

CHS higher-up moving to ASFMS

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COVENTRY — After spending the last seven years in the thick of high school reform, Assistant Principal of Guidance and Student Services, Dr. Arthur W. Lisi will be tackling education reform as a middle school principal.

As soon as his position can be filled at Coventry High School, Lisi will transfer to Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry as an assistant principal, as approved by the school committee on Tuesday night.

Middle School Principal Dr. Michael Almeida says he considers this a great gain, but High School Principal Michael Hobin says he is not sure what he will do without Lisi on board.

Lisi is excited for a new challenge, he said in an interview on Friday morning, but leaving the high school will be bittersweet.

"This job is fun because you juggle so many things at the same time," he said, seated in his guidance office at the high school.

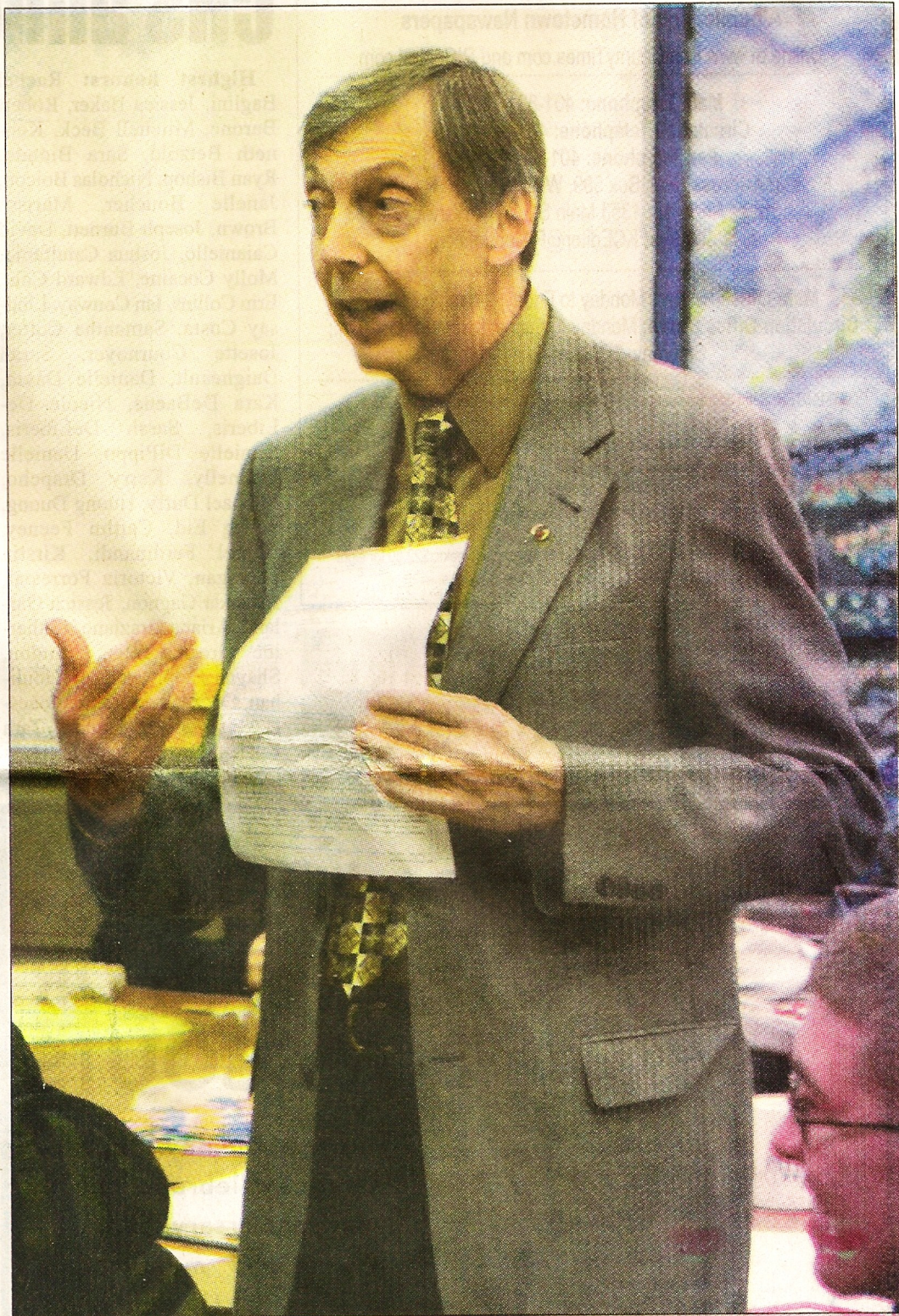
Over the past few years, Lisi has been instrumental in developing Coventry's performance-based graduation requirements, he has watched the teaching and administrative staff adapt to many new requirements and he has worked hard to provide all students with various pathways towards graduation — according to their individual needs.

"It's always about the students," is his motto, Lisi said, pointing to a piece of paper with the words printed on it. "If you're not careful education can become very adult-driven."

One of the ways he strives to keep education about the students is by giving them a variety of choices in how they graduate. Some of this is rearranging schedules so they all have the same opportunities. Some of it is offering diverse classes that will engage students with different learning styles.

Lisi coordinates most of the scheduling at the high school, Hobin said, and knows the new high school reform inside out.

"He's a huge loss in terms of performance-based education requirements," Hobin said. "But this is a great opportunity for him to go and help the middle school with their reform. I think we have a great administration [at the high school] and it's tough to have him leave. I don't know how we'll train a new employee to do what he does; he's here at 6:30 a.m. and doesn't leave until 7 p.m. What more could you ask of an employee?"



Hannah Piecuch • Daily Times

Coventry High School's Assistant Principal of Guidance and Student Services Dr. Arthur W. Lisi talks to an advisory class on Friday about registering for their classes for fall 2010. Dr. Lisi will become assistant principal of Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry as soon as his position at the high school is filled.

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Lisi making move to middle school

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For these same reasons, Almeida is looking forward to working with Lisi, he said.

"He will be an asset to the middle school," Almeida said. "He's extremely knowledgeable and confident in much of our work currently and our work in the future — specifically in regards to our graduation requirements, at the middle school and high school and also specifically in the guidance counseling department and the work that has to happen within that department. He is also very skilled in scheduling and he is an expert in the use of our student information system. He truly is coming to us with open arms. We're excited about the opportunity for him to join the administrative team and the entire faculty."

Personally, Almeida is very excited as he looks forward to working with Lisi and learning from him on a daily basis, he said.

The middle school position opened up when Assistant Principal Kathy Miner left. At the end of the year, Assistant Principal Augusto Gomes is retiring, Almeida said. Having Lisi come on board midway through the school year will help as the middle school administration goes through this transition.

Although he has a lot of education experience behind him, Lisi did not begin his career in this field, he said.

In the 1980s he worked in politics. It wasn't until 1989 that he started teaching, Lisi said. When his children reached school age and he began to help them with their work, he started to become interested in teaching. In 1989 he started as an elementary school teacher at Blackrock Elementary School, taught there for six years, and then moved to the guidance department at the middle school for nine years. Along the way he earned his doctorate in education from the joint Rhode Island College and University of Rhode Island program.

A return to the middle school is a return to Lisi's

roots, observed Superintendent Kenneth DiPietro, who initially suggested that Lisi take the middle school position.

When Miner left the middle school, Lisi was not one of the applicants to fill her position, DiPietro said. But bringing someone from inside the district in to fill the position seemed better than training someone new halfway through the year.

There were some very good candidates who applied for the position, DiPietro added, and they will have a chance to apply for Lisi's high school position as well as Gomes's middle school position.

The major reason that Lisi is a good fit for the middle school is his understanding of the new graduation requirements, Almeida said.

"I advocated for Arthur [Lisi] to come to the middle school because much of the work involves transitioning kids from grade 8 to grade 9. Dr. Lisi will be able to see it both from the high school end and the middle school end. I really believe he's going to be the key so that our ability to articulate and communicate between the middle school and the high school is going to be much tighter, much clearer, and certainly meet students' needs."

"We do a lot of great things right now between the middle school and the high school now, but having Dr. Lisi on board in regards to how we really make this strategic process understood by all and clearly documented is a great opportunity. I don't think I could have found a better candidate."

For his own part, Lisi knows that he will miss the administrative team at the high school, he said. "But this is a phenomenal opportunity and I am very excited about working with a staff that I know is great, dedicated and hardworking."

At present, Lisi's position has not been filled at the high school and Hobin hopes he'll be able to keep Lisi through July. Almeida, on the other hand, can't wait to have his help at the middle school.