

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 27, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award Recipient: Emily Lieffers

ORIGINATOR: John Edey, Principal McKernan

RESOURCE

STAFF: Carol Anne Inglis, Anne Mulgrew

INFORMATION

Emily Lieffers from McKernan School is the 2003 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 achievement of all students with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy."

Samples of writing submitted by Emily 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 Emily Lieffers are provided in Appendix I.

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APPENDIX I - Excerpts From the Writing of Emily Lieffers

**EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITING OF EMILY LIEFFERS,
MCKERNAN SCHOOL**

From Emily's Introduction to her portfolio

To me, writing is really important for personal growth. When I write something down, it helps me to articulate my thoughts, and to think clearly. It is important to share my ideas and emotions, not just vocally, but in writing as well. Writing helps me express my feelings of joy, sadness or confusion....

I have always loved reading. I believe that the wide variety of literature that I read has contributed to my success in writing. Every different genre of writing that I read gives me new ideas, new inspiration. From every different author that I read, I discover a new writing technique – a new personal style of touching someone's feelings. I try to learn from my reading; it helps in all aspects of writing.

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Reflections on "I've decided"

I wrote this piece because I was inspired by a dialogue that I had read only a few weeks before. I really liked the style, and I decided to try this writing genre.

This piece of writing is two friends' conversation via telephone. One of the friends has made a big decision; we do not know exactly, but the character is leaving. The two characters are very close. The characters are both trying to deal with the decision, and will both miss each other greatly.

I wanted to create a feeling of good friends in the piece without actually saying it....I also did not want to use names, gender, or age; the situation that this piece is portraying probably happens to friends all over the world, therefore I did not want to be too specific.

"I've decided"

(Written spring of 2002, while in grade 7)

"Hey, it's me."

"Huh?"

"IT'S ME!"

"Oh, yeah, yeah, no need to shout. So, what's up?"

"I've decided."

"Really? Well?"

"I'm leaving."

"No! Yesterday you said that you were staying here."

"That was before."

"Before what?"

"Before I got some sense knocked into me. I've thought it over, and it's the right choice."

"But before you were so sure that your home was here. I can't believe how quickly you've changed your mind."

"I don't know what convinced me so suddenly. It just makes sense."

"So, am I the first to hear the news? Knowing you, you're probably scared to tell anyone else, right?"

"You know me too well. Yeah, I haven't told anyone else, and believe me, I'm not looking forward to it either. I doubt they'll be pleased with my decision."

“Why not?”
“I don’t know, it’s just a feeling. They probably think that this is where I belong. They don’t realise that I need change and independence.”
“Hmmm, are you positive that this is the right choice?”
“I’m pretty sure, and anyway, I have to go with my gut.”
“Are you sure that your gut’s trustworthy?”
“Didn’t you always tell me to trust my gut?”
“Well, yes, but that’s not the point...”
“Hee hee, I’ll miss your sense of humour.”
“Oh, stop talking like that. I’m missing you already!”
“Yeah...”
“So, when do you want me to come over and help you pack?”
“I don’t know, I can probably do it myself.”
“Okay then, well when do you want to say goodbye and stuff?”
“I don’t know...it’ll be so hard...”
“Well, I know, but we still have to have a proper goodbye...”
“Gotta go...sorry.” Click.
“Hello? Where did you go? Did you just hang up on me?”
Click.

Reflections on the poem “Ego”

We were asked to write a poem expressing a conflict that we felt strongly about. I decided to write about bullying. I wanted to write about something that everyone knows about; that everyone can relate to. I know that bullying takes place in schools all around the world, in all cultures, and that almost everyone has somehow been involved in it. I wanted a poem that everyone could appreciate. Bullying is a very difficult and painful experience, so this poem had to be strong.

I think that the metaphors in this poem help to enhance it. I have always pictured ego as a balloon inside of one’s head, therefore a lot of the poem was based on that image. Because a poem has to display such a vivid image using few words, I relied on metaphors to paint pictures. I developed my use of metaphors considerably while working on this poem.

Ego (Written October 9, 2002, while in grade 8)

She walks down the halls,
strutting her stuff.
She flashes her cool, confident smile
that everyone knows oh so well.

She’s popular.

She shuns the little people
who are of no importance.
She feeds off of others’ sadness,
And makes them feel like they have
lost.

She stops at no lengths.

With each passing day,

a balloon of self-absorption
grows inside of her
little head,
making her more and more
bold.

She's winning.

It keeps growing until
one day,
an unaccepted girl
asks her the simple question
"Why?"
She pauses, searching for an answer.

But there is no answer.

"I don't know," she stutters,
unsure.
That over inflated bubble of ego
Has just been popped by a
teeny tiny
needle
called
Shame.

She has lost.

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Concluding Reflections

The opportunity that I have been given in participating in this writing award and compiling this portfolio has helped me to progress in my writing, and become more critical. I have not only improved my work, but also strengthened my ability to analyse my own writing and others' as well. It has helped me to realise my strengths and weaknesses, and has given me some direction for improvement. I have learned a lot.

An area that I want to continue to develop is my figurative language. Figurative language is an important aspect of writing because it really helps create vivid images, and animates thoughts in shorter spaces. If used appropriately, figurative language also enhances writing, and makes it creative. I also want to learn where to use figurative language; I don't believe that this writing aspect should be forced, because it takes away from its ability to be genuine. I want to improve this technique, so that it becomes much more flowing and natural in my writing.

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