



December 20, 2023

Dear HJt1 Families and Team Members,

I hope this message finds each of you in good spirits. I am writing today to share some important updates regarding leadership changes within our school community.

Mr. Joe Viste, who has been serving as the CMS Principal for nearly a decade, has been offered an opportunity that aligns with his career aspirations, and affords him the opportunity to return to his educational roots in Milwaukee. While we are sad to bid farewell to Mr. Viste, we are excited for him as he embarks on this new chapter in his professional journey. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes, and honor Mr. Viste's contributions to our school.

We strive to ensure the best possible environment for our students, therefore we have assessed our remaining leadership structure to support this goal. It is with great enthusiasm that we announce Dr. Lori Rugotska's transition into the role of Central Middle School Principal. As a former principal, we are confident in Dr. Rugotska's abilities and leadership qualities to guide our school forward during this time of transition. Dr. Rugotska brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to our school community, having served as the Director of Educator Effectiveness, Professional Development, and 4K in the School District of Hartford Jt. 1 for the last 5½ years. Her tenure has been marked by the implementation of mathematics curriculum, analysis of data that has helped drive change, and layers of coaching for new and veteran teachers, showcasing her dedication to educational excellence. Moreover, her commitment extends beyond our district as she has actively contributed to the active collaboration among the Hartford Area Schools. Licensed as a School Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Principal, and Teacher, Dr. Rugotska has a wealth of knowledge, the skill set, and the drive to support the ongoing projects and needs at Central Middle School. She has shown dedication beyond our district having begun her administrative career, serving as a Summer School Principal, Associate Principal, and Student Assessment Specialist at both the elementary and middle levels in both the Milwaukee and Madison areas. She has also been published in WASC and AASA and has presented at several conferences including the Wisconsin Data Summit, WASC Annual Conference, Green Lake Mathematics Conference, and QE. Dr. Rugotska was also a member of the Wisconsin AMTE Leadership Team for approximately four years. We are excited to welcome her expertise and passion to Central Middle School.

Due to her familiarity with our district, she already possesses strong relationships and will be able to collaborate closely with the existing leadership team to ensure a smooth transition and the continuation of our school's standards of education and care. As she assumes her new role, Dr. Rugotska will retain some current job responsibilities while transitioning others to appropriate team members.

During this transition, both Mr. Viste and Dr. Rugotska will receive continued support to ensure a seamless handover. We encourage our school families and team members to extend a hearty congratulations to Mr. Viste on his new position, and warmly welcome Dr. Rugotska as she steps into this new role on January 2, 2024. Your support and engagement are vital as we work together to maintain the exceptional educational experience we strive to offer our students.

We understand that transitions can bring about questions or concerns, and assure you that this decision was made with the best interests of our students, staff, and families in mind. We appreciate your continued trust and support as we navigate this change in leadership together. Our focus remains unwaveringly on providing the best possible educational experience for our students. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or require further details.

Yours in Education,
Tara Villalobos, PhD
District Administrator