

# Community Report

2011



Photo by: Caroline Brook

## Our Vision:

We provide world-class instruction and a rich diversity of engaging programs to inspire success for every student and bring communities together to learn, share and grow.

[www.nvsd.bc.ca](http://www.nvsd.bc.ca)



North Vancouver  
School District  
the natural place to learn®

March 10, 2011



## Message from the Superintendent

Student engagement is at the heart of personalized learning for the 21st century and the theme of this year's *Community Report*. Although "21st Century Learning" is not a new concept, recently there has been heightened emphasis upon the ideals of personalized learning, assessment for learning and lifelong learning. All of these elements are currently found in practice in our District, and we are pleased to be able to showcase some of them here.

I'm also pleased to share that student achievement within the North Vancouver School District continues to be very strong. Six-year completion rates have achieved their highest level in the past decade, improving from 84% to 87% over the past year, and 81% to 87% over the past two years, again surpassing the Provincial average (which includes private and independent schools). We're also gratified to see our six-year completion rate for Aboriginal

students moving in the right direction, from 51 to 52%. These and many other indicators of progress, and priorities, are found in the annual *Superintendent's Report on Achievement*. The Report for the 2009/10 school year describes not only the strengths we're building on, but also where we've trained our focus for ongoing improvement in student achievement. You'll find the complete report online at [nvsd44.bc.ca](http://nvsd44.bc.ca) > *About Us* > *Accountability and Achievement*.

As a resource, the *Report on Achievement* provides a summary of the extent of initiatives in our School District to address the many varied learning needs of our students, and summary indicators of progress. From new initiatives for Aboriginal learners to developing our assessment practices, we can see the depth to which diversity and inclusive education are addressed in our School District. Professional development geared towards personalized learning, partnering

with the First Nations communities, work and career experience programs, transition support from Grade 7 to 8, community partnerships and social and emotional learning are among the focal areas addressed in the *Report on Achievement*. We are seeing strong indications that our efforts are realizing improvement in all areas. Provincial/School District results tell one side of the story.

We know that every parent's focus is, understandably, on their own child. Keeping the lines of three-way communication open between parent, student and teacher is key to supporting a child's education. I encourage all parents to stay

involved and interested in their child's progress – ask questions, offer praise, help find solutions... The interest you show in your child's challenges, successes and discoveries can help instill enthusiasm for the lifelong learning that we all need to foster for success in the 21st century. ■

Sincerely,

**John Lewis**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
NORTH VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Message from the Chairperson

On behalf of the entire Board of Education, it's my pleasure to share with you some of the major accomplishments we have overseen since our last *Community Report* was published in March of 2010:

- the rebuilding of Carson Graham Secondary and Ridgeway Elementary continue on track towards completion;
- a first annual School District-wide "Green Fair" showcasing our sustainability and environmental education initiatives;
- ongoing support for our Artists for Kids Academy, Hockey Academy, Digital Media Academy and Peak Performance Program;
- Capilano Elementary's preparations for official accreditation to offer the IB Primary Years Programme (Balmoral and Carson Graham are now officially accredited to offer IB);
- a restructuring of the School District following widespread

community consultation achieved the submission of a balanced budget to the Ministry of Education in June of 2010;

- construction of the new Education Services Centre and Artists for Kids Gallery on Lonsdale continues on schedule for Spring 2012 completion;
- approval for Phase 1 construction of the Environmental Learning Centre in Squamish; and
- oversight for the \$136.3 million operating budget for 2010/11 school year.

Last fall, the Board began work on a consultative process to develop a high-level, ten-year strategic plan for the School District. The 10-year plan is an opportunity to integrate all our planning into a set of focused goals and objectives. The Strategic Plan will enable us to align our goals with our Vision, guide

decision-making and planning at all levels, create a tool for assessment and evaluation, and build understanding of our priorities and direction.

A long-term plan supports us in accomplishing meaningful progress while maintaining a consistent focus. It gives our work continuity and consistency, by investing the necessary commitment to improving student achievement over time. It will also help us to develop our leadership capacity so that we can support each other, particularly through times of rapid change. As a Board, we look forward to launching the Plan later this spring. We appreciate the contributions and perspectives of our partners, and the many members of the community who provided their input.

School Districts operate with a myriad of measures, plans and accountability contracts to deliver a complex mandate. In launching our Strategic Plan later this Spring, we will establish a new framework of reporting back to the community on the steps we have taken towards realizing our Vision to "provide world-class instruction and a rich diversity of engaging programs to inspire success for every student and bring communities together to learn, share and grow." ■

Sincerely,

**Franci Stratton**  
CHAIRPERSON  
NORTH VANCOUVER  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Most of the photographs in this year's report, including the cover photo by Caroline Brook, are credited to talented students and staff in our school district. All other photos are by Rob Newell.

“The vision of a 21st century K-12 education system is rooted in personalized learning. It focuses on providing students the skills they need to participate in a knowledge-based society, while also allowing them to explore an educational path that is best suited to their interests, their capabilities and their chosen future.<sup>1</sup>”

— Premier’s Technology Council, 2010



## Defining personalized learning for the 21st century

It may be the most frequently asked question in the education profession today: “What is personalized learning for the 21st century?”. Parents wonder from the perspective of “what does it mean to my child?”. Employers may ask, “Is it all about technology? Does it mean readiness for work?”. Communities want to know how students will engage and contribute to civil society. Multiple definitions co-exist to help understand the concept, and how it relates to living, working, succeeding and contributing to an ever-changing world.

Directors of Instruction Dr. Julie Parker and Joanne Robertson are two professionals who provide leadership in the North Vancouver School District to support personalized learning for the 21st century. Their inspiring insights, captured in a recent interview, reflect the dramatic shift happening in education at this point in time. As Julie routinely reminds her colleagues: “It’s about *learning*”.

**Q:** Can you define ‘personalized learning in the 21st century’?

**Parker and Robertson:** If you Google the term, you’ll find pages of definitions to wade through. They generally have some very common elements that affirm the individuality of learners. In the past, we focused on defining curriculum and the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. That is now shifting to facilitating learning for each student and the options and choices that are available to teachers to broaden the support they provide.

Many definitions emphasize education that puts the learner first and is flexible, creative, collaborative and complex. In his book *Five Minds for the Future*<sup>2</sup>, Howard Gardner gives us a solid starting point. He offers a definition that emphasizes the “minds” to cultivate in life-long learners. Qualities of **discipline** (expertise and skills), **synthesis** (surveying vast amounts of knowledge to assess what is important and how to make sense of it to one’s self, and others), **creating** (how to stretch from what is known to how it can be developed in new and unexpected directions), **respect** (diversity as a positive that can enrich the world) and **ethical** (recognizing the rights of others, and our responsibilities as citizens).

Some people think “21st Century Learning” may just be a new badge for some very traditional ideas in education, or a fresh phrase for “technology in the classroom.” Certainly, technology has a place in the definition, as it is a powerful tool to facilitate students’ abilities to collaborate. But while technology offers unprecedented abilities to personalize education, that is only one component of the concept as a whole.

**Q:** What is the role of the teacher in supporting personalized learning for the 21st century?

**Parker and Robertson:** Teachers have a central role in supporting four key pillars of learning for students: the development of knowledge, skills, self-esteem and a place in society. They can harness the power of student engagement to help students learn cooperatively.

They can welcome and integrate the resources of the community in the learning opportunities they design. They can practice what we call “assessment for learning,” that is, assessments need to begin by observation, letting the student lead knowing what the goal is, and providing the support and on-going feedback they need to get there.

We may be seeing the greatest shift in philosophy at the secondary level. Traditionally, teachers at the secondary level have focused on the transfer of content from teacher to student. 21st century-style Secondary teachers provide the best options for information and skill development that they can to students. It’s a switch from being the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side.” They are the coach, they set baseline expectations and encourage students to “stretch” as critical thinkers. They help students see their progress and what they need to do next to achieve a goal. Emphasizing the process of learning, rather than the memorization of facts, is essential. For many of our educators, this is not new, but certainly the value placed on it is higher than ever before.

**Q:** What is the role of the student in their own learning for the 21st century?

**Parker and Robertson:** Today’s students can’t succeed by simply absorbing facts. They need to be engaged in their learning and take responsibility for it. There is so much information coming at everyone these days, students need to practice their abilities in critical thinking skills, they need to collaborate, problem-solve and

understand that they hold the key to their own success.

Report cards and grades are one form of feedback that students and their parents receive. But there is also daily observation, dialogue and direction to work with. Students need to consider and work with all the meaningful feedback they are receiving, take ownership of it and set goals for how to take it further. Parents and teachers can support them in this, but students need to make the connection that their own involvement in their education has an impact on their achievement.

Students also need to develop the skills for life in a society with increasingly easy access to social media and a wide range of information. They need to be critical about what they’re reading, decipher what is valid and what is not, check their sources, distinguish between opinions and facts, ask what the motive behind the content is, and what the underlying message is. They need to develop their media literacy skills into a real savvyness, because only then can information help them make good choices.

**Q:** What can parents do to support their students?

**Parker and Robertson:** Parents of 21st century learners allow their kids to take ownership, to deal with conflict and challenges, to stumble sometimes and pick themselves up. They make room in their children’s lives for play and unstructured time. There is learning in all of this.

Parents today are living with a generation of “digital natives” who have unprecedented access to

Continued on page 4...

<sup>1</sup> Premier’s Technology Council. 2010. A Vision for 21st Century Education. Vancouver, British Columbia.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, Howard. *Five Minds for the Future*. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2007.

Photo by: Gowra Kong



## 2010/2011 North Vancouver School District Snapshot

- 16,262 students enrolled in Kindergarten to Grade 12
- 9005 Elementary and 7257 Secondary students
- \$137 million operating budget for 2010/11
- \$90 million capital budget for new construction, renovation and improvements

...Continued from page 3

information which is not always easy to navigate. Families can provide support and encouragement as their children take initiative, question, analyze and work things through.

To have engaged students, parents need to stay engaged as well. Parents have tremendous capacity for positive reinforcement, and dealing with life's ups and downs. Collaboration, good communication, listening with respect and a broad perspective can all be modeled at home. The opportunities are endless and they all contribute to the 21st century learner.

**Q: What is the role of the community in creating a culture of lifelong learning?**

**Parker and Robertson:** Everyone has a contribution to make. We can all learn from each other and we all have a need to be connected in a personal way. As a society, we're experiencing a growing realization that our cultural emphasis on independence is unsustainable. In the extreme, it creates isolation and an inability to meet diverse needs.

Our schools are transitioning from a somewhat independent model of operating to facilitating more collaborative learning opportunities. This means a new level of openness not only to the shared use of facilities, but also the access we have to the wealth of knowledge and expertise in our community. We see this in the expansion of our early learning support systems for pre-school age children, but it extends all the way up through secondary schools. It takes time and effort, and a community that places a high value on education, which, fortunately, we have. ■

- 2002 employees (full-time and part-time) -- 1114 teachers, 728 non-teaching staff, 160 casual staff
- A comprehensive K-12 education program consisting of over 200 provincial and locally developed educational programs and services in the Humanities, Mathematics/Sciences, Physical Education, Fine Arts and Applied Skills
- Early French Immersion, Late French Immersion and Secondary Bilingual Programs, enrolling 2,212 students
- Nationally recognized local programs, including Band and Strings, Reading 44, Firm Foundations, Inspirations 44, Math 44, and Early Learning Foundations
- Summer School providing comprehensive programming in remediation, enrichment, fine arts, full credit senior Secondary school courses, and integrated ESL and International Programs
- A variety of specialized support services and programs for students with exceptional learning needs
- An International Education Program, attracting over 600 learners from around the world - 200 Elementary and 400 Secondary students
- Continuing and adult education programs, providing a full complement of high school completion courses and academic upgrading classes
- The Artists for Kids Trust housing a collection of contemporary Canadian art and providing award-winning fine arts enrichment programming and scholarships
- 26 Elementary schools
- 7 Secondary schools
- An environmental outdoor education centre--the North Vancouver Outdoor School, located near Squamish, BC.



## Behind the spotlight: Johneen Harris, Capilano Elementary

To “understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right” is part of the Mission of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme. It is a declaration that is both simple and profound, going beyond respect and tolerance to genuine acceptance. Johneen Harris, Grade Two teacher and vice principal of Capilano Elementary, sometimes illustrates the concept to her students through art. In one of her favourite exercises, she shares with her class the famous paper cut out by Henri Matisse of “Icarus.” This Icarus, the mythical character who flew too close to the sun, is a single black cut out form, laid over a dark blue sky. While her students consider the picture, Harris asks them what emotion the picture conveys. Some say “happy” — they see a boy’s figure uplifted in flight, buoyed by the air and surrounded by bright stars, his bright red heart full of life. Others say “confused”—they see legs and arms akimbo, chaotic star shapes, a hole in the chest.

Harris sees that *both are right* and so do the students. Not only that, by having considered their impressions and articulated them, they have practised valuable skills for the 21st century: communication, reflection, and critical thinking. They have also worked through an exercise in open-minded listening, with curiosity, not with the intention to change each others’ minds. It’s a skill Harris hopes they will practice all their lives. It is also a goal of the IB Programme (of which Capilano Elementary is currently a candidate school) to “become active, compassionate and lifelong learners.”<sup>3</sup>

A teacher for 11 years, Harris is herself a model of the term “lifelong learner.” Among her favourite teachers are her students. “Kids love telling the teacher what they know, they love to raise their hands and share it,” she says. More than this though, is their capacity to teach each other. She believes facilitating this capacity is part of her role, recognizing the opportunities to be the “guide on the side.”

A few years ago, when Johneen was teaching the Global Learners Programme at Montroyal Elementary, she had a boy in her Grade 6 class from Korea. “Our international students contribute so much to the classroom dynamic,” she says. “This boy had very strong computer skills and he was a very nice kid,” she remembers. “But making friends was hard for him, he was shy, he didn’t play sports and he was new to learning English. At one point in the year, we were working on art projects and some students were actually leading workshops to teach others a particular skill they had grasped. This boy came up with the idea that he wanted to lead a workshop on creating web pages on environmental issues. It became very important to him, and he did a lot of research in figuring out what to teach. Finally, he created a four-part series for intermediates on how to build your own blog.

“He was very excited about his idea, but he realized he couldn’t do it all himself, because he wasn’t confident in his English. He had to reach out, and he found a couple of helpers, kids who were natural leaders and quick to grasp computer skills. They supported him in the workshops, and when he was unsure of how to

explain something, he turned to one of his buddies for help.”

The friendships formed through this collaboration continued to grow between the boys long after the workshop was complete. “He wasn’t an athletic kid, and he wasn’t particularly outgoing, but by taking a risk like this and going out on a limb, he not only made friends, he became someone the other kids looked up to.”

In its learner profile, the IB espouses to develop students that are: “communicators; principled; reflective; thinkers; open-minded; balanced; risk-takers; inquirers; caring; knowledgeable.” As central as they are to the Programme, these qualities are not exclusive to IB.

At some point in every conversation about personalized learning, up comes the topic of tech. While Johneen likes to keep the new technology in perspective, it’s also what made it possible for her to complete her Masters of Education in Learning and Technology from Royal Roads University while working full-time, and stepping into the role of acting vice principal for Montroyal Elementary. “It was all online except for a two-week summer internship,” says Harris. “I don’t believe in forcing technology where it’s not needed; it’s a balance of the right tool for the right job,” she says.

Sometimes, that means no tool at all. In leading a Grade 5 class “poetry slam” a few years ago,

“Our international students contribute so much to the classroom dynamic,” she says.

They can be cultivated in any classroom that is focused on personalized learning for the 21st century.

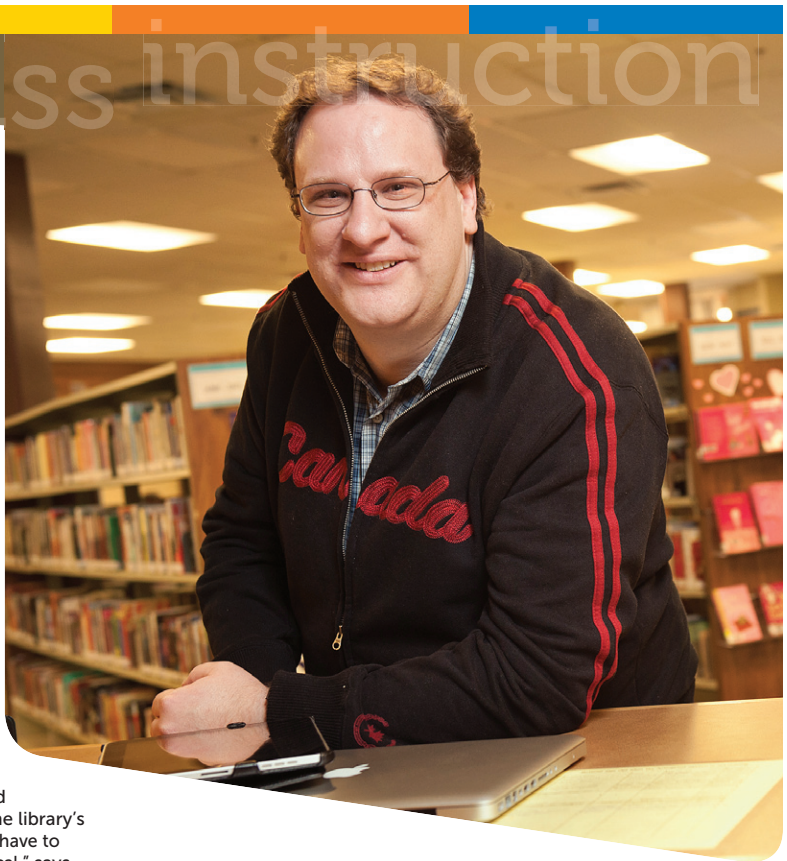
Recognizing, supporting and celebrating these developing qualities in her students is where Johneen finds some of her greatest career satisfaction. “It’s about shining a spotlight on a child’s strengths, a job well done, a creative approach to solving a problem,” she says. “And the spotlight is always moving,” she explains. “It doesn’t stay in the same place, on the same student day after day.”

Johneen observed that her students readily grasped the writing of their poem, but many were struggling on the delivery—the inspired reading or reciting of their work, that is part of a true “slam.” One morning, as the kids were coming in from recess, a spontaneous learning event occurred. Kids crowded into the cloakroom to hear one student, who had mastered the reciting part. “He filled his voice with energy and excitement and showed the other kids how to really deliver a poem,” says Johneen proudly. “He figured it out, and he shared.” ■

<sup>3</sup> Mission Statement, © International Baccalaureate Programme.



## Seeing What's Possible: Bryan Hughes, Seycove Secondary



Ten years ago, Bryan Hughes was living the high-flying life of a corporate manager. He worked for Starbucks Coffee at a time when the company was experiencing unprecedented growth and expansion. Bryan was a specialist in new store openings, and he travelled the world helping to grow the company. As exciting as the work was, "there came a point when I wanted a career change. To know for sure I was making a difference." From the private sector through to five years in education programs at BC Hydro, there was always a thread of teaching in Bryan's career. Finally, he decided to make it official. In 2008, he graduated from UBC with a degree in education and today works as the teacher librarian at Seycove Secondary.

the waters with a small collection of Kindle eBooks. The one area you will find space on the shelves is the library's non-fiction section. "We have to be progressive, and practical," says Bryan. "Students turn first to online sources that they can search. It doesn't make sense anymore to buy sets of encyclopedias that are out-of-date the moment they are printed. Today, there is a wealth of up-to-date information available much more economically online, often for free."

Computers in the Seycove library provide easy access to that wealth of knowledge, and as a librarian who also teaches Information Technology 9, Bryan spends plenty

we all need them in the 21st century."

"I'm a librarian, but I'm not hung up on the book. I think the book is one of many formats that can be used to convey a story," says Bryan. "To me, books have a place on the spectrum of technology that now includes computers and all the new media devices." As he speaks, he taps the screen of his iPad and up comes a page from *The Book of Negroes*. The type is small, so in one stroke, Bryan enlarges it. Next, he highlights an obscure word. The eBook instantly offers a definition. Readers accustomed to pondering over the meaning of a word before passing it over now have the option of enlightenment at their fingertips. "It's a powerful tool," says Bryan. "It doesn't replace the tried and true methods of the teaching profession, but it allows us to do things today we could only dream of before."

Conveying the importance of what students share is a challenge for any tech teacher today. Even a decade ago, the Web was all about "telling." Now it's all about sharing. Everyone in a student's life can support their understanding of safe and appropriate use of any tool, and the Web is no exception.

The up side of sharing is, well, sharing. "Recently, a Grade 9 student let me know she was very disappointed that the library didn't have all the classics here on the shelves," says Bryan. "She was right. But I showed her where she could find them all together online." *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Pride and Prejudice, The Count of Monte Cristo...* they're all there, free to download and ready for reading.

As dramatic as the current shift in education is, "this isn't about throwing out what works," says Bryan. "It is about using the best possible tool for the job. At different points in our history that was a chisel and rock to etch out a story on the wall of a cave, or later paper and pen. Now, digital technology is the tool of our time — it's the reality of the way we live today. You can learn without it, but why would you want to?" ■

And Bryan knows that with power comes responsibility. "The Internet is like a firehose," he says. "You have to learn how to sip from it safely." For today's digital natives, this means not only considering the information they have access to, but also how they present themselves online. "I tell them it's their digital tattoo. What they put out there about themselves, and others, they'll have to live with for the rest of their lives. People will search for you online, what do you want them to find?"

of time helping students navigate their way to the best sources.

It's that plethora of information though, and its vast range of accuracy and quality, that requires serious skills to sort through. "As a society, we have a lot of confidence in books," says Bryan. "We know, or believe, that most have been through a process of fact-checking and editing. For students to learn effectively online, they have to be shown how to evaluate sources, sense bias, assess authenticity... These are all vital, learned skills, and

"To me, books have a place on the spectrum of technology that now includes computers and all the new media devices."

Public school libraries, Bryan knows, are not what they used to be. Historically speaking, they are a relatively new phenomena, and they are rapidly changing. A few hundred years ago, libraries were exclusive to the rich, the privileged or the parochial. Public lending libraries didn't exist. But then, neither did public education.

Today, the library at Seycove offers not only an impressive collection of modern fiction, periodicals and reference materials, it is also testing



## Stretch, balance and butterflies: Liette Johnson, Sherwood Park Elementary/ École Sherwood Park

On any given day in her Grade 1/2 classroom at Sherwood Park Elementary, chances are you will find Liette Johnson on the floor. Surrounded by her students, she will teach anything on the carpet — even math and science.

"They get wiggly, they can't sit at their tables all day," she explains. On Monday afternoons, she leads the class to the school's yoga room and the children get their Daily Physical Activity (DPA) by stretching, bending and balancing.

"They love the challenge of balancing, and teaching each other new poses," she says, confiding that her students are amazed their teacher can do "the crow" (a compact, arm-balance pose). For her part, Liette is happy to twist herself into a pretzel every week if it encourages her students. "You have to be a model," she says. "You have to show your enthusiasm."

Originally from Quebec, Liette obtained her teaching degree from SFU and joined the North Vancouver School District in 1987. She entered the profession at a time when computers were relatively new to schools, and has observed what an integral tool they've become today, even for teaching the primary grades.

"We just finished a unit for science on force and motion. I found these unbelievable clips on YouTube that demonstrate Newton's Laws of

Motion in a way that very young children can grasp," she enthuses. As appreciative as she is for the power of YouTube as a teaching resource, the computer has also facilitated a more practical approach to parent/teacher communication, either to quickly share a photo taken on a class field trip, or just to let parents know on a rainy day to watch for wet clothes in the backpack — simple, short connections that help to build community.

Building those little connections makes it that much easier when Liette needs to reach out and ask for parents to help with a project. For example, every Spring and Fall, she gardens with the class. "You'd be amazed what Grade Ones can do in a garden: weed, rake, plant bulbs... But we need the parents to do the heavy lifting."

Every second year, all the primary classes at Sherwood Park raise butterflies and release them into the garden. For a few years before the butterflies, Liette's class used to do chickens and ducks, hatching them in an incubator and watching them transform from wet, scraggly hatchlings to downy chicks. Eventually the chickens would go to a farm, and the ducks to Outdoor School. Butterflies though, go from their classroom habitat to right outside the school's doors. It's a project that taps into the enthusiasm of students for discovery that is paramount in the primary years.

"Gardening is one way they learn about contributing to the community," says Liette, "it also teaches them responsibility." Primary students need to see for themselves that what they do makes a difference, to other people, and to the environment. This is the ethical pillar of personalized learning in the 21st century.

"In a true community, everybody has a job, everybody can contribute in some way," says Liette. Similarly, her students all have jobs in the classroom; there is an assistant who runs for messages, a table monitor for each group of students, a person to water the plants, cloakroom

the kids enthusiastic and looking forward." At the same time, she is quick to point out that "special days" and many of her other activities, are common practice throughout the School District. Colleagues share ideas, and things "that work" as a means of supporting each other and improving the profession.

Look ahead to June and you will find "Bring Your Bike to School" day on the Sherwood Park calendar. "Teachers prepare by talking about bike safety, and parents help by dusting off their children's bikes and making sure there are in good working order. But not every child has a bike, so families lend and

"You'd be amazed what Grade Ones can do in a garden: weed, rake, plant bulbs... But we need the parents to do the heavy lifting."

cleaners, and even two tennis ball technicians who provide at-need service to put the tennis ball silencers back on the chair legs when they fall off.

But Liette knows that a community is much more than jobs and responsibilities. Her calendar is marked by "Special Days" — a visit from a scientist, a skating party, 100 Days of school... "I try to plan as many as I can," she says. "It keeps

borrow what they need so that every child can have one that fits them on our special day," says Liette. It's a big event for Sherwood Park, and the playing field is repurposed for the afternoon for bike races and games. It's meant to be fun and inclusive for everyone, no matter how good a rider they are. "And for some kids," she says, "it's often the day they take their training wheels off." ■

# Photo Album



Photo by: Johneen Harris



Photo by: Brenda Miller



Photo by: Karen Watson



Photo by: Diane David



Photo by: Travis Fitzgerald



Photo by: Conner Preston



Photo by: Ryan Walker



Photo by: Ryan Longoz



Photo by: Kevin Ward



Photo by: Alia Youssef



Photo by: Jordan Asch



Photo by: Ella Sandoval-Carlsten



Photo by: Mikayla Duey



Photo by: Lucy Rohatynchuck

  
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