

# Special Education School Names New Head

*Northstar Academy and Career Center welcomes their next Head of School, Bethany Raffanello, who brings 20 years of special education leadership experience.*

HENRICO, VA, UNITED STATES, July 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After an extensive international search, the Board of Directors of Northstar Academy and Career Center is [pleased to announce the appointment](#) of Bethany Raffanello as the school's next Head of School.

The search process, led by a seven-member committee and supported by national search firm ST Search, spanned five months and included input from Northstar faculty, staff, students, families, and trustees. Bethany distinguished herself through multiple rounds of interviews and on-campus meetings, where she received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the school community.

“

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*Bethany Raffanello*



Bethany Raffanello will greet students on campus when they return for classes in the fall.

She was selected for her deep experience in special education, transformative leadership, and demonstrated commitment to inclusive, student-centered learning.

“Bethany Raffanello emerged as the clear choice to lead Northstar into its next chapter,” said the Board of Directors in a joint statement. “Her professional expertise, warm and engaging personality, and alignment with Northstar’s

mission made a lasting impression on every group she met during her campus visit.”

Northstar promotes [educational excellence and career opportunities](#) for students with disabilities who have academic, physical or social challenges. The school has grown over the last 30 years, serving approximately 125 students annually across Central Virginia through its two branches. Northstar Academy specializes in a customized educational approach for degree-seeking K-12 students. Northstar Career Center serves juniors, seniors and young adults with

disabilities under the age of 24 to help them gain work readiness skills as they transition out of secondary education and into the workforce.

“I’ve been inspired by the passion and commitment I’ve seen across the Northstar community, and I am eager to listen, learn, and work alongside you as we build on the school’s strong foundation and move forward together,” said Bethany.

Bethany brings nearly 20 years of experience from The New England Center for Children (NECC), where she has worn many hats—from classroom teacher to Director of Student Administration. Her work has taken her across the globe, most recently at NECC’s campus in Abu Dhabi, where she served in leadership roles including Program Specialist, Program Director, and Head of Early Years, Preschool, and Secondary Schools.

She holds an MBA from Quinnipiac University, a Master’s in Education from Simmons College, and a bachelor’s in psychology and sociology from Drew University. She’s also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and Licensed Applied Behavior Analyst (LABA), with specialized training in Applied Behavior Analysis from Western New England University.

Her appointment marks an exciting new chapter for Northstar. “Bethany brings a thoughtful, student-first approach to leadership, and a proven ability to foster school growth and program innovation,” said the Search Committee. “We are confident she will be an inspiring and



Ms. Raffanello brings nearly 20 years of special education experience to Northstar.



Northstar serves students with disabilities ages 5 - 24 through the Academy and Career Center.

effective leader for our community.”

Bethany replaces Crystal Trent, who has served as Northstar’s Head of School since 2017. Under her leadership, Northstar notably relocated to a new facility in Glen Allen in 2022 and since [built a new gymnasium and community center](#) on the property.

#### About Northstar

Northstar is a 501(c)(3) non-profit school dedicated to serving students with autism, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, emotional disabilities, developmental delays, and speech/language impairments. Located in Glen Allen, Virginia, Northstar is licensed by the Virginia Department of Education and is a fully accredited member of the Virginia Association of Independent Schools. Northstar is committed to promoting educational excellence and career opportunities for students with disabilities.

Maggie Latimer

Northstar

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