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Watertown Board of Education Press Release for Immediate Release
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Contact: Leslie Crotty, Chair

WATERTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION APPOINTS DR. ALISON VILLANUEVA AS NEW SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Watertown, CT: At a special meeting on December 21, 2020, the Watertown Board of Education appointed **Dr. Alison Villanueva** its new Superintendent of Schools effective January 25th, 2021. Dr. Villanueva most recently served in a central office level position as the District K-12 Humanities Supervisor in Ridgefield, CT where she was also nominated for the AASA Women in Leadership award in a central office role this year by faculty.

Dr. Villanueva's professional career brings a variety of educational perspectives to the Watertown community. She began her career as a Music teacher and also served as a high school Humanities teacher, then an elementary teacher and acting principal, all in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. After moving to New York City, Dr. Villanueva worked in New York City schools as a literacy specialist and coach. For five years beginning in 2010, she became co-director of Studies in Educational Innovation at Columbia University, Teachers College, a world-renowned center dedicated to building K-12/ University partnerships with educational systems around the globe. Dr. Villanueva began her Connecticut work as a Principal in Danbury and Ridgefield Public Schools before taking on her current role. She is also an adjunct professor in the department of Educational Leadership at Sacred Heart University, where she specializes in advanced curriculum and educational law and finance.

Dr. Villanueva is dedicated to educational excellence for all children. She was drawn to Watertown Public Schools' clearly articulated Vision of a Graduate which she said, "[she] can confidently stand behind and advocate for all children". Becoming a member of the Watertown community is very important to Dr. Villanueva. She said, "one of the most important things I am looking forward to is collaborating with the administrative team and local town constituents to listen and learn more about the Watertown community. Understanding the local 'way' of Watertown and learning about its history will be essential as I onboard".

Watertown Board of Education Chair Leslie Crotty said, "The Watertown Board of Education took very seriously its responsibility to find the best possible candidate to lead our schools. We conducted an extensive search and were pleased to have attracted a great pool of candidates with strong experience and credentials. Dr. Villanueva rose to the top of the group, demonstrating a thorough understanding of educational excellence, communicating a collaborative, open, and relational leadership style, and relaying an impressive understanding of Watertown, our Vision of a Graduate and District Improvement plan. We believe Dr. Villanueva is the best candidate to help us move successfully through current pandemic challenges and help us to realize our district vision." Board Vice Chair Janelle Wilk noted Dr. Villanueva's desire to be in a school district located in close proximity to her family and friends and that "she had a specific goal to be in an intimately sized school district known for its tight knit community and hardworking administrative and faculty team".

Dr. Villanueva received her Honors Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from York University in Toronto. She earned her first Master of Arts in Literacy Education from New York University, and then a Master of Philosophy from Columbia University. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy in English Education from Teachers College, Columbia University as well.

Dr. Villanueva told the Watertown Search Committee, "The opportunity to lead Watertown Public Schools is not only an honor and privilege, but where I aim to become part of the community for many years to come. Although we continue to be faced with strict social distancing parameters and varying learning models, where interacting with one another looks very different, I will devote this time to get to know the heart of Watertown Public Schools. The heart being the people who make this district beat. I look forward to serving the community of Watertown, CT as we continue to forge forward no matter what is thrown our way."

The Watertown Board was guided in its search by Mary Broderick, a consultant with CABA Search Services. She gathered perspectives from many stakeholders before writing the Leadership Profile which guided the Board in its search for a new leader.