

# New superintendent takes the helm at Greater Lowell Tech



New superintendent of Greater Lowell Tech, Jill Davis. (SUN/Julia Malakie)

By [PRUDENCE BRIGHTON](#) |

PUBLISHED: August 9, 2020 at 6:50 p.m. | UPDATED: August 10, 2020 at 8:12 a.m.

TYNGSBORO — Hints of the Bronx are still in Jill Davis' voice when she speaks, despite 24 years in New England and nine years in Miami.

But much has changed in education in that time, especially in technical and vocational education, the new Superintendent-Director of the Greater Lowell Technical School says.

“The perception of vocational education has changed. Some students now get ready for college while others get ready for immediate employment after graduation, she says. “Both academic and technical training are available. We really provided two educations in one. Davis was selected earlier this summer after several months as interim.



*New superintendent of Greater Lowell Tech, Jill Davis. (SUN/Julia Malakie)*

She takes over the school that enrolls students from Dracut, Dunstable, Lowell and Tyngsboro — one of the largest tech schools in the state — at a time when Gov. Charlie Baker has refocused state emphasis on the importance of such schools. Tech schools are key, Baker and the state Department of Education and Secondary Education said, for those students who prefer to pursue a trade or another profession, rather than a four-year education at a college or university.

“She was the right person at the right time,” said GLTHS Committee member Curtis LeMay, of Lowell, who pushed the committee to appoint her instead of continuing to search for a replacement for Joseph Mastrocola, who retired in January.

“She’s well versed and well liked by students and faculty alike,” LeMay said.

Current Committee Chairman Paul Morin of Dracut agrees. “I taught at the school for 30 years and many of those years I was working with her side by side. Her work ethic is unbelievable.”

The accolades would probably make Davis uncomfortable. She doesn’t like the spotlight, saying, “I’m a bit shy about that.”

“For me it’s all about the kids. I’ve always been a student advocate,” Davis said.

After graduating from the City College of New York, where she also received her graduate degree, she started her career teaching special education students for nonprofits in New York City and Miami. She continued teaching special ed when she arrived at GLTHS.

“I started here in 1996 and was a special education teacher for nine years,” she said.

She then moved into administrative positions. She was assistant-superintendent director most recently. Michael Barton, a Dracut resident, now holds that position.

The year ahead is going to be challenging as schools across the country work to educate the nation’s youth, while making the health and safety of students top priority. In this year of the pandemic, she says, “it’s really going to be a challenge, but I will work my hardest to provide the students the best, keeping health and safety as the priority.”

Currently, she and the school board are looking at a hybrid model for reopening the school.

“It’s always important for a leader to be adaptive and innovative,” she said.

Both skills will be essential to her and other educators this academic year. “As local health data changes, we have to respond.”

She hopes to build on the existing culture of collaboration at the school to meet challenges ahead. “It’s great how the staff has worked collaboratively over the summer,” she said. She’s been at the school every day this summer. The assistant superintendent and the custodians were the only other personnel on site.

Collaboration extends beyond the school community, she said, and she believes in forming partnerships in the communities that belong to the district.

Davis describes herself as an “interactive and involved leader.” Students will see her walking the halls and at sporting events. “You have to show students you care.”

Listening to Davis speak, you hear caring in her voice even more strongly than the hints of her years in the Bronx.