

Principal wants to make school positive experience for students

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Stouffville District Secondary School's new principal Arlene Smith has a two-fold job: making SDSS the best place for students and moving it all in 2007.

She started during the summer by learning about the school, its students and the community.

Department heads "described to me how they saw Stouffville now and what kinds of things needed to be changed to make it even better," she said.

This is Ms Smith's first

time in a small town setting. When there is only one high school in town, she said, it is central to the community. "I want to be part of the community."

She's been an educator and administrator for more than 30 years, most recently as the York Region public board's co-ordinating principal of special education. Over the years, the Toronto resident has taught and been an administrator in the North York and Toronto systems.

Much of her work has been in special education, which gives her an appreci-

ation of what people with different talents and abilities can achieve.

Describing SDSS "as a good solid school to start with", no major changes have to be made, she said.

Ms Smith plans to build on the school's strong sports focus by emphasizing scholastic achievement, consistent attendance and a safe environment so students of all abilities can achieve at their highest level.

A new dress code has

also been approved for students.

Ms Smith is working to make school a positive experience for her students, but her concern for them doesn't end when they graduate.

"I do think education is a life-long process."

She is involved in the articulation program that helps students move on to university or college.

About 20 per cent of last year's Grade 12 graduates are returning for another

semester or two, giving them more time to decide on a career or trade.

In the meantime, Ms Smith is developing a team to make the move to a new facility as seamless as possible.

The 50-year-old school will be replaced in three years.

The new facility will be on 15 acres south of Main Street, behind Sobey's, and will accommodate up to 1,600 students, almost double the current population.



ARLENE SMITH: New SDSS principal developing team to make seamless move to new facility.

Website helps students escape debt sentence

Two Thornhill students have launched the first Canadian Internet website designed to take the bite out of buying university and college textbooks, some of which, they say, can cost \$300.

Lawson Hennick and Mike Levine, both 21, co-founders of www.books-forschool.ca, were commiserating about textbooks for their respective studies at York University's biology program and Ryerson University's information technology program.

"We were venting frustrations about pricey books when the idea sparked about a year-and-a-half ago," said Mr Hennick, who, like his friend, is in his third year of university.

The duo put thought into action. They were going to

launch in January of this year, but held off to include a number of enhancements.

Experienced in website development, they decided an Internet-based central directory where post secondary students can communicate for the purpose of buying, selling and trading used textbooks would be a welcome alternative to rueful pleas on bulletin boards.

They were proven correct. After less than a few weeks on line, their site is averaging 15 new registrants a day. A few hundred textbooks are currently listed. By the end of the forthcoming semester, they anticipate 1,500 more.

"We believe strongly in the notion that post secondary students deserve a higher level of learning, not a debt sentence," said Mr Hennick, whose biology courses require texts costing between \$100 and \$300 each.

—Chris Traber

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