

NEWS

John Richard to leave state education post, become president of Stark Education Partnership

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John Richard, who had been poised to become the Ohio's top school superintendent next month, is coming home to Stark County instead.

Richard, a 1979 Sandy Valley graduate who also taught and served as a superintendent in Stark County, will become the new president of the Stark Education Partnership on Oct. 11.

The partnership is a nonprofit organization that brings together leaders in education, business and the community to tackle some of the most complex challenges affecting education, such as increasing access to college and improving early education.

More about Stark Education Partnership: Want free money for college? Stark County education groups helping students complete the FAFSA

Richard, who has served as deputy state superintendent for the past four years, was slated to become the interim state superintendent on Sept. 25, a day after current state superintendent Paolo DeMaria retires. But on Tuesday, he announced that he would be resigning effective Oct. 8.

On Wednesday, the Stark Education Partnership announced Richard as its new leader.

Richard, who was contacted by a search firm months ago about the partnership job, said on Wednesday that leaving the Ohio Department of Education was a difficult decision because of the dedicated people in the department. He said the idea of "coming home" was too attractive to pass up.

"I have a great deal, in a sense, of debt to the greater Stark County area because of my background, being born and raised in the area, starting my teaching career there and serving as a local superintendent," said Richard, who lives in Dover. "I just feel very much like it's a chance for me to hopefully give back to the education community but also to the economic, development and strength of the community, so that is very attractive to me."

Richard succeeds president Teresa Purses, who joined the Stark Education Partnership in 2015. The longtime educator called Richard an "outstanding choice" for the president's position.

"John is a well-respected leader in Stark County and throughout the state and I am gratified that he has agreed to come 'home' to lead the work of the partnership," she said.

Ray Hexamer, chair of the Stark Education Partnership board, said Richard's extensive educational background and his Stark County roots helped him stand out among the hundreds of applications.

"He has a great combination of attributes that will help him continue the great work the Stark Education Partnership has done for Stark County," said Hexamer, who also is the president of the Stark Economic Development Board. He credited former education partnership board chair Jim Gresh with the search process.

As deputy state superintendent, Richard oversees all initiatives related to student supports, continuous improvement, performance and impact, and teaching, leading and learning. He also oversees ongoing professional development sessions

for the education department's senior leaders and speaks frequently to Ohio education groups about the critical impact of excellent educational leadership both on students' lives and Ohio's future.

Richard, who held a variety of positions at the state education department, said he's proud of how he and DeMaria have been able to improve the internal culture and climate of the department and to shift the mindset to involve businesses and other external stakeholders into the decision making process.

Prior to joining the state, Richard spent 30 years in the education field. The University of Mount Union graduate started his teaching career in 1983 at Sandy Valley High School and served as superintendent of the Perry Local School District from 2005 to 2013.

He also has served as the associate executive director of the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators and spent more than 10 years as a part-time instructor in the University of Akron's school principalship program.

Richard earned a Master's Degree at Cleveland State University and his doctorate at the University of Akron.

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