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Croton-Harmon Superintendent of Schools Announces Retirement



Croton-on-Hudson, NY, January 21, 2021 -- Dr. Deborah O'Connell, the Croton Union Free School District Superintendent of Schools and district administrator since 2011, has announced that she intends to retire, effective January 4, 2022. The Board of Education accepted her resignation for the purpose of retirement, with regret, at its meeting on December 3, 2020.

Dr. O'Connell was named superintendent by the Board of Education in July 2018, and before that, served the District for seven years as its Assistant Superintendent, responsible for K-12 curriculum, instruction, assessment and data initiatives, professional development, teacher observations and contract negotiations. She has been instrumental in developing the District's Strategic Coherence Plan, defining the Profile of a Graduate, and forming the Culture of Respect Task Force. She fostered a partnership with the Anti-Defamation League to implement the program, No Place for Hate, and created a Superintendent's Advisory Council to hear directly from students on issues facing our schools.

"Dr. O'Connell has been an incredible leader for our district, pulling us together and articulating a vision for a sophisticated and culturally-responsive education for students," said Board of Education President Sarah Carrier. "I know I speak for the Board when I say that we are grateful to Dr. O'Connell for her dedication to involving the community in important decisions and for setting up the district for continued success."

Under Dr. O'Connell's leadership, Croton-Harmon launched the Child Nutrition Program that now serves lunch and breakfast in our schools. As a proponent of active learning spaces the Croton-Harmon High School library was redesigned this year and she continues to support Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School's popular Innovation and Design Lab. Dr. O'Connell also assists the Board of Education, community members, staff and students with ongoing sustainability initiatives that have resulted in enhancements to curriculum, and programs to increase efficiency and reduce waste.

"As Isaac Newton once said, I simply 'stood on the shoulders of giants' in a learning community that works together to get ideas and initiatives off the ground and running," said Dr. O'Connell. "It would not be possible without the staff and Board of Education commitment to our mission and the embedded community involvement we have in Croton-Harmon."

A cornerstone of Dr. O'Connell's leadership style is to benefit from the expertise and experiences of the educational community. She feels we are always at our best when we empower everyone's voices. To face the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr. O'Connell formed and led a districtwide School Re-Entry Task Force that helped guide her administrative team.

"I'm so proud of how our students and staff displayed their creativity and resilience through some of the most trying circumstances," she said. "Being a purveyor of hope, I see nothing but the best in our people." Dr. O'Connell concludes each of her communications with the phrase, Yours in *Mission Possible*, a regular reminder of her belief that when people work together, great things can be achieved.

Dr. O'Connell concluded, "In 1985, when I first started my career, I knew my world would be forever changed. But I never imagined the depth of experiences Croton-Harmon would provide. The district will forever hold a very special place in my heart."