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New Paltz School District Announces New Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Education Services

New Paltz, NY-- New Paltz Central School District (NPCSD) is pleased to announce that Dr. Janety Encarnación has been named as the district's new Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Education Services. She is replacing Connie Hayes, who retired after eight years of serving children as an educator.

As director, Dr. Encarnación will oversee services for both occupational therapy and special education, including students classified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students receiving accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, students that are entitled to home instruction, homeless students, as well as Central Registration responsibilities.

Dr. Encarnación, who is a town of Fishkill resident and mother of three—two of whom have special needs or exceptionalities—has been in the field of education for 28 years supporting urban and suburban school district initiatives in special education, bilingual special education, English as a New Language (ENL)/Bilingual Education, literacy, trauma informed practices, restorative practices and promoting culturally responsive schools.

She served as an assistant principal at Dutchess BOCES Career and Technical Institute and at Warring Elementary School in the Poughkeepsie City School District. She was also school principal of the Dutchess BOCES Regional Academic Summer School for Grades 9-12. She is also a former special education teacher who has taught bilingual special education and worked as a bilingual/dual language teacher as well as a reading/literacy specialist.

The new director also serves as an instructional specialist for New York State Education Department (NYSED) Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network and as a bilingual special education specialist at NYSED's Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Center. Dr. Encarnación has presented at regional and state conferences on topics that include culturally responsive classrooms, specially designed instruction for English Language Learners (ELL), making career and technical education settings accessible to students with disabilities, and unbiased speech and language assessments for ELLs. In April, she published her doctoral dissertation entitled, "Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of New York State's Comprehensive ELL/MultiLingual Learners Education Plan (NYS CR-Part 154): A Quantitative Policy Analysis."

Dr. Encarnación explained that learning to advocate for her own children and experiencing their struggles provided her with different perspectives and understandings within the culture of special education. Dr. Encarnación says her life work revolves around promoting social change and refers to herself as a "lifelong learner", or a "forever learner", who truly enjoys the process of learning through inquiry, observation, and reflection. She explained that coming from a single family home with few economic resources, she understood that education offered opportunities to better herself and the future of her family.

"I understand that education is essential for a better future and that this is true for all our students, regardless of where they come from or the challenges they face," she said.

Dr. Encarnación said that two of the many things which attracted her to the New Paltz Central School District are its commitment to the community and its ongoing social justice and equity work. "My belief is that schools serve as change agents for the community and that communication and collaboration are key to developing strong communities aligned with the work the District continues to engage in," she said.

The District's new superintendent, Angela Urbina-Medina, believes that Dr. Encarnación is an ideal fit for NPCSD's needs. "Dr. Encarnación is uniquely qualified to understand and address the many challenges facing our student population who require special services, thanks to both her professional and personal background. She will enable our students with special needs to obtain the same high-quality education as their peers, especially with her multiple qualifications in ENL, bilingual/dual language education, trauma-informed and restorative practices, and reading/literacy. We are pleased to avail effective, meaningful and high-quality services to our vulnerable population under Dr. Encarnación's oversight."