



News for Immediate Release

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Governor Corbett Announces Changes at Department of Education

Tomalis Leaving, Cumberland County School Superintendent to be Nominated

Harrisburg – Governor Tom Corbett today announced that Ronald J. Tomalis will leave his post as Secretary of Education on May 31 to become Special Adviser to the Governor on Higher Education.

Tomalis, who has been with the administration since January 2011, will be responsible for overseeing, implementing and reviewing the recommendations made by the Governor's Postsecondary Advisory Commission.

During Tomalis' tenure with the Department of Education, he supervised sweeping changes in Pennsylvania's educator evaluation system in order to recognize the many outstanding teachers across the state and identify other individuals who may need additional professional development.

He also stressed the importance of standardized testing procedures at schools across the state and implemented tighter security requirements for some schools where improprieties were suspected.

Tomalis also participated in the creation of the Opportunity Scholarship Program, which offers tax credits for businesses who provide scholarships for students living in low-achieving school districts.

In addition, Tomalis worked to bring about the return of the Pennsylvania Governor's School for Sciences summer program. Partnering with Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, the program is designed for high school students who excel in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"Secretary Tomalis has worked hard to make Pennsylvania's public education system benefit all of Pennsylvania's students to ensure their success beyond graduation," Corbett said.

To replace Tomalis, the governor will be nominating Dr. William E. Harner, superintendent of the Cumberland Valley School District in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County. His nomination will need to be confirmed by the Senate.

Following a 20-year military career, Harner served in several educational capacities, from middle school principal to school superintendent in South Carolina to deputy chief executive officer of the School District of Philadelphia.

"From his days at West Point to his service at Cumberland Valley, Dr. Harner has shown himself as an effective problem solver able to unite all sides in a common goal of educational excellence," Corbett said.

"Those who have worked with him describe Dr. Harner as an accomplished student, born manager and decisive leader who can carry out our agenda of educational excellence in the face of any challenge."

"I am truly honored that Governor Corbett has asked me to serve as the next Secretary of Education," Harner said. "I look forward to working closely with the governor and members of the General Assembly as we strive to provide all Pennsylvania students with an exceptional education."

Several members of the Cumberland Valley School District had high praise for Harner during his time in their district.

"Dr. Harner is a true leader who supports student achievement in our schools," Donald Snyder, principal of Middlesex Elementary School said.

"He is committed to community involvement and student success. He encourages further education for staff and administrative personnel. He supports student initiatives and has the ability to help them fulfill their potential as participants and future leaders in our world."

Lisa Anstine, a fifth-grade teacher in the school district, described Harner as "a mentor who actively helps teachers guide students down the road of success."

"He is highly visible within our elementary school and interacts with students to get to know them as young people," Anstine added.

"As a teacher in a school with many needs, he continually looks for ways to inspire students about all the educational opportunities that life has to offer. Dr. Harner has visited students in my classroom weekly, and he has been a positive role model in their lives."

"In his five years with Cumberland Valley School District, Dr. Harner has successfully endeavored to raise rigor amongst our students," Barbara Gleim, president of the Cumberland Valley School District Board of School Directors said.

"His overarching goal was to challenge all students to the best of their individual abilities. For this and all of his successes, we are truly appreciative. We wish Dr. Harner all the best in his new opportunity with the Pennsylvania Department of Education."

Originally from Wyncote, Montgomery County, Harner, 56, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He served in command, teaching and staff positions at West Point and Chief of Policy & Strategy, U.S. Forces Korea in Seoul.

He retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel after serving as an infantry battalion commander and receiving the Legion of Merit, the military's highest award for service.

Harner has a doctorate in educational leadership and a master's degree in education supervision and human resources from the University of South Carolina. He worked as a middle school and high school principal before he was named school superintendent for the Greenville County Schools in Greenville, S.C.

From there he served school districts in Gainesville, Ga., Toledo, Ohio, and Philadelphia, and then was named deputy superintendent for the Recovery School District of New Orleans, overseeing the reopening of nine school buildings in the post-Katrina area. He came to Cumberland Valley School District in 2008.

Media contact: Kevin Harley, 717-783-1116

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