



CROTCHED MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Meet Ami O'Keefe, Co-Assistant Principal, Crotched Mountain School



What brought you to Crotched Mountain?

I have been working with the special needs population since I was 17 years old when I got my first job at United Counseling Service in Bennington, Vermont. What started out as a summer job turned into a career path opportunity as I worked there every summer through college and knew that I was meant to help people with special needs.

In addition to working at United Counseling, I was a volunteer EMT in Bennington, where I met my future husband. After we got married, he suggested I explore job opportunities at Crotched Mountain School as a way to combine my interest in working with individuals with disabilities and those with complex medical conditions. I was hired as a teaching assistant and within a year, was offered a teaching position. With my background as an EMT, I was made a classroom teacher for predominantly medically fragile students. I knew immediately that's where I wanted to be and where I belonged. At the time, my classroom consisted of eight students and I worked with them to become stronger, more confident communicators.

What excites you about being named assistant principal?

Initially, I wasn't sure I wanted to leave the classroom because I loved working with my students. But under the previous administration, I had started doing more administrative jobs, attending meetings and making presentations, so I think I was transitioning into the role before I even knew it! One of my first responsibilities was helping to make the statewide assessment process more organized and streamlined. That's a big part of what I continue to do now.

My responsibilities have grown and evolved over time so it has been an easy and smooth transition and I am very excited about it! I am always challenging myself and our team to ask ourselves what we can do better, and to work hard toward being the best special education school, the best professionals and the best leaders we can be.

What do you enjoy most about Crotched Mountain?

There are two things about Crotched Mountain that I love most: the environment and the staff.

At Crotched Mountain, there is no separation of levels - we have students with emotional and behavioral disorders blended with students with complex medical conditions blended with students with autism - and there is a great flow between them. This is a very comfortable environment for our students, because they recognize that other students here are just like them. Their self esteem grows as a result of working together to complete specialized projects and supporting each other's needs throughout the school year.

The staff. What can I say? Crotched Mountain teachers and paraprofessionals are the best, they consistently give 110%, with such a focus on the well being of our students. It's incredible to be around such an inspiring group, who have such pride in their work, and a love of what they do. That is very energizing for me!

What's the best part of your day?

I am so lucky because my new office happens to be right next door to my old classroom, and I love it when the students come in and say Hi. The proximity also allows me the opportunity to pop back into the classroom and be a part of the students' daily flow. I am really touched that they still want to see me and I enjoy celebrating their successes!

Certifications

Certified by the NH State Board of Education in General Special Education with Learning and Language Disabilities.

Education

Master's degree in General Special Education, with a focus on learning and language disabilities from Notre Dame College and Southern New Hampshire University, and bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in special education from Castleton State College.

Experience

17+ years working at Crotched Mountain School as a special education teacher in a self-contained classroom for students ages 11-15, with various disabilities, complex medical conditions and academic abilities. Named co-assistant principal in November 2014 and responsible for special education administration, building safety, emergency response procedures and preparation, as well as daily administrative duties.

**Contact us to learn how
our services can
help children to learn and thrive.**



CROTCHED MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

David Etlinger, Director of Admissions
admissions@crotchedmountain.org / 603.547.3311, ext. 1894
1 Verney Drive, Greenfield, NH 03047 / www.cm-school.org