

# Spotlight on Youth



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## Navigating to success in school

Laura McAvoy connects Bicentennial students with community and confidence

by Allana Loh

“I love my job!” says Laura McAvoy, community outreach worker at Bicentennial School. McAvoy is the SchoolsPlus person helping families navigate the system so they can access the help they need to support their child’s success in school.

“It’s all about building relationships, in the classroom and in the community, and having professional connections available for the kids and their families.”

McAvoy says Bicentennial School creates a child-based culture of inclusiveness. “The school gives me the green light to do what I’m supposed to do,” she says. “Everyone works as a team to get the best of each child.” McAvoy is

clearly proud to be part of this positive school environment where every child is valued and respected.

Immersed in everything that connects her to the kids and their families, McAvoy coaches the boys and girls flag football teams and is the team manager of the boys’ and girls’ basketball teams. She has been involved in programs such as the Builders Club, Voices, Home Alone Babysitters Club, Incredible Years Parenting, Friends for Life, book clubs, puzzle club, Home & School Association and School Advisory Council. As chair of the Bicentennial School spring fair, McAvoy is already planning the event to be a fun, family and friends-

oriented fundraiser for the school.

“Community businesses support us immensely! There are so many people who care about the children of this school!”

McAvoy is in her 10th year as a community outreach worker. She is also the SchoolsPlus person for Creighton Park, Hawthorne, Southdale-North Woodside and South Woodside schools. She’s also a proud mom whose son is a competitive and accomplished athlete. McAvoy maintains a momentum as strong as her passion for helping kids be their best.

“I can read kids and I understand what they need,” she says. “So I do the best I can each day.”



Photo: Allana Loh

Laura McAvoy, centre, with the Bicentennial girls’ basketball team.

## A new frame of mind

Quiet space at Shannon Park helps student, staff practice mindfulness

by Sherene Kirincich

Do you ever wish you had a quiet space to go to? Somewhere to collect your thoughts?

Somewhere to just get away from it all for a few minutes and reset? Well, that’s what the staff and students are doing on a daily basis at Shannon Park Elementary School.

We have set up a Mindful Room for small groups of students and staff to go in and choose from a variety of quiet activities for 15-minute blocks of time. In this quiet space, we offer colouring activities, a

chessboard, Buddha boards, a lava lamp and fish tank to watch, yoga mats, comfy blankets, and pillows. Our iPad has nature sounds and relaxing music, as well as guided meditations and yoga sequences to listen to and follow. There is a supervisor in the room, but the students’ choice of activity is always self-directed. We also have noise-cancelling headphones so they can have silence if that’s what they need.

The goal of the room is to offer students and staff a place to go where

they can collect their thoughts and get back on track if they’re feeling anxious, worried, restless, or if they just need a few minutes to relax. In the midst of our busy, noisy, and fast-paced lives, we’re finding it helpful to have a quiet place like this to go to and recharge.

If there is anyone interested in volunteering to help out with the Mindful Room, it would be lovely to have community involvement. Please e-mail [dartmouth-northnews@yahoo.ca](mailto:dartmouth-northnews@yahoo.ca) for more information.



Photo: contributed

Students can colour, play board games, snooze or practice yoga postures in Shannon Park School’s relaxing new Mindful Room!