

Gismervik joins school district as director of special ed

By Patricia Robert

Jean Gismervik, a fourth-generation educator, is the newly appointed director of special education for the Dobbs Ferry School District (DFSD), effective Monday, July 1.

She replaces Erin Vredenburg, who held the position for seven years. Vredenburg is now the special education director for the Rye City School District.

"We are excited that Jean Gismervik will be joining us to lead our special education program in Dobbs Ferry," Schools Superintendent Lisa Brady said. "Her colleagues from Hendrick Hudson and those she has worked with throughout the region over the years speak so highly of her in every regard.

"Jean shares our inclusive philosophy and has the energy, enthusiasm, and passion to build on the excellent services currently being provided for students with disabilities," Brady added.

Prior to taking the position with the DFSD, Gismervik was the assistant director of pupil personnel services for the Hendrick Hudson School District in Montrose for four years. From 2007 to 2015, she worked at Bronx Theatre High School where she had multiple responsibilities, including that of assistant principal serving as ESL and special education supervisor.

Gismervik, who grew up on Long Island, graduated from Villanova University in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in English and philosophy. She earned a master's degree in special education and elementary education from Fordham University in 2006 and a master's degree in educational administration from Baruch College of the City University of New York in 2007.

Gismervik, 38, resides in Eastchester with her husband, Greg White, who works in finance, and their two daughters, ages 3 and 6. She follows in the footsteps of her mother, Maureen, who is a retired special education teacher.

"I was born into the role, but I took a detour first and worked in film and journalism," Gismervik said. "In 2003, I decided that wasn't for me and I applied to be a New York City teaching fellow. This is a program that allows you to teach and get your M.A. [master's degree] at the same time. They place you in 'high-needs areas' or schools that might be difficult to staff."

Gismervik was placed in a middle school in the Bronx where she taught math and science to a sixth-grade special education class.

"I absolutely fell in love with my students, many of whom were neuro-diverse and had a different way or style of learning," she said. "I help students learn what makes them unique, how to overcome obstacles, and to feel empowered in the way they learn and engage with the world. They all have something to offer — something to bring to the table."

Gismervik was drawn to the DFSD by its reputation, and her interviews with the administrative staff and faculty confirmed her positive feelings.

"I had always heard that the DFSD was very innovative, but also very supportive and inclusive," she said. "I could see how value driven their mission is, and that really resounded with me.

"This was something I felt a need to be a part of — all the values I have about the way we support our children's learning was reflected in the DFSD," Gismervik concluded.



Jean Gismervik

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