

# Staffing the

Brown, Randy

# system

By Henry Bury

The Intelligencer

Education is a people service. And for Randy Brown, it's a philosophy.

The 45-year-old Brown assumes new responsibilities next month as one of four academic superintendents employed by the Hastings County Board of Education.

His job title will be superintendent of human resources. It's a role that will see Brown and his department manage all aspects of staffing in a public school system that employs 1,700 people — from teachers to custodians.

Brown will be a key resource person to trustees who negotiate contracts with various employee groups. His office at the Education Centre on Ann Street will look after occupational health and safety, worker's compensation and administering five collective agreements.

"I won't have direct instructional school responsibility like I've had in the past," acknowledged Brown, who became superintendent of education in 1991.

"My contact with schools will be dealing with personnel issues, staff levels and implementing possible staff reductions because of the re-

cent funding cuts to education," he said.

The Ontario government's announcement Nov. 29 that school boards will receive \$400 million less in funding next year will force systems to cut programs and reduce staff. The Hastings board estimates it'll lose about \$5 million in government funding at a time when it's already trimmed its operation by \$6 million over the past three years (to a \$120-million operating budget).

Brown acknowledges the funding cuts will present a "big challenge" for the newly-restructured personnel department that he now heads.

"It's a lot more fun adding and improving programs than it is to be implementing budget reductions," he said. "On the other hand, it's a challenge to see if we can do it well. Our goal will be to minimize the impact on students because of possible program and staff reductions."

One of Brown's major objectives will be to work with school board staff "in

such a way that morale is maintained during difficult economic times. A positive staff morale is beneficial for students."

The Belleville native has climbed the academic ladder to where he is today.

And it all started as a student in a one-room school in Wallbridge. From there, he attended Quinte Secondary School, Queen's University and Peterborough Teacher's College.

He began teaching at William R. Kirk School the year it was built in 1972. Then it was on to Stirling School and Prince Charles in Belleville as vice principal. He later spent six years as special education co-ordinator at the Education Centre before assuming the principal's role at William R. Kirk School and Bayside School for three years before being named superintendent of education.

He's enjoyed his five years as superintendent's role, even though his direct contact with schools has diminished somewhat because of staff reductions.

"It's a really good job because it's different every day. I get a feeling of satisfaction resolving problems and issues in such a way that parties involved can feel like they have been heard, treated fairly and can get on with whatever part they have to play in the education of children."

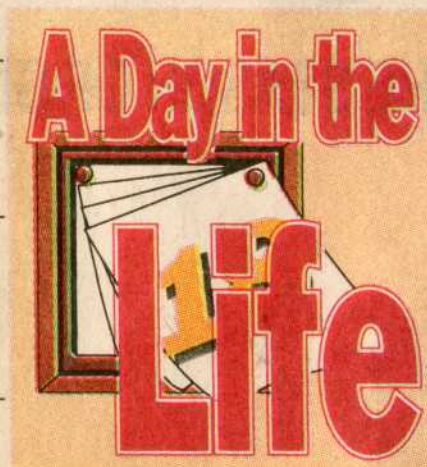
As superintendent, Brown has had to perform two major functions — the central administrative side which deals with economics, staffing and working with trustees and the school support side assisting schools implement board and provincial initiatives and advising them with various legal issues.

Brown has had many dealings with parents in those five years, whether it be attending parents' meetings or talking with concerned parents on the phone about their children's education.

"In today's society, parents really are concerned about their children's schooling."

He's accustomed to talking to parents who are frustrated or anxious about how their children are doing in school or how a particular school has handled some problem.

"With 20,000 students in school, not everyone is going to be completely happy with every decision that gets made with a particular student, school



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telephone a lot dealing with schools, parents and staff. A re-organization and reduction in Education Centre staff has made the telephone a vital link with schools and parents.

"I'm hopeful our new organization in January will allow us to get back closer to that personal touch as we face some tough economic decisions."

program or policy."

Brown said it's imperative the board maintain a positive working relationship with parents "because it takes parents and school board staff to resolve these situations that come up."

He pointed out trustees are the decision makers "and it's our job as superintendents to carry out those policies."

Brown acknowledged he's on the