



THE KEN SPENCER AWARD

## PRESS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Seven Award Winning School Programs Recognized For Their Potential To Change Learning

*Canadian educators who weren't afraid to change the traditional school day model are honoured with the 2014 Ken Spencer Award for Innovation in Teaching and Learning.*

**Toronto – February 19, 2014** – An ambitious group of Canadian educators are changing the culture of school by working tirelessly to provide their students with the space to follow their passions and contribute to the development of their own learning pathways – in the process, these learners have become way more engaged.

This year's Ken Spencer Award winning programs leverage teacher expertise beyond their subject areas to provide inquiry based real-world learning that takes the classroom outside school walls. Many of these programs involve regular teacher collaboration that focuses on motivating students at risk of not completing school, while others blend indigenous teachings with 21st century learning. They all demonstrate a common commitment to the quality of the relationship between teacher and student.

“Many of these great ideas were built by determined educators willing to push the boundaries of traditional schooling to better engage their students,” says Canadian Education Association (CEA) President & CEO Ron Canuel. “But the real challenge still remains for school districts to embed this type of disruptive change beyond individual classrooms and schools.”

Ken Spencer Award recognition ceremonies are being planned in the communities of each of the seven winners. This is the fifth year of this award, and CEA would like to thank all of the school and school district staff for their time and effort in the preparation of the application packages.

**For an electronic booklet with photos and videos about all 15 Ken Spencer Award finalists:** <http://reports.cea-ace.ca/story/9609>





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The Ken Spencer Award for Innovation in Teaching and Learning was established with the generous contribution of Dr. Ken Spencer to recognize and publicize innovative work that is sustainable and has the potential of being taken up by others; to encourage a focus on transformative change in schools; and to provide profile for classroom innovation within school districts, schools, and the media. <http://www.cea-ace.ca/kenspenceraward>

Founded in 1891, the Canadian Education Association (CEA) is a network of passionate educators advancing ideas for greater student and teacher engagement in public education. CEA does this by conducting research and spreading useful ideas through its publications, website, workshops, symposia, blog, videos, and social media channels, and supporting education systems to be more adaptive to the rapidly changing needs of all learners in an effort to reverse the trend of students ‘tuning out’ of their learning opportunities. <http://www.cea-ace.ca>

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**2014 KEN SPENCER AWARD WINNERS**

**FIRST PLACE – \$7,000**

**The X-Block**

*Changing the culture of school by unleashing both students’ and teachers’ passions*

**Len Wood Middle School – North Okanagan-Shuswap School District**

Armstrong, BC

Students work with teachers to design courses that can range from building self-propelled aircraft, hydraulic arms or catapults, to backpacking, camping, canoeing, and rock climbing – they are fully engaged in a variety of experiential learning such as wilderness survival, creating super hero comic books, and cooking food from around the world while learning about the nutritional content and the country’s culture. This program has been successful because it connects to both the students’ and teachers’ passions, amplifies student voice and choice, matches skills and competencies to curriculum outcomes, strengthens the school-community relationship, and provides extraordinary learning experiences for everyone involved, and in the process, has shifted the learning culture of this middle school.

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**SECOND PLACE**

## Building Futures

*Constructing real world learning for students, from the ground up*

### George McDougall High School – Rocky View Schools

Airdrie, AB

Building Futures is a ten-month program where Grade 10 students build two houses from the ground up in partnership with a community owned and operated homebuilder. Students get bused to the jobsite Monday to Thursday for hands-on work alongside skilled tradesmen/tradeswomen. A detached garage filled with tools and technology becomes the classroom. By the time the build is completed, students complete the Grade 10 curriculum and obtain 57 of their required 100 high school credits to attain a Residential Construction Site Manager Level One Academic accreditation. This dynamic real-world context has led to a sharp increase in student engagement and subsequent decrease in discipline issues. Students are simply too engaged to ever ask: “Why do I need to know this?”

For more program information	Media Inquiries
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## HONOURABLE MENTION

### Oskāyak High School Renewal

*Empowering a generation of aboriginal leaders by blending traditional teachings with 21st century learning*

### Oskāyak High School – Saskatoon Catholic Schools

Saskatoon, SK

Oskāyak High School is a First Nation’s public school incorporating Plains Cree language, worldview and values to help students attain a powerful sense of identity and belonging. Four years ago, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, the Oskāyak Kitotiminawak Parent Council, school administration, teachers, and students leveraged a culture of trust, collaboration, flexibility and risktaking to revitalize the school’s Culture and Cree Language Program, create an integrated model of Student Support Services, and transform the classroom learning experience to a high level of student engagement. As a result of this renewal process, Oskāyak has become a school of choice for Aboriginal youth in Saskatoon, and they now have the cultural, personal, and academic tools to succeed in the post-secondary world.

For more program information	Media Inquiries
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## HONOURABLE MENTION

### Through a Different Lens

*Helping teachers look at learning through the eyes of students*

#### Princess Margaret Secondary School – Okanagan Skaha School District

Penticton, BC

A group of 28 teachers meet monthly to share teaching and assessment strategies, and to strategize on how best to connect with specific students who are at risk of not completing school. They challenge themselves to reflect on their practice and to try a new approach between each meeting. This collaboration has led to growth in all students' academic confidence, engagement, and greater self-awareness of their personal strengths and talents. Students at risk attend class more often, participate more in class, establish better relationships with their teacher and peers, and begin to see themselves as learners.

For more program information	Media Inquiries
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## HONOURABLE MENTION

### The Futures Forum

*Embedding 21st century learning across the school district*

#### Waterloo Region District School Board

Kitchener, ON

The Futures Forum brings together students, teachers, administrators, central staff, superintendents, community members, trustees and others with a common purpose of improving learning and instruction across the Waterloo Region District School Board. It offers encouraging evidence of innovation that can result in sustainable, improved instruction and learning that is inquiry based, increases achievement results and is relevant to the world in which students are preparing to live, work and succeed. It has been carefully developed and assessed over time, and has documented conditions for scaling similar approaches to improved learning and instruction across a system.

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## HONOURABLE MENTION

### **We Are All Treaty People**

*A powerful way to bring treaty education to the classroom*

#### **Palliser Heights School – Prairie South School Division**

Moose Jaw, SK

With the assistance of researchers from the University of Regina's Faculty of Education, a program was developed through a teacher's trial and error to explore how digital storytelling could be used to engage students in inquiry learning about treaties and the treaty relationship. Students became passionate learners of the social justice issues embedded in treaty education by exploring issues of fairness, citizenship and belonging. This program has the potential to expand to other schools and classrooms and become a crucial element to ensuring that relationships between First Nations people and Canadians move forward in positive ways.

For more program information	Media Inquiries
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## HONOURABLE MENTION

### **Découvertes pédagogiques (Pedagogical Discoveries)**

*A mission to motivate at-risk learners*

#### **École des Sentiers – Commission scolaire des Premières-Seigneuries**

Québec, QC

This personalized course was designed for students who decided not to participate in one of the school's optional programs. Some of these students have behaviour-related difficulties, attention deficit disorders, low levels of engagement and motivation, and are in danger of dropping out. Using an elaborate program of creative incentives to motivate, students participate in a series of "missions" throughout the academic year that challenge them to work in teams, problem solve, and invent in a non-traditional classroom environment with ubiquitous technology and social media tools at their disposal. The results so far show students who once felt helpless are on their way to becoming self-confident independent learners who like school and want to succeed.

For more program information	Media Inquiries
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