

2006 HONOREE

Susan Superson

Birchland Park Middle School, East Longmeadow, MA
Special Needs Education • 6th-8th Grade



Years Teaching: 25

Average Class Size: 15

Classes Taught Per Day: 6

School's % of ESL Students: 1%

School Type: Public, Suburban

Type of Class: Self-contained

“On any given day of the week, our door is open to others. We do not function in a vacuum, but rather, try our best to engage our community. Emerson said, ‘Nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm.’ I believe students must work with their brains and their hearts. Their passion then affects their lives outside of school as well as the life of the greater community. The truth of this was evident when, at the end of the school year, my students organized a peaceful sit-in to protest our district’s cutting of our program from the budget. Ranging in age from 11 to 14, these students spoke out at an evening school committee meeting, collected the two hundred and fifty signatures required to file a petition at the town hall, and submitted a warrant article for a town meeting vote. When questioned by administration during their sit-in, they said, ‘We are invoking our First Amendment rights to free speech and protest. We will make a difference.’ Due to their efforts, our program was restored for the 2005-06 school year.”

“As a teacher, I serve as facilitator, designing parameters for student success, yet always allowing for student choice, differentiated lessons, and student autonomy. If students can ascribe no meaning to their tasks, they will not learn. Allowing choice



within parameters encourages students to work within an area of strength, develop passions, and succeed. That’s all very nice you might say, but what are they learning? The beauty of it is that they are learning the very things that are part of state standards. Things like research, crediting sources, speech, debate, and creative problem solving. Students learn these things not by rote and deadening repetition, but in joyous celebration.”

“Susan Superson’s innovative teaching and ability to awaken students’ own motivation to achieve their potential is extraordinary. Students come to her room for her special programs during tutorials, they come after school to build future cities, they come during homework, they come whenever they can. Students are drawn to her like a magnet. Susan is a tireless advocate for students as a whole and individually. In the face of endless testing, budget cuts, and a lack of support, she inspires creativity and her teaching style empowers students. I am in awe of these students and their inspiration, Susan Superson.”

– Lisa Mrotek Rhinehart,
parent of current student

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

HomeTown Hero Award (2006) • East Longmeadow Board of Selectmen Award (2006) • Honorable Mention - Springfield City Library Poetry Award (2006) • First Place - East Longmeadow Library Poetry Award (2006, 2004, 2003, 2002) • Mable E. Merrick Award (1976) • Honeywell SpaceCamp Educators’ Award (2006) • Nominee, World Leadership Forum (2006) • Nominee, Massachusetts Teacher of the Year (2000) • Children’s Empowerment Award (2001) • Kappa Delta Phi, International Honor Society (2006)