

MAHWAH TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS NAMES TWO NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Both start new positions in July



Michael Hagopian



Michael Henzel

Mahwah Township Public Schools appointed two new elementary school principals: Michael Hagopian for George Washington Elementary School and Michael Henzel for Betsy Ross Elementary School, both K-3 schools. The principals will start their new positions in July.

Hagopian, the new principal at George Washington Elementary School, was an elementary school teacher in Westwood when his supervisor suggested that he consider a career in school district administration. He became a district elementary supervisor for two years and later an assistant principal. He has spent seven years as an assistant principal in Oradell.

Hagopian said that after only his second interview for the George Washington position, he knew he wanted to join the team. "I remember driving home and thinking 'this culture is something that I want to be a part of.'"

Hagopian comes to Mahwah with a strong instructional knowledge of the elementary setting, but also emphasized "the importance of building relationships with families, staff and most importantly, students."

"I am excited to work with the students and the staff that I had the opportunity to meet," Hagopian said. "I want them to love being learners and feel success."

The new George Washington principal said he prefers a personal approach. "Beyond learning each kid's name, my hope is to make individualized and personal connections with every student," he said.

Hagopian said his journey into teaching began when he was working as a restaurant manager and helped a child with her homework one night when it was slow during dinner. The next time the family returned, the girl thanked him and told him that she received a 98 on her test. The mother told him that he should become a teacher and so he did.

He has a master's degree in the science of teaching and master's degree in educational leadership, both from St. Thomas Aquinas College in New York. He also has a business degree from Dominican University in Blauvelt, New York. Hagopian also worked as a teacher in the South Orangetown Central School District and Westwood before moving to Oradell.

Hagopian lives with his wife Amy, son Adam, and goldendoodle Cookie in Rockland County, New York. He enjoys traveling and skiing with his family.

Michael Henzel has 12 years of experience as a principal in the Cresskill and River Edge districts in Bergen County, most recently nine years as the principal of Roosevelt Elementary School, a K-6 school in River Edge. He also previously worked as an assistant principal of an early childhood center.

“I am really drawn to working with children in the primary grades of K-3,” he said. “I really enjoy making connections with new families. When this opportunity came up, it made me look fondly back on those times. I like the neighborhood school feel when kids are so excited to be in school and so excited to be a part of something.”

Henzel said he also likes to know every child in the school. “I like to validate every kid, not just their name but something about them and I like to greet them with a smile and ask about a soccer game or scouting project,” he said. “School should be a place where kids come and feel seen and valued -- it is a cornerstone for kids, like a home away from home.”

“Giving them that rich and rewarding experience is something that makes me feel good and in turn, makes them feel good,” he said, adding it helps kids in grades K-3, who are impressionable, develop their self-esteem. He noted that he also enjoys collaborating with parents, advocating for them, and completing a home and school connection.

Henzel has a bachelor’s degree in history from William Paterson University, a master’s degree in educational technology from Ramapo College and a master’s degree in educational leadership from the College of St. Elizabeth in Convent Station. Henzel holds certifications for a school administrator, principal, supervisor, elementary school teacher and K-5 social studies teacher.

“I am very excited to be joining such an established and successful administrative team,” he said. “Mahwah is regarded as such an innovative and forward-thinking district.”

Henzel lives with his wife Taylor, his son Cole, 9, and daughter Emerson, 7, in Wyckoff. In his spare time, he enjoys woodworking.