

The First Branch Unified District Board of School Directors is pleased to announce that Ms. Joanne Melanson will be serving as the Principal for the Tunbridge Central School for the 2018 – 2019 academic year. Principal Melanson will be on the job as of July 1. She comes to Tunbridge from downstream in South Royalton, where she has been serving as the Interim Principal for their PreK-12 for the latter half of the past year. Principal Melanson clearly does not fear stepping into the breach, nor swimming upstream for that matter. She brings to Tunbridge many years of experience as a classroom educator, as well as many years as a school administrator.

Joanne Melanson grew up in Poughkeepsie, NY, before moving to Bangor, ME, for college. She has stayed in the North Woods ever since, teaching at Woodsville High School in New Hampshire for twenty-six years before becoming a school principal. She then served as principal of Colebrook Academy, followed by Daisy Bronson Middle School/Littleton High School, before completing her westward migration to the Green Mountain State. During her tenure in New Hampshire, Principal Melanson also served on a number of state bodies, including the New Hampshire Future Business Leaders of America, the New Hampshire Association of School Principals, and the North Country's Principals' Association, of which she was Chair. She was nominated by her colleagues and served as President-Elect of the New Hampshire Association of School Principals before coming to Vermont. She has been a member of the Littleton Chamber of Commerce, asked by local business members to serve as a liaison with the school there. Notably, while serving the Colebrook community, she was also asked to join the area's Economic Revitalization Group based on her experience as a business educator.

Principal Melanson said it was a privilege to be able to serve the larger Colebrook community through that group, as she is always interested in such opportunities. She cited her childhood in Poughkeepsie, where there was a tradition of service by adults and students alike to their neighbors, as a profound influence. Principal Melanson has been excited to see a similar habit of service in our area, and views that as one of the reasons the Tunbridge community felt like a good fit for her. She looks forward to attending the many events the town sponsors. She will happily introduce herself to anyone who is interested, but don't be surprised if she is simply absorbing and digesting things. She has observed over her career that "you learn more by keeping quiet!"

As for her approach to being a school administrator, Principal Melanson has noted that the job is an "all in" type of work, where a good administrator immerses herself both in the work of leading the school community and in connecting with the larger community. She has relocated for two of her positions, crediting the support of her son and husband, as well as the more recent flexibility that comes with a grown child. She also noted that she made the transition to administration from teaching because she relishes the chance to work with a team of educators, supporting and helping her fellow professionals excel at their work of serving kids. For her, the touchstone for all decisions is whether something serves students and creates a kid-centered educational environment. With that in place, addressing the needs of the whole student and

finding the right pathway for each individual, kids can really achieve their best and be empowered. Principal Melanson is also very excited to work in a K-8 school, a foundational stage for kids. She sees this time as a golden opportunity to give students the tools they will carry forward with them through the rest of their school and work lives, tools that will help them succeed.

While Principal Melanson serves the students of Tunbridge, she will also continue her own education, as she has done throughout her career. She will be finishing up additional graduate coursework in leadership and curriculum at Plymouth State University, filling out her education as an administrator. Ms. Melanson already has a Master's Degree in Education Administration and Supervision from Plymouth and her Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Leadership, but she is not content to stop there. She has said that she is constantly seeking opportunities to better understand the context of her work and how to do it better.

Please join the First Branch Board of School Directors in welcoming Principal Melanson to Tunbridge.