

Regional School Unit 57

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RSU 57 prepares students for success in an ever-changing world.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RSU 57 Announces James L. Montanari as New Principal of Shapleigh Memorial School

RSU 57 is pleased to announce the appointment of James L. Montanari as the next Principal of Shapleigh Memorial School, effective July 1, 2026.

Mr. Montanari brings more than 36 years of experience in public education, including 22 years in school leadership roles, and most recently served as Principal of Sgt. Jordan Shay Memorial Lower Elementary School in Amesbury, Massachusetts. Throughout his distinguished career, he has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to student achievement, positive school culture, instructional excellence, and strong partnerships with families and communities.

"We are excited to welcome James Montanari to RSU 57 and the Shapleigh Memorial School community," said Superintendent Dr. Stephen D. Marquis. "James is an accomplished educational leader with a proven record of building collaborative school cultures, supporting high-quality instruction, and fostering meaningful relationships with students, staff, and families."

His leadership experience and student-centered approach make him an outstanding fit for Shapleigh Memorial School."

Mr. Montanari's career has been defined by a dedication to creating learning environments where students thrive, educators are empowered, and families are welcomed as valued partners in education. His extensive experience includes leadership in curriculum development, school improvement planning, social-emotional learning, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), literacy initiatives, and community engagement.

During the past three years, Mr. Montanari served as the Founding Principal of Sgt. Jordan Shay Memorial Lower Elementary School, leading the successful consolidation and transition of elementary programs in Amesbury Public Schools. Under his leadership, the school implemented innovative instructional practices, strengthened intervention systems, expanded family engagement opportunities, and enhanced collaboration among educators.

Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Montanari:

- Served as Founding Principal of Sgt. Jordan Shay Memorial Lower Elementary School.
- Led the implementation of MTSS and PBIS frameworks to support students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional success.
- Established literacy, mathematics, social-emotional learning, and Universal Design for Learning implementation teams.
- Partnered with educational organizations to strengthen student-centered instructional practices and collaborative planning structures.
- Coordinated professional development initiatives focused on early literacy, the Science of Reading, social-emotional learning, and innovative teaching practices.
- Developed comprehensive intervention systems using universal screening, progress monitoring, and targeted support strategies to improve student outcomes.
- Built strong family engagement programs, including parent advisory councils, community forums, and educational information nights.

Prior to his work in Amesbury, Mr. Montanari served for sixteen years as Principal of Salisbury Elementary School in the Triton Regional School District, where he earned recognition as the Massachusetts PTA Outstanding Elementary Principal of the Year. He also served as Assistant Principal, Acting Principal, and Interim Principal during his career and spent fourteen years as an elementary classroom teacher.

Reflecting on his appointment, Mr. Montanari shared,

"I am truly grateful for the opportunity to join the Shapleigh Memorial School community and serve as its next Principal. Throughout my career, I have believed that strong schools are built on

meaningful relationships, trust, and a shared commitment to helping every student succeed. I look forward to getting to know our students, staff, families, and community members and working together to foster a welcoming, supportive, and engaging learning environment. By building on the many strengths and traditions of Shapleigh Memorial School, we will continue to create opportunities for students to learn, grow, and achieve their full potential.”

Mr. Montanari holds a Master of Education degree from Lesley University and a Bachelor of Science degree from Salem State College.

RSU 57 extends its appreciation to the interview committee members, staff, and community stakeholders who participated in the Principal selection process. The district looks forward to welcoming Mr. Montanari and supporting his transition into the Shapleigh Memorial School community.

Please join us in welcoming Mr. James Montanari to RSU 57.