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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DuPage County Regional Superintendent Retires After Twenty Years of Service

Wheaton, IL, July 1, 2023— Dr. Darlene Ruscitti has retired from the DuPage County Regional Office of Education where she served as regional superintendent for twenty years.

As the first female chief administrative officer of the DuPage Regional Office of Education (ROE), Ruscitti's achievements in education have increased graduation rates, decreased drop-out rates, and produced many of the top-scoring schools in Illinois. Many "best practice" models originate from Ruscitti's leadership, making DuPage County a leader in Illinois public education.

In a proclamation from the DuPage County Board, chairperson Deborah Conroy said, "Dr. Ruscitti has been a tremendous asset to DuPage County, working to support children academically, socially, and emotionally." Conroy thanked Ruscitti for her "collaborative leadership, dedication, and exemplary service."

Ruscitti first ran for the office of Regional Superintendent in 2003, promising a high standard of accountability, school safety (emotional and physical), and excellent teacher quality. Over her twenty-year tenure, Ruscitti and her team at the ROE have accomplished these goals by filtering every decision through two critical questions.

"First, we considered whether it was right for the children. Was it in the best interest of our students?" Ruscitti explained. "And secondly, was this decision in line with our commitment to deliver a world-class education while also being fiscally responsible to our taxpayers? Those were our guiding principles," Ruscitti said.

Because of Ruscitti's relentless commitment to the most vulnerable student populations in DuPage, her work in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) was lauded by the state of Illinois, and DuPage County was designated a "Hub" for providing professional development, training, and support to teachers and students. These inroads

in SEL have significantly contributed to the promotion of mental wellness and a reduction of student absenteeism in DuPage schools.

Ruscitti also pioneered the creation of policies and procedures to promote the physical safety of students and teachers. The DuPage ROE was the first in Illinois to develop a School Safety Task Force, which has served as a model for other ROEs across the state. Partnering with local police and fire departments, the FBI, Homeland Security, and threat-assessment experts, Ruscitti aggressively sought $2M in grant funding to develop comprehensive emergency plans, training exercises, protocols—and even the first "Anti-Bullying" policy program, which became the prototype for the State of Illinois.

Ruscitti and her team at the ROE were also awarded other national and state grants, giving the County $50M in additional funding for education—at no cost to taxpayers. These funds were used to pay for critical education programs such as the "Parents as Teachers" program, which trains at-risk parents to be their child's first and best teacher; offering new principal and superintendent mentoring; initiating a work-based learning program for high school students; becoming a state-recognized "Hub" for Civics education; and addressing the national teacher shortage with innovative ideas on a local level.

Ruscitti says special attention and training opportunities for the core subjects of math, reading, science, gifted education, and language skills were always a focus because "it is the right of every student in DuPage County—regardless of their demographic—to get a world-class education."

During the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting quarantine, Ruscitti received high praise for her quick responsiveness. Working with the DuPage County Health Department and other experts, Ruscitti guided DuPage schools as they pivoted to online learning and developed safety protocols for a once-in-a-century challenge. Equally important, Ruscitti created and implemented an accelerated learning program to aid students who experienced a learning gap due to the pandemic.

Ruscitti's legacy will no doubt be her tireless promotion of excellence in public education as well as her ability to partner with local and state leaders and organizations with the goal of giving every student the tools and opportunities to succeed in school and become a successful, contributing member of the DuPage community.

"At the end of the day, it's about the children of DuPage County. They are our most valuable resource, and serving them in our public schools has been an honor and pleasure," Ruscitti said.

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About the DuPage Regional Office of Education

The DuPage Regional Office of Education is a service organization whose role is to provide high quality service and support to all stakeholders and collectively expend every effort to prepare DuPage County children for the world they will face. In addition to the myriad of services provided directly to educators and schools, the office also provides services and support to community members, private schools, parents, children, business leaders, and others. For more information, visit DupageROE.org.