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Prime Minister's Awards

f o r T e a c h i n g E x c e l l e n c e



Exemplary Practices 2005

Canada



Prime Minister's Awards

f o r T e a c h i n g E x c e l l e n c e

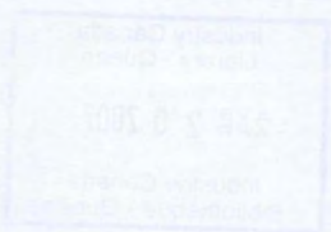
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Exemplary Practices 2005

Prime Minister's Awards



WELCOME

Canadians need not worry about where their next crop of leaders is coming from. They can be found in the classrooms of the 2005 recipients of the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

These teachers are firmly convinced of the benefits of letting students take on leadership roles in the classroom and beyond. The teacher is no longer the focus of attention for every period. Students are learning together.

Many times, they are also teaching — and inspiring — the teachers.

Teachers are learning to see beyond the roles of instructor and pupil to get to know the young people in their classrooms, and their families. And getting to know each other as people makes it much easier for both sides to take risks and face the challenges that life brings.

After receiving their certificate from the Prime Minister, the latest recipients met for a day in Ottawa in March 2005 to share teaching philosophies, ideas, best practices and experiences. Common themes surfaced and resurfaced throughout the day. These included big ideas such as providing hands-on, authentic

learning experiences for students to engage in their learning, building a community within a community, integrating technology into the curriculum, and helping students learn the new language of the media.

The pages that follow highlight some of what the teachers covered during their time together and what the selection committees thought was noteworthy in their nominations. Grouped together by the themes mentioned above, much of the information is of a practical nature, with the intent that other educators can adapt the ideas for their classrooms and students.

This publication provides some biographical information about each of the Certificate of Excellence recipients and brief profiles of the 50 Certificate of Achievement recipients. More information also appears on the Prime Minister's Awards website at www.pma-ppm.gc.ca.

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MEET THE TEACHERS





GRANT ETCHEGARY
Holy Heart High School St. John's,
Newfoundland and Labrador

Daily life for Grant Etchegary involves working with performing instrumental groups within the school's renowned music program, including a concert band, a jazz band, a saxophone quartet, a flute choir, a jazz combo and a brass quintet.

All these opportunities for student participation in music are the manifestation of Etchegary's firm belief in the importance of music education as part of a child's education.

"The connection to academic success and participation in music is well documented," he says. "Music is a performing medium that allows students to express themselves in a manner unlike any other medium. It truly touches the depth of our souls."

Etchegary, himself, is an outstanding musician, having been the principal bassoonist for the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra for more than a decade. He was instrumental in launching the Rotary Music Festival in St. John's and has been actively involved in this nation-wide celebration of music for more than 10 years. He has also led school district honour bands, acted as music director for community festivals, taught at music camps, and has been part of the music faculty at Memorial University.

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ANDREW HICKEY

Holy Heart High School St. John's,
Newfoundland and Labrador

Andrew Hickey has taught for all of his 20-year career at Holy Heart High School, including his student internship. The teacher who acted as a mentor during his internship told the principal: "Don't let this one get away."

Hickey may have wondered what he had gotten himself into. He felt that he had to cover every detail of the curriculum. "I was all about the content, but I quickly felt I was losing my focus and getting frustrated." Fortunately, a fellow teacher noticed this and gave Hickey some good advice. "He said that students don't remember what you taught; they remember who you are and what you taught them as a person. From that moment, my whole philosophy on teaching changed."

Now, having interesting activities and connecting with students is a high priority. Interestingly, the content flows naturally out of those efforts. And this suits the majority of students Hickey is currently working with. He says that this is very much "my place in the school system."

Hickey has an active volunteer life within and outside of school. In addition to his classroom duties, Hickey regularly leads field trips to locations near and far for learning and recreation. He has also coached many school sports teams, including provincial champions. In his community, he is a volunteer fireman and a kindergarten basketball coach.

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MICHAEL GANGE
Fredericton High School
Fredericton, New Brunswick

As Marshall MacLuhan once said, "On spaceship earth there are no passengers; we are all crew." Michael Gange lives this message each day for his journalism and creative writing students.

Gange worked five years as a journalist and broadcaster in Winnipeg, Toronto and New Brunswick before becoming a teacher. Now, he passes on the skills of the trade to his students, but he didn't put his pen and notebook away.

"The drive to write never leaves a writer," says Gange by way of explanation of his ongoing journalism career. Since 2000, he has written better than one book review each month for the local paper and had four major articles published each year on pop culture and understanding the mass media.

He is a play-by-play commentator for University of New Brunswick basketball and hockey games; approximately 50 games carried on both cable and the Internet each year.

"I believe you have to lead by example and I always get several of my students out to help with these productions. I looked around the press box the other day and, of the 20 or so people working there, 12 of them were my current or former students."

Fredericton High School has a campus-wide radio station that Gange manages with student on-air and production talent. He is currently trying to get a small television station going.

Gange is also active in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards for outdoor training and leadership program, having held almost every position in the provincial organization.

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RACHEL MCCABE
Trafalgar School for Girls
Montréal, Quebec

If you asked the 18-year-old Rachel McCabe what she would be doing in 10 years, she probably wouldn't have guessed that she would be a teacher — and not just a teacher but a teacher at a small private girls' school in Montréal.

A product of the public school system in southern Ontario, McCabe didn't know what she wanted to do when faced with having to pick a major at McGill. Looking through the course calendar, she stumbled upon education and thought, "I could do this. This sounds perfect!". In fact, the more she thought about it the more she realized that teaching was a good fit for her skills and interests.

After graduation, she accepted a job at the Trafalgar School for Girls and has never looked back. The school is small — just 210 students who range in age from 11 to 17 years old — so she knows them all. "I love teenagers," she says. "I think they're wonderfully complicated, fragile, melodramatic, and exciting all at the same time."

McCabe's summer job before she started teaching was working on a media literacy project for the Quebec ministry of education; looking at the introduction of technology in three inner-city elementary schools. This got her thinking a lot about integrating technology into the classroom. "Even though my concentrations were English and history, I started my career teaching multimedia in the junior grades. This is a very important part of the language arts curriculum. My strongest pedagogical beliefs are grounded in what I do with these kids."

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DAVID DEBELLE
Joyce Public School
Toronto, Ontario

The commute from the suburbs to the small inner-city school where David deBelle teaches is long and tiring. And even though he says every year that this will be the year he leaves the school and takes a job closer to home, he never does. He has taught there for all of his nearly 20-year career. Why?

Although most of his students are of generally low social-economic status and about 70 percent come from families that do not speak English as their first language, the student and parent community have very strong respect for education and teachers are very much appreciated.

deBelle often teaches every member of a family. He marvels at the fact that students that he met when they were in grade 2 and couldn't speak a word of English, now have graduated from university and are back in the community working.

A hallmark of the school is its integration of technology throughout the curriculum. deBelle is currently writing his master's thesis as a case study of the work that he and his fellow teachers did in that regard.

Thanks in part to the technology, the school is also a centre of activity for the local community. deBelle is actively involved in many extra-curricular activities and programs, such as getting children and their parents to learn music together in the school's digital music lab after school.

He also started an environmental club at the school. In trying to get the recycling retrieved from the school rather than just heaved into the dumpster, he became a member of the regional waste management committee and helped it launch an education program in the schools. This led him to a couple of forays into the political arena, running for the Green Party federally in 2000 and municipally in 2004.

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STEVEN HAMMEL
Woodview Children's Centre
Burlington, Ontario

Steven Hammel's philosophy is "If it doesn't exist, create it."

As a talented artist and a captivating storyteller, Hammel creates unique teaching tools to work with the emotionally and socially challenged kids he, a social worker, and a childcare worker have under their charge for 20 weeks as part of the Early Identification Early Intervention Outreach program (yes, EIEIO).

He uses simple props and cutout figures with moveable parts to animate original stories that will "stick to their lives."

"These kids have talked about feelings — the other f-word — over and over again with people who are trying to help. We try to take the kids outside themselves a little bit and give them a story they might be able to attach to themselves and say, 'This is sort of like me, or this guy is sort of like my dad.'"

The children also do some creating of their own, making what Hammel calls "educational souvenirs" that relate to the stories. For one story about a skilled but angry and lonely stone thrower, and his friend the helper, students get to take home a pouch containing a stone and seed to remind them of the lessons in the story when they are at home.

"What these kids need when they come to me, is finding out that they can learn. They are not successful at home; they're not successful in the classroom. I try to figure out what kind of stuff I can give them that is going to make them feel that they can learn."

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MARY MCBRIDE

Banting Memorial High School
Alliston, Ontario

Mary McBride fully admits that if she were ever to find herself without any Latin students, she would have no one to blame but herself.

"I have to teach absolutely effectively and do an excellent job. If I don't do a good job of teaching this year, nobody will take my course next year, nor will they tell their younger sisters and brothers or friends to join the course."

Growing up in Toronto, McBride attended an academic high school. She opted to go in an hour early each day to study Ancient Greek and completed all the requirements on the fast track, three years for four. She followed that up by studying Latin, French and Greek at university.

After university, she connected her subject-matter expertise with her love of working with young people. "The logical thing was to teach, she says, since I had been a camp counsellor for seven summers. I'd been training by teaching boating, nature appreciation, and crafts. I reluctantly left camping behind to start teaching."

More than 35 years later, McBride's program is one of the cornerstones of Classical education in Ontario and her students beg her not to retire.

"People say if you love your job you never work a day of your life. And I have indeed loved my job. I have been able to retire for the last five and a half years, but how could I be an important person in a young person's life if I were not a teacher?"

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MARK ROBBINS

**Madawaska Valley District High School
Barry's Bay, Ontario**

Mark Robbins started learning to play the cornet at age 7 from his father, a Salvation Army bandmaster. Shortly after that, he began piano lessons and became totally passionate about music. Throughout his teens he became involved in as many orchestras, bands, choirs and small ensembles as he could through his church, community and school.

After teachers' college, a short stint teaching in Toronto, and professional studies with Larry Weeks, former principal trumpet of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Fred Mills of the Canadian Brass, Robbins moved to the Upper Ottawa Valley to be head of the music department at Madawaska Valley. He has been there since 1986.

For a very small community and a small school population (slightly more than 500 students and a teaching staff of 30), Madawaska Valley is a well-equipped school built around a central cafetorium. Robbins calls this facility, "our town's little arts centre." In the same breath, he also notes that the goal for his music program is to "be big in a small community." The music department, itself, is housed in a converted electrical shop, which offers facilities, including six practice rooms, that would be the envy of music teachers in much larger centres.

All that being said, Robbins is very clear that although all the equipment and facilities are nice, he sees the music program as much more than a skills-building program.

"At MV, we're not merely involved in music education but in life education — learning how to work together, how to respect one another, how to overcome self-doubt, explore leadership opportunities, and how to grow as people. They're all part of the MV music department experience."

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BRUCE WHITE
 Vincent Massey Secondary School
 Windsor, Ontario

After university, Bruce White applied for a job in the computer field at Hydro Ontario. There was only one problem, "The job I wanted didn't exist yet; it was on their books for two years from then."

Figuring that maybe he could teach for a couple of years, while waiting for the job he really wanted, he approached high school principals about joining the staff. A couple of interviews and a six-week wonder course over the summer later (those were the days), White returned in September a newly minted teacher.

He arrived to a class of 38 students and only 36 desks. (Two kids took turns sitting on the window ledge each day.) Then there was the matter of actually teaching the material he had to cover. "After two weeks I figured that I was doing such a rotten job that I went to the math head and asked whether I could start over." Fortunately, for students in the subsequent nearly 40 years of White's career, the department head agreed. "He said, 'Okay, tomorrow walk in with a garbage pail in your hand and have them rip their notes out and throw them in the garbage pail.'"

Since that inauspicious beginning, White has gone on to success after success, developing classroom and extracurricular programs that turn some of his students into math titans. Many of his students are regularly in the top rankings at local, national and international contests, and others, who thought they'd never have a hope of passing math, have become confident learners.

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CAROLYN WILSON

St. Michael Catholic Secondary School
Stratford, Ontario

Carolyn Wilson's teaching philosophy stems from a strong belief in fostering a sense of respect and community with students both within the walls of the classroom and beyond. It is based on the principles of justice, solidarity and inclusion. "I see the classroom as a community of learners — a community that is connected to the world and not separate from it," she says.

She sees her work in media studies and world issues as a kind of gateway to helping students understand a number of issues central to their lives as global citizens today.

"One thing I hope students take away from my courses is the lesson that the world is full of heroes. There are people out there who are involved in their communities, who are working hard every day, and who really effect change. I hope that my students realize that this is possible for them, too. I hope they learn that whether it's in the classroom or beyond, they have a contribution to make; they can make a difference in this world.

Wilson is the president of the Association for Media Literacy in Ontario and has organized and delivered professional development sessions for teachers in Ontario and across Canada. She has been an invited speaker at UNESCO, UNICEF and World Council of Media Education conferences around the world. She is the co-author of the best-selling textbook *Mass Media and Popular Culture, Version 2*.

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VIRGINIA WINFIELD
St. Joseph High School
Ottawa, Ontario

After a few years on the job, Virginia Winfield got some wise advice from a fellow teacher about developing a teaching philosophy. And now she has it written out on a coloured piece of paper that sits above her desk.

"And every year I retype it," she says. "It sometimes changes. I re-laminate it and it goes back over the desk. It's something I try to think of every time I plan a lesson."

"I am here to inspire. I am here to be inspired." is how her philosophy currently reads. "And I am constantly surprised how often I am actually inspired by the students."

In the morning, Winfield works with a class of special education students, most of whom won't go into the work force. She started a catering company (Someone's in the Kitchen) that the students now run to give them plenty of authentic learning experiences. "They came up with the name and the logo, do all the shopping, all the cooking, and they actually create some of the recipes. They do all of the advertising; they keep all of the accounts. The money we make, we use."

In the afternoon, she teaches Grade 12 English and creative writing. As the department head of English and creative arts at the school, she works with a lot of new teachers. "I get so much energy from them and their enthusiasm. It's the best part of my job," says Winfield.

Winfield is also an enthusiastic supporter and leader of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards for outdoor leadership program.

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SARAH VARGHESE
Keenooshayo Elementary School
St. Albert, Alberta

Sarah Varghese says that her passion for teaching is a gift from her family. "I come from a family of educators, mainly my grandfather and father. As well, I chose this career in teaching because I wanted to make an impact and a difference in the lives of children, as some of my past teachers have affected my life."

An elementary teacher for eight years in Ontario and Alberta, Varghese completed her master's in education in 2002 while teaching full-time. Her focus on special education and adaptive instruction flows naturally from her work on diversity and inclusiveness in her classroom. She hopes eventually to move into administration to continue her work in these areas and to get her PhD.

Being a young teacher herself, she remembers what it was like, not all that long ago, to be starting out in the classroom. To this end, she is an active participant in the student-teacher program at the University of Alberta. She has led seminars and workshops for teachers in areas such as materials and resources for tracking language arts, has promoted the concept and application of teaching diversity within the classroom, and has provided tools to respond to other issues facing elementary teachers.

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LORETTA VAN BRABANT
St. Teresa Catholic School
Edmonton, Alberta

Loretta Van Brabant's mom always wanted to be a teacher but never had the opportunity. She obviously passed along her passion for the idea, since Van Brabant and three of her siblings are teachers.

Van Brabant has an education degree with distinction from the University of Alberta and she is a role model for hard work.

A teacher for more than 30 years, she most recently taught all subjects in Grade 3, except music. As a result, she has had to become an expert in the curriculum to make sure she covers everything in a year and to stay on top of new developments. "I spend a lot of time staying current with the curriculum."

She translates that detailed knowledge into a steady stream of activities and projects that keep her students happy and engaged in their learning. As one of her former students put it, "Our projects were so interesting that we hardly noticed we were learning anything at all." "This kind of total involvement is the best kind of learning," says Van Brabant in response.

Van Brabant has written exam questions for provincial achievement tests for grade 3 math and designed tests and activities for a math diagnostic kit for grades 1 to 3. These materials continue to be used by teachers throughout Alberta. She also helped design assessment rubrics for creative writing in grade 3. These are available to download from the Alberta Learning website.

After 31 years of teaching, Van Brabant retired in 2005.

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SUSAN CHOW
North Surrey Secondary School
Surrey, British Columbia

Susan Chow was asked during her first teaching job interview whether, as a petite woman, she could manage a class and keep the students in line, even if the students were much bigger than her. "With confidence, I replied that I try to instill a sense of mutual respect. I earn my students' respect and they earn mine," says Chow.

What that principal didn't know, and a group of unruly grade 8 boys found out one day, is that Chow can bench press 150 lbs. This group of boys was arm-wrestling at the back of the room. Chow challenged any one of them to arm-wrestle, on the condition that if Chow won they had to co-operate. Needless to say, Chow won and the rest of the class ran smoothly. "There are times when one must focus on one's strengths and this was one of them."

All joking aside, preparation is the key to accomplishing anything worthwhile, Chow says. Becoming her school's computer facilitator was the ultimate challenge. Having only taken one computer science course in university, eons ago, she felt intimidated. "Now I had to network computers, fix them, instruct teachers how to use them, help teachers integrate technology within their subject areas and much, much more. To prepare I tried to read every available book on computers. It was this challenge that opened more doors to doing unique projects."

Chow also looks at the very big picture of technology in education. For example, she developed an Internet driver's licence, which became a mandatory item for students across the school district. She also tracks computer literacy at her school and, with that data in hand, has been instrumental in determining the scope and sequence for technology delivery at her school. She has also led technology in-service training at the school and district levels for more than 15 years.

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DONNA NEILSON
Rockridge Secondary School
West Vancouver, British Columbia

Donna Neilson has taught every grade from kindergarten to grade 12. She has taken 90 grade 3 and 4 students to an outdoor pioneer school for a week and she has taken high school students to New York for 10 days. "And, believe me, there is no difference between the two. It's exactly the same."

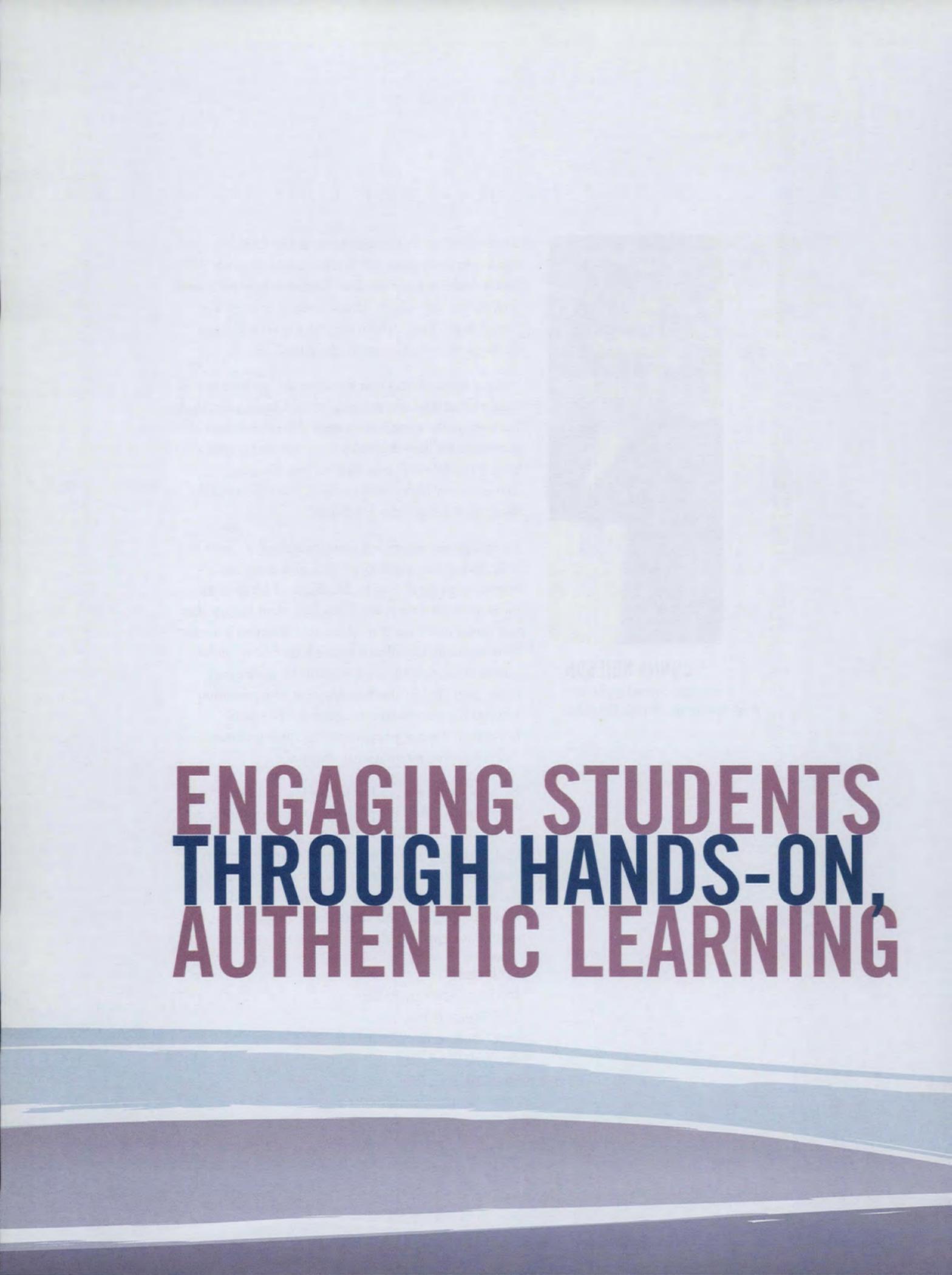
Neilson acknowledges how fortunate she has been to have such a broad base of experience to work from, particularly her work in the elementary system. "My elementary experience has been the backbone of my teacher education. It has definitely informed my best practice, influenced my high school teaching, and influenced the direction our high school is taking."

Rockridge Secondary is a beautiful school (it looks like a ski chalet) but it is also a well functioning one — thanks in no small part to the efforts of Neilson to build a cooperating team of teachers. And it's not that the school hasn't faced its share of challenges. It went from a middle school to a junior high to a secondary school in six years; and on six months' notice each time. Each change also brought new administration and much staff turnover. In addition, the school has a very diverse population, including about 200 fee-paying international students.

Neilson stands for teacher leadership and modelling. "If we believe that the primary goal of education is to socialize our young as they are going to be our leaders in the future, then I think that we have to model for them what leadership is all about, model the behaviours that we expect from them and put in place structures and strategies so that they can be productive citizens of our world."

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**ENGAGING STUDENTS
THROUGH HANDS-ON,
AUTHENTIC LEARNING**



As school competes for attention among the many other activities of busy, modern children and teens, teachers often find themselves struggling to get their students interested in learning.

As the following examples show, many of the Prime Minister's Awards recipients have found that hands-on learning experiences are effective at allowing students to be much more engaged in their learning than traditional textbook-based activities.

Different hands-on experiences allow students to have learning opportunities that suit their learning styles. Learning and knowledge become more personal for students, more meaningful, and more deeply entrenched when it's "their" truth.

And when what students are learning is relevant, it also becomes authentic. The point of a hands-on activity is not just to have students demonstrate knowledge of a concept, but also to have them actively participate in building and sharing knowledge. In these situations, the students take over and the teacher becomes a facilitator rather the director of classroom activity.

Hands-on activities encourage independent and lifelong learning, as students gain an appreciation and a better understanding of themselves, their own needs, and their knowledge.

A New Challenge With Every Activity

Susan Chow readily admits that she and her students attempt to have fun at school every day, but not just for the sake of it. Everything she teaches her business students at North Surrey Secondary School in Surrey, British Columbia, builds on what students already know and makes connections to new ideas — and this makes what could otherwise be dry subject matter come alive. “The things that I do in my classroom never waste my students’ time.”

To teach the crucial economic concept of supply and demand, for example, Chow has students play a computer game that is similar to the television show *The Apprentice*. Students compete and make decisions as real entrepreneurs would to see who can sell the most lemonade. At the end of each game, the students assess their performance.

The knowledge they have gained comes in handy when they look at fluctuations in gas prices. The students also set up a pretend oil auction, with some as oil buyers and others as sellers. They soon see the effects of supply and demand on prices — the invisible hand of the marketplace.

Using this activity-based approach gives Chow flexibility in how she plans her lessons, and allows her to respond to her students’ needs. Sometimes she starts with the theory and then does the activity; other times, she does it in reverse. When the class is having trouble with a concept, she comes at it in various ways until everyone understands it.

The flexibility also means she can throw variables into activities when it suits the students. For example, in the lemonade-selling exercise, she can ask students to look at whether they made enough money to keep their business viable, or add government regulation or interference into the mix.

The long and short of it is that she wants each lesson to be engaging and to have some sense of challenge to it. She also wants to communicate to students that what they are doing is real; that the skills and knowledge they are learning can be applied in the real world.



“Every day, I try to bring in something current and tie it into the lesson. The first thing I do in the morning is read the business pages. One day, for example, I read a story about Adidas introducing a running shoe with a microchip in it.” This dovetailed into a case study of the running shoe industry in that day’s marketing class.

Another day, business people looking to introduce an Arabic cola into the local market met with Chow’s students, who then wrote a marketing strategy for the product. Since Chow had taught the students the basics of how to prepare such a document, they were able to run with the project themselves.

On still another occasion, the marketing class designed and produced flash cards and activity booklets to help children in an orphanage in Mexico learn to read. Since there were 26 students in the class, each student had to develop a flash card for a letter in the alphabet using computer paint and drawing tools. The school’s Spanish students translated everything into Spanish and then special education students laminated and trimmed the flash cards, and assembled the booklets.

“We’re in a global world now, and what I teach my students, I hope, will help them there. Kids criticize school for teaching things that aren’t relevant, so I try my best to show them what I teach is relevant.”

The Jelly Doughnut and The Jackhammer

The biggest challenge Andrew Hickey says he faces in his science classes at Holy Heart High School in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, is keeping the students from tuning out. Some are not interested in the subject and others have trouble picking up the concepts from the textbook, so their attention wanders or they do not show up for class.

What is a teacher to do when he knows that his students need science credits to graduate and there are provincial exams to write as well?

One of Hickey’s secret weapons is the lowly Tim Horton’s jelly doughnut. Hickey uses the tasty treat in a lesson about the oil industry. Students try to suck the filling out of the pastry using a straw (it’s not easy; nor is pumping oil). Slicing the doughnut in half shows a cross-section of dough, filling and air pockets that resembles what an oil field looks like underground.

On another day, he brings in a spherical loaf of crusty bread. Slicing through it with a chainsaw (not surprisingly, power tools grab teenagers’ attention), Hickey illustrates the layers of the interior of the earth; as an added bonus, everyone gets to make and enjoy peanut butter and jam sandwiches at the end of the class.

Hickey finds that giving students everyday examples of things really helps to lift science concepts off the page. While pastries, sandwiches and power tools are useful for introducing ideas, he doesn’t stop there. He builds on these basic ideas to cover the rest of the content related to the oil fields, geology or whatever the subject.

In addition to making his classroom a fun place to be (“I always try to have fun every day.”), using simple objects and food is easy on an always-stretched budget. It has also presented an opportunity for Hickey to get community support for what he does. A local rental company lets him borrow the tools he needs for his lectures — including a jackhammer for a lesson about rocks and minerals that had other teachers wondering whether they had just been through an earthquake.

Hickey’s fun and engaging manner has increased the popularity of science classes at the school, and the students who take his classes — who range widely in academic ability — regularly exceed provincial averages for marks and pass rate. As one former student said, Hickey is “the only man with a chainsaw and jackhammer I’ve ever learned anything from.”

Connecting For Success

It's never too early for students to start seeing the connections between what they learn and real life. Even at the ripe old age of seven or eight, young students have life experience that a teacher can tap into to make learning more interesting and relevant.

For Loretta Van Brabant who teaches Grade 3 at St. Teresa Catholic School in Edmonton, this means looking at all the elements of the curriculum and thinking of creative ways to make it meaningful.

When in Ancient Rome (or Greece) ...

For all the talk of Latin being a dead language, you would never know it if you ever encountered the hustle and bustle of the annual Ontario Student Classics Conference.

What started as a local affair in northern Ontario in the late 1960s now attracts approximately 500 participants from close to 20 schools across Ontario for a weekend of competitions focused on all things Classical.

Mary McBride, who teaches Latin at Banting Memorial High School in Alliston, Ontario, and is one of the conference organizers, says that the conference has grown to be a real celebration of Roman and Greek culture and language.

Teams and individuals compete in a variety of areas, from academics and athletics to creative arts and archeology!

The academic contests include sight translation and quizzes on vocabulary and English derivatives, along with Latin and Greek reading exercises, and tests on mythology, Roman and Greek history, and Roman life and customs. Students strive to become an "academic pentathlete" by achieving the highest score in five areas.

Students also compete in swimming and track competitions, including the 100 m dash, chariot races, Frisbee toss, ultimate Frisbee and slinging.

The creative competition sees the students write a short skit on a classical theme (9 to 10 minutes), make the costumes and scenery, and present it to the assembled crowd. Similarly, students put on a fashion show of authentic and handmade classical clothing, jewellery and footwear.

Finally, there is the archeological portion of the program. Some may wonder how this is possible when the conference takes place at a university in Ontario. As it happens, the competition involves manufacturing and digging up artifacts. Students create five realistic artifacts and bury them. Once all the teams have done so, they switch locations and excavate another team's site using the correct methods. In addition to actually finding the artifacts, each team must analyze them and prepare a report about them and the characteristics of a possible site where similar authentic artifacts might be found.

McBride says that the students get engrossed in preparing for the competitions. This is remarkable, given that they receive no marks for doing so. "They do it all for the glory and love of it." And so does McBride, who has hosted the conference more times than any other teacher in Ontario, and developed one of its best-loved contests, a version of *Reach for the Top*, testing knowledge of Roman life and customs.

For more information, go to www.classicsconference.org

"I call it connecting for success," says Van Brabant. During the first few weeks of school, she looks for connections with students' interests and their learning styles to enhance each of her theme units, which in themselves already connect together many elements of the curriculum. "I connect students to the curriculum and connect the curriculum to students' experience." The students can then enjoy success, no matter where they are as learners.

The friendship theme Van Brabant teaches at the beginning of the year is a good example of the connections she makes. Here are the various activities that make up that theme:

- introduce themselves to the class, share interests and ideas (public speaking);
- write a poem incorporating knowledge of what a friend means to them (written language arts);
- explain and reveal hopes and dreams for themselves and the world (religion);
- create a dream catcher (art);
- learn and accept the unique and special qualities of each other (family life);
- survey and graph physical characteristics and personal favourites (math);
- analyze and discuss stories about friendships as they relate to their lives (language arts);
- use co-operative games on the playground (physical education); and
- celebrate friendship with other Grade 3 classes in the school (drama, music).

(Van Brabant organizes her themes and lessons using a grid that she developed to help her make all the

connections across the curriculum. See "A Practical Tool For The Elementary Classroom", page 44.)

Creating artwork, which children love to do, plays a big role in many of Van Brabant's classroom activities. For a unit on rocks and minerals, for example, she has the children build little people out of small rocks and other materials.

And she soon discovered that children love to talk about their art. This gave her the idea to improve on the age-old activity show and tell and make even more connections with the curriculum.

Instead of just bringing in any old thing from home to show the class, the children talk about what they have learned in the various units or about the crafts they have done, such as the rock people.

In a social studies unit on Christmas (since she teaches at a Catholic school), for example, the children may make and talk about a Christmas ornament, their family's traditions or a favourite toy from when they were younger.

Van Brabant does not hesitate to call these oral presentations "public speaking" and to treat them as opportunities to teach important skills. She sets up a monthly schedule for the presentations and explains to the children about the importance of preparing well, of practising, and of not being afraid to be expressive and share in their own terms. She also teaches them to listen politely, not to interrupt or criticize, to clap at the end of each presentation, and to ask questions.

(Close cousins of public speaking are role-playing and drama, which are also effective ways to engage students; see "The Day Stalin Dropped By," page 34).

Opportunities For Real World Journalism

In a different setting, what Michael Gange's students do in his journalism classes at Fredericton High School in Fredericton, New Brunswick, is not unlike the public speaking that the young learners in Van Brabant's class do — and to similar effect.

Student journalists go into the press box with Gange when he does play-by-play for the local hockey team or the national university hockey championships.

Gange gets press credentials for students and takes them to the political conventions that often occur in Fredericton, New Brunswick's capital. Students travel on the politicians' buses during election campaigns.

Each time, the students have to write an article based on their experience. He admits that their first articles often need some work, but that the experience of being part of an event and learning to ask questions are particularly valuable.

"The best writers are curious, good observers. The mechanics you can fix," he says.

Along with practical assignments, Gange also exposes his students to the theory behind the practice. For example, they will look at how two media outlets, such as the local radio station and *The Globe and Mail*, cover the same event.

The students also discuss the choices the various media outlets make about the stories to feature and the angle to take — their news judgement, in other words. "I'm always amazed at the wide-ranging discussions we have," Gange says.

Students bring their own life experience to the table during these sessions and what they have learned out in the field. The theoretical and the practical reinforce one another and enhance the learning experience for students.



Engaging In The Modern World Through The Past

In teaching history in Canada, Rachel McCabe has found willing accomplices in her students.

The young girls McCabe teaches at the Trafalgar School for Girls in Montréal want to engage in the world, and they want to know where they can most effect change. Teaching them 20th century history is very empowering for them in that regard, McCabe says. It is easy to turn the events of the recent past into lessons they can use in the future and prepare them to become productive citizens.

The key, McCabe says, is variety — to present history as more than just names and dates. For example, when the girls are studying Mexico, they not only learn about the various revolutions that shaped the country, but they also study the world-famous art of Diego Riviera and make tortillas. McCabe says it is important to engage all the senses to appreciate a different time and a different place.

For a unit on Russian history, McCabe has an auction of abstract notions, such as “to be free,” “to be beautiful” or “to create works of art.” Students each choose a person to be in pre-revolutionary Russia, such as a Cossack, a member of the Imperial Family or a Jewish peasant, and bid on which of these ideas would be most valuable and useful to them. This leads to interesting discussions about perspective and need.

McCabe says that it is important for her that students end up caring about the subject matter and the people and time they are studying, and she helps make that happen by designing exercises that put students in those people's shoes.

She also assures students that her classroom is a safe place to have conversations about the alarming events of the past. “There are no stupid questions,” she says, since in history, there is (or should be) little sense of black and white; rather, everything is shades of grey.

As commemorations of historical events come along, such as the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan massacre, and historically significant events such as 9/11 occur, the students immediately want to know about these events and often ask themselves some uncomfortable questions: How can this be going on? How can I be oblivious?

“It is fascinating to watch the girls engage and debate with each other,” McCabe says. This helps them develop confidence and the ability to articulate their arguments.

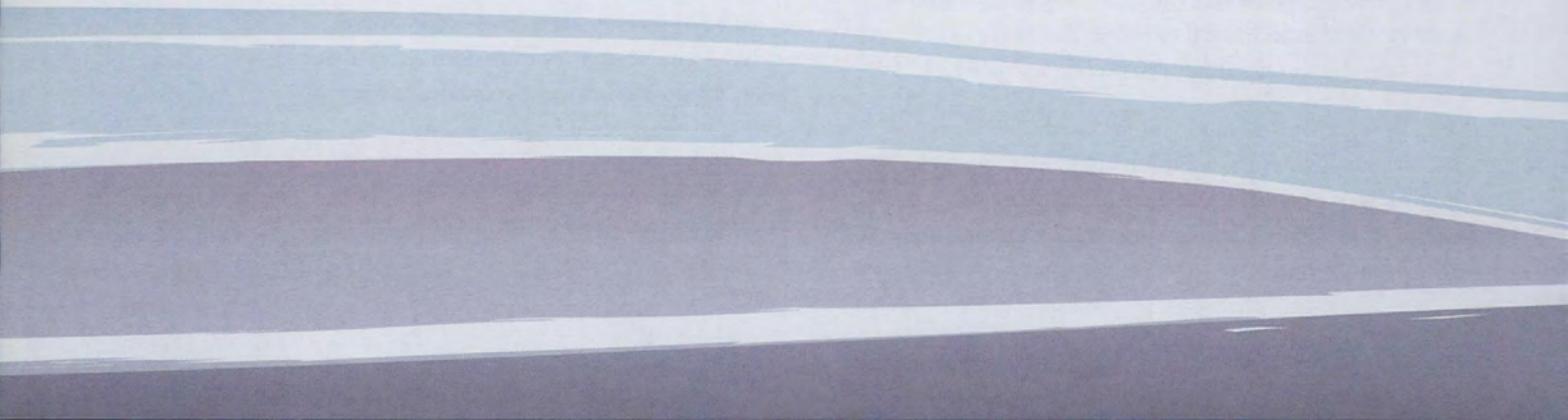
McCabe is a firm believer that knowledge is power. Her class discussions help her students use examples and evidence in their argument and analyze information that is presented to them. In a particularly interesting exercise, she has students read excerpts from Adolf Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, and then, has them refute the author's arguments: “Look at the argument and use your learning to discredit it.”

McCabe also regularly gives her students latitude in the way they demonstrate their knowledge. Some students have done spoken word performances about a particular topic; another wrote a children's storybook about events in the Middle East.

Transferring what they know into something more artistic and creative helps them learn better, McCabe concludes. “We all learn well this way. As well, the students are proud of what they've done, and it's very engaging.”



REACHING
THE “HARD TICKETS”





Connecting with students who are completely disengaged from learning and school is one of the toughest challenges teachers face.

Often, these “hard tickets” just aren’t interested in learning, cannot see the value of it or have other things going on in their lives that put school at the bottom of their priority list. Unfortunately, they skip school or often get labelled as disruptive troublemakers, and sometimes teachers throw up their hands, not knowing how to deal with them.

The Prime Minister’s Award recipients admit to having encountered their share of tough cases and have come to realize that teachers need to go the extra mile to reach them and make an effort not to judge them based on past behaviours. For many of these students, it’s a major accomplishment just to get out of bed and to school every morning.

Teachers must find something to hook these students early on in the year and get them interested. Often, going somewhere outside of the classroom helps. Taking students to a different setting can help the teacher see them in a different light; perhaps more importantly, the students might also see the teacher in a different light.

Having passion every day is key. There has to be a cool thing every day — a moment — that strikes a chord with students. And yet teachers cannot be all things to all students, despite their best efforts. Teachers need to have faith that they are planting a few seeds that one day will grow.

The following examples show how some Prime Minister’s Award recipients have met this challenge and have reached some “hard tickets”.

The Great Outdoors As Your Classroom

Many Canadians travel to Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northwestern Newfoundland, to take in the breathtaking scenery and get away from it all.

Andrew Hickey did the same thing and ended up designing and running a successful and popular field trip to the park that brings students of all interests and abilities at Holy Heart High School in St. John's out into nature to learn and grow.

"I went to a teacher workshop at the park. It opened my eyes to how the outdoors can be a classroom," he says. "To truly appreciate nature, you need to get out into nature."

Initially, Hickey developed a four-day science trip, with park interpreters and scientists leading sessions on the flora, fauna and natural features of the world-renowned park. The activities covered curriculum objectives for geology, environmental science, biology, and chemistry — just about any science discipline you could name. The students really appreciated the chance to work with real scientists.

"After a few years, we realized it was more than the science that the students were getting out of the trip," Hickey recalls. Now students are encouraged to write poetry about their experiences and prepare drama skits for the variety show on the last night. One of the school's English teachers comes along on the trip to ensure the activities meet curriculum objectives.

The Highlanders of Gros Morne trip, as it is called, is also an opportunity for students to take on personal challenges, such as an eight-hour hike



to the top of Gros Morne Mountain, and to do team-building exercises with their peers. "The ones that finish the hike feel like they are, literally, on the top of the world."

The first important step in designing the program was contacting Parks Canada, says Hickey.

"They are very big on outreach," he says. Their interpreters will lead the activities, which takes a big weight off the teachers. Hickey sent them his curriculum objectives so park staff could structure the activities to help meet them. Hickey then did in-service training in outdoor education and completed first aid training.

"We never plan anything beyond the scope of our own training. We also work with skilled park staff

who know the park very well. This helps us keep everyone safe during the four-day adventure."

Hickey says that for many of his students, the trip is the highlight of their high school career, including those who have never had an experience in the outdoors before. The students see their teachers in a different light. "Around the campfire everyone unwinds and the barriers come down. That's where their memories will come from."

That field trip totally reversed one student's life. "She was a real hard ticket, as we call them. We didn't think she'd graduate, but after the field trip she started to really get into her schoolwork and she did graduate. Two years later, she came back to the school to say that she was taking environmental science at university."



The Day Stalin Dropped By

Learning experiences that capture students' imagination can happen in the classroom, too, particularly when the teacher goes out on a limb.

You could have heard a pin drop the day Russian leader Josef Stalin walked into a history class at St. Joseph High School in Ottawa. He barked orders at the surprised students and, before they knew it, had them doing push-ups beside their desks.

As a way to start a unit on the Russian Revolution, you couldn't beat it. "The kids were

hooked," says Virginia Winfield, their teacher, who acted out the part of Stalin.

On another day, to launch a study of *The Lord of the Flies*, she dressed in rags and crawled on her hands and knees up four flights of stairs, crying "Water, water."

"Most teachers forget about sitting in a square classroom... how dull it can be," Winfield says. "The first thing you have to do is wake them up. That's the first purpose of my incorporating drama into my classes."



She has since discovered other benefits. For one, students see the teacher in a different light — as a risk taker. “If students can see you out there, they will put themselves out there. If you ask them to do creative projects, why would they do them when they see that you wouldn’t?”

Drama is also tangible and can involve all five senses. In her history classes, all the students dress up. When learning Shakespeare, she has them act out all the plays. They particularly like using foam swords and ketchup for the fight scenes.

(There must be something about swords. Another recipient, Donna Neilson of Rockridge Secondary School in West Vancouver, recounts how one of her toughest students memorized and acted out a large swath of *Hamlet* when given the chance to do so with a real sword as a prop.)

Winfield has a huge tickle trunk à la Mr. Dressup that she can raid whenever she needs to.

“There’s so much you can do by giving a student a hat or a mask. They feel safe [to take risks they normally wouldn’t].”

Winfield admits that her acting experience makes this easier for her than it might for other teachers. But there are a lot of baby steps any teacher can take to bring a subject to life, even in a small way. Here are a couple of examples.

- Play four corners with a discussion topic: divide the class into four groups, one in each corner of the room. Have each group discuss the question, with each person putting forth their argument. Once everyone has had a turn, those who agree, move on to the next group to collect up more adherents. The teacher can participate in this too.
- Put the desks in a circle every now and then and have a group discussion.
- Give an oral presentation on a topic. Purposely make it perfect or purposely do it poorly. Ask students to mark the presentation and discuss it.

“You don’t have to act, just take mini-risks,” Winfield says, but do take risks and “try to ensure that you take more risks than they do.”

Taking risks means risking failure. And when students see teachers who are willing to possibly fail — in front of the class no less — they may be more willing to take such risks themselves. Winfield recounts a grammar lesson that just wasn’t working. At one point, she flopped in a chair and said in exasperation, “You know what, guys, I’m completely off today.”

“As a teacher, you can’t bring an ego into the classroom because kids smell a fake,” says Winfield.

Words To Live By

Steven Hammel teaches small groups of students who need time away from the regular school environment to get behaviour or other difficulties under control. Small groups of six-to-eight-year-olds come to Hammel's class at the Woodview Children's Centre in Burlington, Ontario, to build self-esteem, work through behaviour problems, and develop a basic set of skills for coping in a regular classroom.

Hammel cannot hope in 20 weeks (how long the children stay in his program) to fix all of their troubles, but he can help them take some important first steps.

One tool that Hammel has found very effective is a class motto. But this is not just any short, catchy slogan; this is a "belief system for the classroom".

If I respect myself others may do the same. If I persevere I can succeed. If I give up I will fail. I can begin to solve problems if I share my ideas and feelings with those who wish to help. My future can be good if I work with others to make it that way. I cannot be perfect, I can only do my best. If I do my best good things will happen.

Hammel hit upon the idea of the motto with a group of older kids for whom behaviour was a problem. He had each child contribute a "line to live by" and then wove the whole thing together. Although the students he teaches now are considerably younger than that earlier group, he continues to use the same motto with good effect.

The motto says that "these are the fundamental things we need to do in the classroom; this is what we believe in this classroom," Hammel explains. Since it is expressed in simple terms, the kids readily understand it and agree to abide by it. "It's like a contract."

If someone does do something wrong, Hammel has the motto to turn to when dealing with the problem. It's a matter of him saying, "You're not living by the beliefs of this classroom," so the student has something real to compare his or her behaviour to, something to be accountable to.

The motto is on the wall in Hammel's classroom in big coloured letters, and stretches about 20 feet.

Hammel also has the students memorize the motto — something that his youngest students think that they'll never be able to do but always manage. The class says it aloud each morning, which reinforces the message and its importance to the class. Hammel does not have the students sign the motto, but says there is a general understanding of it "by virtue of saying it together." Hammel reports that former students tell him later that they still remember the motto. For many of his youngest students, it's the first time they have ever said anything positive about themselves.

The motto has applications outside the classroom too. Hammel has the students make a big poster of the motto for themselves and mail it home. When they receive it, they can hang it up in their home and share it with their family.

This is something that any teacher could do in their class, Hammel says, by adapting the idea to suit the environment and the age and level of the students. He recommends that it be the first thing a teacher does each year to set the class off on the right foot in terms of expectations and behaviour. For younger children, the teacher may want to collect ideas from the kids and then write the motto. Older students, as Hammel found, get a kick out of writing it themselves.

The key is that "you can't just say it; you have to live it."





PUTTING THE STUDENTS AT THE CENTRE OF THE LEARNING



In order for students to be the focus of classroom activity, it is essential that teachers develop a personal connection with each and every student.

- *Recognizing each student as an individual (even recognizing their faces and remembering their names both inside and outside the class) is important to creating a good classroom environment.*
- *Allowing an opportunity for all students to participate, teaching to their individual skills and level, and challenging them to do their best, addresses their unique needs and boosts their chances of success.*
- *Ensuring that learners feel comfortable in class makes the school experience more enjoyable and carries over into other aspects of life.*
- *Being able to teach peers empowers students in their learning.*

Entwining their lives with those of their students by making themselves available and devoting time well beyond the regular school day is a hallmark of the Prime Minister's Award recipients.

Under The “V” For VERBA

Can learning Latin in high school help you in the rest of your life? Absolutely, says Mary McBride, who has been teaching Latin for more than 35 years at Banting Memorial High School in Alliston, Ontario.

“I want students to learn things that will benefit them for the rest of their lives,” she says. Her students have a better vocabulary in English

because they have learned the Latin roots of so many words. (Did you know that the English word *muscle* comes from the Latin *musculus*, the diminutive of *mus* (mouse), because of the mouse-like form of some muscles?) They also have a better understanding of Classical culture and civilization. This helps them to appreciate the literature they read.

Students As Leaders

The list of activities Mark Robbins and his music students at Madawaska Valley District High School in Barry's Bay, Ontario, have on the go at any one time is exhausting just to listen to; a full slate of music classes, countless band, ensemble and choir programs, and a roster of community engagements that would make any service club proud.

How does one teacher manage it all? In Robbins case, he doesn't. "The more diverse you want to be, [the more] you need to get away from the teacher delivery model." In other words, "think of yourself as a coach" and get the students to take as many leadership roles as possible.

The potential for his students to help him run his program occurred to him when he was teaching a music technology unit. The students were really interested in it, and one boy in particular knew more than Robbins did about MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) technology, so he taught the others. "Kids naturally step up into leadership roles," Robbins says. "I'm constantly amazed at what they know."

Robbins soon had other students teaching things that interested them. A very gifted guitarist offered lessons to others who wanted to learn. "The more students got involved the more diverse the program became," Robbins recalls.

Not that it has become a free-for-all. At the beginning of each school year, students present their ideas for what they would like to do. Senior students take on the challenge of sorting out a workable schedule that accommodates sectional rehearsals for the various bands, ensemble rehearsals and other special projects. School policy is that while extracurricular activities such as these are encouraged, students have to keep their marks up. The student leaders have to take this into account too, when setting the schedule.

Student leadership shows itself in other ways. Robbins has instituted a strong peer tutor program in the music department. He handpicks people with strong music and leadership skills from among his seniors to help him with the younger students. The tutors prepare by watching the class they will be helping with a semester ahead. They also get some leadership training before their stint begins. Once on the job, the tutors have a daily planning session with Robbins to talk about what will be happening that day.

Student ensembles — smaller performing groups — provide plenty of other leadership opportunities for students. Not only does Robbins turn much of the daily operation of the ensembles over to the students but the ensemble members also play a role in resolving conflicts among members and recognizing achievement within the group.

Still other students lead warm-ups and tune up the various bands during practices. With all the activities going on, there is also room for student help with administration, such as arranging gigs, filing music and booking buses for tours.

What drives all this student-led work is not only Robbins' desire to offer as diverse a program as possible but also his firm belief in "involvement for all." (In the same spirit, any student — regardless of talent — who takes one of his instrumental music courses gets to be in one of the main performing bands.)

None of this is to say that Robbins gets to sit back and relax all day. He still has a full teaching load and is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the music program. He also has office hours at his desk in the band room and welcomes the steady stream of students who come to him with questions and requests.

More importantly, though, Robbins says, he is modelling behaviour. He knows his students watch how he treats them, so he focuses on respect and positive reinforcement, and he is very transparent about his own weaknesses.

Robbins also does a lot of debriefing with his student leaders, not so much on the musical aspects of what they do but more about leadership. He often goes through teaching sessions with them, getting them to reflect on things that went well and things that did not.

Robbins admits that he is taking a risk by turning over so much control to the students, but he is adamant that the benefits far outweigh the risks. "I get letters from former students who say that I challenged them to try things they had never tried before, to step outside themselves and get over their fear of performing in front of others. Their experience of leadership will affect them for the rest of their lives."



Best of all, McBride says her students are learning how to learn by acquiring various study skills and how to apply them to other subjects.

Interestingly, the methods she uses are not complicated, but they are effective. For example, she has the students write the Latin and English equivalents of their vocabulary words on the opposite sides of cue cards. This study tool helps them memorize and recall words. McBride says that students have used similar cue cards in subjects other than Latin, when they have needed to learn terminology or brief facts.

Students also play “Flyswatters,” trying to be the first to hit the Latin word on the overhead screen when the English equivalent is called. They have to beat three opponents to win a small prize.

McBride writes out Latin words opposite their English meanings on all sides of a 6” x 4” grid. Students, working in pairs, have to re-assemble these into a cube by lining up the corresponding words. She sets a time limit on the exercise to teach students to concentrate and work together effectively. MacBride says teachers could use this technique or variations of it in other subjects.

At the beginning of the class, to keep students on their toes, McBride usually quizzes the words of the story read the day before. Among the most popular vocabulary activities is VERBA or word bingo (*verba* is the Latin for words). For the game, the students have to pick out the five hardest words from among those listed under each letter of VERBA. Students lose one mark of the ten allotted for each error on this vocabulary quiz.

Building Student Confidence

For anyone who has ever struggled with math, the last thing he or she might think is that math is an excellent confidence builder.

Not so, says Bruce White. The veteran math teacher, most recently at Vincent Massey Secondary School in Windsor, Ontario, has seen a career’s worth of students build increased confidence in their abilities just by successfully tackling a math problem.

“Many kids had a bad experience in math when they were little,” he points out, and this has set them against the subject ever since. However, White noticed that when he encourages these students to persevere, they end up succeeding. “When you get students to struggle with something, then they really appreciate it. It builds toughness in the kids. They don’t give up.”

It also helps when you have a teacher such as White who has developed many interesting ways to encourage his students to get active in the learning process, to take up the challenge of math and to stick with it.

One is letting students know that it is all right to put wrong answers up on the board. No one is judged on it, and it provides a basis to build from. Students can help each other figure out the correct answer to a question. When they share ideas, they get really excited, White says. And any student who feels uncomfortable demonstrating a problem in front of the class can do so before class. White then works with them to build their confidence so that they can eventually solve problems with their peers in the room.

Another way that White helps students puzzle out math is by teaching them to think of it as a language that they can learn to read. He encourages students to ask the following questions about a math problem, much as an English student might ask about a text: What does it say? What does it mean? What can you do? This allows students to break the problem down into manageable pieces and work towards the answer.

It also shows students that math is more than memorizing formulas. "Kids are eager to learn to think about math, rather than just do it." White says that when a student uses a unique way to solve a problem correctly without the higher math skills, that's fine with him. "Every job that you get, you have to solve problems. So I try to encourage kids to approach things in a unique way."

The other thing about math is that practice really helps. White always keeps his lessons short but assigns a lot of homework so students have plenty of opportunity to practice what they have learned.

Another favourite device is open-ended tests. White estimates that students should be able to earn a mark a minute, so he writes the test with enough questions that the fastest student would be busy for the whole test period. For the students who excel at math, this gives them a real challenge. Others can set different goals for themselves and work to meet them. They learn to use their time efficiently and do their best, White says.

White backs up his use of these many practical tools by devoting countless hours to helping students to succeed to the best of their own ability. His approach is captured in a favourite saying, of which he regularly reminds his students: There's nothing wrong with being wrong, but there is a lot wrong in being nothing.



That Special Thing

Sarah Varghese's young Grade 2 students at Keenooshayo Elementary School in St. Albert, Alberta, learn from the first day of class that they are someone special.

As is Varghese. Being of East Indian heritage makes her someone special in her community, and she uses this fact to good effect in her classroom in order to teach students about diversity.

"Diversity is all the ways in which we differ," says Varghese. With each class she teaches, she strives

to communicate that to her students. She shows them that there is a lot of difference even among a group of people who look essentially the same.

One way she does this is by giving her students a voice and letting them be heard in a way that suits them.

For example, one year she regularly asked a child in her class who has brain damage due to oxygen deprivation at birth (and who has many learning difficulties as a result), to read a good piece of writing

Trade Team Canada 2015

Future Team Canada trade missions to the four corners of the world may very well feature former students of Susan Chow of North Surrey Secondary School in Surrey, British Columbia. In fact, current trade missions may, since she, along with another colleague, trains her students for this possibility.

Terry Clifford, who is a former member of Parliament, launched the Global Vision Conference at which 17 to 25 year old students attend presentations by big business CEOs, hear about the real-life situations and problems of entrepreneurs, and participate in the development of solutions.

Students who qualify to go to the conference can apply to go on to the Global Vision Junior Team Canada international trade mission. Only one or two students per province may join the team, which has gone in the past to China, Mexico and Brazil.

To have a chance at one of these coveted positions, students must have demonstrated leadership qualities. They then must find local sponsorship from businesses, in order to represent them in the country. But they have to qualify to go to the conference in the first place!

Chow asks her fellow teachers who the current student leaders are, and she invites them and other interested students to come to a lunch hour meeting about the event. Students then apply for a position on the team. Once the team is selected, they are coached on expectations and dress code after they learn to "brand" themselves.

After the conference, any student can apply for the trade mission. In that case, the whole team works to support those interested throughout the application process. In addition to showing the students the importance of teamwork in a business environment, this brings the added bonus of showing young people to support others and to have respect for others' talents.

For more information, go to www.gvconnects.com

in front of the class. She encouraged the students to understand and accept his learning difficulties, and to realize that he was trying his best. "To show support, the class gave the boy a standing ovation every time he read something. It was amazing to see how proud he was of his accomplishments. This helps create a drive to succeed," says Varghese.

Varghese asked another child, who is Aboriginal, to share an art activity particular to native culture with the class. Another child who was very interested in technology became the class AV technician. Good storywriters have their work laminated and posted on the board.

"Children know there is difference in the world, so they accept it and move on. What I can do is help them build on each other's strengths."

Varghese sets this standard for acceptance and growth right at the beginning of each year by having the students draft a class code of behaviour. On the first day of class, the students discuss rules; why you should have them, and what they should be. "This way they always know what they should be doing, they agree on the consequences, and they learn respect for individual differences."

Varghese writes the rules out on chart paper, and the children all sign it. Two of the most important

A Practical Tool For The Elementary Classroom

It is a bit overwhelming when you first look at it, but Loretta Van Brabant's year-at-a-glance chart tells her everything she needs to know about what she is going to teach her Grade 3 children from September to June at St. Teresa Catholic School in Edmonton.

On 11" x 14" paper, the chart has the months of the year going down one side. Across the top, the first column contains the themes used to integrate the subject areas (e.g. friendship, the past, fantasy, animals). The other columns are for each of the subject areas.

The idea for the chart stemmed from Van Brabant's notion that it would be much easier to teach the elementary curriculum — and that the curriculum would be much easier for the students to follow — if she took advantage of the connections between subjects. "I thought things were disjointed, so I put chunks together to better build upon learning, which builds success." She has also found that this big-picture view makes it easier for her to evaluate her students. "I get a more well rounded view of the kids."

The key, Van Brabant says, is to know the curriculum and then to think about how best to present it at the children's level. "You should also look at what kids would have learned the year before, and then, what they would need to learn the next year." Another thing she does is write down general and student-learning expectations for each subject area, and look for the commonalities among them.

The grid helps Van Brabant keep track of what she has to get done in any given unit. At the same time, having everything plotted out means that it is easy for her to see how she can move things around in her schedule when she needs to be flexible.

Van Brabant admits that developing her first grid was very difficult and time-consuming. In subsequent years, however, it has gotten easier as she has learned from previous years. She says that this integrated approach is easy to implement in primary grades, because she is with the students almost all day. It also works well in team teaching situations, as team members can be sure their efforts are complementary and there's no duplication.



rules are to mind your own property and always respect others. The consequences are very clear: Varghese gives a warning the first time a child breaks a rule. The second time, she takes five minutes off recess. The third time... Well, she's never had to get to the third time.

She continues her emphasis on good behaviour and student leadership in the schoolyard. Older students learn respect and how to deal with various people as they monitor activity in the schoolyard during recess. These Grade 6 students are trained in mediation, and follow a very scripted process to resolve problems that arise. The program has been so successful that the children now have the added role of leading

games. "Kids do have something to contribute," says Varghese. "It's neat to empower kids to teach."

Back in the classroom, Varghese brings out the Magic Bag which contains each child's name on a small piece of paper. A child's name is drawn from the bag and all the children have to write a sentence identifying a positive thing about the child whose name has been drawn. Varghese reads the sentences out loud and then types them all up for the child to take home. As one parent said, "This is a fabulous way to get the children to focus on their friends and classmates, and a wonderful self-confidence boost for the children."



Important Learning Outside Of School Hours

It's not just during school hours that students can learn the skills that set them on the path to a successful life. For many, they learn just as much from the extracurricular activities in which they participate.

This has certainly been Bruce White's experience. He is a firm believer that students' school life should comprise 50 percent academics, 25 percent social activities, and 25 percent athletics.

In his long career as a math teacher, most recently at Vincent Massey Secondary School in Windsor, Ontario, he has offered various after-school opportunities to his students to help them achieve that healthy balance.

For example, White coached volleyball for many years. "Volleyball is a very mathematical sport," he admits with a smile, but it also requires that the players work as a team. Sports teams help create a good atmosphere in the school, making it a more positive place. Interestingly, he notes, his current school has its lowest rate of vandalism in years because so many students use the building at so many different times of day for sports and other extracurricular activities.

In his chosen field of math, White has always run extra classes at lunch and in spares for students who want to get ahead or catch up.

When White moved from one school to another, his former students complained that they no longer had a math coach to help them prepare for contests. It was at that point that White started to offer problem-solving sessions outside of school hours. Between 150 and 200 students participate, paying a small fee to work with White. Each hour-long session focuses on 10 questions that a student might encounter in a math contest or in a math class (the sessions act as enrichment classes for students across the school board). For an international contest, students might

practise for up to six hours a week. Recently, White added a Sunday morning session for gifted students, first at his home and then, when the group got too big, at the school.

In addition to honing their math skills, students are encouraged and learn to work together during these problem-solving sessions. This emphasis on co-operation may explain another successful extracurricular event that White launched 20 years ago and that is still going strong.

In 1978, White's school celebrated its 50th anniversary. White told the students that if they could find an event in old school yearbooks that they would like to hold again, he would help them organize it. A picture in the 1934 yearbook of a teacher handing a cup of tea to a poor child visiting the school prompted students to update the idea and hold a Christmas party for inner-city elementary students who would visit the school for the day.

Students immediately began fundraising to pay for the catered food (now the students cook everything they serve). They also plan all the activities for the more than 250 children that attend the party each year.

On a day early in the week of the party, the students go to the elementary schools and spend time getting to know their guests. On the Saturday morning of the party, they meet with the children and ride the buses to the high school with them for the day of fun. A highlight of the day is that each child has his or her picture taken with Santa.

For the student organizers, the day is an important learning experience — not only because they have to organize a big event, but also because they get to know people in the city who are different from them and how to treat them fairly.



Although her students are just with her for a year, Varghese hopes they take some lessons with them for a lifetime: a respect for, and understanding of difference.

"Diversity is not just the visible, and it's so much deeper than just colour," Varghese says. She strives to teach basic respect for human beings, and to help her students grow up to be good citizens. "Students will learn to read and write anyway," she says. I want them to remember who I am because I made a connection with them, and learned what is different about them."

"That's what the year is all about: finding that special thing."

The background of the page is a light, textured surface. In the upper half, there are several faint, horizontal bands of color, including shades of light blue, green, and yellow. These bands are separated by thin white lines. In the lower half, there are more prominent, wavy lines in shades of blue and green, suggesting a landscape or water. Faint, illegible text is visible in the upper half, appearing as ghosting from the reverse side of the page.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS



Today, many children do not have a sense of community. Particularly in large cities, the sense of belonging that comes from interacting with family, neighbours and others in the community is lacking.

As a result, it becomes very important for teachers to model the community so students learn the importance of reaching out and being part of something bigger than themselves.

- *Building community involves a collaborative effort: interaction and joint projects between a school, local people, and organizations to foster good will, support and understanding.*
- *Building community involves bridging distance using technology, bringing the world in close, and sharing expertise and knowledge.*
- *Building community involves collegiality, understanding the concept of “we”: teachers as a community of learners working together, and teachers working together with students in the broader school community.*

Below are examples of how some of the Prime Minister’s Award recipients build community around their schools.

Community Within Community

As with many high school music teachers, Mark Robbins has done his share of arranging and preparing his students musically for appearances in music competitions. It wasn’t long into his tenure as a music teacher at Madawaska Valley District High School in Barry’s Bay, Ontario,

that a better focus for his school’s many musical endeavours emerged: he set about making the music program an integral part of the life of his small community.



Changing Perspective

Carolyn Wilson would argue with anyone who suggested that today's teens are lazy, insular and selfish. "I have found that young people today are very interested in the world around them," says Wilson. "They have boundless energy, a thirst for knowledge, and incredible optimism. What I hope to instill in my students through our experiences together is the belief that they have a contribution to make, that they can make a difference in this world."

This is best exemplified through the social justice activities her students at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford become involved in each year, and Wilson's weeklong trip to the Dominican Republic with senior students. "An important goal of the program is to provide students with the opportunity to experience a new reality, and to be able to see the world from a different perspective. This is where real learning and the possibility for change exists."

"Students learn to give generously of their spirit and resources, and receive graciously the lessons we need to learn from our neighbours in the developing world — lessons about our own lives, our relationships with others, our consumer culture, our treatment of the environment. Through their experiences, students recognize that injustice affects all of us because it is taking place in the world we share."

Wilson's school had long been involved in social justice activities in the local community prior to hearing about an opportunity to have students billet with local families in the Dominican Republic.

Students now go to the village of Consuelo, which is mostly populated by families who work in the sugar mills or in free zone factories. The students live with Dominican families for the week. What the students do not do, however, is go prepared to take on a charitable project. This sets Wilson's program apart from many others, where students help build schools

or dig wells. (The group does take plenty of goods and supplies, and does fundraising behind the scenes.)

"There isn't a lot of 'doing' in the North American sense of the word," says Wilson. "The Dominicans are in control for the week and they don't want the students to keep themselves busy with work projects and not spend authentic time with the people." Instead of working on a particular project, the students go to schools and meet their Dominican counterparts. They also meet cane cutters, sweatshop workers and human rights activists, and are encouraged to be open and listen — "to be moved and challenged by the people they meet and the stories they hear."

"The experience is incredibly powerful. They see the reality of the poverty and the suffering. But, in spite of the incredible misery, there is still joy in life and an incredible faith in God."

Organizing such a trip began with Wilson cultivating relationships with people she knew in the community who were active in the social justice field. She offers advice to other educators that are interested in trying something similar: "You never have to start from scratch. There is a whole network of educators involved in social justice. All you have to do is tap into that network." As for funding, Wilson says she has found that community groups have been keen to help fund the trips in exchange for students making presentations to their members when they get home.

It may also be that an overseas trip is not possible for every teacher or every school, but there is no shortage of opportunities for students to have this sort of learning experience right here in Canada. "It's equally important for students to learn about justice issues in our own society and my school provides these opportunities as well. The Dominican Republic experience is really part of what we see as a life-long journey in social justice. The learning doesn't

begin and end with the trip to Consuelo. Past experience has proven that students, upon their return, are motivated to become involved in social justice issues in their own communities and beyond. For many students, stepping out of North American culture and spending the week in the Dominican Republic gives them the perspective necessary to look critically at their own lives and at our society. The experience removes the protective barriers that we tend to build up here at home, so when students return, they are able to really see for the first time just what is happening around them. The trip helps to remove the 'blindness' so to speak."

Wilson holds several preparatory meetings with the students to deal with the practical aspects of travelling overseas. These are followed by an overnight retreat to deal with emotional aspects of immersing themselves in such a different culture. One of the things she has to deal with is the students' guilt and worry that they cannot solve all the problems these people face. "What I stress with the students is that the problems in the Dominican Republic have built up over hundreds of years, and they are not going to be solved overnight. What we talk about is the importance of our own education about what is happening in the world. If we don't educate ourselves, how will we know what to pay attention to, where to begin, or even what questions to ask? Only with education will we be in a position to make a difference in our own lives, and in the lives of others — and this has to be done one step at a time. Act by act, step by step we move forward. That's where we have to put our energies."

The bottom line for Wilson is that, through the trip experience, students are changed. "What is, converts us," she says. "It's my obligation as a teacher to provide these kinds of experiences."

He increased its concert schedule, invited the community to art nights, made the school's Christmas concert even bigger, started touring and offering classes in feeder schools, and sent ensembles and individual music students to local nursing homes and the hospital.

The results were immediate. The Legion now regularly requests a bugler to perform at various functions, including Remembrance Day ceremonies. Attendance at school events went up and interest in the music program grew. "There was now both pride and ownership," says Robbins. "The kids wanted to be involved."

The school now gets so many requests for shows — many a whole semester ahead — that scheduling sometimes gets tricky. He says that his priority is the big performances, and then feeder school tours. "But we have a 100 percent commitment policy for all students who want to be involved in the program."

The community response has been marvellous, he says. The Lions Club helped the school get band jackets and has made other donations. The Knights of Columbus has held raffles to raise funds for a new piano.

Robbins admits that being in a small town makes this kind of community connection easier, but insists that it's still possible in the big city. "Find a 'small town' within the larger centre. Find a cause you can champion." For example, a teacher could approach a hospital about fundraising for them and enlist other community groups to help the music program to make it happen.

Other important allies are parents. They are often connected to the local music community or to other community groups. They are going to support the program, Robbins says, if they see their children out “doing good” in the community. The same goes for partnerships with elementary schools. In addition to playing concerts at feeder schools, Robbins’ students teach recorder classes, choir classes and even instrumental classes at the elementary schools. “All of this extra involvement will bring in a whole new generation of parents and students who will support the program.”



In Robbins’ view, everybody wins. “The students are learning to give back. They see different venues and the diversity in the community. They learn about being part of something bigger. Our whole music program is itself a community within our school, which is a strong community within the bigger communities of the area.”

Working Better Together

Teachers have long used group work in class as a way for students to learn together. But how do you ensure that those groups work effectively and everyone can participate and learn to the best of their ability?

Donna Neilson, who teaches English at Rockridge Secondary School in West Vancouver, thinks that providing structure with the freedom that group work gives is key to making this happen. Neilson calls what she does “building cooperative structures and strategies.”

A good example of this is “literature quads.” These are small groups she sets up in her English class so students of all abilities can succeed. She purposely places high, medium and low achievers

and ESL students together in one group, so each can benefit from everyone’s talents. “I don’t necessarily choose the best reader to lead the group, but perhaps the best artist. Cooperation and personal recognition builds confidence, and all group members learn to like and respect each other’s strengths.”

She gives each group a secret question to answer, which requires them to think critically and explore as a group. This causes them to dig deeper. “I want my students to remember that they were challenged, that they learned to think, that they learned to find the critical thought explored in the literature, and that they learned to answer the big question: so what?”

Video Conferencing Connects School To The World

Grant Etchegary is a high school music teacher that provides exciting international music opportunities for his students using video conferencing technology (including an interesting combination of traditional Newfoundland fiddling and turntable between Ottawa, St. John's and Geneva). He is also a passionate advocate for providing the same accessibility to other curricular areas and to the community at large. And that technology is turning his school, Holy Heart High School in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, into a hub not only for learning but also for community involvement.

"The band room is turning into a place where you can make more than music," he says.

It all began when Etchegary's school participated in a federal government research project to connect teachers across the country via video conferencing. Soon the idea migrated into the classroom and students collaborated with a composer to create an original musical work for concert band. The unique twist was that the participants were in Newfoundland, Alberta and Ontario. Videoconferencing allowed them the opportunity to connect simultaneously on a national scale and work and perform with their peers from across the country, even though they were thousands of miles apart.

Since then, Etchegary's students have connected with musicians at other schools, universities, and music organizations, such as the National Arts Centre Orchestra, to share music on a daily basis. For example, Etchegary leads weekly mentoring sessions with National Arts Centre Orchestra musician Pace Sturdevant, for students at several schools connected by broadband videoconference. Etchegary organizes the sessions so that his students work with Sturdevant for 15 minutes and then, while other students are working with him, they practice the skills upon which Sturdevant focused. Finally, the students work briefly again with Sturdevant to validate and fine-tune the skills development. This approach has led to very rapid skills development for the students. A government scientist, who is leading the research project, notes that broadband pedagogy is "a field so new that best practices are only beginning to emerge."

The technology also provides countless opportunities for distance learning for students in remote communities. He cites the example of a violin teacher who lives in Ottawa being able to give violin lessons to students who live in remote northern Quebec. In Newfoundland itself, Etchegary says, several rural schools have been connected by the Centre for Distant Learning and Innovation to offer classes in specialized curricular areas using this type of technology. This means students can take courses they would not otherwise be able to.

There is no doubt that this technology has provided unique learning experiences for Etchegary's music students, and it did not take long for him and his fellow teachers to figure a myriad of other uses for it. For example, community groups are beginning to see potential benefits. On one occasion, senior citizens who were participating in a study on the availability of government services came into the school to talk with other seniors across the country.

This type of project also benefits the school's students, not always in terms of marks, but certainly in terms of broadening their perspectives to include other groups within society, such as senior citizens. Students sat in on the sessions with the senior citizens and were exposed to a generation of Canadians with whom many do not have much contact.

On another occasion, the school hosted a student forum on climate change. The event was planned with teachers in other curriculum areas through e-mail. Rather than letting participants talk about whatever aspect of this broad topic they wanted to, the organizers picked a theme and had everyone prepare their comments beforehand. They also brought in experts to address the students. Etchegary notes that people in the community respond very well to the idea of speaking to students using this technology.

Etchegary says that any school could bring in or have access to such technology for their students. It is important to look beyond the confines of the school and get the community on board. Being creative about seeking sources of funding is crucial. Holy Heart was fortunate to tap into funding from federal and provincial sources to continue its work in this area. "Having a strong relationship with pedagogical and technical leads at the National Research Council and the Communications Research Centre helps immensely. Their contribution to the utilization of this technology in the school setting has been outstanding," says Etchegary.

In addition, he says, every university across Canada has video conferencing capability. Contacting the right person may bring opportunities for school involvement. CANARIE also provides free access to CANet4 for each school board and, although the equipment can be expensive, it is getting cheaper.

"Technology has brought a new spark," says Etchegary. He and his colleagues are always trying to think of new ways to use it — "I wake up in the night thinking about new ideas" — both now and in the future. "My program and students have benefited. Hopefully not too long from now, this will be commonplace."

PARENTS:

Finding Strength In Numbers

It's no accident that Steven Hammel has his students share the class motto with their families. Hammel regularly emphasizes the importance of family support for his young students. They come from all sorts of backgrounds and have had to deal with many difficulties in their young lives. But one thing they can count on in Hammel's class, though, is the presence of a family member to help them learn to succeed at school.

Hammel and his colleagues run a multi-family therapy group concurrently with regular classroom lessons. Once a week for 10 weeks each child has a parent, grandparent or other significant adult right beside him or her in the class for two hours.

With the desks in a horseshoe, extra chairs for the adults, and Hammel at the front of the room, the group covers topics such as expressing and managing feelings, problem solving, and family dynamics. Each discussion is accompanied by an activity that the adults and children do together. For example, on the day when the group talks about families, each adult and child pair makes a sculpture to represent their family. Since each sculpture is unique, Hammel uses the exercise to show the group that a family is a family, no matter what it looks like.

The activities serve other purposes too. Hammel watches how the adults and children interact, intervening when necessary, and uses what he sees to form his own interactions with the child and the content of the group discussions. Hammel also finds that the activities stimulate discussion between the adults, children, and among the group as a whole.

The adults quickly find common links and often exchange phone numbers. "For most, it's a comfort to know that they are not alone," Hammel says.

Hammel structures the family sessions in parallel with what the students are learning in class. For example, a popular activity he does with the children is to build and set off a mini-volcano. The students learn some science but, more to the point, Hammel uses how a volcano works as a metaphor for how people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are all interconnected and can come to a head when not dealt with. Hammel uses this same activity with the family group, which means that the adult and child have the same language, and they can use it in the future to solve a problem.

Hammel starts the family component of the term three or four weeks in; after he has had a chance to get to know and work with the students. He can plan the family sessions to suit the group's needs and interests.

Hammel relies on colleagues with a background in social work and knowledge of this type of group treatment to make the program a success. He recommends that any teacher who wants to try to implement a program such as this seek out similar support.

Hammel and his colleagues have written a manual about multi-family therapy groups that includes a plan for a 10-week program. It is available by contacting Hammel at steevver@hotmail.com

The program has been a great success, Hammel reports. The self-esteem of everyone involved blossoms, and it promotes positive involvement of parents and other adults with their children and school. As Hammel puts it, "For once, it's not because Johnny's in trouble."

Setting High Standards For Students And Teachers Alike

Teachers have the “opportunity of a lifetime to socialize the young. We expect them to run our world, so we need to model the best practices in thought and action,” says Donna Neilson.

With that thought clearly in mind, Neilson sets out each day with high expectations for herself, her students and her fellow teachers.

School and Business Partnerships

A common thread in many of Andrew Hickey’s science programs at Holy Heart High School in St. John’s is the important role that businesses in the community play in his students’ learning. He has a relationship with a rental company that lets him borrow power tools to demonstrate science concepts (see page 25). Other companies come forward with sponsorships for a handful of kids, who otherwise couldn’t afford to, to go on a four-day field trip to a national park.

Another key attribute in this regard is the co-operative education program Hickey runs, which sees about 85 students a year take term-long placements at businesses in and around St. John’s.

“More and more companies know that they have to step up and give something back to the community,” Hickey says.

The biggest initial challenge, Hickey says, was making contact with the businesses and convincing them that having a high school student work for them for a few months would be a positive experience for all concerned. As the years have gone by (Hickey has been involved with the program since 1999), this has gotten easier, as the school has developed a track record. After all, he says, “Our name is on the line.”

Hickey’s success stems from a couple of things. First is his perception of what a co-op program should be. He sees the program as a “personal development course” for students of all capabilities to learn about different occupations. It’s also a way for students to excel in non-academic environments.

Second, he ensures his students are well prepared before they step out into the work world. They have guidance counselling beforehand and, in the first few weeks of the term, take a pre-employment module, during which they learn about interview skills, preparing a résumé, workplace etiquette and safety, and the role of unions, among other things. He also emphasizes personal skills, such as self-confidence, time management, teamwork, responsibility, respect and communication.

Business people, in turn, see students coming out of high school who have some understanding of what it means to be a good employee and make a contribution to the workplace.

Of course, students also get a head start on figuring out what sort of career they would like to have. Hickey remembers one girl who was convinced that she wanted to be an accountant, but she found out during her co-op term that it was not what she expected. “This actually turned out to be a very positive learning experience for her.”



PARENTS:

An Important Partnership

As a Grade 2 teacher, Sarah Varghese encounters many parents of her students at Keenooshayo Elementary School in St. Albert, Alberta who are keenly involved in their children's education, and want to ensure that they get off to a good start.

"Parents are my advocates," she says. "I want to work in partnership with them."

Varghese understands parents want to be involved. "When you take your child to school you lose control."

To counter this, Varghese makes a significant effort to keep them informed and involved in the classroom:

- She phones each child's parents during the first few days of school to introduce herself and give parents information about the upcoming school year.
- She holds an evening open house in the second week of school to meet parents and allow the children to show their parents the learning environment. She follows this up in November with a second open house to review each child's progress. (This is in addition to the scheduled parent-student-teacher interview.)

- She sends detailed monthly newsletters to parents that include an update on the curriculum for that month, goals for the month, and tips for parents helping with schoolwork.
- She encourages weekly volunteers in the classroom.
- She sends home a daily agenda with the children and includes a short note to parents when required. Parents, in turn, may write a short note back, to which Varghese always responds. Parents appreciate this daily communication.
- She phones children who are away sick to see how they are feeling; to let them know that they are missed.

Even more extraordinarily, Varghese goes out of her way to help parents when they need it. Since "a lot of things that happen in the classroom happen because of home," she will help parents get counselling and other help when they need it.

"The communication between the classroom and home is excellent. Mrs. Varghese takes the time to make sure that we are very aware of what is happening with our son. We find that she inspires him both in the classroom and at home. Mrs. Varghese is a frequent topic of conversation at our dinner table," says one parent.

"Kids spend a great deal of time in school and we owe it to them to produce a quality product every single day. When we set high standards for the students, we need to do the same for ourselves as teachers."

And while individual teachers have long raised the bar for themselves and their classes, Neilson spearhead efforts at her school to get all the teachers to work this way collaboratively.

She was motivated by a couple of things: teacher shopping among students and parents, and literacy scores that could be improved.

Having students request a particular teacher, while nothing new and certainly flattering for the popular teachers, causes all sorts of problems for a school, including making it difficult to set schedules, plan resources, and potentially setting up rivalries.

Low literacy scores, besides being a concern in and of themselves, create learning difficulties not only in English classes but across the curriculum.

The solution to both problems, it occurred to Neilson, was the same: the implementation of student performance standards. Common

PARENTS:

Giving Them An Eye Into The Classroom

Loretta Van Brabant's frustration with a common school practice led her to develop an innovative, multi-faceted scrapbook that allows her, her students and their parents to keep track of the work the students do in a school year.

"We were forever asking students to review their work, but there was no place to put it. A scrapbook allows them to see how they were doing at the beginning, middle and end of the year."

Keeping work in an organized fashion allows students to review their learning, which, in turn, allows them to go back over concepts and see how they have progressed during the year. It is an effective learning technique for the children; it helps teachers see whether their lessons have stuck with their students; and it gives parents a good idea of what their children have been learning at school.

At the end of each unit, Van Brabant asks the children to pick out their favourite piece of work and reflect on it, noting what it shows they learned. She then has them write about or draw a picture (or both) to illustrate their reflection. The whole page gets stapled to the work and then glued into the scrapbook.

"Parents really like how the children are reflecting upon their learning," Van Brabant says. In their reflections she has them explain, in their own words, what they learned and why is it important. Former students and their parents have said that these scrapbooks have become more meaningful as the children grow older.

One unusual aspect of the scrapbook is a baggy in which students put art objects they have made. For a unit on rocks and minerals, for example, Van Brabant has the students build little people out of small rocks and other materials.

requirements and expectations that students had to meet, no matter whose class they were in, would help students set goals and achieve greater success in literacy and, in turn, in all of their subjects.

Neilson did not stop there. She reasoned correctly, as it turns out, that if staff across the school worked together to develop and implement these standards, student and school success would be even greater.

Neilson helped pilot provincial performance standards, and taught a small group of teachers how to use these standards for English. "We worked together to assess the exemplars, so that we were sure that we were thinking the same way." The group collaboratively planned one small unit and assessed the students' work. The teachers were excited by the results of this experiment,

Neilson says, because they realized they were not in it alone, and that they were able to validate their own teaching standards.

The teachers also worked together to express the performance standards in simple and straightforward terms that they could use with parents and students to explain expectations. "This gave everyone a common language and focus," Neilson recalls.

Once the small group of teachers had used the standards for a while, they took this approach to the whole department. With results in hand to support our efforts, "we turned the data to dialogue and informed our practice," Neilson says.

Now, when the department has its monthly meetings, at least half of the session is dedicated to curriculum planning, Neilson explains. Just having the teachers work together in this way has greatly improved the morale of the department and, most importantly, student performance has improved.

With this success under their belt, Neilson and her colleagues worked to implement their approach across the curriculum. One grade was struggling with reading, which turned out to be the reason why these students were having trouble not only in English class but also in other subjects. Neilson invited teachers of these subjects to work with her, and collaboratively in departments, to help students improve their reading skills. She led teacher workshops on how to teach young people to read in other subject areas, and encouraged the staff to dedicate a certain amount of time each week to teaching reading in their content areas. Students' attitudes about reading and their reading ability were surveyed before and after this exercise and there was a gain, Neilson says.


She admits that not every teacher is going to like the idea of having to spend time teaching youth how to read, for they may not be comfortable with the process. But, she says, the experience at her school has shown that everyone benefits from this collegial approach to improving student literacy.

"No teacher goes it alone. We're planning together, assessing together, and doing cross-grade marking." At the same time, the "kids know they're going to get the same curriculum and the same type of marking," no matter whose class they are in.

Neilson's advice to other teachers who want to try this collaborative approach is to begin small. "Invite your colleagues in. Open your doors; open the files and folders of lesson plans. ... I think that working with my colleagues this way is as exciting as seeing the students learn something that I'm teaching them."



MEDIA: A WHOLE NEW LANGUAGE TO LEARN

The bottom of the page features a series of horizontal, wavy lines in shades of blue, teal, and purple, creating a sense of movement and depth.



With the word text no longer just referring to ink on a printed page, it is no wonder that there are plenty of educators and academics looking at literacy for the 21st century, and looking far beyond what it takes to read a book.

In turn, it is clear that the definition of the term literacy also must be expanded.

As with computer technology 10 years ago, media literacy is seen by many as an add-on, but by expanding the notion of text, it becomes “part of the whole” that can be studied like a novel or a poem.

Connected to that is a way of hooking students. Media education provides an ideal opportunity to validate students’ knowledge and learning because many of the “texts” to look at belong to them. This is even true in elementary school. The influence of media is evident starting right in kindergarten and even before, in terms of what kids want to wear, how they speak, how they’re influenced, and the shows they watch.

The challenge that currently exists is providing teachers, across Canada, with the necessary professional development so they can start to learn for themselves all about incorporating media literacy into the classroom.

A New Take On “Text”

It did not take Rachel McCabe long to notice at the start of her teaching career that many of the “texts” that are such a part of the modern world had no place in school: videos, billboards, the shopping mall, chat rooms. These were things that students — and even teachers — encountered and discussed all the time in private, but not in class.

But, McCabe says, “If students really are going to be literate citizens, we have to expand our notion of what text is.”

McCabe noticed something else: every year, there is a new pop culture phenomenon — game shows, reality TV, practical joke shows or extreme makeovers.

She quickly conceived of a project that allows her students to explore the ever-expanding world of texts and related ideas about media, and do it using a part of the culture that teens are intimately familiar with and find interesting. They develop their own television show.

“I am not the guardian of meaning,” says McCabe. “I don’t have all the answers — there was no textbook on reality TV yet — so we built on what the students knew but may not have processed.” For example, they know intuitively what a reality TV show is, so they create one. Along the way, they answer questions such as what are the codes and conventions for this type of show? How is it constructed?

In 2001, when *Who wants to be a millionaire?* was popular, she started with her two media classes producing a game show. At the time, McCabe said, “this is a really great opportunity. Let’s look at how these work. It was really interesting to talk about ownership and sponsorship and network.” She decided that the best way for them to learn was for them to be the producers of their own show: writing, promotion, filming, marketing, etc. “It was very authentic, since they were doing it for a real audience.”

The Soundtrack Inspires The Script

At the ripe old age of 15, Michael Gange got the opportunity to be a teen voice on the radio. It was nothing fancy, just basic broadcasting equipment and a room full of LPs, but he could pick whatever he wanted to play.

When he became a teacher, he immediately remembered the skills he honed in his radio days — communicating clearly, sharing knowledge, being persuasive — and realized that he could put them to good use in his classroom.

Now, everyone in his journalism class, including his special needs English students, write reviews of books, records, movies, whatever interests them.

Music is a great place to start, says Gange, because teens “all have their own soundtrack.” And they love to talk about it and other aspects of teen culture. By writing a review of something, they get to do that, learn how to argue, think critically and take a balanced look at something — in addition to learning how to craft sentences and paragraphs properly.

Gange has the students prepare what he says is essentially a five-paragraph, persuasive essay. He teaches them how to make a case for something in a way that reflects how people learn, taking them through six steps: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

This approach allows his young writers to develop their own style and to know that there is no “right” way to write a review. “I can’t tell you that there’s a definitive process. I tell them to trust what they are saying and let it come out.”

He also has the students compare their work to reviews in mainstream publications, such as daily newspapers and *Rolling Stone* magazine. The students can easily see that what they are doing is what professional writers do, and they can achieve that level of quality too.

Another real world touch is that Gange entrusts the students to take responsibility for meeting deadlines. At the beginning of the year, he sets the due dates for

assignments, and the students have to make sure they get things done, “just like in the real world.”

The beauty of this type of writing assignment is that, because it is an opinion piece, it forces students to think critically, answer the “because” question, and make an argument for something. For example, for one assignment Gange had students listen to a variety of music and ask themselves why they liked or didn’t like particular styles of music. One student said that although he didn’t like country music itself, he realized that the poetry of the music appealed to him, which he then wrote about. This also allowed Gange to remind students of earlier lessons on symbolism and poetry.

Another aspect of the assignment is getting the finished pieces published. The school has an on-line magazine, which published many of the pieces, as does the Fredericton daily newspaper. Pieces have also been published in compilations of student journalism and in broadcast versions on the local radio station and cable channel. Publishing immediately increases student confidence (particularly when the writing gets noticed by CNN, which happened one year) and students are interested in writing more.

Becoming a published writer means that they have to be gracious and careful about what they say, Gange notes. This allows him to focus in class on the importance of critical thinking for any type of journalism or writing in order to curb teenage tendencies to see the world in black and white.

“These kids are pretty sophisticated, having grown up with music and movies. They know the hard work that goes into playing the guitar. They all have an opinion anyway. This allows them to do this in a measured, qualified way.”

Even rejection letters provide a teachable moment. “The biggest compliment of all,” says Gange, “is that they read your writing, whether they liked it or not.” Gange puts his own rejection letters up in the classroom so that students can see that even professional writers don’t succeed all the time.

In recent years, McCabe's students have done their own take on *Survivor*, a murder mystery, and a hidden camera show modelled on *Punk'd*, taking on all the tasks required to produce a videotaped show for broadcast to the whole school. McCabe oversees the whole effort and guides the students as they navigate tricky issues, such as language and privacy, but otherwise, the students do everything themselves. They come up with the idea, plan out the episode, including language, costumes, camera angles and locations, write the script, shoot the scenes, edit the footage, and add music and sound effects. On top of all that, they do the marketing and advertising for the show, and then broadcast it to the whole school.

Editing the hours and hours of footage down to one 60- or 90-minute program provides many opportunities for teaching. "Editing is everything in reality TV," McCabe says. "If you want to be on the editing committee, you get to play God. You can go so many ways with the footage, and working with the sound becomes a huge learning opportunity, as students discover the power of music to entice people and convey a mood."

The most challenging aspect of the project is organization (not the technology they use, which is home video cameras and a Macintosh editing program called iMovie), so she sets up a series of committees and subcommittees to take on each task. She also blocks out the schedule for the project ahead of time to ensure everything gets done. Interestingly, the students are so excited about the project that they come in after class to work on it.

"They find it really rewarding when they are engaged, have ownership of the project, and have an authentic audience."

They are also learning plenty of transferable skills. They can look at the codes and conventions of whatever they are studying (such as sonnets, essays and television news reports). In science class, they can read a journal article critically. Putting on a production such as this also requires plenty of group work, co-operation, consensus building, and time and resource management.

It also presents a challenge to the teacher, which McCabe relishes. "Students know a lot. Teachers have to abandon the notion that they have to know everything. That's where education is going."



Critical Autonomy For Young Media Consumers

With their love of all things media, high school students have a lot to offer in a discussion about the latest TV craze or packaged celebrity.

“This is one area where their knowledge and experiences are valued,” says Carolyn Wilson, who teaches media studies at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford, Ontario. “As an educator, I want students to develop their skills and gain deeper insight into the nature of the mass media, the techniques they use, and the impact of these techniques.”

Wilson calls it giving students “critical autonomy.” It is important to teach students the skills they need to be autonomous when looking at the world, so that as citizens they can bring a critical eye to everything that’s presented to them.

In this context, critical does not mean negative. Her work in media education emphasizes the importance of active involvement with the media, connecting it to democratic rights, active citizenship, and technological literacy. “I see my work in Media Studies and Canadian and World Issues as a kind of gateway to understanding a number of issues central to our lives as global citizens today.”

“It’s important that students be given the opportunity to examine the stories they’re receiving today, how they’re being created, and how we’re responding to them — whether we’re talking about stories on CBC news, on pop-culture websites or prime time television.”

Wilson has her students explore a variety of topics, from advertising strategies and news reporting, to representations of gender, violence and race in the media. Media analysis engages her students in important and challenging dialogue, which often generates such questions as, “What can you learn from media stories and images, about our society and culture, and about how you want to live? How does the media influence the way we see others and ourselves? How can media and culture enable you to attain the identity you would like?”

Classroom dialogue leads the students to think about the stories they would like to tell themselves, and how media and technology can be used to give youth a voice and convey the messages that are important to them. Through their own news articles and video productions, some of which have won awards and have been used by local media, students learn about how the media operate, how they construct meaning, how they can be used, and how to evaluate the information they present.



In addition to her work with her own students, Wilson has written numerous study guides for CHUM Television's media education programs. These are available at www.chumlimited.com/mediaed/studyguides.asp.

"Media educators recognize the need for an expanded definition of literacy today — one that recognizes the skills that young people need for life and work in the 21st century. Increasingly, educators and administrators are becoming aware that students who do not possess media literacy skills are significantly disempowered and disadvantaged in contemporary society. While this increased level of awareness is important, one of the greatest challenges we are facing in Canada is in teacher education. "Inside Plato's Cave," an online course for teachers, is being produced in collaboration with educators from across Canada, in an effort to address the need for teacher training. The course will help prepare teachers to teach media education in the elementary and secondary classroom by providing both, a solid theoretical basis, as well as direct and practical strategies for working with students in the classroom.

For more information on the course, contact Wilson at Carolyn_Wilson@hpcdsb.edu.on.ca

Reading And Loving It!

As an English major in university and an English teacher by profession, reading and teaching reading had always come easily to Virginia Winfield. However, when she got involved with a province-wide literacy project, she quickly found out that many of her colleagues struggle with how to impart this crucial skill to their students.

"The more my eyes were opened to that, the more I started reading," says Winfield of her experience with Ontario's Think Literacy project. "This sparked an obsessive search for literacy strategies and I joined my school and board literacy committees."

Along the way, she learned a few things. One is that about 80 percent of students never read again for pleasure once they leave high school. "Why is that?" she asks. "What we are teaching them bores them. Just because I like Shakespeare, doesn't mean that a 16-year-old boy will."

Another fact is that there are differences between boy and girl readers. "Boys, for example, don't like things that take masses of time to read and have too many characters. They really like non-fiction."

Finally, it is clear, Winfield says, that teaching students to read and teaching them to love reading are two different things. You have to find a balance between the two in the classroom.

So what does a teacher do? Winfield likes to look beyond the established curriculum of Lord of the Flies and Shakespeare to such popular recent books as *Into Thin Air*, which is about a Mount Everest climb that goes horribly wrong. Also, she does not eschew magazines, such as *The Walrus* and *MacLean's*, which cover current issues that teen readers "can sink their teeth into."

Winfield also takes advantage of students' love of the Internet, particularly chat rooms and MSN. She says that there is value in the writing and reading that teens do online. A teacher could arrange to have a chat room with another English class that is reading the same book or, for younger students, pen pals across the city, country or world.

Another technique Winfield swears by is one she borrowed from literacy guru Kyleen Beers, called Syntext Surgery. This is an exercise Winfield does with her English students three times a week for five minutes at the start of the class.

Here's how it works. Winfield types a small piece of text in 18-point type, double-spaced but so it fits on just one page. She makes an overhead of it and gives each student a copy. The class then works together to take apart the text and understand what it says. "We clarify who is who and what is what using existing knowledge," Winfield says. She also has the students draw a picture of the action the text depicts, and look for context clues for words that they don't understand.

Winfield says that most students are not very good at this at first. "They don't know what good readers do. You have to show them first, and then let them try it. It's a building block kind of thing." In the first week she does all the work for them, but after about a month, there is incredible improvement, she says.


This is all well and good, but what if you don't teach English but biology? Winfield says that good literacy strategies should work for everyone, across the curriculum.

For example, teachers in a vocabulary-heavy subject could build a word wall. "Before you teach a concept (such as photosynthesis), put the word on a card, explain it and then put the card up on a wall as a visual reminder to the students." Another possibility is a scavenger hunt with word cards or any other game that immerses the students in the vocabulary they need for the subject.

As good as these strategies are, they will never turn every student into a bookworm, Winfield admits. But that's okay, she says. "When I was first a teacher, I thought how awful it was that students are getting through without knowing how to read. I've changed my mind. Every student is unique. Some will never be very good readers. They will get better, but will never love Shakespeare. However, they have loads of other skills, such as knowing how to take apart an engine."

Winfield recommends the following books as "must-reads" for teachers wanting to learn more about teaching their students to read: *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do* by Kyleen Beers, *I Read But I Don't Get It* and *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?* by Chris Tovani and *Even Hockey Players Can Read* by Canadian David Booth.

TECHNOLOGY: A TOOL TO ENHANCE LEARNING

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In recent years, school boards have invested countless dollars in upgrading their computer equipment and teachers have invested considerable time and energy trying to figure out how to integrate technology into their teaching. But has technology really proven its worth in education? Does it really enhance learning?

Several of the Prime Minister's Award recipients are actively involved in exploring the opportunities, challenges and limitations of making computers, the Internet and other related technology an effective classroom tool.

A distinct lack of data about the actual effectiveness of computers in the classroom caught the attention of David deBelle and his colleagues at Joyce Public School in Toronto, who were involved in a university research project a few years ago about knowledge building — having students share ideas and build on what each other knows, rather than just getting tasks done. Given the presence of technology in the school, it was also relevant to ask whether technology could facilitate this, and whether this was a practical thing to do in a public elementary school.

“With technology, there’s always a cycle of great promise, hope, and selling,” says deBelle. “But you can’t just plunk the machines down and expect that we’ll all get smarter. Technology is change. If you want to implement a program, there’s going to be culture change, a ton of work, and plenty of opportunities to not use it well.”

As a result of this project, deBelle and his colleagues have probably gone farther than most in making technology an effective classroom tool. And they learned a few interesting things along the way. For example, there are some simple things that computers can be used for to



make schoolwork so much better. By teaching their students basic keyboarding skills, deBelle's students were able to hand in assignments that looked the same as their peers. From that point forward, he could focus on the content of the work not necessarily how it was presented.

Reading is another area in which a computer is helpful. Children can take a computer reading test, at the end of which they get a score and a suggested reading range. The latter helps the school librarian guide the children in their reading choices. Students can also read a book and then take a comprehension test on it, which the computer marks. Students, particularly boys, love the immediate feedback, deBelle says.

Special education students are also well served by technology in the classroom, says deBelle. He teaches his special education students to use Microsoft Word to help with their writing. And there are programs that say the words out loud as the student types them. Another program co-writes with the student. For example, if a student wrote "Once upon a" but did not know what came next, the computer would suggest the word *time* to help the student complete the thought.

As another Prime Minister's Award recipient, Grant Etchegary, found out, special education students also thrive when given access to video conferencing technology (see "Video Conferencing Connects School To The World," page 53). Special education students who meet this way have no trouble introducing and talking about themselves, and playing games together. "It's amazing to watch

with what great ease they use the technology," Etchegary says. The students at his school have developed friendships with their long-distance counterparts, and one group developed a website about their experiences with its sister school. A music therapy program has also proven very effective; with special needs students able to see and interact with music students.

After looking at all these examples of technology at work in the classroom, deBelle and his colleagues determined that the technology they were using was, in fact, enhancing their students' learning. A large provincial grant then allowed the school to see what the students and teachers could do with a bit more and better technology.

The school now has a digital music lab, which is unusual for an elementary school. deBelle co-wrote a unit integrating math and music, which focuses on areas in which the two subjects intersect, such as fractions and patterning.

deBelle also teaches his Grade 5 students robotics. In most school boards, this subject is not taught until high school, but deBelle is convinced that it helps even young children to think and solve problems in new ways. (deBelle recommends two books on this topic: *The Children's Machine* and *Mindstorms* by Seymour Papaert.)

deBelle gives the children a problem to solve — for example, getting a car out of a defined area — and has them build a device to do it. When they run into difficulty, they have to figure out how to fix what is wrong. "This is very motivating,"

deBelle says. "I've never seen kids so excited." And it is not just the boys; girls get really excited too.

For deBelle, it is a matter of staying a few steps ahead of the kids. There is also a big time investment required in terms of set up, and "lots of little pieces to keep track of," he notes with a voice of experience.

deBelle says that for all the sophisticated programs that his school runs, other teachers should not feel they have to use the latest, newest things to teach their students. KidPix and HyperStudio are both great programs to use with young students; they have been around for many years and are easy to learn. deBelle and his colleagues started small with simple tools such as these, and then, through grants and by participating in research projects, became known as technology leaders.

Susan Chow takes a similar approach. As North Surrey Secondary School's technology coordinator for the past five years, she has been focussing on increasing technology integration across the school's curriculum. She started out with her fair share of ancient equipment and technical limitations, but it didn't deter her from developing innovative learning activities that involved technology. In fact, Chow believes strongly that "courses, except technology courses, should not be dependent on technology but rather use technology to enhance learning outcomes."

Regardless of what actual hardware and software a school has, the bottom line is that the technology

seems to be making children more interested in learning, comments deBelle. "It's amazing what kids will do when they want to. They listen and are focused. Many of the behaviour problems that are sometimes evident in the classroom just aren't there in the computer lab. Students are engaged in what they are doing, and what the Grade 5s used to do, Grade 2s are doing [now]."

Another benefit of simple technology, such as a laptop loaded with a graphics program and hooked up to a projector, is that difficult concepts come a lot easier to many of Andrew Hickey's high school science students at Holy Heart High School in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Instead of Hickey having to draw complex diagrams on the board, he could show animations with movement and colour on screen that set out the ideas much more clearly. "I had students come up afterwards to say that they had learned more in that one class than all of the previous year, because they could now see what I was talking about."

One remaining challenge is tying everything into the elementary curriculum. Fortunately, deBelle and his colleagues have discovered that technology helps them teach many of the things that their students have to learn, such as how to read, write and do basic math. In addition, they get to compose music and build robots!

"We surveyed our parents," deBelle says, "and they are very happy that their children are learning all of this in the school."

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

ANTHONY HILLIER

Holy Spirit High School
Conception Bay South,
Newfoundland and Labrador

Anthony Hillier quickly grasped that new tools offer challenges as well as opportunities. In response, he created interesting activities to help students master new technology. These activities allow students to innovate and develop problem-solving skills in a spirit of friendly and respectful competition. He also developed opportunities for fellow teachers to familiarize themselves with software programs in formal, structured settings. Hillier organizes, coaches and mentors students for the Skills Canada Competition and saw his students compete at the national level three years in a row.

Get in touch!

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BRUCE LANE

Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

Bruce Lane believes that students who learn to use the technology of today will be better prepared to learn the technology of tomorrow. He is confident that even very young students can, with direction, learn to apply technology to enrich their learning. In line with his beliefs, he obtained funding that brought technology to his school. As a consequence, all students in grades 1 to 6 create and maintain their own website where they publish a portfolio of their work. While working full-time as a learning resource teacher, Lane maintains a network of 50 computers, often working after school and on weekends. He opens the computer lab during recess, lunch, and after school so students can complete their projects.

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NORMAN LITTLEJOHN

St. Francis School
Harbour Grace, Newfoundland and Labrador

Norman Littlejohn believes that success comes from a positive attitude and good behaviour, from being responsible, and from being adaptable and learning continuously. This philosophy helped him to implement a cable system throughout the entire school with the assistance of a local TV company. As a result, students of all grade levels have the opportunity to broadcast student interest announcements, presentations in lieu of the normal principal's morning announcements, and sports newscasts. Littlejohn also founded an annual robotics competition, led his junior robotics team to success at the provincial robotics competition, taking five out of six trophies, and took another team to a North American robotics competition.

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HOWARD LUNDRIGAN

St. Peter's School
Upper Island Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador

Howard Lundrigan believes all children can expand their horizons when given the appropriate environment and support. Applied to mathematics and science, that means showing students how these disciplines can help them to solve everyday problems such as calculating interest on loans, determining beneficial payment options, balancing a cheque book, or figuring out how much flooring to buy for an irregularly shaped room. Lundrigan also makes use of what he calls the "If I were the teacher" method, whereby students are encouraged to teach a concept they have mastered to a group of their peers. He believes that the students remember 80 percent of what they teach.

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ELIZABETH MURPHY

Christ the King School
Rushoon, Newfoundland and Labrador

Elizabeth Murphy's life and teaching are driven by a desire to serve others. She went beyond her required responsibilities as school librarian to hold various book fairs to make low-cost books available to all students, even those who could not afford to buy them. She created an outdoor classroom — a learning space where students can undertake environmental projects — and helps colleagues with special needs children to acquire the skills and knowledge required to use assistive devices. She is the founding chairperson of the province's first small school council, which provided the impetus for Memorial University's Diploma in Rural Education and Tele-learning.

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KEITH SAMUELSON

Prince of Wales Collegiate
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

Keith Samuelson has been able to bring the world to his classroom, and his students to the world. Samuelson's Teaching for International Understanding framework helps students become responsible global citizens by learning to appreciate due process and the rule of law, and that patriotism and multiculturalism are complementary ideas. He led two cross-curricular learning projects that are earning a worldwide reputation for educating young people to become responsible global citizens — the P.W.C. Holocaust Project and the World Youth Manifesto Project. They are now being used by teachers in many schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as other provinces and countries.

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NOVA SCOTIA

GALE LOHNES

Bayview Community School
Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia

With a limited budget and equipment, Gale Lohnes was instrumental in starting a new band program at Mahone Bay School, which later joined another school to become Bayview Community School. In addition to teaching part-time in another school, Lohnes agreed to teach two mornings a week for grade 9 students and run early morning practices. Eventually, this led to the establishment of a full program for all interested students. Lohnes then obtained a \$10,000 Band Aid grant from the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences to purchase instruments, music, and equipment for the school. Approximately 60 to 70 percent of the school's students have been in the music program, the highest participation level in the board.

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TERRY THORSEN

Cobequid Educational Centre
Truro, Nova Scotia

Terry Thorsen has pioneered new teaching methods and approaches to tests and exams. For example, he developed a new "cafeteria-style" method of testing that offers students three levels of difficulty for each question, thus challenging top students, and providing doable problems for others. He also initiated a new mathematics course at the school designed for top-level students coming into grade 10. The course ensures that these students have the skills and knowledge to advance to pre-calculus and be successful in science. His ideas have been published in the provincial mathematics journal and have been widely accepted and practised by his colleagues throughout the province.

Get in touch!

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NEW BRUNSWICK

MONIQUE BASTARACHE

École Louis-J.-Robichaud
Shédiac, New Brunswick

Monique Bastarache believes that all students must know about a country's development in order to understand the country well. That is why she helps students appreciate the complex influence that events have on students' current experience, and on their place in our society. She helps students further by providing them with a logbook to use to reflect on the material they are learning, uses simulations to help students see how the law works, and has a panel of young offenders visit her class. Her students have distinguished themselves on several occasions at competitions related to the course. In 2003, her team won the regional law competition, and two of her students were selected as best litigants.

Get in touch!

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QUEBEC

DAPHNE AMSTER

Saint Bernard Elementary School
Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec

Daphne Amster creates a rich, stimulating learning environment at the beginning of each school year by arriving two weeks early to set up her classroom. She supports cross-curricular learning through a variety of creative activities. For example, she uses a nutrition theme across different subject areas of the curriculum. Amster and a colleague also started a collaborative mentorship program between the grade 5 morals class and her kindergarten class, exploring feelings and identifying results and solutions. This contributed to a school-wide peer mediation system to be implemented in coming years. Amster also teaches respect and compassion by involving her class in raising funds to support a foster child.

Get in touch!

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SYLVIE BLANCHET

Collège Saint-Louis
Lachine, Quebec

Sylvie Blanchet focuses on the place of dance in the history of humanity, and on how the arts play a key role in society; developing values such as tolerance, respect, openness to the world and curiosity. Blanchet shows students how to develop their ability in spite of a lack of physical and technical facilities. To help overcome these limitations, she draws from many resources in carrying out her numerous projects. She finds what she needs in her community and involves parents as well as technicians and specialists from outside the school. She also founded a dance troupe, Expression, which is made up of 150 students. It has celebrated its 15th anniversary.

Get in touch!

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STÉPHANE CÔTÉ

École primaire Lalande
Roxboro, Quebec

Stéphane Côté is always willing to use a little creativity and make an extra effort to help his students achieve their best. For example, from March to June 2003, Côté launched and carried out the Super Bolides (super racecars) project. His students formed teams to design and build a model racecar from start to finish: the chassis, wheels, suspension, security system, propulsion system (mouse trap), electrical system, reinforcement, body and bumper. This project allowed approximately 140 students to experience success at all levels: intellectual, manual and social, and earned them a spot on the front page of the newspaper *Le Devoir*.

Get in touch!

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PEGGY HOFFMAN

Bialik High School
Côte St-Luc, Quebec

Peggy Hoffman pioneered the Portrait Poetry project, in which students use poetry to reflect on, and express their thoughts about someone who is close to them. The students complement the poem with a piece of visual art and a spoken word piece. This approach has grown out of Hoffman's desire to encourage students to express personal viewpoints and to use personal reflection as they develop their critical thinking and analytical skills. She introduces students to social and psychological issues in literature, and discusses how literature reflects society and culture. She encourages remedial students to participate in the book club she holds daily during lunch hour, and is always available to students or small groups at these meetings.

Get in touch!

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ONTARIO

BERNADETTE BERTHELOTTE

W. F. Herman Secondary School
Windsor, Ontario

During Bernadette Berthelotte's tenure, the music program at W. F. Herman Secondary has grown from one part-time grade 9 instrumental class to a full time program with many instrumental classes for students in grades 9 to 12. Berthelotte is responsible for organizing a yearly feeder school tour that shows prospective students what the music program has to offer. She introduced daily listening journals, in which students research, listen to, and write about a piece of music that is outside their usual experience. Berthelotte has strong ties to the Windsor Symphony Orchestra, which provides students with an opportunity to learn from professional musicians, attend performances, and to work with the Symphony's conductor.

Get in touch!

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MARY CARD

Monarch Park Collegiate
Toronto, Ontario

"When given the chance to apply mathematics to real life situations, students recognize that learning mathematics can be fun," says Mary Card. That is why she has developed activities such as the "derivative dance" to help teach product rule and quotient rule in differentiation. Card also encourages students to participate in extracurricular activities, including the Steps to University program, through which they can achieve a credit from the University of Toronto and an in-school credit in English. She also raised more than \$150,000 in scholarships and bursaries over two years for students who would not otherwise be able to attend university or college.

Get in touch!

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STANLEY JAY DANKEVY

Mayfield Secondary School
Brampton, Ontario

Stanley Jay Dankevych seeks to establish a learning environment in which everyone can be successful. He adapts subject matter, assignments, exercises, assessment, and evaluations to meet the needs of students, including special needs students who are integrated in his programs. He also encourages gender equity in a male-dominated technology field by establishing a safe learning environment for all students. More than 100 students are placed on the waiting lists for his classes annually. Students in his classes receive immediate and meaningful feedback on a daily basis, providing opportunities for problem solving and the development of leadership skills. He is flexible when faced with equipment and material constraints.

Get in touch!

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CHRISTOPHER PAUL GORCZYNSKI

Hillcrest Community Public School
Toronto, Ontario

Christopher Paul Gorchynski develops and implements creative and innovative cross-curriculum activities year after year. The most notable one may be his grade 6 Modern Motion Pictures unit, which integrates technology, language, drama, and visual arts. Students produced, filmed, and edited a feature motion picture of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. After several months of post-production (editing, sound, special effects), the movie was screened for students, parents, and members of the community. Gorchynski's students' work is celebrated throughout the school board and is used as a model for innovative cross-curricular development. He also spearheaded a lunch-time music club integrating music, performing arts, and technology.

Get in touch!

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KERNAN JOHN

Marc Garneau Collegiate
Don Mills, Ontario

Kernan John ensures students are ready for university by developing effective study, time-management, and note-taking skills. Students attend three university lectures to get the feel of a university environment and to hone their note-taking skills. John's innovative biology projects have included an eight-week cat dissection, from surface to anatomy. John committed much personal time over almost two months preparing for this project. He also includes life lessons in his teaching, and is a positive role model for good manners and professionalism. He encourages students to seek many sources of information to help them learn how to distill the good from the bad and fact from fiction.

Get in touch!

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PAUL LUKACS

St. Edward Catholic Elementary School
Jordan, Ontario

Paul Lukacs nurtures the creative side of his students and teaches old concepts in new and creative ways. Survivor Challenge teams tackle daily grammar challenges for 14 days straight. Creative activities include work in all subject areas, be it tangrams, spelling, physical exercises, or map reading, all based on the Ontario curriculum. Lukacs's students are encouraged to develop their creative, dramatic, and speaking skills by participating in the school's annual musical production. They audition for roles and assist in writing, designing costumes, and getting props. Lukacs's School Buddy System sees his grade 6 students help senior kindergarten students with reading, math, and computer activities.

Get in touch!

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LOIS MCMILLAN

Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute
Guelph, Ontario

Lois McMillan creates an atmosphere in which students feel comfortable expressing themselves. Students across the board adopt her positive attitude, from the most reluctant learner to the highest achiever. She uses structured dramatic dialogue, asks personal questions in French about issues pertinent to her students, mixes French and English, and has students create structured dramatic dialogues. Props, sets, and drama make a lively and fun-filled classroom. McMillan has students create posters, three-dimensional figures, videos, and paintings. Students are also asked to read French books, watch French television programs and/or listen to Radio Canada. Consequently, students learn that French class extends to everyday life and that they can learn outside the classroom.

Get in touch!

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MEG O'MAHONY

University of Toronto Schools
Toronto, Ontario

Meg O'Mahony strives to model social, learning, and problem-solving skills in a safe and caring, yet adventurous environment. And she does this in a way that ensures that students' perception of any of these skills does not include gender, racial, or other discriminatory biases. O'Mahony encourages students to attend lectures at the University of Toronto, and use its libraries for research and assignments. She also implemented a partnership program with the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, placing students as volunteers in research labs. Her students make extensive use of information technology, such as online labs and virtual conferencing, tutoring and mentoring. Information on upcoming lectures and competitions is shared with students.

Get in touch!

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CELIZA RIBEIRO

St. Therese of the Child Jesus School
Mississauga, Ontario

Celiza Ribeiro insists teachers must believe in change — must know it is possible — because education is a constant process of change. She serves as a special education resource teacher, and as an academic resource for children in the regular program. She develops trust, encourages students to accept their individual learning styles, and establishes a sense of calm before they begin to work. Ribeiro also led the school's special education team and school staff in developing and implementing practices that emphasize teacher accountability, programs geared to students' abilities, objective assessment and evaluation, and honest parent reporting and consulting.

Get in touch!

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CHRISTOPHER SMITH

J. L. Forster Secondary School
Windsor, Ontario

Christopher Smith aims to help every student become a contributing, responsible member of society. To do this, he conceives of tasks to prepare students for the challenges they will face in the future. His students work in teams to tackle innovative classroom projects such as the Superhero contest, in which students design a product using a Superhero that has special skills with respect to motion; the Spaceship project, in which students design a plan for landing and starting a new colony on Mars; and the News-Presentations project, during which students inform the rest of the student population about innovations in the field of science. Smith's students develop post-secondary writing skills by preparing flow charts, technical lab reports, and scholarly reports.

Get in touch!

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MARTIN WILKINSON

Collingwood Collegiate Institute
Collingwood, Ontario

Martin Wilkinson seeks to inspire today's youth, who will be tomorrow's leaders, by emphasizing citizenship as something one should "do" everyday, not just as something to study. Wilkinson developed an interdisciplinary course package entitled World Class, focusing on global citizenship. Students took part in online activities with students in other countries, such as Germany and the United States. He also travelled to El Salvador with two of his World Class program graduates to aid a school that the World Class and Amnesty International groups helped establish. Sadly, an earthquake destroyed the school, but Wilkinson started a massive relief drive for the victims, collecting blankets and clothing.

Get in touch!

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MANITOBA

CLARENCE FISHER

Joseph H. Kerr School
Snow Lake, Manitoba

School is not about doing; it is about learning and thinking, says Clarence Fisher. He has initiated many collaborative online projects, including a Web-based gallery. Grade 6 and grade 8 students read, draw, sculpt, and listen to music to explore the various ways that artists create a specific mood or emotion. His students also collaborated with students in the Netherlands on two projects: Sustainable Industries and Sustainable Lifestyles. Students used e-mail to share information on matters such as logging, mining, commercial fishing, trapping, electricity production and usage, waste and water disposal, and recycling. Fisher's classroom is one of six in North America featured in William Kist's book *New Literacies in Action*.

Get in touch!

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MIRO GAWINSKI

Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School
Brandon, Manitoba

Through the co-operative education program, Miro Gawinski has placed students in jobs that provide an opportunity to contribute to the design of several major projects in Brandon and other locations in Manitoba. These designs include the student lounge/cyber café at Brandon University, and parks and playgrounds for the City of Thompson. He has volunteered to organize New Media Master Classes for Western Manitoba, providing students in rural Manitoba with an opportunity to learn from new media professionals. Gawinski is a leader in the use of technology for design, and is often asked to provide industry training in the community.

Get in touch!

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NICOLE LABOSSIÈRE-CLARK

École Héritage Immersion School
St. Pierre-Jolys, Manitoba

Nicole Labossière-Clark promotes cross-curriculum reading in a variety of situations. She demonstrates how reading will help students become better at the things they love to do. She lobbied to get the funding for Animated Literacy, a new reading program in her classroom. Labossière-Clark also developed new strategies in her classroom to help hyperactive children direct their energy to learning. For instance, she has equipped some chairs with bungee cords so that students who cannot focus without moving can swing their legs against the cord. She spearheaded a school-based project to create student profiles that allow teachers to share important information about how each child learns best.

Get in touch!

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GERALD NEGRAVE

Rosburn Collegiate Institute
Rosburn, Manitoba

Gerald Negrave's teaching practices include a blend of humour, the ability to talk with students at their level, and the ability to maintain high energy levels in both himself and students. He adapts to any situation. For example, when a new chemistry lab encountered construction delays, he chose lab exercises that could safely be done in a classroom. He has energized students by organizing an Easter egg treasure hunt, complete with clues that are hidden throughout the school, and incorporate mathematical formulas to scramble locker numbers and lock combinations. He developed a drama program and has written and directed many musical productions, complete with music, song, and dance.

Get in touch!

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LANDA SWEET

Donwood Elementary School
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Landa Sweet's commitment to child development and literacy leads her to nurture reluctant learners. She uses materials and strategies from a language development workshop, and implements guided reading, interactive writing, phonological awareness, non-fiction writing, and cross-grade programs to assist in this endeavour. She has written and published an article on balanced literacy, used for primary grade professional development sessions in schools in the division. She has designed programs based on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical levels of development, and is recognized for her outstanding accomplishment in the successful completion of the Family and School Together (FAST) program. Sweet also builds strong community connections, and encourages parents to play an active role in the learning of their children.

Get in touch!

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ALBERTA

CRAIG BRENNAN

Victoria School for the Performing and Visual Arts
Edmonton, Alberta

Craig Brennan ensures that students do not just play music, but rather they understand how music works and why they play it. He uses music as a vehicle for communication, and developing keen listening skills, since listening is as vital to a musician as expression. Brennan employs problem-solving games such as the 60-Second Club: to become a member, a student has to play all 12 major scales in less than a minute. He encourages students, in their own research, to further ignite their passion for music. Brennan's musical activities also include private lessons, province-wide conferences, instrument choirs, provincial ensembles, and the Yardbird Suite Jazz Club, where he volunteers.

Get in touch!

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FRANCES BURKE

Old Scona Academic High School
Edmonton, Alberta

Frances Burke insists that students be organized, focused, hard-working, and consistent, as well as mindful of how many talents it takes to produce a successful concert, play, or debate. In return, she ensures that students get recognition for these efforts, whether they work backstage or take centre stage. She emphasizes the importance of teamwork, stressing responsibilities towards the group. Students nurture the qualities of commitment to one's best work and dedication to the success of the group. Senior students with experience lead teams in areas such as singing, set design, lighting, and sound. This approach gives the students a sense of ownership of their work.

Get in touch!

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ANNIE FOSTER

McNally High School
Edmonton, Alberta

Annie Foster celebrates the culture of each language. One day, she will have students partner up for Spanish dance lessons with a guest dance instructor, and another day they will craft piñatas to celebrate the festive season. In her French class, one may find the classroom transformed into a French café, complete with checked tablecloths, croissants, and café au lait. In 2003, more than half of the school's student population was studying second languages. This is remarkable, given that a second language is not required for a high school diploma in Alberta. Students of all backgrounds and abilities are encouraged to participate in the second language program at McNally.

Get in touch!

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MARK HEINRICKS

Eagle Butte High School
Dunmore, Alberta

Mark Heinrichs makes himself available to his students by arriving at school early in the morning, spending his lunch break in class, and giving students his home phone number should they need help in the evenings. He initiated a Math Club for students who were dropping by his classroom and doing fun math activities on their own. He also initiated a Math Night to prepare students for the departmental exam. Heinrichs has his students set realistic but challenging goals at the beginning of each semester, and they discuss what it will take to achieve these goals. Each student signs the goals, and Heinrichs follows up during the semester.

Get in touch!

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ELLEN HILTON

Hunting Hills High School
Red Deer, Alberta

Ellen Hilton shows students, including an increasing number of girls, that they can "get math" and become successful. She created the homework hotline, a voice mail system through which her homework assignments are always readily available to students. Hilton also offers daily tutorials at lunch and before school. She has created a very low-key, relaxed, and comfortable environment where students are welcome to bring their lunches and get the help they need. She has helped colleagues develop a policy of sharing materials, lesson designs, and binders among staff, especially for those teaching a subject for the first time.

Get in touch!

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BILL HOWE

Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts
Edmonton, Alberta

Bill Howe ensures that the potential of every student is met, and the curiosity of every student is sparked. He instituted a Buffet Friday to make his classes feel more like a community. Howe is the founder and leader of the Victoria Social Justice Club, in which students are invited to discuss issues. Under his guidance and support, the group has raised thousands of dollars for the construction of schools in Nicaragua, and has educated other students on issues such as domestic violence. One hundred percent of his students have reached the acceptable standard in both their final grades and their provincial achievement exams.

Get in touch!

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JUSTIN KOOL

Foundations for the Future Charter Academy
Calgary, Alberta

Justin Kool helped the Foundations of the Future Charter Academy grow from 375 students in a single building to more than 1400 students in four campuses. He is a qualified teacher-trainer in the PEAK student motivation program, and trained 25 teachers in positive motivation and discipline, supervising and evaluating staff skills in these areas. Kool also developed assessment tracking sheets, new units for his grade level, learning materials, and resources. Aside from his core teaching assignments, Kool learned content, developed and taught middle school design, food studies and physical education — subjects outside of his expertise.

Get in touch!

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SUSAN MOLESKI

Banff Elementary School
Banff, Alberta

Susan Moleski develops individual plans and goals to meet the needs of every learner, regardless of their placement or ability. She is committed to mentoring and supporting children through the “unwritten curriculum” — lessons that are part of every school day. Moleski implements teaching strategies and designs units based on research, dialogue with professionals, intuition, and knowledge of her students, as well as integrates technology into learning. Her lessons connect to life in the local community, the country, and the global village. Moleski developed the Naturalist-in-Residence program, which involved teaming a naturalist with a classroom teacher to deliver the Alberta science curriculum outdoors. She also developed the Mountains as Water Towers international conference, and the international Wolf Congress.

Get in touch!

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JACQUELINE VINCENT

Ernest Morrow Junior High School
Calgary, Alberta

Jacqueline Vincent engages learners emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. She addresses readers at their skill level to help them become independent readers. Vincent spearheaded the Ernest Morrow Literacy Program, designed to enhance the reading of all students through an active daily program of instruction. Students are tested in the spring, and placed in literacy classes according to their reading levels. Begun as a pilot project, the Morrow Literacy Program became a permanent fixture under the supervision and guidance of Vincent. The success of this program has sparked interest and inquiries from other schools in the area.

Get in touch!

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

RUTH BLASNER AND HEATHER RATCLIFFE HOOD

Westshore Centre for Learning and Training
Victoria, British Columbia

Ruth Blasner and Heather Ratcliffe Hood create learning opportunities for students, make learning joyful and stimulating, and create a supportive learning environment that challenges staff and the community at large to achieve their potential. To this end the teacher team developed applied learning models and strategies for integrating employability skills into school curriculum. The two teachers developed a variety of offline and online lesson plans for their classes, encouraging students to work in teams. They serve at-risk students and promote First Nations literacy via reflective processes such as journal writing and learning logs.

Get in touch!

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GLYN DAVIES

Henry Anderson Elementary School
Richmond, British Columbia

The theme projects Glyn Davies has integrated into the classroom have proven effective and inspiring in engaging students. The projects make living and learning inseparable. Student-created castles, undersea worlds, pirates, ancient Egyptian tombs, jungles, and a cartoon town result in a three-dimensional learning environment. In one project, Davies' class built a five-metre mini roller coaster for the school's foyer. He empowers his students by letting them choose a topic of interest and become the leading expert in it. Students are responsible for researching their topic, contacting community experts, sharing the knowledge with their classmates, and applying their newfound expertise.

Get in touch!

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MARVIN DODDS

Esquimalt High School
Victoria, British Columbia

Marvin Dodds' students are involved in creating and establishing class content and lesson plans. The guiding principle behind his lessons is asking questions to elicit real, honest responses. Students learn co-operatively, teaching each other through role playing. Dodds also brought eight groups of students and parents to Russia, including teachers and students from other schools in the district. He is passionate about learning of other cultures through travel, and seeks to extend the opportunity to all students within his reach. The Russian trip provided students with an incredible cultural immersion, as they were billeted in Moscow with Russian students and their families.

Get in touch!

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TED GILBERT

Kwalikum Secondary School Qualicum Beach, British Columbia

Ted Gilbert secured a computer-numerically-controlled Plasma torch for his program, which not only increased interest among students, but has also generated business from shops in the community. The program includes building and selling fully fabricated truck trailers. The trust and respect of the school administration and parent organizations enable Gilbert to push his program to greater heights. One project involved the creation of ornamental knives made with exotic woods. Extraordinary safety precautions are built into their production. His network of contacts in business, industry, and post-secondary institutions provides classroom benefits and job placements. Former students are often seen returning for advice.

Get in touch!

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MICHELLE HAMILTON

Belgo Elementary School
Kelowna, British Columbia

For Michelle Hamilton, French immersion is more than just teaching a language; it is teaching another culture. She ensures that resources are always available in the classroom and in the school, building a bank of richer, more current, and relevant resources for French reading, social studies, and math. She created a daily weather project, La Météo, with Environment Canada, that was highlighted on Global TV. Hamilton created a car-rally website project in which her students used a city map to direct parent chauffeurs to the shortest route possible from one location to the next in Kelowna. Students answered questions related to their website journey and shared their experience with four other British Columbia schools via the Internet.

Get in touch!

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MICHAEL HAWORTH AND GRAEME WILSON

Fraser Valley Distance Education School
Chilliwack, British Columbia

Michael Haworth and Graeme Wilson pioneered a new synchronous online technology called the Radio Play Project with Wilson's grade 7 class and Haworth's grade 6 class. The students use an online virtual classroom to both read and write their own radio plays. Haworth also designed a secondary website template for all Fraser Valley staff, enabling them to develop online courses, and created an online spelling contest for students. Wilson also created Everest Trek, an online creative writing adventure, and an electronic grade book for teachers that generates report cards, certificates, office forms, and comments.

Get in touch!

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CAROLYN MARCOTTE

D.W. Poppy Secondary School
Langley, British Columbia

Carolyn Marcotte instituted several new social studies courses at D.W. Poppy Secondary. The social studies department has branched out to offer a wide variety of social studies courses, such as psychology, law, and human services. Marcotte promotes personalized instruction by organizing assignments in such a way that students can explore areas of particular interest while stressing the importance of teamwork. She also developed a student self-evaluation sheet and rubrics that are currently being used in several other disciplines within the school and other districts in the province. In promoting lifelong learning, Marcotte is constantly developing questionnaires and evaluations that force students to think about their own learning and thinking.

Get in touch!

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HAJIME (EDDY) MATSUMOTO

Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School
Vancouver, British Columbia

Hajime (Eddy) Matsumoto established the first elementary school computer lab in British Columbia at Shaughnessy Elementary in Vancouver, and was instrumental in setting up computer labs in four other elementary schools. He also implemented the Accelerated Math Program at Lord Byng, his former school, where students completed Math 8, 9, and 10 in two years, allowing them to take Math 12 in Grade 11 and Calculus in Grade 12. Matsumoto created a co-operative teaching technique that allows students to collaborate and reinforce each other's learning, and The Random Homework — a homework checking method that helps students learn and be organized, reinforcing the idea that the more you practise, the better you become.

Get in touch!

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GREGORY THOMAS MIYANAGA

Pinetree Way Elementary School
Coquitlam, British Columbia

Gregory Thomas Miyanaga teaches by example, creating outdoor activities for school trips, as well as sponsoring and coaching teams and clubs. Miyanaga shows flexibility, both by working in a team and developing programs independently. He has established a reputation among administrators, teachers, and support staff as a skillful teacher and compassionate human being. His students are given ownership and governance of their classroom. Miyanaga has condensed Robert's Rules of Order so students can understand and use them. Students learn to conduct class meetings, pass motions, and second, amend, and put forward questions. He also wrote a new program for social studies called Internment and Redress: The Story of Japanese Canadians.

Get in touch!

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APRIL NELSON

Rocky Mountain Elementary School
Elkford, British Columbia

April Nelson spearheaded and now leads school-wide social responsibility programs called Second Step (kindergarten to grade 3) and Steps to Respect (grades 4–7). Nelson makes learning very meaningful for students by drawing on their past knowledge and experiences. Thinking and processing skills are emphasized. Students love receiving “brain gems” (shiny bathroom beads) when they have made an important thinking connection. The approach allows everyone to achieve success. Nelson is involved in many extracurricular activities, such as coaching badminton, volleyball, cross country, and basketball, sponsoring safety patrol, organizing and supervising primary noon hour activities, co-sponsoring the student council, and coordinating both the school's winter carnival and reading program.

Get in touch!

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CORINNA STEVENSON

Stelly's Secondary School
Saanichton, British Columbia

Corinna Stevenson established the Vancouver Island Experiential Wilderness Program. This program is designed to provide struggling teens with an alternative to traditional, classroom-based teaching. It allows them to complete their secondary school diploma, obtain certification in eco-tourism skills, develop healthy lifestyles, and connect with their community in a positive way. She also developed the Global Perspectives Program, a career preparation course designed to provide learning and work experience in international development. She teaches the course outside of the school timetable on a volunteer basis. Stevenson engages students in the educational process by helping them find positive roles in society.

Get in touch!

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SALLY STUBBS

University Hill Secondary School
Vancouver, British Columbia

Sally Stubbs created a performing arts program that welcomes, encourages, and nurtures all young people, fostering a strong and abiding sense of self-worth, community, and ownership. She creates diverse and exciting opportunities that take the students beyond the school and into the community. She encourages, creates, and legitimizes opportunities for students wishing to pursue studies and work in the performing arts when they graduate. She also implemented many large-scale projects that draw on student interests and strengths, and integrate various disciplines. She initiated the Myth-Takes project, based on myths pertaining to racial stereotyping. Stubbs is currently working with the Playwrights' Theatre Centre to develop a course for Vancouver student playwrights.

Get in touch!

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ABOUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence honour outstanding and innovative elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines who best equip their students to meet the challenges of our changing society and knowledge-based economy. The 2005 awards were administered by Industry Canada on behalf of the Prime Minister and in partnership with Bell Canada, RBC Financial Group, Kraft and Microsoft.

The education stakeholders from across Canada who make up the national and regional selection committees look for evidence that teachers have achieved outstanding results with students, inspired them to learn and continue learning, and equipped them with the knowledge, attitudes, and abilities they need to succeed in our changing society and knowledge-based economy. Specifically, they recognize nominees who have excelled in the following areas:

- innovative and exemplary teaching practices;
- student skills development;
- student interest and participation;
- student achievement and performance; and
- teacher commitment and leadership.

Teachers may receive one of two awards: the Certificate of Excellence and the Certificate of Achievement. All recipients receive a certificate from the Prime Minister. In addition, each recipient's school receives a cash award to be used for educational purposes, such as professional development or equipment, and a certificate recognizing its support of and contribution to the teacher's achievement.

Certificate of Excellence recipients travel to Ottawa where they participate in best practice sessions, and receive their award at a special event hosted by the Prime Minister. Certificate of Achievement recipients are honoured at local events involving supervisors, colleagues, and local Members of Parliament or local leaders, as appropriate.

For more information about the program, send an e-mail to pmate-ppmee@ic.gc.ca or call 1-800-575-9200.

All written correspondence should be addressed to:

Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence
Industry Canada
18th Floor
300 Slater Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0C8

CORPORATE PARTNERS

Bell Canada

Bell Canada supports programs that promote educational excellence, and help youth access resources to improve and enrich their lives, including Prof, Junior Achievement and The Learning Partnership. In addition, Bell Canada supports research initiatives at universities throughout Canada. The most significant investment in this regard is the Bell University Laboratories, which unites Bell Canada professionals with the Canadian university research community in key strategic areas of emerging wireline and wireless communications, e-business, new media, human-computer interaction, and e-health applications. It provides an innovative environment for more than 600 students and renowned university researchers across the country.

RBC Foundation

RBC Financial Group believes in helping students make a smooth transition from the classroom to the workforce. RBC's major investments in this regard include Career Edge, designed to give recent graduates practical work experience; SHAD International, which introduces students to entrepreneurship, information technology, science, and engineering; and Junior Achievement, which helps young people discover leadership and workforce readiness skills so they can achieve their highest potential. RBC has provided in excess of \$50 million to educational organizations throughout Canada over the past 20 years.

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