

# New principals at three Acton schools

By FRANCES NIBLOCK  
The New Tanner

It is too early for the new principals at Acton's three public schools to be making long-range goals and objectives for the school year; other than to carry on with what has made their respective schools special.

At Acton High School, it is not all new for in-coming principal Bert O'Hearn who was vice-principal at the school for four years a decade ago.

O'Hearn, a Brampton resident who was principal of a Burlington high school before coming back to Acton, said he wants to "maintain the atmosphere of collegiality and support for students and will develop plans and goals collaboratively with people in the building."

O'Hearn said one of his goals would be to catch up with the goals already developed in the school effectiveness plan so he can get a handle on what is happening at the school.

"I tend not to want to make too many snap judgements about where we should go until I can see pretty clearly where we've been and where the people who are already here see us going," O'Hearn said on Friday, adding he's been really pleased with the welcome he's received from staff, students and parents who have been in to the school.

O'Hearn said he had already spoken with the incoming principal at McKenzie Smith Bennett School, Demetra Saldaris, and Leona Skanes, the new principal at Robert Little School.

"I think that it is an interesting opportunity for us to get together to look at the Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum - the continuum



**SCHOOL PREP:** McKenzie-Smith Bennett School Senior Kindergarten student Sangjun Bak, 5, attended a meet-and-greet session with his teacher Barb Harris (left) on Tuesday while mom Migyoung Jang looked on. -Frances Niblock photo

of education that we will be providing that we want to be providing for students in Acton. I think that is an interesting opportunity for us."

At Robert Little School, principal Leona Skanes, who relocated to Acton with her family from Sudbury where she was a principal for five years, said she has a "kids first" philosophy.

"I can see by talking to staff and by looking at the hard work they've put in before the first day of school that they feel the same way - they have a lot of compassion and caring," Skanes said on Friday.

She said the school's priorities will continue to be safety and the Tribes behaviour program and literacy, along with a very collaborative team ap-

proach to learning.

"It's not my school - it is our school - and I've always focused on that, that we have a leadership team and all opinions are respected," Skanes said, adding she has a sense of humour and likes to laugh at herself a lot.

While it is too soon to set school-life goals for the year - she wants to meet with the teachers and find out what they feel the needs are - Skanes has set some personal goals.

"I want to maintain the sense of community and continue to make the community proud of Robert Little School."

It is all about the people - the students, staff and community - for Demetra

Saldaris, the new principal at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School.

"One of the things that we talked about with staff on the last PA day (in June) was to work with the entire school - they had a direction team in place - to create really strong spirit. That's something that they've started and I want to continue working on that," Saldaris said on Tuesday as she took a break from going class to class to meet the students.

She said she wants to continue the good things already in place at MSB, including the Tribes social skills program that stresses learning and working together.

Saldaris, who most recently was principal at an Oakville school, said it would take some time for her to get to know the school and community, and for them to get to know her in terms of her style, which she describes as "outgoing."

"I like to work with people

- I don't think anything happens unless you're right in there working together, side by side," she said.

"I'm a people first administrator - sometimes it's the students, sometimes it's the teacher because if you help

the teacher then the teacher is right there for the kids. It's all about people and how I can be of service," Saldaris said, adding she is looking forward to working with the school council to determine what things can be made better.

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