

# Worman likes small town setting

NEILBURG—As the technology integration teacher, Diana Worman doesn't have a home classroom but she clearly likes it that way.

Besides it kind of works well since she also happens to be the principal at this fairly small (168 students) but extremely busy K-12 school. The fact she might not be able to spend that much time in her eclectically decorated, small office is just fine.

As she says herself, she revels in the differences that she experiences walking the hallways, whether it's the enthusiastic high-fives or "awesome hugs" from the younger students or feeding off the same level of energy from the junior and high school wing.

During this brief visit her rapport with the students was readily evident, as was her casual way of dealing with students who perhaps weren't quite where they were supposed to be at that specific time. There was nothing heavy-handed about it, when a good natured exchange still managed to accomplish the objective.

It's all part of what Worman categorizes as a "very busy school, a caring and respectful school where everyone is really involved in a lot of things, whether its students or staff."

Her unabashed boosterism of the school comes in large part due to her experience which has given her an acute comparison. While she was previously a longtime teacher in Edmonton, she and her husband—who were both born and raised in this area—were among those who repatriated to rural Saskatchewan, and it's a move she hasn't regretted for a second.

This is her fifth year at Neilburg Composite School after having applied for the principalship vacancy upon earning her master's degree in communications and technology from the University of Alberta.

"I like the feeling that parents feel like they can come and talk to me here (and that includes outside school as well). Its part of a very open philosophy we have here and that's between parents, teachers and kids and it works really well for us."

Worman is exuberant about what the school is able to offer the students as the result of what she calls an exceptionally strong, stable and committed staff. That includes the full range of academic options including calculus, for example. In terms of extracurricular she's also quick to praise her colleagues who are integrally involved in the full gamut of sports (boys' basketball suffers because of the direct competition with hockey) and there's



Neilburg Composite School principal Diana Worman might be the technology integration teacher but she doesn't get to spend that much time in her own office.

also a well-rounded fine arts component including drama, music and art as well as a cooking club and an active student representative council.

According to Worman, there's no question though that it's academics that is definitely the highest priority, and she boasts of the continued high degree of proficiency among students. "We have high expectations and it's something we work hard at as a team."

During this visit a couple of keen students came in to the office to borrow the robots that are built into the daily "plus time," which Worman explained is designed to offer those students who might be struggling an opportunity for extra help while those who are excelling have the reward of some time for pursuits such as robotics.

Worman indicated the Northwest School Division has made technology a priority, which works nicely with her expertise. There are already two SMART Boards in the school with a third on the way. The principal said she's thankful for the division "putting the money in where it needs to be, because that's the bottom line." That, and the fact, she said it's been a great help that the staff is willing to learn as well as the students.

The village of Neilburg (population 500) and surrounding community has been hugely supportive not only in such fundraising initiatives as relief for Haiti and Telemiracle in recent times with nearly \$10,000 raised. "The community just really rallies around what we're doing at the school and you need that. The value the community places on the school is obvious, and we don't take it for granted."

Worman said a major factor in that relationship is the fact that she and all but one of the other 13 teachers on staff make their home right in the community and area.

"The community absolutely has its own identity and we support each other. You can go to any event in town and there's probably going to be one of our teachers there, and so we have those relationships and we're on a first name basis with people in the community. That makes it a lot easier for parents if they have something they want to raise with you I find. I know it's not for everyone, but for me this really works well and I prefer the more personal touch, both with staff and students. I find it to be much less stressful than in a city school, and I love it here," she summed up. ■

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