

LOWENGARD A VETERAN URBAN EDUCATOR

JUSTIN MURPHY

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The next leader of the Rochester School District has four decades of experience in urban education in New York, including stints as superintendent in Syracuse and Utica.

Dan Lowengard began as a teacher in Syracuse in 1972 and worked his way up to the top job, staying there more than five years before retiring in 2011. He was announced Tuesday as the interim superintendent in Rochester beginning Jan. 1, when Bolgen Vargas' resignation takes effect.

"I'm old, so I'm not doing this a long time," the 65-year-old said. "But I do have passion, and I believe we can do better."

His salary was not finalized Tuesday but will be no less than a pro-rated amount of \$175,000 a year, plus a housing allowance, school board President Van White said. Lowengard will not receive health benefits.

In Syracuse, he was best known for bringing in Say Yes to Education, a national program that provides free college tuition to urban high school graduates who meet certain standards. It has sent many Syracuse teenagers to Syracuse University free of charge.

He also had a famously fractious relationship with Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner, butting heads over a joint school construction program similar to the one now underway in Rochester.

Lowengard also spent eight years as superintendent of the Utica Central School District. Since his retirement, he has worked as an outside education

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Urban

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al expert reporting on schools — including in Rochester — on behalf of the New York State Education Department.

"We wanted someone who was experienced and also familiar with our community, and Daniel is that person," White said. "We could not have done any better."

Jennifer Pyle, the deputy director for the Conference of Big Five School Districts, called him "an outstanding advocate for urban education."

"The Rochester City School District will be well served by his stewardship during the transition period," she said.

Vargas will report to Lowengard from January to June in his new role as a consultant. Lowengard said that will be particularly useful during budget preparation.

"(Superintendents) are only as good as the people working in the district (and if they) agree with the direction they're going," he said. "I hope to bring that in the transition to someone who will be next leader and will lead for five or six years, because the continuity in leadership is key to moving the district forward."

It is too early to say how long the search for a permanent candidate will take; White said there is no short or long list of candidates yet.

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Bolgen Vargas shares a hug with supporters after he announced he is resigning as Rochester School District superintendent at the end of December.

JAMIE GERMANO/@JGERMANO1/ STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

“... I do have passion, and I believe we can do better.”

DAN LOWENGARD

TO BECOME INTERIM ROCHESTER SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT



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