

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 23, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dosdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award Recipient: Kathryn Lennon

ORIGINATOR: John Beaton, Principal Parkview

RESOURCE

STAFF: Carol Anne Inglis, Anne Mulgrew

INFORMATION

Kathryn Lennon from Parkview School is the 2000 recipient of the Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award. Margaret Stevenson is best known for her encouragement of young writers and promotion of quality children's literature during the years she served as supervisor language arts for Edmonton Public Schools. The purpose of this award is to promote annual recognition of a talented young writer completing his or her eighth year of schooling in Edmonton Public Schools. The portfolios of all the applicants are impressive demonstrations of the board priority "to improve student achievement in the core subjects with an emphasis on language arts and mathematics".

Samples of writing submitted by Kathryn demonstrated evidence of her personal growth as a writer, her positive attitude towards the literary arts, and satisfied the following selection criteria:

- show a range of writing for different purposes, situations and audiences
- show persistence with complex writing tasks
- display a strong personal style and sense of voice
- demonstrate excellence in content, organization, word choice, syntax, and control of writing conventions
- show evidence of reading a wide variety of literature
- show evidence of valuing the work of other authors

Excerpts from the writing of Kathryn Lennon are provided in Appendix I.

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APPENDIX I - Excerpts From the Writing of Kathryn Lennon

**EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITING OF KATHRYN LENNON,
PARKVIEW SCHOOL**

From Kathryn's introduction to her portfolio

I enjoy most forms of writing, but stories and poems are my favorites. I love how words give you the ability to express yourself in anyway you so choose. You can be whoever you want, wherever you want, and do whatever you want. You can create impossible worlds and impossible people, or stick to things you know about everyday life. All great works began as simple black and white characters. That is the beauty of literature. You do not need any sort of technology or complicated equipment, all you need is imagination, brain power, and a dash of talent.

The best part about writing is letting others read it. It is sometimes hard to bear any criticism about something you have slaved away on, but in the end, criticism improves your writing. And when it is finally perfect, it gives you pride to see other people enjoying your work. If no literature was written, we would not be able to read books by all our favorite authors. Reading also strengthens your writing skills and vocabulary. So it is a cycle, reading helps you write, and in order to have anything to read, someone must write.

**Excerpt From "Banishing the Night"
(story was written October 1999)**

For Sara, surviving each night had always been a nightmare in itself. She knew that no matter what, there would always be another night and another and another. In reality, Sara didn't survive night, she sacrificed herself. Each night she lay in her bed in dread, awaiting the moment when night would swallow her and she would find herself in its bottomless belly, helpless and lost, until she was freed by dawn's first rays.

* * * * *

Crawling back into bed, Sara thought wistfully of morning, imagining no more silence, loneliness, or darkness, would she ever see it again? And would her faithful companion of the night, her night-light ever work again? Mickey had lessened the night's blows for as long as she could remember. Or maybe not. "Teddy!", Sara whispered excitedly, "I just remembered something. 'Member when we went to buy Mickey? Well before we bought him, I didn't have a night-light, and I must have survived the night. You know what that means? It means that morning will still come!"

No matter what, morning would always come, no matter how hard she had to fight during the dark hours, morning would always pull her from night's depths, restoring light and noise. Sara smiled, it was so simple. She would no longer have to dread night since she knew morning would always, always, forever and ever, follow it. She closed her eyes and with images of a sunlit world dancing in her head, she felt sleep cradle her gently for the first time.

From "Banishing the Night" Description

My intention when writing this piece, was to create a story about survival. I didn't want it to be the stranded-on-a-desert-island type of survival story. I wanted it to be about the hardest kind of survival—surviving emotions. Also, when I was younger, I was afraid of the dark and nighttime, although not nearly to the same extent as Sara in my story. I wanted to communicate the message that although many people laugh at children's fears, thinking them to be petty, they are in fact very real and very terrifying to the children themselves. I also wanted to show that anything is possible, if you have the determination and strength. Emotional survival is the same as physical survival, you have to beat the odds, and use all your strength.

One of Kathryn's poems (written February 28, 2000)

THE BRIDGE

Crashing turbulently inside my brain
Like waves on an ocean of emotions,
My thoughts scream to be let out
Of their cage
And engulf me in their raging cry.
What to do?
What to do?
Standing on the brink
Of the abyss of uncertainty,
Gazing down into the
Indeterminable depths
With naught but a rotting bridge to cross it,
A wrong step,
A careless slip is irreversible.
To attempt a crossing with
An angry heart
Is to burn the bridge and maroon myself in
An empty desert.
Only a rational heart
Bearing an offering of peace
Shall mend that shaky bridge
And reveal the chance
For a safe crossing.

Excerpt from Kathryn's Reflections on her Portfolio

My writing has developed significantly over the last three years. Mostly in the vocabulary I use and my sentence structure, but also in the types of ideas I use and the depth I go into. My writing used to be more of surface ideas, obvious things, but now I think I am experimenting more with emotions and deeper meanings. The most important thing this portfolio shows is how much a writer can change over a few years, and yet still use the same basic style.