The exciting news last month that Newark won and will share a $3.75 million federal School Climate Transformation Grant over the next five years with Williamson and Red Creek School districts has resulted in some key staffing reassignments in the NCSD.

- **Laurie Palmisano**, who has been serving since August as Assistant Principal at Newark Middle School and Kelley School and as the district’s Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Coordinator, has accepted the newly-created and entirely grant-funded position of Director of Community Schools. It was approved by the Newark Board of Education last month.

- **Robyn Ross-Squirrel**, who has been Assistant Principal at Newark High School for a year and a half, will become the AP at Newark Middle School and Kelley Schools in January.

- **Tiffany Cohrs**, who is now in her fifth year of teaching Kindergarten at Perkins School, will begin an administrative internship at NHS to meet the requirements of the administrative degree she is working on obtaining at the University of Rochester.

Ross-Squirrel and Cohrs’s reassignments are expected to be approved at the Dec. 18th BOE meeting.

“Ms. Palmisano, Mrs. Ross-Squirrel and Mrs. Cohrs are all women who have been nominated to go through the WFL BOCES Leadership Institute, which is a program going into its 18th year, focused on growing the leadership capacity of local educational professionals,” NCSD Superintendent Matt Cook said. “Seeing these ladies become administrators over the last few years and helping them find the best places to contribute to the district is one of the things I love about my job. They care deeply about Newark and are committed to helping every student, every day.”

Among Palmisano’s many new duties, including continuing to be Newark’s SEL Coordinator, will be overseeing distribution of grant monies to Red Creek and Williamson CSDs in accordance with grant guidelines and specifications. The grant will allow the three districts to develop, enhance and expand support services with the aim of improving behavioral outcomes and learning conditions for all students.

The NCSD applied for the federal grant on behalf of the three-district consortium of high needs rural school districts that serve nearly 4,000 students in 12 school buildings. Mark Miller, Director of Grants and Special Projects for the NCSD, wrote the grant with Jay Roscup, Director of Community Schools in Wayne County.

Palmisano, who was the secondary level Summer School Principal last summer, served as an Administrative Intern at Newark Middle School and Newark High School during 2018-19. The year before she taught fifth grade at Kelley School and taught either fifth or sixth grade at Lyons Elementary School for 12 years before that.

“We know that the school climate plays a critical role in the potential success and school experiences of a student,” she said.

“Students who learn in a positive learning environment are more likely to develop skills that will help them be successful in school and in life. I am thrilled to have a role in this important work.”

Palmisano earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Elmira College and her master’s degree in general education at St. Lawrence University. In May, she completed her administrative degree in Educational Leadership at SUNY Oswego.

She lives in Geneva with wife, Casey Peterson, a major gift officer/fundraiser for St. Lawrence University, and their two children, Marco, 9, and Leigh, 7.
Ross-Squirrell who functioned part time as Interim Principal at Lincoln School during the 2017-18 school year before becoming AP at NHS in July, began working for the Newark Central School District in 1997-98 at Kelley School as a long-term substitute. The following year was hired full time as a fifth grade teacher—a job she continued in until August of 2008 when she became the new District Enrichment and Arts-In-Education Coordinator. During the 2016-17 school year she was an administrative intern at NHS, Perkins and Lincoln schools.

“I have truly enjoyed my time at the High School,” she said. “This was a very difficult decision due to the numerous relationships I have made with staff and students there. However, I am looking forward to starting a new adventure in my career and going back to where I started my journey with the District at Kelley, and now working alongside staff and administrators at both Kelley and the Middle School. I feel honored to have been given this opportunity.”

Ross-Squirrell received her bachelor’s degree in elementary education at Nazareth College; her master’s degree in political science from George Mason University; her administrative special education certification from Nazareth College; and her educational administrative certification from SUNY Oswego.

She and her husband, Bernard, who works at Johnson Controls in Rochester, live in Farmington with daughters Melanie, 13, and Reagan, 9.

Before coming to work for the NCSD in 2014-15, Cohrs taught either Kindergarten or first grade in Lyons for 14 years.

“It will be a change from teaching Kindergarten to doing my administrative internship at Newark High School. But I’m very excited,” she said. “My children are older and I’m comfortable with that age group. But I make connections really well with kids of all ages and they respect me because I get to know them and remember they are all still kids.”

Cohrs earned her bachelor’s degree in dance with a minor in education from Hobart and William Smith Colleges and her master’s degree in education from Keuka College.

She and husband, Tim, a self-employed contractor, live in Geneva with their three children Beth, 16, Leo, 13, and Teagan, 11.