



PRESS RELEASE

Longwood Central Schools

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Longwood School Psychologist Named Dowling College/News 12 Long Island Educator of the Month

RIDGE -- Dr. Katherine Meehan, a Longwood School District school psychologist assigned to the Ridge Elementary School, has been selected as one of 12 Educators of the Month for the 2011-12 school year by Dowling College/News 12 Long Island.

Dr. Clyde Payne, Dean of the School of Education, Dowling College, congratulated the entire Ridge staff and noted the many times he has presented the award to a Longwood teacher.

"You can't do it alone; you need cooperation and the support you get from the entire staff," he said, noting that Dr. Meehan is a critical component of an effective educational program that serves autistic students who were brought back to their home district.

Debra Winter, Longwood's Assistant Superintendent for Student and Community Services, nominated Dr. Meehan for the award. She credits much of the program's success on Dr. Meehan's determination.

"She has been with the program since its inception and has written grants to support it," Ms. Winter said. "She demonstrates every day her genuine compassion for an extremely challenging population," she added.

Dr. Meehan trained teachers and aides for the Alternative Learning Program (ALP) that serves these students, and works as a behavior consultant for teachers and parents. The program serves as a model for other districts.

The goal of ALP is to provide students with general skills to be successful in the community. The highly structured class at Ridge Elementary School has developed opportunities through a student-run school store, where they do everything from stocking to shelves to checking out customers. In a pre-vocational classroom, they learn such skills as making beds, doing laundry, and limited cooking.

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EDUCATOR OF THE MONTH – ADD ONE

There are special perks for the kids, too. On Fridays, they get to have lunch with their favorite school psychologist. “I can’t go near the cafeteria on the other days,” she said, explaining that when the kids see her, they think she’s coming to get them for lunch.

Dr. Meehan thanked her school administration, Principal Janine Rozycki and Assistant Principal Yvette Mercado-Tilley, for their support of the ALP program. “But we couldn’t do it without the teaching staff and the great kids we serve,” she said.

“If what she and these individuals do all day for some of the most challenging students in the district doesn’t make her stand out, her work in her home community will,” Ms. Winter said. Dr. Meehan is a volunteer firefighter, EMT, rescue swimmer and rescue diver, and in her “spare time,” organizes teams from Ridge to participate in the Autism Annual Walk.