New staff welcomed to Gateway ‘family’

Huntington – Due to retirements and staff departures, a number of new staff members were welcomed to the Gateway family during the days leading up to the new school year.

Two new Assistant Principals were hired to replace their predecessors, who left to take positions in other districts. Deanna LeBlanc is the new Assistant Principal for the Middle and High Schools and Darlene Rehor is the new AP for the elementary schools.

LeBlanc comes to Gateway with a background in music education and administration, holding a Bachelor’s in Music Education from the University of Rhode Island; a Master’s in Education from Cambridge College, and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in School Administration from American International College. Before coming to Gateway, Deanna taught at an elementary school in Virginia for two years, taught band and chorus at Agawam Junior High School for eight years, was an Assistant Principal in Southern Berkshire Regional School District for two years, and served last year as the Principal of Pearl Rhodes Elementary School. “I am excited to work with middle and high school students, and to work with this enthusiastic staff,” LeBlanc said. “The Leadership Team and middle and high school staff have been so welcoming and positive.” She has three children and is also a musician (French horn player).

Darlene Rehor is the new Assistant Principal for Chester and Littleville Elementary Schools. Her primary office will be based at Chester. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Western State University of Colorado, a Master’s of Education degree from American International College, and an advanced certificate in administration from the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association. She comes to Gateway following ten years in Springfield Public Schools, and eleven years in Agawam Public Schools. “I’m looking forward to getting to know and working with the students, staff and families of both Littleville and Chester Elementary Schools,” Darlene said.

I am looking forward to working in a positive and supportive community with Gateway’s staff and students,” said Julie Blackmore, the new second grade teacher at Chester Elementary School. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree from Westfield State University in Elementary Education, with a concentration in reading. She is currently working toward her Master’s Degree to become a Reading Specialist. For the past two years, Julie worked in the Springfield school system as a classroom teacher.

Also at Chester Elementary School is April Prior, new special education teacher. Like her colleagues, April shared her excitement at being part of Gateway and working with a wonderful group of teachers. Prior has a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education from Butler University and Master’s Degree in Education from Southern Connecticut State University. Prior has 19 years of experience,
Another new teacher—although she began last spring—is Amy Mason, who will work district-wide with students who have visual impairments. Officially, her title is Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments/Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (TVI/COMS). She received her Bachelor of Arts from The Ohio State University, before receiving her M.Ed. in Special Education: Vision Studies from UMASS Boston. She also holds an ACVREP Certification in Orientation and Mobility. She has held this position at Ludlow Public Schools for the past 4 years, and was an itinerant TVI/COMS with Perkins School for the Blind for 7 years previously. Her professional interests include Braille literacy, accessible STEM, social skills and community travel skills. Mason says she is happy to work in a small, rural school district and is “excited about the opportunities that such a setting offers for students and teachers to work together and learn with and from one another.”

Alexandra Brearley is the new 7th Grade Social Studies teacher at Gateway Regional Middle School. She holds undergraduate (political science) and graduate (education) degrees from UMass Amherst. “I’ve had a wonderful first week at Gateway, and have loved the current 7th grade,” Brearley reports, adding that she is thrilled to be returning to Western Massachusetts (where she attended college) and getting to teach a new and exciting subject—Ancient Civilization. Her prior experience includes teaching 8th grade at Marblehead Veterans Middle School.

Chris Tamburrino was a regular face at Gateway through the summer, where he ran the high school’s summer program for students who receive year-round services as part of their special education program. Chris holds degrees from Syracuse University (BA), Rutgers (M.A.T.) and MCLA (M.Ed.). He arrives with 15 years’ experience teaching and working with students and adults who have developmental disabilities. Tamburrino says he looks forward to joining a wonderful district and a great special education department, as well as working with the students and families of Gateway. He will serve as an Educational Team Leader/Autism Specialist.

Also coming to Gateway from Ludlow—where she taught AP English and World Literature—is Taylor Simpson, who was hired as Gateway’s newest high school English teacher. Taylor’s college studies at Elms College focused on secondary education and English; she also holds an AP English Literature and Composition Certification. Simpson says she is looking forward to getting to know her students. “I’ve heard only remarkable and positive words expressed towards the Gateway community, and I look forward to being a part of that.”

Finally, Chad Warren will be a special education teacher at the high school. He comes to Gateway with a BA from Saint Anselm’s College and an M.Ed. from Salem State. For the past 13 years, Warren has lived in Madison, Wisconsin working at Verona Area High and Madison East High. Before moving to Wisconsin, he worked at Marblehead High School where he was head track coach. Warren said that he is excited to be back in Massachusetts and becoming part of the Gateway family.

Gateway is still hiring to fill several positions which opened in late August.

Please join us in welcoming our newest staff to the district!

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Photo: (back row, left to right): Chad Warren, para professional Mary Pappas, Alexandra Brearley, Darlene Rehor, Julie Blackmore and Chris Tamburrino. Front row: Taylor Simpson, Amy Mason, Deanna LeBlanc and April Prior—newest staff members in the Gateway Regional School District.