process
- Graduation rates for all students have steadily increased and dropout rates have decreased during his tenure
- New educational opportunities have been delivered to students as a result of his leadership including new CVTE, STEM and humanities courses that will support our students to be more competitive in the college application process
- Leveraged several hundred thousand dollars from external partners to support the school's core work



We have significant work ahead to make our flagship school an excellent and equitable one for all students. Nevertheless, Waltham High School is better positioned because of Greg DeMeo's leadership. I, for one, am grateful for all that he has done to welcome me to Waltham, support my growth as Superintendent and to move WHS toward an excellent and equitable school.

So where do we go from here to build off the work Mr. DeMeo has led?

Appointment of Interim

I will recommend to the School Committee that we appointment an interim principal for 2018-2019 school year. This will provide us the time to create promotional materials, build a pool of strong internal and external candidates for the permanent job, ensure we are on the front-end of a search timeline rather than the back-end and create an even stronger foundation for the permanent principal who will lead the school in 2019-2020. I will assess candidates for their understanding of and ability to support the education plan, a working knowledge of the building project and processes, commitment to equity, an ability to partner with teachers, parents, and external partners and knowledge of the Waltham context and schools, among other competencies. I am also committed to a wide-open permanent search in which as many internal and external candidates can apply. As a result, I will only consider interim principals who do not want the permanent role. In fact, interim principal candidates will be ineligible to apply for the permanent role because I want to maintain the integrity of the permanent search.

I am hoping to make an announcement on an interim principal shortly after February vacation. Interested candidates should contact me directly.

Process for Selecting Permanent Principal

I plan to model this search using a Superintendent search framework and timeline. Here is the timeline I envision for a search:

Task	Dates
Development of Job Description, WHS promotional materials to support recruitment, and plans for selection of large, diverse screening committee to be shared with School Committee.	June 2018
Appointment of Co-Chairs of Screening Committee (1 from WPS and 1 from Waltham Community)	June 2018
Nominations for screening committee—to represent a diverse group of stakeholders including teachers, parents, students, alumni, SC and community members and central office administrators.	September 2018-October 2018
Release of promotional materials and build candidate pool focusing on recruiting both internal and external candidates to apply.	October 2018-November 2018
Applications due	November 2018
Semi-finalist Interviews	December 2018
Finalists Interviews, Reference Checks, Site Visits	January 2019
Announcement of Permanent Principal	January- February 2019
Transitional Support	February 2019-June 2019
Permanent Principal Begins	July 1, 2019



We will have much time ahead to celebrate and thank Greg for his leadership. It was important for me to share some of the things Greg has accomplished because, based on what I have seen in the last three years, he has left an important and positive mark on Waltham Public Schools. I know I am a better Superintendent because of him. I look forward to working with him to ensure we end the school year strong. I also look forward to partnering with the community to ensure a fair and transparent selection process for the permanent role of Waltham High School Principal.

Sincerely,
Drew Echelson