

Ex-superintendent to pinch hit for resigned Hope school head

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HOPE TWP. - Michael Buonomo, who retired as superintendent of the Belvidere schools in August, will be filling in as interim administrator of the Hope Township Elementary School in February.

Elizabeth Nastus has resigned as district superintendent and principal of the Hope school to become superintendent of the three-school, 1,800-pupil Clinton Township School District on Feb. 1.

The Hope school board, accepting the resignation with regret, voted Tuesday to hire Buonomo as interim superintendent for up to six months while the board recruits a new superintendent. Buonomo is to start Feb. 4 and is to receive a stipend of \$450 a day.

Lauren Bartow, board president, said Nastus, who has been chief administrator for the Hope school since 1997, "brought the school to a level of excellence we never imagined. She made some quick, critical decisions from which everyone benefited, especially the children," Bartow said.

The New Jersey Monthly Magazine, in its September 2001 issue, listed the Hope school, along with the Patrick McGaheeran School in Clinton Township, among the state's 31 "great" elementary schools.

In 1999, the Hope school was among 1,000 U.S. schools winning Target Awards in recognition of educational excellence.

Nastus said she has enjoyed the challenge of her job in Hope Township, including implementing new programs and expansion of buildings. She noted state aid will pay 27 percent of the costs of the school's \$2.78 million expansion, a significant savings to taxpayers.

Nastus added that Hope has worked with Belvidere, Harmony and White Township in writing curriculum for the four districts.

One of the Hope school's accomplishments has been a dramatic rise in pupils' mathematics proficiency, which had been below state minimum when Nastus arrived four years ago.

The superintendent said the "vision" she shared with the supportive school board, faculty and community "has been achieved for our children and it's time to move on."

A resident of Somerset, Nastus held posts in Essex and Middlesex counties before taking the Warren County position. She will receive \$129,000 a year in her new job.

Buonomo had been principal of Glen Ridge High School in Essex County before becoming superintendent in Belvidere in 1996.