

# Maxfield: Deputy choice not 'grooming'

A minor slip of the tongue during Tuesday night's school board meeting might have made some wonder whether new Deputy Superintendent, Sue Zurvalce was appointed for more than one reason.

Superintendent Bob Maxfield acknowledged after the meeting that he slipped with a comment during Zurvalce's appointment, by saying, "It's become increasingly apparent to folks that Sue has been functioning as school superintendent."

He corrected himself, adding the word "acting" before school superintendent.

"I'd love to see Sue become a superintendent sometime," Maxfield said. "This is not designed to be a succession plan for Farmington, not at all."

He added he is not in a position to "groom" Zurvalce. "That's not fair to Sue or the board."

Under Maxfield's current contract, he will work no later than through June 2005. Were he to decide to retire sooner, he'd tell the board by this summer.

"A superintendent search takes a long time," Maxfield said. "It would be fair to give them the best part of a year."

He stressed there's no connection with his retirement plans and Zurvalce's appointment.

Maxfield's appointment in 1994 was the first time the board hired a school superintendent who wasn't an internal candidate, he said.

Sara Maxfield, his wife, took an early retirement from a teaching position more than a year ago, but he doesn't think it's fair to her for him to be away from home as many hours as he is.

"I wouldn't retire to nothing," Maxfield said. "I'll do something else, but I won't do something else which takes this many hours per week. I love this business, and I love what I do, but I'd like more flexibility."

and, if I'm not around, who do you call?" Maxfield said.

Zurvalce's new title better describes her expanded role, he said, she will also continue her present duties.

Her tenure with the district has included hard work on interest-based bargaining, which Maxfield defined as going to the bargaining table and stating what each side cares about and is trying to do.

The switch has resulted in health insurance savings, as well as a move away from what can be an antagonistic process.

Maxfield said Zurvalce handled last year's boundary study "brilliantly."

"She heard all the voices. She brought all these people together," he said. "They came up with a solution which was generally embraced by people."

Zurvalce has also worked on the district diversity committee and was recently honored with the Chair Award from the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council.

"I also regard her as an excellent problem solver," Maxfield said.

In Maxfield's absence, Zurvalce will run board meetings and prepare board packets, acting more as "second in command."

Zurvalce was a social studies teacher in Lansing and worked in human resources in Lansing schools. She also worked for the Michigan Association of School Boards, helping it to negotiate contracts.

Zurvalce thanked Maxfield for his support and confidence.

"I'm delighted," she told the board. "I remember when I first came here in 1989, how quickly I felt a part of a family."

I still feel this is home, this is a family. Bob Maxfield and this board of education has really created an environment where people are allowed to take risks."

While Zurvalce attends a local event today, Maxfield will speak at the University of Michigan forum organized by Mary Sue Coleman, its new president. He will be speaking about how high schools and colleges can create better relationships and how school districts can better prepare students.

Also on the panel will be Michigan State University President Peter McPherson; Howard Sims, CEO of Sims, Varnes and Associates; and Robert Blain, a college of education professor.

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## DEPUTY

FROM PAGE A1

named principal of Dunckel Middle School two years ago, the district didn't fill his central office position. Instead, Zatrulce Michaelson was given expanded student services responsibilities, in addition to a role in promoting safe schools.

Having three assistant superintendents has worked well, but this year Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for business and operations, requested and was given a half-time position so she could spend more time with her family.

"There are times when a transportation issue might come up on a Friday afternoon

mountains, rivers and more April 4 at Central Michigan University.

Sean Young, a Dunckel seventh-grader and Spencer Schroer, a Power eighth-grader

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

Two middle school students are preparing for a battle of brains involving world capitals,

have qualified for state competition in the National Geographic Bee.

Jerry Morrissey, a Dunckel teacher who also handles the school's geographic bee, said that Young seems to have an affinity for geography.

"We wish him all the best," said Morrissey, adding this is the second year Young was tops in Dunckel for geography.

Schroer said he is taking a nonchalant attitude toward preparing.

"I'm not really studying or anything like that," he said. He does love science and reading, though. His favorite authors are Tony Hillerman, who writes

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