

A little good news on schools

By **TIM WHITNELL**

Special to *The Champion*

Immersed in a province-wide strike, Halton Board of Education administrators and teachers have jointly received some good news with the results of student testing.

The public board scored higher than the provincial average in all three subjects and at all four ability levels in grade 3 test scores released by the newly-formed Education Quality and Accountability Office.

Nearly 3,000 grade 3 students in Halton were part of a group of 130,000 in Ontario which wrote reading, writing and math tests based on a common curriculum prepared by former NDP Education Minister Dave Cooke.

"We think the results for the Halton board are outstanding relative to the rest of

the province, but it's still a question of how we can help more (students) do better," said education director Dusty Papke.

"I don't think it's a matter of raising the bar but putting (more) kids over it," he said.

Grade 3 students were tested last spring in the basics of reading writing, and mathematics with students being assigned a level of ability based on a score between one and four. The ministry made Level 1 the lowest achievement, 2 and 3 are deemed the acceptable range of performance while 4 is the best.

Halton officials assigned their own terms, making 2 satisfactory, 3 good and 4 excellent.

In reading, the Halton board had 87 per cent of its grade 3 pupils score between levels 2 and 4 while the provincial mark was 80 per cent.

In writing, Halton had 88 per cent score

in the three upper levels; the Ontario average was 82 per cent.

In math, Halton placed 84 per cent in the top three levels; the provincial average was 76 per cent.

In breaking the results down by gender, board officials said Halton's grade 3 females scored about 4-5 per cent higher than boys over the three subjects in levels 3 and 4.

"I don't find the difference alarming," said education superintendent Kit Rankin.

More precise analysis, on a municipality-by-municipality basis in Halton, and at the individual school level, will be part of future follow-up work, said Ms Rankin.

Ms Rankin believes the strong local results are not surprising under the circumstances.

"Our board has been very forward thinking for a few years," she said, referring to

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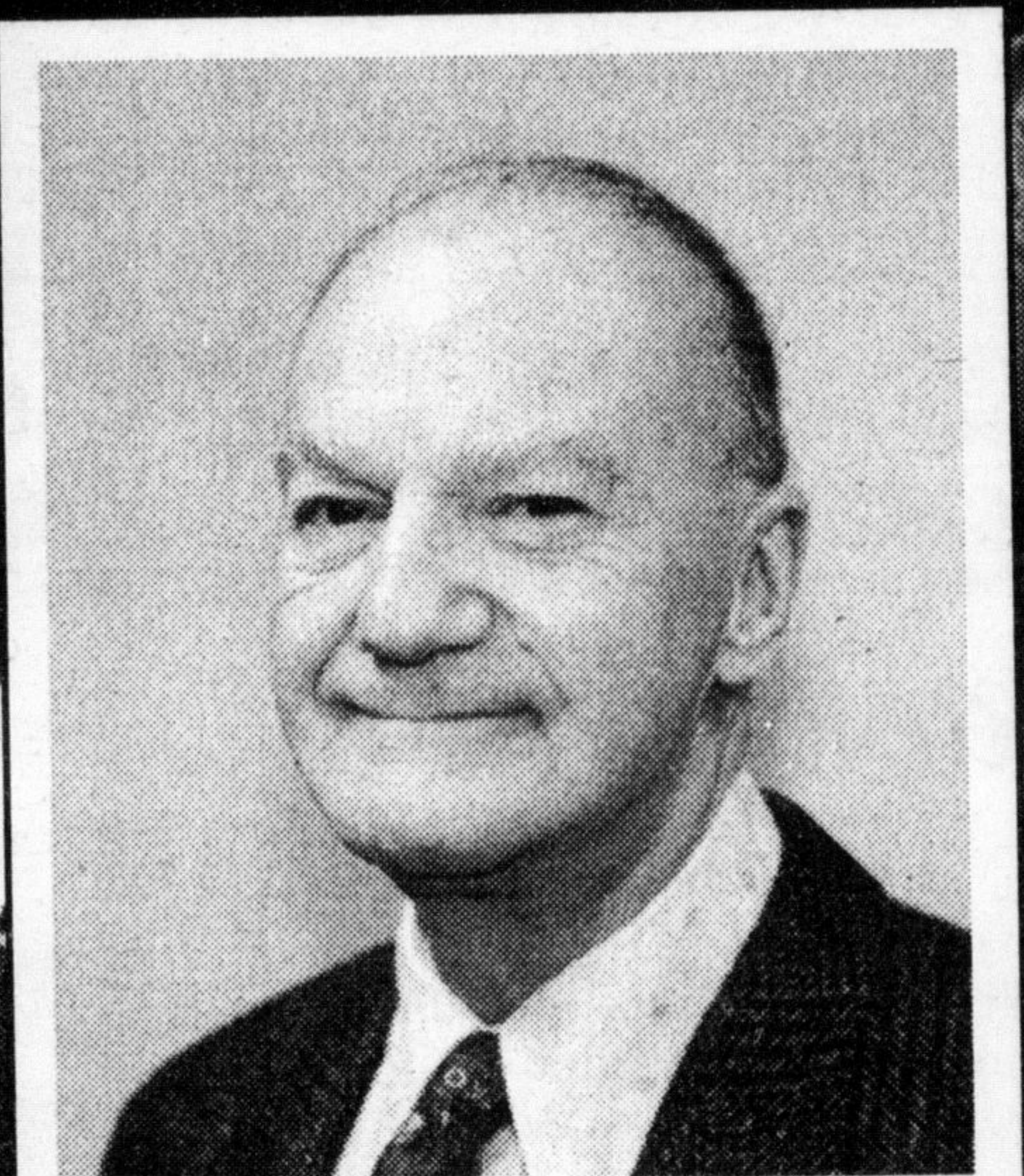
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