



RPS NEWS

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RPS Names New Director of Education Technology



Superintendent of Schools Dr. Susie Da Silva announced that Dr. Wes DeSantis will be the new Director of Education Technology. Dr. DeSantis will be a familiar name to many RPS families as he is the current K-12 STEM Supervisor and before that a beloved Ridgefield High School physics teacher, coach of the electric car race team, and founding director of the annual cardboard boat race.

Of the hire, Superintendent Da Silva said, “We know he is up to the challenge. He was an important asset of our technology leadership before COVID struck and has been invaluable since March.” DeSantis has sat on the RPS Technology Committee for years and worked tirelessly this summer to secure and implement some of the technologies that have been critical to being able to reopen schools, including cameras for all the teachers, which had noise-canceling capabilities so students could hear teachers even when the heat or air conditioning was on. Visit [Dr. DeSantis's website](#) to see the many ways that he engaged to make technology accessible to students and departments.

“I know the power of technology in today’s classroom,” said DeSantis. “I also know the drawbacks. It’s so important that we stay up-to-date, flexible, and informed as we harness these amazing resources to support teachers, families, and learning. Technology needs to be considered a teaching tool, not a panacea or replacement.”

Dr. DeSantis’s voice will be recognizable to anyone who has heard the District’s entertaining, weekly [Tiger Talk podcasts](#). As founder and host, “Dr. Dee-Santis” has interviewed many building leaders from RHS athletic director Dane Street to the team responsible for COVID response to elementary principals and most recently, the RPS music staff. While the podcasts highlight different aspects of RPS, they also reveal DeSantis’s thoughtful approach to technology, respect for colleagues and students, and passion for education. He nurtures fun and engagement on-air and in person.

DeSantis is an adjunct professor at Western Connecticut State University and recently completed peer-reviewed research involving the use of Virtual Reality Simulations in the training of new teachers. He will begin his new role as Director of Technology on January 1, 2021.

Calendar

December 14

BOE Meeting

[BOE website for information](#)

[Full RPS Calendar](#)

December 21-23

Remote Learning Days

December 23

Early Dismissal

December 24-January 1

Winter Recess

January 4

Classes Resume

True Justice at SRMS

K-12 Humanities Supervisor Dr. Alison Villanueva commended the Scotts Ridge Middle School Grade 8 social studies team for their creative use of the new HBO documentary, *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality*. The documentary tells the story of Alabama public interest attorney Bryan Stevenson (photo right) and his struggle to create a fairer and more equitable justice system.

"The documentary has been a compelling addition to our Constitution unit," said SRMS social studies teacher Thomas Broderick. "It brings together all that we



have been studying about the Constitution because the film asks how does the Bill of Rights work in real life and how did the Founding Fathers' choice to preserve slavery influence justice today." Students have been studying the history of the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution since early November.

A Ridgefield Public School parent made *True Justice* available to the Humanities program. "Our Social Studies program is rooted in dissecting as many perspectives as possible," explained Dr. Villanueva. "We push our students to consider different points of view. The film complemented the Constitution unit and opened up discussions for students to share varying opinions and responses."

BMES Draws Line in the Salt



Barlow Mountain Elementary pre-schoolers practiced their letters and got in the holiday spirit by using a branch to write letters in salt.

Employment Opportunities

Ridgefield Public Schools is hiring. Please visit [the RPS website](#) to find district openings.

More RHS All-State Athletes

Congratulations to RHS students Faith A. and Charlotte K. for their selections to the 2020 Class LL All-State Girls' Soccer Team! Charlie K. (photo below signing Letter of Intent to continue XC and track at the University of Pennsylvania), Charles (Chuckie) N., Liam C., Katherine (Katie) R., and Georgia K. are [CHSCA](#) All-State Cross Country selections.



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