



Chalk Talk

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Subscribers,

This week's editorial about teacher recognition has been submitted by Marian Reimer-Friesen. Marian is a principal at John Butler School in St. Catharines, ON and was a Finalist in the 1996 Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History.

Earlier this month a magazine landed on my desk announcing that February is "Teacher Appreciation Month". I was surprised to read this headline given that I had never heard of such a month when I was teaching, nor had I marked it on my calendar as an administrator. Had I missed the boat on this proclamation? As with all things, it turned out to be a company's attempt to garner more business by encouraging me to purchase mugs, pens and tote bags saying "To Teach is to Touch a Life Forever". A fitting sentiment, no doubt, but is this truly the way we show teachers appreciation?

I began to think about my earliest experiences teaching. After a year in teacher's college I was fortunate enough to land a job in mid-September teaching a grade 4/5 class. I was overwhelmed by the immense task that stood before me and felt very alone in that room despite the 32 students sharing the days with me. For the first time, there was no advisor checking my lesson plans prior to teaching, no associate teacher to observe the lesson or rescue me if I faltered, and of course no daily feedback. In those early weeks and months, a tote bag or pen would have done me little good. However, the kind words of a colleague, student, parent or administrator made all the difference. True appreciation for a job well done is a rare and wonderful thing. Being involved in the Governor General's Award took recognition to a new level. The nomination process alone was empowering and forced me to take the time to reflect on and document my achievements -- something we teachers don't often do. Now I encourage other educators to submit a lesson plan or teaching approach to the program. You never know what could transpire.

So, Teacher Appreciation Month is February, or so the magazine on my desk would like us to believe. I think instead I'll make this "Teacher Appreciation Year". It doesn't take long to pen a quick thank you note to someone who has coached a team or organized an event. It won't break the bank to buy a few Tim Horton's gift certificates for the folks who have put in long hours to coordinate a concert or set up a book club. Most importantly, I will continue to take the time to speak to my colleagues offering a personal thank you for efforts large and small. We spend a lot of time bolstering our students with positive recognition knowing that it will reap tremendous rewards in their academic performance, attitude and effort. With ever-increasing job demands and stressors, isn't it time we put the same amount of focus on teacher appreciation?

[Let us know your thoughts.](#)



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Through your dynamic, personalized approach to teaching history, you have shown your students that history begins with each individual and continues as each of us adds our own story ... Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean.



Click [here](#) for award ceremony speech.

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada illustrated her commitment to Canadian history education during the 2005 Governor Generals Awards ceremony. Now its your chance to show us yours! Canada's National History Society urges you to submit a lesson plan or teaching idea for the 11th annual Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History. The process is easy. Candidates need only submit an original lesson plan or project description, supporting student work, evaluation of the student work, and a statement of their teaching philosophy. It's that simple.

Six Recipients Awarded \$2,500!

Six recipients will be awarded \$2,500, a medal and a trip to Ottawa for two, to attend the Awards ceremony and presentation by Her Excellency.

Six Schools Share in the Winnings!

An additional \$1,000 is awarded to the recipients' schools.

All Approaches are Welcome!

Canada is rich in stories and there are countless ways to tell them. The History Society invites educators from elementary, middle, and senior levels to participate in the Awards, provided that their work features Canadian content with an explicitly historical dimension. Teachers can present themselves or a group, or be nominated by a student, parent or colleague. The application deadline is April 29, 2006.

A Career Highlight!

In addition to the cash awards and recognition, recipients enjoy two days of unforgettable experiences which have included in past years, Vice-regal ceremonies with her Excellency, cocktails in the Senate, and private tours of Parliament Hill, Rideau Hall, the Library and Archives Gatineau Preservation Centre, and the Mackenzie King Estate.

Free Lesson Plans, Posters and On-line Resources!

Canada's top history teachers share their expertise with educators across the country through the education link at www.historysociety.ca. The site offers a wealth of lesson plans and teaching approaches. Each year the Society also publishes a classroom poster and teaching tool. Order a copy for your classroom.

[Apply Today!](#)

1-800-861-1008



Marian Reimer-Friesen, Principal
Colonel John Butler School

1-800-861-1008

prixggawards@historysociety.ca
www.historysociety.ca

Other Awards for Teachers

Prime Ministers Teaching Awards

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence recognize the efforts of outstanding teachers in all disciplines who instill in their students a love of learning, helping them excel and build a successful future.

Physical Education Teacher of the Year Award

The Physical Education Teacher of the Year Award (PET) recognizes and promotes excellence in teaching physical education. This includes the ability to motivate children and youth to participate in physical activity.

Education News

AUCC releases responses from parties on higher education

Four main parties support continued investments in universities and research but differ in their approaches to funding and support, AUCC survey of political leaders finds

Getting the Youth Vote - Vanessa Richmond - The Tyee

The more that white, middle-aged people wring their hands about how to get youth to vote, the more they're doomed to fail. So say a lot of young people wary of earnest appeals to cast ballots this federal election.

Facts & Figures for the Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History



Total Number of Celebrants to Ottawa

- 121

Governors General Who Have Presented the Awards

- Romeo LeBlanc presented the Awards from 1996 to 1999
- Adrienne Clarkson presented the Awards from 2000 to 2004
- Michaëlle Jean presented the Awards in 2005

Locations for the Awards Ceremony

- The Awards have been presented at Rideau Hall for 9 years
- In 1999 the Awards were presented at the Citadelle in Quebec City

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T 416.955.9526
F 416.955.0815

THE COMPANY FOR EDUCATION COMMUNICATIONS INC.

66 George St., 3rd floor • Toronto, ON, Canada, M5A 4K8 • www.coedcomm.com • info@coedcomm.com