

Board director Pontes to retire

Director of Education Tony Pontes is retiring from the Peel District School Board, effective Aug. 31, 2017.

Pontes has held the role since March 2010.

He has spent his entire career in the Peel board, beginning in 1978 as a teacher of mathematics and woodworking at the then J. A. Turner Secondary School. After his time as a teacher, department head and vice-principal, Pontes became principal of Chinguacousy Secondary School, followed by Mayfield Secondary School. In 2000, he became a superintendent of education, where he had the opportunity to serve as both an elementary and secondary superintendent. In 2009, he became superintendent of staff development and school support services at the HJA Brown Education Centre. He has been active beyond the board in both the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association and the Council of Ontario Directors of Education.

"Since becoming director six years ago, and indeed in his entire career with Peel, Tony has focused first and foremost on a sincere desire to support students," Board Chair Janet McDougald commented. "He has done so with integrity, kindness, optimism and genuine hard work. He leaves the Peel board with a legacy that includes our new Plan for Student Success, a renewed instructional focus on math, a powerful implementation of Bring Your Own Device and vision for modern learning, and a system commitment to mental health and well-being."

"Without question, he has also personally demonstrated a bold, fearless and unwavering commitment to real progress on inclusion in all forms, and has helped make Peel a national leader in equity," she added. "We thank Tony for his personal and professional dedication to the children of Peel - he truly is someone who each day lives and breathes the Peel board mission to inspire success, confidence and hope in each student. He will be missed in Peel, and we wish him every success in his well-deserved retirement."

Caledon Trustee Stan Cameron had words of praise for Pontes at last Tuesday's board meeting.

"He is a gentleman, and a gentle man," Cameron said. "He offered the board of trustees humble leadership. He always took responsibility, while always giving credit to others."

Cameron also commented on Pontes' ability to connect with people through a caring and empathetic approach.

"Tony has displayed extraordinary problem-solving skills," he declared. "His in-depth knowledge of this board's 254 schools . . . and our nearly 154,000 students allowed them to always stay focused on student success."

"I will carry this question forward with me after Tony retires: 'WWTD - What Would Tony Do?'" Cameron concluded.

The board will begin a formal search process for a new director of education. That process will include hiring an external search firm, and consulting internally and externally on the qualities and characteristics for the new director. The board expects the new director to be in place in May 2017.

"As a board, we want to ensure that this search is comprehensive; that we do all we can to select the right leader to take this board forward and continue our work in the Plan for Student Success," McDougald said. "We are confident that process will be complete and a new director in place by the end of May 2017, so we can provide stability to the system for the next school year."

