

## Lowengard steps down as leader of RCSD

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#### Recuperating after stroke suffered on 4th day of work

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Daniel Lowengard is stepping down as interim superintendent of the Rochester City School District to recuperate from a stroke he had last week, the district announced Friday, a blow to a system in search of stability after the departure of Bolgen Vargas.

Linda Cimusz, whom Lowengard hired as chief of staff in one of his few official acts, will replace him as the district's interim leader and its third leader in as many weeks.

Lowengard, a former superintendent in Syracuse and Utica, began work Monday, Jan. 4, outlining a vigorous agenda ahead of the district's budget season, pledging to improve teacher collaboration and calling for a more joyful experience in the classroom.

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On Jan. 7, his fourth day of work, he attended a Rochester Teachers Association event in the evening. While speaking, he collapsed and was taken to Strong Memorial Hospital. He remained there a week later in satisfactory condition.

He revealed Friday that he'd had a stroke and is unable to continue in his new job. He will return to the Syracuse area to recuperate; the district said his prognosis for a full recovery is "very promising."

Cimuszlike Lowengard, is a veteran administrator with no interest in a long-term appointment.

Most recently, she spent one year as the chief academic officer of Buffalo Public Schools. Before that, she worked with Lowengard in the Syracuse City School District from 1972 to 1992 and also as Texas' deputy education commissioner.

"Like Dan Lowengard, Linda Cimusz is an experienced educational leader with an outside perspective who will help to advance our district's progress and support the transition to new longterm leadership," school board President Van White wrote in a letter to staff Friday afternoon.

Cimusz said she intends to follow through on the vision that Lowengard laid out.

"I agreed to come here to help Dan move forward with his agenda during the interim period," she said. "Now that this has happened, I feel it is the least I can do to carry on in his place."

Teachers union president Adam Urbanski said he had already had several productive conversations with

Lowengard, while he has not yet met Cimusz.

“Everything we hear about her is very positive from people who worked with her prior to her coming to Rochester,” he said. “She’s knowledgeable and experienced, she’s an accomplished administrator and obviously has the confidence of Dan Lowengard.”

The district will not continue to pay Lowengard either salary or benefits — a good thing, since its first erstwhile superintendent, Vargas, will draw a paycheck until his contract runs out in June. Vargas clashed with the school board over the contours of his responsibilities as superintendent. White and the board have pledged to take a more active role in determining the district’s direction.

Cimusz’s appointment does not change the board’s process for finding a permanent superintendent. White has pledged to conduct a national search, though there are also some potential local candidates.