

NEWS

'Looking forward to the learning curve': Drew Weymouth named new Worcester Tech High principal



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WORCESTER – Worcester Technical High School Principal Siobhan Petrella will hand off the reins to Drew Weymouth when she retires on June 30 after two years in the role.

"I'm really excited but also a little bit nervous," said Weymouth, now the director of Innovation Pathways at the school. "I am confident with my background. I'm confident in my skills but ... I haven't done this job before, so I am looking forward to the learning curve."

Weymouth previously worked as an assistant high school principal at both Worcester Tech and Wachusett Regional High School, experiences that Superintendent Maureen Binienda said helped land him the job.

"He has a lot of skills in that area and he was the best qualified for the job," she said. "He is the person that got the district's Innovative Pathway program up and running."

The Innovation Pathways program allows students to gain experience in an industry they are interested in through coursework and partnerships between schools and employers so that students can apply what they have learned to an internship.

Binienda also said he was chosen for his vision of how the school will continue to evolve.

"He wants to be able to expand opportunities for students to have engaging activities both in the vocational and in the academic area," Binienda said. "He wants to make sure that we have English-language learning students that apply and that there are increasingly English-language learners and special education students."

He also received praise from Petrella, who said she is working with Weymouth to ensure a smooth transition in leadership.

"He will keep the energy going and the passion for the students and the faculty, so I'm very excited about that," Petrella said. "He's very collaborative."

Weymouth said that one of the first tasks he plans to tackle on his first day is getting feedback from faculty "on things that are working well, things that are strong, and things that they would suggest need some attention."

He said that he'll use those suggestions to work with a team and prioritize and address the different items brought up during those feedback sessions.

He will also continue to try and improve communication and collaboration with parents to ensure that everyone is acting with the students' interests in mind, he said.

"The other aspect I wouldn't want to leave out is our relationship with the local industry because that's ultimately our purpose, that we are training students for careers," Weymouth said.

He said that providing a pipeline of workforce and opportunities for the students is essential.

While retirement may mark the end of Petrella's tenure at Worcester Tech, she said she will continue to be involved in education afterward by teaching vocals at Central Mass. Dance Academy.

"I gave up a law practice to go back into education when I had my family, so I'm going to go back and maybe dabble a little bit more in the law," she said. "I'm also going to continue to expand my teaching of vocals. That's my love - teaching vocals. It's a passion of mine."

She said that leaving Worcester Tech will be challenging since she loves "the students, I love my faculty, the people I work with," but that she is excited to get back into her passions.

Petrella drew praise from both Weymouth and Binienda for her leadership, particularly during the pandemic.

"They've won a lot of different awards while she was principal," Binienda said. "She's brought the faculty together, so it's one school, everybody working together for the same goal."

Weymouth said there could not have been a better person to lead him and the rest of the Worcester Tech staff through the pandemic.

"I think she's done a tremendous job, kind of guiding the faculty through those difficult years," he said. "She has extremely positive energy."

Petrella credits her staff with being the reason she was able to navigate the two tumultuous years.

"I have a fantastic team here, they're amazing," she said. "From not only my administration team but to the department heads to the teachers. The students are amazing, and they're resilient."

Petrella said she feels blessed for the opportunities she has had that the school department gave her.

"I love public education. I love the Worcester public schools, have loved every minute, even the tough parts ... and just feel very lucky," she said.