



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**PRESS CONTACT:**

June 15, 2023  
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## **Ellington Board of Education Appoints Principal and Assistant Principal for Two Elementary Schools**

Mr. John Powell, Principal of Crystal Lake School and Ms. JoAnna Schmidt,  
Assistant Principal of Windermere School to begin their duties on July 1st

**ELLINGTON, CT** – At a meeting on June 14, 2023, the Ellington Board of Education appointed Mr. John Powell as Principal of Crystal Lake Elementary School and Ms. JoAnna Schmidt as Assistant Principal of Windermere School. Both hires underwent a rigorous process with three rounds of interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and the Board of Education. A special thank you goes out to our parent volunteers—**Becky Smith, Christina Knickerbocker, Krista Godbout, and Heather Kelly**. As the Ellington Public Schools is a desirable destination for professionals, the Crystal Lake position had 58 applicants and the Windermere position 140, respectively.

Mr. Powell comes to us with a unique background working in the American International School of Lagos (AISL) in Nigeria where he has served as the secondary principal (4 years) and taught science (4 years). He also spent time in the same roles at the North Jakarta International School in Indonesia. He began his career as a science teacher at Tolland High School.

Mr. Powell impressed the committee with his comprehensive understanding of educational issues, as AISL is a small school that works on vertical alignment K-12. He is inquisitive and humorous, and has made a significant commitment to Crystal Lake.

Mr. Powell will replace Mr. Dario Soto who has accepted the position of principal in the New Britain Public Schools. We thank Mr. Soto for his contributions to the Crystal Lake family.



John Powell

*“I am thrilled to be joining Crystal Lake Elementary School—the Ellington Family. With the school district's deep commitment to community-mindedness, it was apparent that this was the perfect fit for me. The enthusiasm and passion for education that emanates from the Ellington community is inspiring, and I am honored to be a part of it. Education is a collaborative endeavor, and working hand-in-hand with dedicated teachers, parents, and staff to create an environment where every student feels valued and supported is a noble endeavor. I am honored to be a part of the incredible things we will achieve together at Crystal Lake Elementary School.”*

- **John Powell, Principal, Crystal Lake School**

Ms. Schmidt comes to us from Region 13 in Durham and Middlefield, CT, where she taught music at both the elementary and middle school levels. As a rising star with nine years of professional experience, she has been adept at developing and facilitating professional learning with a focus on scheduling and courageous conversations. Ms. Schmidt co-facilitated the Kindergarten Academy which is responsible for program management, planning lessons, supervision of teachers and teacher assistants, and monitoring parental involvement and student progress.

*“I am honored to be joining Ellington Public Schools and the community at Windermere! To build upon the amazing work that is being done within the district to educate the whole child is a great opportunity. I operate from a mindset influenced by students’ strengths and believe that each child will be successful when their educational spark is lit. Joining this amazing district and becoming part of a team that cares about the overall health and success of each child is exciting.”*

**- JoAnna Schmidt, Assistant Principal,  
Windermere School**



JoAnna Schmidt

Ms. Schmidt will replace Ms. Jennifer James who has accepted a job with the Connecticut State Department of Education. Ms. James has done outstanding work for the Ellington Family for the past nine years.

Mr. Powell and Ms. Schmidt will begin their official duties on July 1, 2023.

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