

Elizabeth Copeland

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I recently had the pleasure of visiting Millville Elementary School to offer workshops on creative writing through the Writers' in the Schools Program - funded by the Anglophone School Board in collaboration with the Writers' Federation of New Brunswick. I would like to share my thoughts with you as you consider the future of this small, but mighty school.

As an arts educator with over thirty years experience working across Canada, I have facilitated programs in hundreds of schools and have seen a broad range of literacy-based successes and failures when it comes to the process of writing. I have seen high school students who cannot spell and have such a poor command of the conventions of language that they cannot express their ideas using the written word. Heaven help them when they move out into the world. In my tour of New Brunswick schools over the last year and a half, I have spent time with middle school students who carry the belief that they are less than bright simply because no one has taught them the basics of grammar and spelling. This is - in my mind - a tragedy.

At MES, I worked with children in Gr. 3 and 4 who clearly love to read. Many of these students have a better command of the conventions of language than some of their high school counterparts. I saw a community of eager students working with a team of committed teachers and staff. But more importantly, I felt that special something that happens in a school when the right chemistry of caring and talent is brought together to create a truly unique learning environment.

MES is a great success story when it comes to literacy. My recommendation to you is this...Rather than closing MES, you should invite education specialists from St. Thomas (or another interested University) to study why this tiny rural school has such high literacy rates. In a province that sadly boasts one of the lowest rates of literacy in the country, the teachings gained by such a research project would ultimately serve schools in the entire province.

If I can be of further service in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

All good things,

Elizabeth Copeland

Author, Playwright, Theatre Artist, Arts Educator

Elizabeth@songcycles.com