

## Deidrie Depew-Huygens Named Head Mistress - 2023

The Centre Actif Bilingue has a new head mistress, but she's not at all new to the school. Deidrie Depew-Huygens has been an English teacher, has conducted art workshops and has even served previously as CAB's head mistress, from 2013 to 2018. She's been with the school for 15 years.

"I'm devoted to the school and my colleagues, and especially to the children. I really care about how we work with the children. I want them to come to school eagerly, ready to learn," she says. "We need to support (our staff). If we have staff who are supported, then the children will feel secure and welcome."

Deidrie says she appreciates the CAB for being very international and the staff for their "complete devotion to doing their best for the children. I find that inspiring and in line with my own values." She adds, "I wanted to be in a place where the child is the center of the whole learning process. This school encourages and allows that, because it is an associative school."

Among her goals for the school is to encourage more emphasis on nature studies. "I hope the children and the staff can become more involved in the importance of healthy soil and water and understand why that is important. Soil and water are the basis of life on Earth."

A native of Montana and Maine, USA, Deidrie has over 30 years of experience in education and first showed an interest in an international life at age 15 when she spent a summer exchange in Kumamoto, Japan. She later returned to Kansai University in Osaka to study Japanese on a one-year exchange, and to learn about the country's literature, pottery, and *sumi-e*, a traditional Asian charcoal painting.

During her childhood in Maine, she gained an appreciation for the French language. "Many of my friends' families spoke French at home. I found the language very beautiful, the soft sounds of French."

After completing a degree in modern languages and linguistics with a minor in business, life took Deidrie rapidly abroad. She taught for eleven years in Japan. Her students included preschoolers and high schoolers, as well as university economics and literature students. After moving to France, she taught at various elementary schools as an English assistant, then at the *Institut Universitaire Technologie* (IUT) in Fontainebleau in the economics department and at St. Aspais Lycée (high school).

As Deidrie restarts her role as head mistress, the school has grown slightly and has been able to reopen an eighth class. She says the current CAB students represent 22 different nationalities and 19 languages. Deidrie speaks three languages fluently herself: English, French and Japanese.

She is also the mother of two adult children whom she raised to be multilingual and multicultural. They are each fluent in four languages.

