

Superintendent to start work at School for the Deaf

New school chief's installation was delayed for months

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It took about eight months longer than expected, but the Rochester School for the Deaf has its new superintendent.

The school announced last August that Antony McLetchie had been chosen as its seventh leader in its 139-year history. Delays with immigration authorities (McLetchie is Canadian) and the New York State Education Department, however, pushed his first day at work until Monday.

"It was a long, long process, but good things are worth waiting for," board of directors President Michael Doughty said.

McLetchie, 45, served previously as secondary school principal of the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton, Ontario, Canada. He has degrees from Gallaudet University and Western Maryland College and has been teaching deaf children for 20 years in the United States and Canada, according to the school.

It is a time of leadership transition at schools for the deaf and hard of hearing across the country. McLetchie said there were 13 open leadership positions across the country last spring, but that Rochester was the only one he applied for.

That is partly because his family lives in Ontario and partly because he was drawn to Rochester's large deaf population and its reputation for accessibility. McLetchie, like his predecessor Harold Mowl, is deaf.

"It's my goal, first and foremost, to help every student who enters this school ... and to ensure we maintain RSD's reputation as the best school for the deaf and the hard of hearing in this area," he said.

McLetchie's delay in arriving allowed Mowl to stay for a 25th year, making him the second longest-tenured leader in the school's history.

Of its six superintendents before McLetchie, four served more than 20 years and only one served fewer than 10. Only founding superintendent Zenas Freeman Westervelt, who was in charge from 1876 to 1918, stayed longer than Mowl.

"It's just been a really nice place to work, and the deaf community has been great," Mowl said. "People always say Rochester is a great place for a family to live. I think that explains my longevity and others' as well."

McLetchie said his top priorities are to boost enrollment, which is a problem at deaf schools across the country, and to raise academic performance by students, in part through better professional development for teachers.

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Antony McLetchie

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