

Nelson, Gloria

# Teacher gives students rea world experiences

By Barry Ellsworth *Intel*

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Turkeys. Ducks.

Is this a farm or a classroom? It's the latter, Gloria Nelson style.

Nelson, who teaches Grade 1 at Belleville's Sir John A. Macdonald Public School, believes youngsters learn better when they experience things first-hand, so she has a pair of incubators in the classroom.

The duck and turkey eggs are due to hatch May 1. That would be apropos, since Nelson is to receive the Educator of the Year award on that morning during an official ceremony at Loyalist College. And that evening at Sir John A. Macdonald, teachers will host an open house, with some special guests.

"By the open house, they (turkeys and ducks) will be out and running around," Nelson chuckles. "At the end of the week, they go back to the farm."

She is the 34th recipient of the educator award, named after Belleville's Sir Mackenzie Bowell, a former prime minister, and bestowed annually by the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board on an individual who has fostered education in the community. The awards committee named Nelson, 53, during a brief ceremony for media and board staff Tuesday.

When Nelson speaks about her young charges, she makes a slip of the tongue that provides insight as to why she was selected this year.

"My kids...I mean, my students" she corrects herself with a laugh.

Nelson has taught Grades 1 and 2 for 25 years at various Belleville and Trenton schools, but she didn't start out to become an elementary school pedagogue. She earned a high school teaching certificate but when her young son had trouble reading, she ended up instructing elementary school. It was a change for the best.

"I really like the little guys," Nelson says. She adds that when people ask her about her "greatest achievement," she always answers, "There is none."

Rather, she says every student in her classroom represents an achievement, since most come into

Grade 1 without certain learning skills, but, "They go out reading and writing. It never ceases to amaze me."

Nelson began her career teaching Grade 1 in 1975 at Dufferin Street School in Trenton, and over the years she says she has seen the



Intelligencer photo by Barry Ellsworth

Educator of the year Gloria Nelson believes in hands-on education.

curriculum evolve for the better.

"The curriculum now is much, much better," Nelson says, because the teaching guidelines are better.

But as the selection committee notes, Nelson's deeds extend past the classroom.

She was the first woman director of the Belleville Men's Ten-pin Association, has been a coach and secretary for the Junior Ten-pin Bowlers and is currently the director of the Provincial Youth Ten-pin Board.

Nelson has also taught driver's education at local high schools, a role her husband Ivan fulfills for the school board.

Her daughter has followed in her footsteps. Tricia Wormington has taught for 11 years at William R. Kirk School in Belleville.

And that boy who had trouble reading?

Tony Nelson — now

runs a Belleville business, Taste of Country, with his wife Karen.

Looks like she learned 'em well.

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