

## Meeting students where they are

### Help us name the Karen Webb Suite at Sanford High School

In the Sanford School Department, educators and community members recognize the importance of creating learning environments where every student can succeed. At Sanford High School, one of the most impactful examples of this commitment is the Alternative Education program led by Karen Webb.

For close to three decades, Webb has served as an educator and director of this program. In this role, she works closely with students who face challenges that can make a traditional high school setting less supportive of their needs. With a team of dedicated teachers, Webb has cultivated a smaller, learning environment where students can build confidence, stay engaged in school, and work towards graduation.

Under Webb's leadership, the program has become known for its welcoming culture and strong outcomes. Former students have shared that the program was a place where they felt understood and supported, which allowed them to focus on academic progress and personal growth.

In comments to the Sanford School Committee a few years ago, former student Sophie Bilodeau shared that through the program's individualized support and small, relationship-based structure, she was able to graduate.

"I didn't even think that anything like that existed for me until I was given the option," she said. This statement speaks to Webb's years of dedication to build a program where students feel seen, valued and empowered to reach graduation.

Webb is known as a quiet, steadfast contributor to the Sanford School Community who demonstrates compassionate teaching, innovative programming, and does not shy away from advocating for her students and this critical program. Her impact was recognized when she was awarded the Golden Apple Award during the 2023-2024 school year – an honor given to educators who make a meaningful difference with students



Karen Webb is retiring in June after almost 30 years in Sanford schools, most recently at the helm of the Alternative Education program, which she has cultivated to meet the needs of each student.

#### HOW TO HELP

To make a tax-deductible donation in Karen Webb's honor, visit [www.sanordschoolslegacyfoundation.com/give](http://www.sanordschoolslegacyfoundation.com/give) or donations may be sent via check to the Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation at 917 Main St., Suite 200, Sanford, ME 04073. With a \$3,000 goal, the Legacy Foundation will name the Alternative Education program suite in honor of Karen, and use all funds to support the Alternative Education Program.

and within the community.

While Webb is retiring this year, she leaves behind a program that stands as an example of how schools can meet students where they are and provide the support needed to help every learner succeed. Webb, through her dedication and commitment, has created programming that ensures students who were at risk of dropping out are graduating with the skills they need to have the power to communicate, make informed decisions, and access resources and opportunities throughout their lifetime.

Tracy Gibson, current Sanford High School Principal, first worked with Karen as a fellow teacher in the Alternative Education program. Reflecting on their time working together, Tracy shared, "Having had the privilege of working alongside

Karen in the Alternative Program for 15 years, I can say with confidence that few educators leave a mark as deep and lasting as hers. Karen has dedicated her career at Sanford to shaping the lives of young people – especially those who needed someone to believe in them most. She has a rare gift for restoring confidence in students who had lost their way, and her influence on their success extends far beyond these walls. It is only fitting that we honor her legacy with this dedication. Karen will be greatly missed, and we wish her a retirement as fulfilling as the career she has given us."

To recognize Karen's legacy of commitment to her students and the community, the Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation is collecting donations to fund naming rights to the Alternative Education Suite in her honor.

"Our mission is to enrich the experience of students in Sanford schools and the Regional Technical Center by funding opportunities that go beyond what public resources alone can provide. The Alternative Education program is a powerful example of that mission in action, creating pathways for students to stay engaged in school and reach graduation," shared Lydia Lehoux, President of the Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation.

*All donations to the Legacy Foundation will be returned to the Alternative Education Program.*