New superintendent takes over the helm

Schools exist for one purpose and only one purpose, according to the new superintendent at Brady: To educate students.

Every decision Bill Porter makes for the school district will be based on that idea, he said.

Porter took over as superintendent in July. He said he hopes his straight-forward approach to school management will pull the school system and community into a single team-like unit to benefit Brady's children.

"I want every person in the school and the community to believe we have something special to offer," Porter said. "We have good, solid academics. We have to build on that and make this a school known for its pride and dignity."

The district, he said, is headed in the right direction.

One area Porter hopes to build on is technology.

"Our kids live in an instant world," he said. "They are driven by instant satisfaction, instant answers. Technology drives that."

For instance, he said students don't want to pick up a dictionary to find a word's definition. They

want to type a few letters into a computer and have the answer appear.

“We have to be able to use that as a teaching tool,” he said.

That is one reason the district is moving toward a one-to-one initiative with laptop computers for each student. Porter said Smart Boards and other technological advances the district has recently made are helping to bring Brady up to speed.

“It all takes money,” he said. “In a small school, you’re always going to struggle. We just have to learn the best way to handle it without taking a step backward.”

Porter has made getting the district out of debt, even to itself, one of his priorities.

A $500,000 bank loan has been paid off by borrowing funds from other district accounts. Now Porter wants to eliminate that debt and build a cash reserve.

“We’re tight,” he said. “Really tight.”

Increasing enrollment is the best way to improve the budget situation, he said.

But taking care of students and making families feel welcome inside the building are important in helping encourage current students to remain.

“I want everyone to feel comfortable coming here,” he said, “whether it’s a student or parent or patron. It’s their school, after all.”

Porter said the day-to-day operation is not likely to change much with him at the helm. What he hopes families find is a noticeable presence as he intends to be involved and supportive at all school activities.

He also hopes to improve communication.

“My door is always open,” he said. “I know I don’t have all the answers but I know where to find them.”

Porter, a long-time elementary teacher, was most recently the superintendent at Cheylin Public Schools in Bird City, KS.

Prior to that he served as superintendent at Sioux County Public Schools in Harrison, NE.

A native of Iowa, Porter and his wife Veronica lived in Brady in the 1990s, with two of their four children graduating from Brady High School.

They have built a house on the northwest edge of town.

“We’re glad to be back here,” he said. “This is where we intend to retire.”