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DEERFIELD REVIEW

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Lane Tech principal chosen to head Deerfield High

By STEVE SADIN

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Christopher Dignam, who has been principal of Lane Tech for the last three years, is resigning June 30 to become principal of Deerfield High School. (HANDOUT)

When Christopher Dignam needed a yardstick to measure the school he led the last three years, he made Deerfield High School his standard — and he will now be its new principal.

Dignam was selected to become Deerfield's principal effective July 1 by the District 113 Board of Education during a special meeting of the board at Highland Park High School Feb. 18.

While serving as principal at Chicago's Lane Tech College Prep High School for the last three years, Dignam said he was constantly aware of Deerfield's reputation as one of the state's top institutions.

"As I looked at academic performance and extracurricular activities Deerfield is the school I measured Lane Tech against and I looked at this as the place to be," Dignam said. "The culture at Deerfield High School and the 113 community are a wonderful place to be."

As the principal of the selective enrollment school in Chicago, Dignam will be bringing something else to Deerfield. He will transport the know-how he developed at a specialized institution to help all of his new students with their future.

Two years ago, Deerfield was ranked the state's top general enrollment public high school by U.S. News & World Report, slipping to number two last year. Rated higher overall were several selective enrollment schools from Chicago, though not Lane Tech.

Dignam believes utilizing guidance counselors and other resources around the school will improve the students' ability to gain admission to the best possible colleges.

"We want the guidance counselors to meet representatives of the colleges," Dignam said. "We want college matching and college choice. Are you offering what the top tier schools want? If it's different we want to know that."

Dignam will replace Audris Griffith, who is retiring June 30 after spending the last six years leading the school. He plans to take advantage of the time she has left to get to know her and learn from her experience.

"I'm going to communicate with her the next four months so when I come in to the school I will be able to build on what she has done," Dignam said. "She has given the school a healthy culture in all areas."

Before taking the reins at Lane Tech, Dignam spent the previous five years as the school's assistant principal. He was also a science coach for the Chicago Board of Education and a biology teacher at both Lane and Chicago's Prosser Career Academy.

During his time at Lane, one of Chicago Public Schools' premier institutions, Dignam he oversaw installation of a computer science 3D markers lab, a robotics lab and an aerospace and design engineering lab.

He also doubled the size of the art department, put a recording studio in the music area, added Chinese, Japanese and Arabic to bring the number of languages taught to eight and established a student advisory board. Lane Tech leads the state and nation in advanced placement offerings. Despite his accomplishments at Lane Tech, Dignam's first order of business at Deerfield will be turning into a student again.

"I plan to listen and get to know the community," Dignam said. "I want to get to know the culture, meet with students and do a lot of listening."

Board President Marjie Sandlow expressed confidence in Dignam and believes he has the credentials to continue effective leadership at Deerfield.



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