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Allan to wrap up 16-year tenure at Ardsley

By Kris DiLorenzo

Lauren Allan, superintendent of the Ardsley School District since 2010, has announced her retirement, effective June 30.

“I’m ready for Chapter Two,” Allan said, “looking for new challenges, new experiences.”

Allan, 59, has worked in public education for 37 years; she described it as “a calling.” She first came to the district in 2002 as assistant superintendent, after serving as principal of Irvington Middle School for three years. Prior to that, she was principal first at Kent Primary School in Carmel, and then at Carrie E. Tompkins Elementary School in Croton-on-Hudson.

Allan is an Ardsley native who, as Lauren Imbarrato, graduated from the high school in 1977. She earned a bachelor’s degree from SUNY Oswego, and her master’s and doctorate, both in educational leadership, are from Fordham University.

With her husband, Michael, a certified financial planner, she has lived in Briarcliff for 21 years.

During Allan’s tenure as superintendent, she has presided over significant changes in the school system, and credits her administrative team and the board of education for effecting those changes.

“It’s a very supportive board of education that works in collaboration with the administration, constantly working to reflect on and enhance our programs,” she said.

Allan listed many points of pride for the district, all of which can be summarized as opportunities: STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) expanded to all grades, the debut of the Cambridge Pre-University Global Perspective and Research program at the high school in 2010, and that school’s successful Science Research Program, which has produced winners and finalists in national and regional competitions.

Technology also flourished. “When I came, every classroom had just computers,” Allan recalled. “Now we have SMART boards, iPads, Chromebooks, and other technology that has opened doors and made the school more than just the four walls that surround us.”

The district also updated the mathematics program for all three schools. “From algebra through calculus, we’ve written our own curriculum,” Allan noted.

Liberal arts received attention, too. “We expanded the U.S. History course from one year to one and a half years, which allows time to go into current history,” she explained. “We also created a writing rubric for English language arts, to give students targeted feedback on their writing, and we’re constantly updating what



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Superintendent Lauren Allan

our kids are reading independently and in whole-group instruction time. We changed it to be more relevant to the times, balancing it with classic literature.”

Feedback has played an important part in the district’s decisions. When AHS graduates visiting from college talked about their first semester and reported that they needed to be better equipped to do research, the district wrote a research curriculum for kindergarten through 12th grades.

Allan emphasized that the district is now focusing on students’ social and emotional wellness. “We’re all concerned with the stress level kids are under these days. When you have young ones telling me, ‘I’m stressed out,’ we have to take a look at that and ease that for them.”

She enumerated some stressors: peer pressure, how many tests or quizzes a student takes in one day, whether to choose Advanced Placement or non-AP courses, and the college admissions process.

A projected survey will give children the chance to identify stressors that the district can address.

Allan also is pleased with the district’s nonacademic achievements: approving every school budget, and achieving the goals established in its strategic plan despite the district’s growing school population, a state-mandated tax levy cap, and various state mandates on education. The six-member school board is now embarking on its next strategic plan, as well as its search for a new superintendent, whom the board hopes to have appointed by May.

At its meeting this Tuesday, Feb. 6, which is open to the public, the board will

present information on the search committee’s activities and timeline. The district will partner with a consulting organization specializing in superintendent searches, and seek input from many stakeholders, including through a community survey. The community also can keep abreast of the search process via e-mail blasts and information to be posted on the district website, www.ardsleyschools.org.

School board president Matthew Bonney had high praise for Allan. “As for Dr. Allan’s accomplishments in 15 years, it is hard to list them all... Under Dr. Allan’s leadership we believe our curriculum today is more rigorous, broader and deeper... and that the district’s use of technology is also cutting edge. Personally, I think she has left Ardsley in a great place, and she leaves some big shoes to fill.”

Asked what she would like to be remembered for in the district, Allan replied, “Being an educational leader whose focus was always on teaching and learning.”

In that spirit, Allan hopes to go on to do some consulting, and possibly teach at the college level.

What she’ll miss most about her time in Ardsley, she said, is “working collaboratively with faculty to reflect on programs and instruction, and make changes that best meet the needs of our learners. I’ve loved every minute of my work here; the past 15 years has been the highlight of my career. I leave with pride and mixed emotions.”

One thing she won’t miss: “Those 4 a.m. snow calls, like on Wednesday morning — do we need to delay opening, close the schools, or keep them open?”