

Harlem board member seeks link

■ Between schools, trade industry:

Newcomer Michael Letsinger started his career with a plumbing apprenticeship.

By **STEVE FRIESS**

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MACHESNEY PARK—When new Harlem School Board member Michael Letsinger takes his seat at Tuesday's board meeting, it'll only be the second one he's ever attended.

His first was Sept. 25, the night he was sworn in.

"I didn't even realize they were open to the public," said Letsinger, 40, of the 10000 block of Perry Lane in Machesney Park. "I've got a lot to learn. It's a lot more responsibility than I imagined, but I'm up to it."

Letsinger, a vice president at Pearson Plumbing and Heating

SCHOOLS

Co. in Rockford, was chosen over three other candidates last month



Michael Letsinger

for the seat vacated by board member Jeanne Pumilia, who resigned in August. His wife, Lori, 35, suggested he apply for the position.

"My wife showed me the newspaper and said, 'See that? That's something you should consider,'" Letsinger said.

"My son will enter kindergarten at Ralston School next year, so this is a way of getting involved with my children's education."

Letsinger has two children, 4-year-old Christiaan and 8-year-old

Abigail, a second-grader at the private Luther Academy who will test for placement in the Machesney Academy next year. The academy, part of the school district, is an advanced program.

A 1973 graduate of Auburn High, Letsinger left college after a year and instead served a five-year apprenticeship as a plumber.

He's now a member of the Northern Illinois Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors Association, teaches adult education classes on plumbing and home maintenance at Harlem High.

The new board member hopes to be a link between the district and the trade industry.

"Only a small percentage of kids go on to college," Letsinger said. "Where do all these kids go? I can bring something to the district in terms of getting the trades involved. I can talk to the kids, I could maybe start a summer program. I'm the right person to pur-