

MOORCROFT, H.R.

Popular area educator retires

COBOURG — The man who helped lay the foundation for what is now the Northumberland and Newcastle Board of Education — and who helped usher in a number of new area educational programs — has decided to retire.

H.R. Moorcroft, the board's chief superintendent and former teacher and principal with the Hastings County Board of Education, announced this month he's retiring in June, after a 38-year career in education.

Moorcroft's experience with the Northumberland and Newcastle Board included education superintendent with responsibility for curriculum and special education in 1973. In successive re-organizations, he became superintendent of program and, in 1985, chief superintendent with overall responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the board's 49 elementary and nine secondary schools.

After spending 38 years in education, Moorcroft said, "better training of elementary teachers in particular, the improvement in class sizes, and the support services and resources available to teachers stick out in my mind as being drastic improvements over the last 30 years."

The Madoc Township native also pointed out as well that, despite criticism, schools have never strayed from teaching the basics.

"We emphasize them."

Moorcroft was educated in a one-room school in Madoc Township, now a Women's Institute Hall.

"I attended a one-room school and taught in one, and, frankly, the good old days weren't that good in some respects. Classes were large and teachers weren't able to give students the individual attention they receive today. However, it was a family situation and I enjoyed my four years teaching in a one-room school," the retiring superintendent said.

His start in teaching began with the one-room school near Campbellford.

He came to what is now the



Moorcroft

Hastings County Board of Education when he taught at Queen Mary School in Belleville in 1955-56. A year later, he became its vice-principal.

In 1957-58, Moorcroft was vice-principal of Queen Alexandra School (now the Education Centre on Ann Street) and became principal at Hillcrest School where he served from 1958-60. He was only 25 years old when he became principal of Hillcrest.

Moorcroft was principal of King George School — now closed — from 1960-65.

At the age of 34, Moorcroft was appointed a superintendent of education in Darlington Township, which in the late 1960s eventually became the Northumberland and Newcastle Board of Education.

The chief superintendent lauded the provincial move to bigger school boards.

"It brought us a lot closer to equality in education. In fact, one of the first things I was involved with was helping to bring in kindergarten throughout the area. We made it a

universal program."

Under the old system, he noted, kindergarten was only available in urban areas.

Moorcroft recalled other advances made one the system's jurisdiction expanded.

"We were one of the first boards outside the Metropolitan Toronto area and the Ottawa area to put in a French immersion program. More recently, we've introduced junior kindergarten and that's something which I feel very good about. I'm optimistic that a child's progress will be much better because of it."

Northumberland education director Gary Tushingham said he's "truly sorry" to see Moorcroft retire June 30.

"He is going to be very difficult to replace. He has made and continues to make significant contributions to education," said director Tushingham.

Board chairman Diana Stewart added, "The status of an organization is determined by the quality of the men and women at the top, and in Bob, we've had one of the best."

Moorcroft and his wife, Barbara, both graduates of Queen's University, are residents of Port Hope.

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