

Darien Superintendent of Schools Donald P. Fiftal has notified the Board of Education of his plans to retire from the district effective June 30, 2010. In responding to the Superintendent's announcement, Kimberly P. Westcott, Chairman of the Board of Education said, "Mr. Fiftal has been an excellent Superintendent and we all are disappointed that he has decided to retire, but we completely understand that this is the right decision for Don, which will allow him to relocate to spend more time with his family."

Mr. Fiftal, who has been employed by Darien for nine years, became Darien Superintendent of Schools on July 1, 2005, after having served first as Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools in Darien for four years. Immediately prior to his service in Darien, Mr. Fiftal worked for the New Milford Public Schools for 19 years, including as principal of their high school and for their middle school. Mr. Fiftal will conclude a career of 42 years as an educator in Connecticut.

According to a statement from the Board of Education, Mr. Fiftal's tenure as superintendent was marked by his abilities both as an instructional leader and system manager, as evidenced by the construction and opening of a new Tokeneke Elementary School, classroom technology implementation to enhance instruction and student learning, creation of Mandarin Chinese language curriculum, video production, and music technology curricula, along with enhancements to all the core curricula, a program of early intervention for elementary students who might require special services, and the strengthening of teacher supervision and mentoring programs. Additionally, Middlesex Middle School was named a "Blue Ribbon School" by the United States Department of Education for its high student achievement and Darien High School has been ranked consistently as one of the top high schools in Connecticut.

Ms. Westcott commented that "The improvements to education in Darien under Don Fiftal's leadership have been remarkable. He has always had the interests of the students and teachers as the focal point of his vision for the school district. He has earned the respect of staff, parents, our Board and the community for his ability to listen to different points of view and use that input to find the most appropriate solutions: with integrity, composure and a sense of humor."

The Board of Education also announced that it will begin a search for a new superintendent. Ms. Westcott said, "Don's are large shoes to fill, and the Board of Education intends to be patient and methodical in its search. We will solicit input from all the interested constituencies in town. We hope to make an appointment by the end of the school year, but if it takes longer to identify the right candidate, we are prepared to take what time we need."

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