

## **Band Teacher Extraordinaire!**

**Part A:** Verna Ahner is the Band/Music teacher at Springbank Middle School where I am the Principal. I have known Verna for four years, during which time I have observed her work with her various students and groups in the school. I have also had the opportunity to accompany the band on two interprovincial band trips, one to Vancouver Island and one to the National Band Competition in Ottawa.

If I could sum up Verna's approach in working with her students, the teacher axiom of "firm but fair (with fun!)" would absolutely epitomize her relationship with her students. In the middle school, students can sometimes distance themselves from activities they don't think are 'cool', but Verna is able to get past that by ensuring her lessons are fun and fast paced. Within those lessons, she ensures students are on-task and contributing, yet makes sure they enjoy themselves the minute they enter her room.

Most of the students who enter her band program enter in at the Grade 6 entry point, with the great majority of the students not having any band or instrument experience. From that point, she finds out about each student and helps them to find the instrument that is just right for them.

She then immerses the children in her program, providing assistance to families to rent the equipment through Rental and Information evenings. Throughout the year, in addition to regular instruction, she takes advantage of opportunities to have the children showcase their skill development through various assemblies for students and parents, such as Remembrance Day, a Winter Concert, and a Year End concert.

As the children progress through the grades, she continues to provide assistance through workshops and band camps, utilizing area professionals as instructors. A regular feature for the students is their participation in the provincial band competition. Last year, the Gr. 8 and Gr. 7 band each won the Excellent Plus rating, while the Gr. 6 band won the Excellent rating.

In the 2011-12 school year, the Gr. 8 band went to Ottawa to compete in the National Music Festival, where the band achieved the Gold level standard for their exemplary play and performance. They will again be competing in Ottawa in June, 2016.

**Part B:** In terms of the effect of her work, it is significant to note the band program is the largest and most successful school program in place. Every year, we consistently have approximately 10% or more of the student body sign up for the band programs, with next year being closer to 15%.

Perhaps more telling is that even after students have left the school and her program, they return to the school to visit her, always enjoying big smiles, hugs and reminiscing of great times that were had.

In closing, I am fortunate to have an individual with such energy, commitment, expertise, passion, and dedication in my building, serving our students.

**(Word count: 479)**