

The Inclusion “Poster Principal of the Month”

For www.inclusiveeducation.ca

Name: Tammy Dunbar, Principal , Southern Carleton Elementary School, School District 14, Woodstock, NB

Questions:

1. What makes your school “inclusive”?

Belief and hard work- Southern Carleton is fortunate to be a learning community where staff, students and parents believe that all children learn best in their community school with age appropriate peers. We also have a strong Student Services Team that works with teachers using a problem solving approach to create the best learning environment for all children, teachers and support staff.

2. What do you do to make inclusion work in your school?

My role is to encourage and promote Best Practices for Inclusion. It is also to be aware of the strengths of teachers and support staff and to allow them to use their strengths to create the best learning environment for all students. Consciously modeling flexibility and using a team problem solving approach is very important.

3. What helped prepare you to be an effective principal of an “inclusive school”?

Experience as a classroom teacher, a Methods and Resource Teacher, a District Consultant, a Vice Principal, and then a Principal prepared me to take on the challenges of an inclusive school. I have been fortunate, in my career, to always have supportive District and School based administrators who believed in inclusion and provided many opportunities for training.

4. Is inclusion good for your students?

Inclusion is a positive approach to teaching and learning for all students at Southern Carleton. The strategies we have learned and use – problem solving, differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, teaching to student strengths, etc. - have helped us create a positive learning environment for all students.

5. What do parents think about inclusion?

Parents are supportive and positive about being part of an inclusive school. They appreciate the problem solving approach we take to support all students both academically and socially.

6. How do you help teachers manage the challenges of inclusion?

We use a problem solving, team approach to help teachers meet the diverse needs of students in their classroom. We schedule common planning time for grade level teams. Resource and Methods Teachers meet weekly with teachers. Our Guidance Counselor and

School Intervention Worker use a behavior intervention protocol to support teachers as they work through behavior concerns. We also have a strong Student Services Team that meets weekly to help address the concerns expressed by school staff. Our philosophy is that we “work together” to create a positive learning environment at SCES.

7. What is the toughest thing about leading an inclusive school?

Staying focused, positive and pro-active- we have a diverse population and many challenges. We must always be looking ahead – if we are not moving forward we are falling behind.

8. **What would you say to parents/teachers who aren't certain if it will work?

This is a difficult question to answer- the individual concerns of parents and teachers would need to be addressed specifically. Speaking with parents and/or teachers who have had positive experiences with inclusion would be the best way to address concerns.

9. Do you have a final comment?

Being an inclusive school has helped us build the positive sense of community we have at Southern Carleton Elementary. We work on challenges and celebrate our successes together.