

Principal shuffle fills vacancy

Written by SARAH McCRAW
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New hire moved to middle-school position, familiar faces to return

The start of the new school year is a few weeks away, but administrators in the Grafton School District are already leading a lesson in cooperation in order to fill two principal positions.

District officials said they immediately started searching for a new John Long Middle School principal when Greg Kabara resigned in June to take a principal position at Nicolet High School in Glendale.

Superintendent Mel Lightner said they didn't have to look very far.

Michael Leach, who was originally hired as the principal of Kennedy Elementary School in June, was shifted to the middle school in July.

"We looked at our recent hiring and Leach had both elementary and middle school experience, but we were very excited about his middle school experience," Lightner said.

It was Leach's experience with the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) initiative at a middle school in Waukesha that was of particular interest to the district, Lightner said.

"We think (Leach's) experience with the STEM initiative brings a bigger emphasis to our schools," he said.

Two former principals will collaborate to fill the position at Kennedy Elementary School.

Karen Sieber, who had been the principal at Kennedy for four years, resigned at the end of last school year in order to spend more time with her young child.

Lightner said Sieber has returned as Kennedy's principal on a part-time basis.

"It meets her needs of continuing her professional career and gives her time to spend with her daughter," Lightner said.

Tom Engel, who had been principal from 2005 to 2007 at John Long Middle School before Kabara, is coming out of retirement to split the part-time position at the elementary school.

It would not have been as effective for the district, Lightner said, to rush through an interview process during the summer months to find qualified candidates, compared to utilizing the ones already available.

"We feel extraordinarily comfortable with this and we have our needs met as a district in order to continue," Lightner said. "We were able to put it together and have tremendous leadership at both buildings. "To me it is a win-win for all of our kids in both schools."

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