

"When I wake up each morning, my heart is filled with joy as I think about the potential challenges and the certain rewards in the day that lies ahead of me...children who are loved, cared for, taught and supported in reaching expectations are our hope for a harmonious future. Let us never lose sight of this vision," said the 52-year-old Churher who lives on a farm near Tweed.

Churher's career in education has been as varied as it has been exceptional.

Growing up on a little farm just east of Bancroft, she was in Grade 3 when she decided to become a teacher.

Her dream came true in 1973 with her first teaching assignment at North Hastings Senior Elementary School. She subsequently moved to Bayside School and initiated the instrumental music program there and worked on curriculum and special education resource roles.

Churher moved to the Education Centre on Ann Street and took over the portfolio of gifted education.

The former Hastings County Board of Education granted her a sabbatical leave and Churher completed her doctoral studies.

"At the time, I viewed this as a wonderful opportunity. In retrospect, it was a very generous gift," she said.

Churher returned to work after her sabbatical as vice-principal at Park Dale School in Belleville and then principal at Bayside School. She returned to the board office as co-ordinator of assessment and evaluation.

She has instructed teachers at Queen's University and co-authored two science textbooks. As well, Churher has been instrumental in implementing programs in early literacy and reading, mathematics and science.

According to the Education Week committee, Churher's work on assessment and evaluation "has enabled many schools to improve teaching and communication with parents."

Churher has been principal of Earl Prentice in Marmora for the past seven years.

"In education, and in life, it is the sharing of our lives, our philosophies and our visions with others that, in turn, enriches our lives," she said.

Churher has based her career on the simple premise that "children deserve our best.

"We need to look at the whole child and work with the emotional child, with the academics for the child. We need to always maintain high standards for all children, in both their behaviour and academic expectations."

Les Jewell, last year's recipient of the Sir Mackenzie Bowell Award, said Churher "gets results in learning and in improving performance."

The retired superintendent of education recalled how Churher was always pressing the local school board for anything that would help her students.

Churher took his comments as a compliment.

"I have a reputation for fighting for children and I don't apologize for that," she said.