

# Tiogue School's 'captain' leaving

## Richtarik retiring after 33 years

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COVENTRY — She joined the Tiogue School team in 1977 as a school resource teacher. In the late 90s she was asked to serve as the school principal and now she is leaving as an icon.

Denise Richtarik, the principal at Tiogue School, will be retiring at the close of this school year after nearly 35 years of service in the district.

Richtarik said she had originally planned to retire at the end of last year, but committed to staying on an additional year to aid her team in the transition

as the majority of her school's students were transitioned from Tiogue to Washington Oak School and an entirely new population of students and parents were brought in to her school in the redistricting that occurred at the start of this school year.

Richtarik said she knew this would be a very difficult time and didn't want to walk away from her kids, her teaching staff or her building until the process had been adjusted.

"Everyone deserves the opportunity to feel as though they can learn and grow in an environment where they feel safe and nurtured and I wasn't going to walk away not knowing that that had happened here yet," she said.

Now that the initial adjustment period has past, Richtarik said she is confident the school will continue to thrive without her serving as "captain of the ship."

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Denise Richtarik  
Tiogue School principal



Jessica Selby • Daily Times

**Denise Richtarik, principal at Tiogue School in Coventry, will end her 33-year career at the school at the conclusion of this school year.**

# Principal retiring at year's end

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In fact, Richtarik said, she is so confident in her faculty that she knows that parents and students will also now adjust just fine to the news of her retiring.

Richtarik said it is her method of leadership that she feels contributed to the schools ability to adapt so smoothly to the transition.

"I may be captain of this ship, but I do not do it alone," Richtarik said. "We have committees in this building that take leadership roles and I personally feel that you have to empower your staff and believe in them and in their ability to do what they do in order to have a successful team.

"I feel that you have to get your parents involved and you have to set high standards for your students and believe in them and that," she said, "takes work, but it is worth it because look at this building now. I am leaving here this year fully confident in the way it will operate when I am not here anymore."

Richtarik said she will be leaving a book "full of here is how we do this and do that," just in case, but is also confident in the district's choice of a replacement.

Richtarik said the selection committee chose Louise Boyce, the current principal at Exeter-West Greenwich Metcalf School to take her place.

"I think the district did a great job of selecting someone that also shares in my belief in shared leadership," she said. "I know Louise and I know she will be a great fit here."

Richtarik said although she is leaving the school confident in its new leadership, there are many things about her role as principal that she will miss.

"I never wanted to be principal, it just sort of happened, but I am so happy that it did," she said. "I have loved every single day of my work,

it has brought me such joy, and never at any point in my time here did I ever, ever feel like I didn't want to come to work.

"I am a firm believer in the fact that the small things make the biggest impacts — that is why I go outside every morning and greet the kids and say good morning to them and their parents," she said. "I read to the kindergarten every day, the camaraderie I have with my peers — the list could go on forever because there are tons of things and people that I am going to miss, but I have made a list of things that I want to do.

"I still love the job, it is what I do, but this is the right time for me," Richtarik said. "I've decided it is the right time."

Richtarik said she plans to dedicate more of her time to doing some leisure things she enjoys and perhaps delving into some new discoveries. She said she sings in her church choir and wants to try devoting some more time to that, and that she has always wanted to become a master gardener. She said she also plans to give some of her time to the Dana Center to help with education of youth there.

The entire school population came together last month and surprised Richtarik with a special retirement celebration. They had students write short essays, poems or cards about their school principal and hung them all over the school so that she could read them.

They filled the foyer with balloons so that when she arrived at school she would be greeted with a giant farewell.

Richtarik said "it was completely unexpected" and that she found herself at a loss for words.

It was a little overwhelming and I couldn't help it and I burst into tears," she said. "We look at each other like family here and I am going to miss every single person here like I would miss a member of my family."