



Superintendent's Newsletter

Jay Cummings
Superintendent

June 2019

2019 Retirees

The Grafton Public Schools says goodbye to seven individuals who are retiring this year. Each has contributed greatly to the school district and will be missed!

Sandy Iafolla – Behavior Learning Assistant
Donna Poitras – School Secretary
Susan Peckitt – English Teacher
Karen Barkin – Technology Teacher
Gordon Cleary – Math Teacher
Marcia Pereira – Technology Coordinator
Nancy Sawtelle – School Nurse



Sandra Iafolla

After spending some time at Grafton Elementary School, Sandy Iafolla came to Grafton High School in 2010 as a Behavior Learning Assistant. Sandy has been a tremendous support to both students and the Grafton Community. She served on several committees,

including School Council, for many years. She has also served as a mentor to her many colleagues, always offering a listening ear and sound advice. Sandy goes above and beyond to benefit the children of Grafton by providing support for the Unified Sports teams at the high school as well as at Game Club. Her love for creating elaborate baskets and greenery arrangements has also helped the students in the Life Skills and School-to-Work programs immensely during their annual fundraiser.

While the staff and students will miss Sandy more than she knows, we hope to see her around town, as she is a long-time resident. We may even see her around the school buildings once more, as she has been known to be a substitute from time to time. Sandy is excited to spend more time with her family, in her garden, and on the beaches of Nantucket.



Donna Poitras

Mrs. Poitras began at NGES in the Summer of 2005. She quickly became adept at how to

"man her station" and it wasn't long before she became the face of NGES! Donna knew just how to problem solve any and every situation and always did so with a cheerful disposition and reassurance that families came to love and respect. Mrs. Poitras was not only exceptional at supporting families but she also became a go-to for students as well. Her long-lasting connections with students were what made her "simply the best" and will remain with them for years to come. While "the wheels on the bus (continue) to go round and round," Mrs. Poitras left a lasting impression on all who worked with her. Students, staff, and families at NGES will miss her! Thank you Mrs. Poitras for making us all smile each and every day.



Susan Peckitt

Susan Peckitt is retiring after 31 years of teaching. She began her teaching career at Notre Dame Academy in Worcester, and she taught in Virginia, Worcester, North Brookfield, and Northbridge before coming to Grafton 18 years ago. While in Grafton, Susan taught 7th

and 8th grade ELA at Grafton Middle School and coached the Scrabble Club. Seven years ago, she moved to Grafton High School to teach freshmen, sophomore, and senior English classes. At GHS, Susan enjoyed developing and teaching senior elective courses on poetry and writing and has enjoyed co-teaching freshman and sophomore English classes. Susan has been an incredible asset to the English department and to the entire school. She won the Every Day Hero Award and the Promising Practice Award for her work.

Grafton High School won't be the same without her. Students and faculty will miss listening to her whistle as she walks down the hallways, and students will miss her inspiring lectures on Shakespeare and *Beowulf*. Susan is looking forward to spending her retirement dancing in Greenfield and reading books without having to think about turning them into lessons.



Karen Barkin

Karen started at Grafton Middle School in 1998 as a music and chorus teacher. Music led Karen to technology. She originally had students use computer programs to put together music and videos. In fact, Karen was part of the original

group of teachers who used iPads in the district. Most recently, Karen has been serving as a 7th and 8th grade computer teacher. Her passion to continue to grow as a technology educator is commendable. In May 2018, Karen was awarded a Promising Practices in Curriculum Award by the Blackstone Valley Superintendents Consortium. Most recently Karen introduced her students to block coding with Sphero Robots, and she managed the nearly impossible task of creating a one day schedule to get every one of our 520 Grafton Middle School students to experience Google Virtual Reality Technology. Karen will be keeping busy in retirement since she has recently achieved her realtors license. She also loves to quilt and knit. Karen has a son and daughter, as well. In fact, her daughter followed in her footsteps and is now a music teacher in a local district. To top off her retirement, Karen also has a grandson that she adores.



Gordon Cleary

Gordon Cleary Jr. began his career teaching mathematics at Grafton Middle School in 2002 and retired in December 2018, after 17 years teaching adolescent teenagers. Gordon came

to the middle school after 32 years in the private sector.

Gordon is a graduate of Clark University and received his MBA from Nichols College. He participated in ACES, an afterschool program to help students in mathematics, and the Pre-College Engineering Teacher (PCET) workshop at Worcester Polytechnic Institute while teaching at GMS. Throughout his career he was committed to serving the needs of his students.

Gordon, the father of three daughters and grandfather to seven grandchildren, currently resides in West Boylston. He touched the lives of many at Grafton Middle School and for that we are truly grateful. We wish him well in retirement.



Marcia Pereira

Marcia Pereira began her career in the Grafton Public Schools as a high school computer teacher in 1992. Marcia received a bachelors degree from the University of Rhode Island and a Masters in Education from Lesley College. As a lifelong learner, Marcia has taken numerous graduate courses beyond her Master's degree. Following a very successful tenure as a classroom teacher, Marcia moved from the classroom to the position of district-wide

Director of Educational Technologies. As the director, Marcia oversaw the implementation of PowerSchool throughout the district, contributed greatly to the installation of technology during the construction of the Millbury Street Elementary School and Grafton High School, and supported the dramatic increase in technologies within our classrooms. Marcia has successfully coordinated the data systems that are currently used in the district.

Marcia served for many years as the advisor to the Grafton chapter of the National Honor Society. As the advisor, Marcia expanded the NHS program and sparked interest in a number of volunteer efforts such as No Stomach for Cancer. Marcia will be greatly missed as her work ethic, dedication to the school district, and great heart will be impossible to replace. Marcia has three children and resides in Shrewsbury with her husband. Marcia is an avid hiker and outdoor enthusiast. There is no doubt that Marcia will remain very busy and active in retirement!



Nancy Sawtelle

When Nancy began her nursing career, she did not imagine that it would lead her to school nursing at North Street. What began as a few days as a substitute when her children were

young turned into a full-time role for the past 12 years. It's no surprise as those that have worked with Nancy have observed firsthand the many qualities she brings to the team. School nurses not only support a school full of students, but staff members as well. Nancy always understood this unique responsibility and expressed generosity and care towards all. She is always ready to lend a hand and provide guidance.

The North Street office won't be the same without Nancy's sense of humor, amazing cooking, and drawer full of chocolates! However, we hope that she will continue to be a substitute once in a while so that we can hear about her retirement and the successes of her children. On behalf of the entire NSS staff, we wish Nancy well in this next phase of her life.

Grafton Library Events

The Grafton Public Library's summer calendar has been released. It highlights the numerous events that they are hosting over the summer and can be accessed at: <http://www.graftonps.org/library>

2019-2020 Calendar Change

Annually, we strive to put out the school calendar for the upcoming year by early January. Unfortunately, the state does not release the MCAS schedule for the following year until the spring. As a result of that schedule, we will be changing the dates of two early release days to avoid testing conflicts.

The early release day scheduled for March 25, 2020 will be moved to March 18, 2020.

The early release day scheduled for May 20, 2020 will be moved to May 13, 2020.

Both of these changes have been made on the [2019-2020 district calendar](#).

School Committee Update

The next School Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 11th. The committee meets in Conference Room F in the Municipal Center (second floor) at 7:00 pm. The agenda will include the GHS school improvement plan update and GHS handbook review.

Sincerely,
-Jay