



# Board of Education

10 DeFOREST STREET  
WATERTOWN, CONNECTICUT 06795  
Telephone: (860) 945-4800  
FAX: (860) 945-2775



Dr. Rydell Harrison  
Superintendent of Schools  
860-945-4801

Dr. Janet Parlato  
Assistant Superintendent

TO: All Watertown Families

FROM: Dr. Rydell Harrison  
Superintendent of Schools

DATE: August 22, 2018

RE: Welcome to the start of the 2018-2019 school year!

---

It is a great pleasure to welcome both our returning families as well as those who are new to our district to a new school year. The start of the school year represents an opportunity for us to be reenergized by our students' sense of wonder and anticipation and, even after 20+ years in education, I still get excited about new students, new classes, new materials, new lessons, etc.!

Since beginning my tenure as Superintendent of Schools in April, I have been focused on listening, learning, and partnering. I *listened* to students, teachers, families, principals, staff, and community to hear about the significant accomplishments and greatest challenges in Watertown Public Schools through informal meetings. I *learned* by analyzing student achievement data, exploring our core curriculum and instructional approaches, reviewing existing district policies and implementation of reforms. I laid the foundation for strong *partnerships* with our Board of Education, all levels of WPS staff, and community members.

During this transition period I learned that one of our district's greatest assets is the dedicated staff who works diligently to develop innovative lessons that move students from passive receivers of information to active participants in their own discovery process. Our staff is not solely focused on academic growth and improvement, but they are committed to promoting the long-term social/emotional development and success of all children. I am excited about the new employees who are joining our team this year and grateful for the wisdom and experience of our veteran staff.

Over the last four months, I also learned that our students (PreK-12th grade) are capable of leading, passionate about serving their community, invested in the growth and improvement of their schools, and willing to take ownership of their learning. Our students recognize the importance of striving for excellence, and I have been honored to witness the fruits of their labor. From statewide athletic championships to national academic honors, our students have showed that they are acquiring the skills needed to be successful in college or the career of their choice. To ensure students continue to play a significant role in the growth of our schools, I have invited 24 high school students to serve on the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council (SSAC). As a SSAC member, students will share their voices on a variety of topics and work to create evidence-based solutions for specific issues that are important to students and the district during monthly and bi-monthly meetings.

As we journey into the 2018-2019 school year, I will be working closely with our students, teachers, families, principals, staff, and community to develop a long-term plan for our district that will guide our work for the next three to five years. I look forward to building deeper connections with our returning families and building strong partnerships with those who are new to Watertown Public Schools. Be sure to check our district website for announcements, scheduling information and frequent updates: [www.watertownps.org](http://www.watertownps.org). I also invite you to follow me on Twitter @RydellEdLeader for updates throughout the year.

It has been my pleasure serving as your Superintendent of Schools over the past four months, and I am looking forward to growing together as we head into the 2018-2019 school year. On behalf of the incredible team of educators and support staff who serve the children of the Watertown Public Schools, thank you for putting your faith in us to provide your children with a world-class education. We look forward to working with you throughout the year to ensure the success of all of our students.

Thank you for your continued support.