

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 24, 2011

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award Recipient: Rachel Tyzuk

ORIGINATOR: M. Caley, Principal McKernan School

RESOURCE

STAFF: Kathy McCabe, Anthony Walsh

INFORMATION

Rachel Tyzuk from McKernan School is the 2011 recipient of the Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award. Margaret Stevenson served as supervisor of language arts for Edmonton Public Schools. During this time she was best known for her encouragement of young writers and promotion of quality children's literature. The purpose of this award is to promote annual recognition of a talented young writer completing Grade 8 in Edmonton Public Schools. The portfolios of all the applicants are impressive demonstrations of the District's vision that "all students will learn to their full potential and develop the ability, passion and imagination to pursue their dreams and contribute to their community."

Samples of writing submitted by Rachel demonstrated evidence of her personal growth as a writer, her positive attitude towards the literary arts, her strong personal voice, and her ability to honestly and realistically critique her own work.

Her portfolio 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 Rachel Tyzuk are provided in Appendix I.

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APPENDIX I - Excerpts From the Writing of Rachel Tyzuk

**EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITING OF RACHEL TYZUK,
MCKERNAN SCHOOL**

From Rachel's Introduction to her portfolio

Writing has always been something that I have thoroughly enjoyed, but I never used to think that I would ever be particularly skilled at it. I owe it to the fantastic instruction I have had over my school years and the lengthy amount of time that I have spent reading. My current Language Arts teacher, Mr. Espinoza, has stated many times that you cannot write well unless you read and have exposure to other authors' writing.

**From Reading Response for *Specials* by Scott Westerfeld
(Written in grade 7)**

"Special Circumstances". These are the words that have sent chills down Tally's spine for as long as she can remember. Never did she dream that she'd ever be one of them. Author Scott Westerfeld weaves a tale of mystery and belonging, which he titles *Specials*. It's about how the protagonist, Tally, faces many challenges as the controlled way her world has always been crumbles...

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To me, reading *Specials* has left me feeling inspired and like there is hope for humans to find a way to restore the earth. I would recommend this book to any girl between the ages of twelve and thirty. I think this group of people would thoroughly enjoy it because it is great for girls because they tend to like the social aspect of books. It is also better for a younger person who would still understand the workings of the teenage mind.

**From "Violence"
(Written by Rachel for a grade 8 assignment)**

Drastic changes occur in the human brain when we are filled with emotions that overcome our rational thinking, forcing us to become violent. Underneath our skin our behavior is modified initially from the inside out, often stemming from a childhood filled abuse and thoughts of criminals and weapons. Deceitfully, we may begin joining in on gang activities, possibly evolving into bloody murder. Struggling, our societies attempt to save themselves from the anguish and destruction brought by wars. Instead of nationwide wars, these can often be gang wars, which still bring about identical brutal results; revenge, violence, and suicide. Although governments are discovering previously unknown strategies to deal with these issues, they might never be aware of the necessary methods to control this type of psychotic rage.

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Destroyed, people's blissful lives are overcome by stress that they cannot tolerate, all because of violence. Even school, which is supposedly a "safe place", is infiltrated by bullies who can be judgmental, racist, sexist, and many other things. Saddening as it is, violence has also become a part of people's home and street lives, whether it is on TV or actually being acted out. Since it has leaked into relationships, they have suddenly become filled with physical and emotional trauma. This does not apply to everyone, of course, but it affects more lives than we would like to think. Instead of succumbing to this disastrous tragedy, we can resist these negative effects of violence. As long as we preserve a positive lifestyle, violence can be prevented from seeping into our lives, but watch out – if you're not careful, it might consume you too.

**From Description for "Dolls"
(A poem written by Rachel in January, 2011)**

One of the sports that I do is rhythmic gymnastics and for my club's Winter Show, each of us could write a poem that had something to do with one of our routines. This poem was for a themed routine that was supposed to be about the secret lives that toys live in the cover of night. It turned out to be one of my favourite pieces of writing from this year because it makes me wonder if some of the things in our world that we assume we know everything about are still hiding something. I can relate to this poem because it reminds me of when I was a little girl, I sometimes hoped that there was another hidden world where anything is possible. Who knows, maybe there is...

"Dolls"

Before Annabelle goes to bed
She kisses each and every porcelain face
Of the dolls she treasures beyond imagination
Giving their keys one last turn
Filling their sculpted stance with life

As her parents tuck her in
The little girl winks at her collection
Just as she does every night
For she believes that then they frolic
Carefree in the night

When her parents have gone
Annabelle gently closes her eyes
Permitting her stone friends
Privacy while they dance
Unseen by the world

Then they release their energy
Leaping through the dark
For they have dreams
And being molded toys
Never stops them

Every morning
When the young girl wakes from her slumber
She scans her room
Searching for a sign of movement
But there is seldom anything

Except today-
Today she finds a single slipper
Lying on her bedside table
Even though her parents could be to blame
Annabelle knows they are innocent-it was the dolls

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**An Excerpt From “The Animal Inside”
(A story written by Rachel in March, 2011)**

Wind rustled playfully through the brittle, pale sand coloured leaves. Absentmindedly, Charlotte rifled through her clothes which lay crumpled on the floor of her bedroom after being abandoned there. While searching for a fashionable shirt to pair with her brand new, pale blue boot-cut jeans, she had labelled them as rejects. Unfortunately, she must have tossed the shirt she had selected to wear in with the rest of the unsatisfactory tops. After all, that was the only logical explanation for why, on the first day of school in a town she had only just to four days before, she couldn't find the one thing that might save her from being ridiculed further. Then again, nothing about Charlotte had ever had a logical explanation, from her flaming ginger hair to her love of embarking on long solitary strolls among old-growth trees in the forest surrounding her cabin-like residence.