

NEWS FROM THE WEEHAWKEN TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Weehawken School Board Appoints New Superintendent

WEEHAWKEN, N.J., Aug. 1, 2019—The Weehawken Township Board of Education is excited to announce its appointment of a new superintendent to lead the Weehawken Township School District. The school board signed a three-year contract with Eric Crespo, 39, who has been an assistant superintendent of academic services and special programs at the Paterson Public Schools for the last three years. Mr. Crespo's appointment officially took place at a special board meeting on Wednesday, July 31.

Mr. Crespo, who was born in the Bronx, was raised in North Bergen, where he learned Spanish from his grandmother, and attended mostly private schools. "It will be nice to be back in Hudson County," he says.

After earning his Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Seton Hall University, Mr. Crespo got his start in education as a high school teacher of social studies and Advanced Placement (AP) psychology, and taught in two New Jersey school districts. "One of my main goals as I transitioned to administration was to make sure I never forgot I was a teacher," Mr. Crespo says. As an assistant superintendent in Paterson, he worked closely with the teachers' union there to create academic services and special programs. "I always have my teaching hat on, and remember what a teacher goes through," he says. "And I am in the classrooms a lot."

Mr. Crespo earned a Masters of Arts in education administration and supervision from St. Peter's University. His doctoral dissertation is on the effectiveness of professional

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development in schools. He expects to receive his doctoral degree in K-12 education leadership from St. Peter's in the spring of 2020. Currently, Mr. Crespo lives in Paramus with his wife, a physical education teacher in a local school district, and their four daughters, ages four to 12. "I'm not planning on using this district as a stepping stone," he says. "I want to lead this district for a very long time." A big part of that leadership, Mr. Crespo says, is to help students fulfill their aspirations. "In many respects, I think of my position as superintendent as being a dream-fulfiller: Whatever a student wants to become in the long run, I want to help set the groundwork to make that happen."

"We are thrilled to get someone of Mr. Crespo's caliber to lead our district," Weehawken Township School Board President Richard Barsa says. "He has proven from the innovations that he brought to Paterson that he can build on the successes of our district." Indeed, Mr. Crespo says that he wants to build on his predecessors' successes. "I don't want to throw out what has been accomplished, but continue and enhance on the great standards that have been set."

Some of the innovations Mr. Crespo launched in the Paterson district are the [International Baccalaureate](#); [dual enrollment](#); and [Seal of Biliteracy](#) diploma programs. The biliteracy program recognizes students who have attained proficiency in at least two languages. The dual enrollment program allows a student to be enrolled in high school and a college at the same time. The credits apply both to high school diploma requirements and college graduation requisites. "I can't tell you how passionate I am about dual enrollment," he says.

One of Mr. Crespo's accomplishments in the Paterson school system was amping up continuing education for teachers. He sent 20 teachers for AP training. When those teachers told him that incoming AP students needed to be better-prepared, Mr. Crespo decided that in the future, the lower-grade teachers should receive AP training as well. As a result, 20 lower-grade teachers will be receiving AP training next year. "I'm a big believer in professional development," Crespo said. "It's a passion of mine."

Mr. Crespo has experience involving parents, staff and community members in much of his decision-making. As assistant superintendent in Paterson, though administrators made their top three choices of textbooks and digital teaching materials for a reading

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program, Mr. Crespo made sure a committee of parents, staff and community members made the final selection.

“In my last position, any time we had specific issues, we created committees of teachers, parents, and even grandparents to gain their perspective,” Mr. Crespo says. “It’s not what I want: It’s not always what aligns with my ideologies. It’s what the community wants.”



Caption: Eric Crespo has taken the helm of the Weehawken School District. He sees his role as that of “dream-fulfiller,” in that he can help lay the groundwork for students to achieve their life goals.

Photo Credit: Gabrielle Jonas, Weehawken Township

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