

# Luxemburg-Casco School District: Dr. Jo-Ellen Fairbanks named superintendent of Luxemburg-Casco School District

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LUXEMBURG, Wis. – Dr. Jo-Ellen Fairbanks, a Wisconsin educator for three decades and the current superintendent of the Cochrane-Fountain City School District, has been named as the new superintendent of the Luxemburg-Casco School District. The announcement was made by Board of Education President Mike Driedric Friday morning at an all-school assembly in the high school gymnasium.

Fairbanks, 55, will be the fifth superintendent – and first female superintendent – in the history of the Luxemburg-Casco School District. She will begin her new position on July 1 following the retirement of current superintendent Glenn Schlender.

“The Board of Education was excited to select Jo-Ellen as the next Luxemburg-Casco superintendent,” says Driedric. “She has strong curriculum and financial backgrounds, a track record of managing a district and has demonstrated the ability to be creative financially to find solutions. We also believe that she will be a good fit for the community from a culture standpoint.”

Driedric added that the Board of Education was impressed by the 12-page entry plan brought forward by Fairbanks, which laid out what the first eight months of her term would look like.

Fairbanks brings a wide variety of educational experiences – within school buildings, district offices and academic agencies – to her L-C role. These include classroom instruction, curriculum and program development for traditional and alternative

educational models, supervision and mentorship of teachers and principals, budget development and implementation, collaborative strategic planning, culture building, and organizational leadership.

She has been the superintendent of the Cochrane-Fountain City School District in Fountain City, Wis., since July 2020, leading the district through the COVID-19 pandemic with a minimal decrease (0.1) in student achievement between 2018-19 and 2020-21, as documented by the District Report Cards of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Fairbanks used data-driven instructional planning, collaboration and a multi-tier system of support to drive student achievement.

Fairbanks also facilitated staff and community workshops to develop a shared vision, mission, and a comprehensive strategic plan for the Cochrane-Fountain City School District.

“I’m excited to lead the Luxemburg-Casco School District,” says Fairbanks. “It is a forward-thinking district, headed in a good direction, that has emphasized community partnerships to create opportunities for students.

“I believe that every student can learn. Students learn differently and come to us with a variety of background experiences and barriers. It is our job to create a secure and stimulating atmosphere in which every student gets what he or she needs to obtain his or her education goals.

“I believe that strong, authentic connections between schools, families, community groups and businesses are needed to build support for a school district. Working together on issues, sharing information, transparency, building partnerships and creating trust facilitates the process of building community confidence and expands opportunities for students.”

Fairbanks began her 30-year education career in 1993 as a science teacher and department chairperson for the Burlington Area School District. Over 12 years, she taught multiple areas of science, negotiated contracts, managed the departmental budget and used data to implement curriculum and instruction improvements.

She subsequently served as the director of instruction and professional development for the CESA 9 academic agency in north central Wisconsin, overseeing instruction for three Northwoods school districts, before becoming supervisor of secondary curriculum for the School District of Beloit in 2007. In Beloit,

Fairbanks directed curriculum, instruction, assessment and program development to increase student achievement at the secondary level.

Fairbanks then spent five-and-a-half years as the associate dean-general education/business at Mid-State Technical College in Wisconsin Rapids, leading its Adult Basic Education, General Education and Library divisions. She developed and implemented a cutting-edge instructional delivery model for adult education, which led to a 35 percent increase in participation.

She returned to K-12 education in 2016 with two-year stints in leadership with the Adams-Friendship School District and Portage High School/Academy of Achievement. In Portage, Fairbanks' responsibilities included serving as principal of the alternative learning school.

Fairbanks received a B.S. degree in secondary science education, with minors in chemistry and biology, from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1992 and a master's degree in interdisciplinary curriculum & instruction from National-Louis University in 1998. She attained a Ph.D. in educational leadership & policy analysis from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2010.

Born and raised just outside of Milwaukee in Greenfield, Fairbanks will be relocating to Northeast Wisconsin with her husband, Jim, and sons, A.J. and Sam.

In addition to her experience as an educator, Fairbanks was a small-business owner for eight-and-a-half years (2012-20), operating Melt Chocolat in Plainfield, Wis. Along with serving as Master Chocolatier, she was responsible for all product development and production.

Past Luxemburg-Casco School District superintendents/district administrators have been Charlie Meissner (1968-77), Ray Thillman (1977-99), Patrick Saunders (1999-2014) and Schlender (2014-22).