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## New Irondale High School principal wants to help students better connect

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The new leader at Irondale High School will take his cue from the woman he replaces.

Scott Gengler is the new principal at the New Brighton school, coming to the district after eight years as principal at Watertown-Mayer High School in Watertown, Minn. He replaces Colleen Wambach, a onetime Minnesota High School Principal of the Year, who retired after 10 years as the school's boss.

"Irondale is a high school with an incredible history. I'd like to follow in (Colleen's) footsteps and continue that growth," Gengler said.

In addition to maintaining the school's quality programs, Gengler said he also hoped to help students feel better connected to their school. "We can increase some of that through after-school activities," he said.

Connectedness is what some on the interviewing committee — parents, staff and department representatives — liked about Gengler. That's why Ron Broberg, activities director at Irondale, recommended Gengler from among three finalists to the superintendent.

"He understands the importance of building relationships with students, parents, staff and the

community," Broberg said.

Doug Austin, associate principal at Irondale who was also on the committee, was looking for someone with a solid track record.

"He has a lot of experience, and he believes in our vision," Austin said.

Before he was principal at Watertown, Gengler was an associate administrator for three years at Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis. He also has taught health and physical education and coached at Minnehaha Academy and Pequot Lakes Senior High School.

Wambach decided to retire after 35 years with Mounds View Public Schools. She started as a student teacher in 1974 and became a special-education teacher at the junior high and high school levels. In 1993, Wambach became assistant principal at Irondale High School. She was promoted to principal in 1998. In 2006, she received the Minnesota High School Principal of the Year through the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals.

In the past year, U.S. News and World Report named Irondale and Mounds View high schools — both in the Mounds View district — among the nation's "Best High Schools." The magazine ranked 13 Minnesota high schools in its "silver" category and none in its gold.

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