

New York's Youngest School Superintendent

By Sherrie Negrea
Staff Writer

WINDSOR, N.Y. — By 6:15 a.m., Jason A. Andrews '97 is already at his desk in the superintendent's office at the Windsor Central School District, answering calls and meeting with staff.

On this brisk February morning, a teacher who coordinates the Special Education Department has stopped by with some questions and a parent whose 13-year-old son was suspended for selling drugs has called to complain about his new alternative school — all before 7 o'clock.

It's shaping up to be a typical day for the school superintendent of this small rural district 11 miles east of Binghamton. But Andrews is anything but typical. In January, he became the youngest school superintendent in New York State when he took charge of this 2,000-student district at the age of 30.

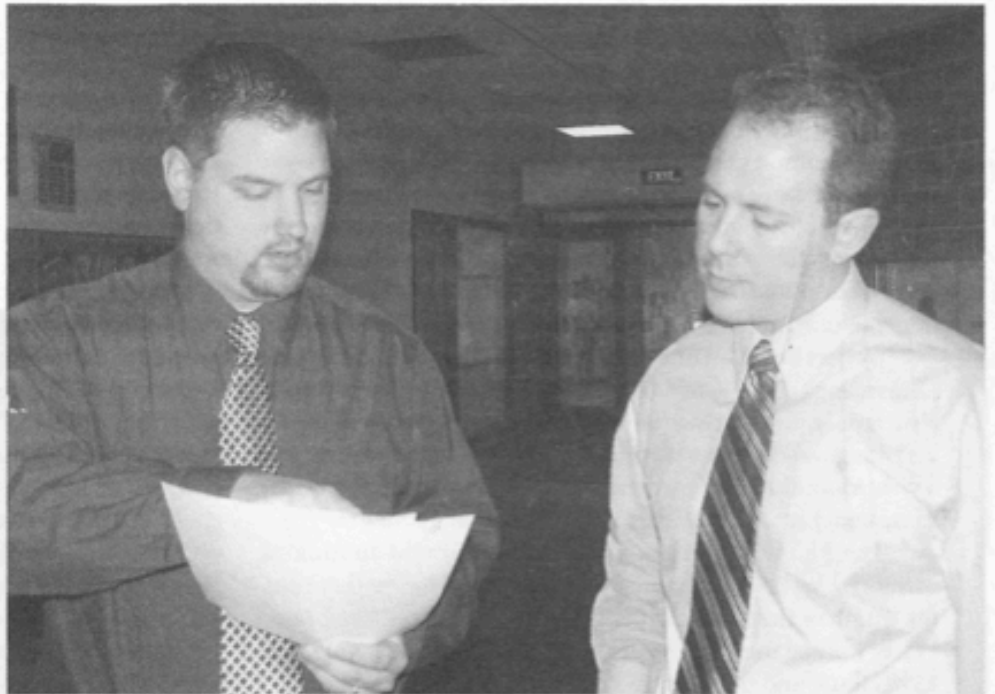
For his friends and colleagues, his appointment was hardly a surprise, knowing that Andrews was elected to his hometown school board when he was 18 and that he became principal of a middle school when he was 27.

"Jason's just such an insightful person that when you're with him for a period of time, you don't even think of his age," says Joseph Busch, the former superintendent of the Harpursville Central School District, where Andrews was a principal. "You think of him as a peer even though you're older than him."

Andrews' success as a principal and his familiarity with the Windsor district, where he had been a social studies teacher and a principal, were the main reasons the board of education selected him as superintendent over 24 other applicants.

"He knew what the job entailed, he knew how to do it and he knew everybody in the district," says Barbara Blincoe, the school board's president. "That's clearly an advantage."

Though some parents have questioned whether the school district, with its \$26 mil-



Jason A. Andrews '97, left, school superintendent of the Windsor Central School District, talks with Windsor High School Principal Jason R. Van Fossen '95 during lunch at the school cafeteria.

lion budget, should be placed in the hands of someone so young, Andrews has easily brushed off the criticism.

"I kind of take the same tactic I've taken at everything else I've been too young to be successful at," he says smiling. "I just have to work hard and prove that I can do the job."

Andrews' fast-track career in education began in his senior year in high school when he ran for a seat on the Harpursville Board of Education. In his second year on the board, he was elected vice president, and the following year he became president for three years, commuting to board meetings from SUNY Cortland.

"That was just a terrific learning experience," he says. "I just learned so much about the ways schools operate and had the opportunity to work with some great people."

At SUNY Cortland, Andrews majored in both political science and secondary education in social studies, unable to decide whether to pursue a career in law or education. In his junior year, he met his wife,

Jeanine Kelly Andrews, '97, at the Friendly's on West Road and Route 281, where she was a waitress and he was a manager. Jeanine now teaches first grade in Harpursville. The couple have a son who will soon turn three.

By the time Andrews began student teaching in his senior year, the scales were tipped on the side of education. His teachers at Cortland were an important influence on his decision.

"I just had some phenomenal teachers and professors at Cortland," he says. "They modeled what I wanted to do."

.....
"I kind of take the same tactic I've taken at everything else I've been too young to be successful at. I just have to work hard and prove that I can do the job."

.....
— Jason A. Andrews '97
.....