D99 Names New Leaders at Downers Grove North High School

Three new administrators have been hired at Downers Grove North High School for the start of the 2016-17 school year.

By MORGAN SEARLES

Submitted by Community High School District 99.

Photos: Downers Grove North High School announces three new administrators for the 2016-17 school year: Cathy Bendicsen, Sara Courington and Kelly Zuerner

Downers Grove, IL - The District 99 Board of Education has approved the hiring of three new administrators at Downers Grove North High School for the start of the 2016-17 school year.

Cathy Bendicsen will become the next assistant principal for counseling and student support services. Bendicsen currently serves as director of guidance at Willowbrook High School in Villa Park, where she supervises counselors and staff members and is part of the building’s leadership team. Bendicsen has presented at numerous professional conferences on counseling and special education topics. She currently serves as president of the Directors of Counseling and Student Services of Suburban Chicago. She has a bachelor’s degree in psychology from New Mexico State University and a master’s degree in social work from Aurora University; she is currently working on her doctorate degree in education-ethical leadership from Olivet Nazarene University. Additionally, Bendicsen completed her school counseling endorsement through Northern Illinois University and educational leadership endorsement through North Central College. She is a licensed clinical social worker. Bendicsen replaces Dr. Sherri DeVore-Benitez, who will continue at the school as a counselor.

Sara Courington will become the school’s next associate principal for curriculum and instruction, replacing Janice Schwarze, who will become principal. Courington has worked at Willowbrook High School in Villa Park since 2005, serving as a special education teacher, a dean of students and special education department chair. For the past six years, she has developed aligned curriculum and assessments to meet all levels of student needs, as well as planned and created interventions to increase student success. She has also presented at professional conferences, including the College Board’s “A Dream Deferred” conference. She holds a bachelor’s degree in advertising from
the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as well as a master’s in special education from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a master’s in educational leadership from North Central College.

**Kelly Zuerner** will become associate principal for student activities. She has worked as a dean at North High since 2010, helping to develop school policies and programs to meet students’ educational, emotional and behavioral needs and success. Previously, she served as a dean and social studies teacher at Plainfield Central High School as well as a social studies teacher at Wilmington High School. She has a bachelor’s degree in history and education from the University of St. Xavier in Chicago and a master’s in administrative leadership from the University of St. Francis in Joliet. Zuerner replaces Kristin Bormann, who will continue to work for the district at South High as a social worker.

“I am excited about the high level of talent and the variety of experiences that that these educators bring to North High,” says Janice Schwarze, who will become principal of North High starting with the 2016-17 school year. “I’m confident that this strong team of leaders will do a tremendous job of guiding our students and staff well into the future.”

Bendicsen, Courington and Zuerner will start their new positions on July 1, 2016.