

SUMMER 2020

MSCS

MENNO SIMONS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



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GIVING THE GIFT OF EDUCATION

Sandy Karg grew up with her three younger brothers and one younger sister in Caster, Alberta on a cattle farm in the middle of nowhere. She initially went to Red Deer College with the intention of going into Oil and Gas before recognizing (that in her heart) she was being called to become a teacher. After finishing her first two years of post-secondary at Red Deer College she transferred to the University of Alberta and completed her Education degree. She ran into her now husband Dave in a 7-11 parking lot during her college days and married just before her graduation. They settled in Stettler, Alberta to start their careers and family. Sandy started her first year of teaching as the first certified aerobics instructor in Stettler and as a teaching assistant in the town's special needs program.

Eventually, Sandy's journey intersected with Menno Simons Christian School, first as a substitute teacher before joining full time in 1998 as the Grade 1 teacher. Through all these years she has commuted daily from Chestermere while raising her children, Ashley (32), Regan (30), Sydney (28), and Jachin (26). The development of Stoney Trail has shorted the drive by 15 minutes, but when you talk to this farm girl at heart she would tell you "it's not that long a drive".

WHAT INITIALLY INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A TEACHER?

In high school, I loved biology classes -- I was amazed at some of the things I was learning. That initially fostered my love of learning.



The Karg Family: Justine, Jachin, Dave, Sandy, Chris, Sydney, Ashley, Rhett (Sandy's 20mth old Grandson), Matt, and Regan

As the school grew in enrollment, they had enough students to have full Grade 1 class, so I was offered the position in 1998 at the Northmount location.

WHAT WERE THE EARLY YEARS LIKE?

The early years were an extension of doing life together. Learning about everything was everyone's job and we'd always be helping each other and working together. We all shared, we all pitched in whether it was sports, the musical, or fundraising. It didn't have to be your expertise, there would be a binder somewhere and you would learn it! It was challenging as you would learn and do things you had never done before, but we did it all so we could provide for the kids and this small community. Everyone got to know each other quite well, which gave the school a small-town feel in the middle of the big city.

FUNNIEST MENNO MEMORIES

Many memories center around the kindness shown to me by parents and colleagues.

I always knew I wanted to do something that would help people, I wanted to give something to people with my life and I knew I didn't want to become a doctor or a nurse. I realized education was so empowering so important. I recognized it was something that could help change lives that could help turn lives around. It was a gift that I could give.

HOW DID YOU END UP AT MENNO?

When Dave was transferred to Calgary I started subbing at different schools. I subbed frequently

CONT'D



Mrs. Karg's first Menno Gr. 1 Class



Opening Ceremony Celebrations at the 7000 Elkton Drive location

Ms. Wiens baked mini cheesecakes for me to serve my guests when my oldest daughter graduated, parents and staff members have cooked meals for my family, Mrs. Krahn took my class back to school when I broke my arm so I could go to the hospital, people have brushed my car off at the end of a snowy day, and the list goes on and on and on. I am surrounded by wonderful people.

On the morning of my oldest son's graduation from Menno, a parent asked me what I would be wearing to it. I said I'd be wearing what I had on because I hadn't had time to go shopping. She and another Mom went to Winners that day and bought me some blouses to pick from. They said I could just take anything back I didn't want. What a surprise and what a blessing. I paid them and wound up keeping all four blouses. They had great taste and big hearts.

One memory you may not want to include, but I thought you'd enjoy knowing about has to do with what used to be a tradition at our school. On the night before a female staff member's 40th birthday, other nameless staff members would drive to her house under the cover of darkness and string old (and may I say very large) bras all over the birthday girl's front yard. Luckily for me, I was at the airport meeting a friend who had a few hours layover while this happened at my house. When I drove onto my driveway that night, I had a good laugh and was able to clean it all up before the neighbors saw it the next morning. No one confessed, but I had my suspicions. Shocking, I know:)

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHANGES YOU HAVE SEEN TO EDUCATION IN YOUR CAREER?

Occasionally the curriculum changes in a never ending attempt to meet the needs of an ever changing society. Of course, we use technology more and we have an endless supply of tools and information at our fingertips, but people are still people. Children still love to play, explore, and listen to a good story. We all find comfort in knowing we are part of a community and enjoy doing life together. Some things change, but the important things stay the same.

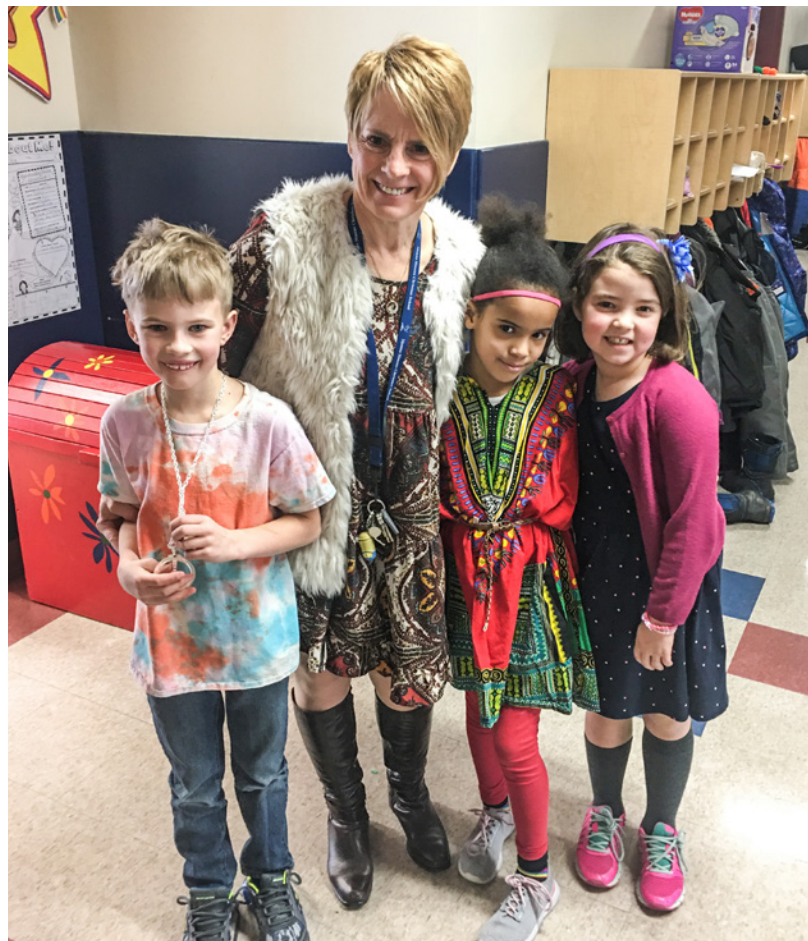
KNOWING WHAT YOU KNOW NOW, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF TEACHERS?

'Have faith in your students. Have faith in yourself. Have faith in God.' Do the best you can with what you know and what you have, and love your students.

WHAT IS YOUR PRAYER FOR MENNO?

That the community stays strong and connected. Lift each other up. Provide a loving nurturing growing community/culture for the children to come here. WE are in step with God. Walk with him through all of it. Walk down the path He puts us on so that He can be a light for the people that come.

Sandy continues to give the gift of education to every student she interacts with at Menno. She continually is innovative, she adjusts to meet the needs of each student and, most importantly, continues to love each and every one of them. Sandy is a passionate life long learner and has been honoured with the APEGGA Teacher Award and nominated for the Excellence in Teaching Award. Menno Simons Christian School has been blessed to celebrate the last 22 years of your career as a teacher and we look forward to celebrating the next 22!





TEACHING IN THE TIME OF COVID

It's a little funny how something I love to do, something that generally comes very easily to me, I am finding incredibly difficult to do. I have been working on this article for days, trying to get the words put on paper in a way that offers value. I love to write. It's how I make sense of the world.

I think that is why I am struggling. When Covid-19 was declared a world pandemic and schools shut down on March 13, something happened that I could not make sense of. In the beginning, it didn't feel real — what do you mean our kids won't be back to school, what do you mean we won't see their smiles and hear their laughter in our hallways again, what do you mean....

To be honest, I feel that I knew that announcement was coming — I just wasn't prepared for what I felt when it did.

Being a teacher in the time of Covid-19 has shown me that there is a whole set of challenges I had no idea existed. They don't prepare you for pandemic teaching in Teacher's College- although I have been told it used to be a thing. I was able to anticipate that it was going to take a lot of trying new things to make "Covid" teaching successful. I was not able to anticipate the grief that I felt, that I still feel, and how it would come in waves, largely triggered by happy memories or thoughts. My grief not only comes from a sense of loss, it also comes from a sense of appreciation and love.

I feel that I can speak for all of our teachers when I say that your kids play such a pivotal role in our lives. At the end of each day when I'm giving thanks for my blessings, there are always too many to count. Your children bring smiles to our faces, make us laugh when we don't want to, and bring joy to our hearts. They also teach us as much as we teach them each day — and our days feel empty without them. We miss them so much.

I find myself thinking often of Romans 5:3-4 in which it is stated "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" throughout these strange times. When I reflect on all of the lessons that we can learn from this, I also like to reflect on the idea that God is doing some serious character building in each of us by showing what is important — and right now that is kindness, love, being intentional, and maintaining relationships. I am learning as I watch the world around me that just a little of these things sure goes a long way, and if everyone is willing to give a little, that adds up to a whole lot.

Happy summer all — here's to the beginning of a new chapter. Lord knows we need it. Stay safe, stay healthy, stay kind. I can't wait to see you all soon.

Meghan Brown, *Vice Principal*



CONGRATS!



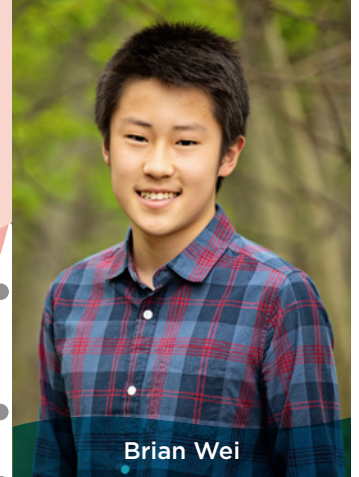
Kiera Driediger



Kael Baskin



Dateme Dami-Fiberesima



Brian Wei



Julian Bartel



Zaira Jonah



Caleb Kuntz



Maddy Beach



Julien Beneke



Vivian Grasmeyer



Joey Bianchini



Rachel Dost



Ethan Willms



Eugena Lee



Annelise Torwalt



Sammy Felsmann



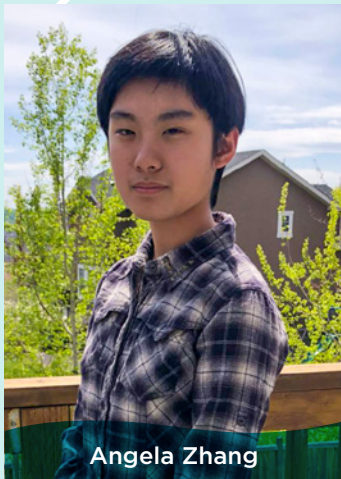
Mackenzie Miller



Tyler Reid



Gabriella Vasquez



Angela Zhang



Tobiloba Oladapo



Trinity MacElwain

2019 CLASS OF 2020

GRADE 9 INTROSPECTION

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU LEARNED AT MENNO?

"I learned the importance of friendship and having each other's back. I also learned that friendship is respecting others for their differences even if you don't agree with their mindset."
- Anna Torwalt

"People change and that's okay because you change as well. When you put effort into your work the end product is usually satisfactory. Don't put plastic on the stove."
- Maddy Beach

"Good friends are really important and that perfection is not always possible. I also learned that asking questions is a good thing." - Vivian Grasmeyer

"To treat others the way you want to be treated/love others as yourself. Do not judge others because they are different from you. A smile can go a long way." - Zaira Jonah

"Team spirit, involvement, and kindness." - Angela Zhang

"To never give up, work hard, and humility." - Ethan Willms

THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE OF ADVICE THAT I WANT TO PASS ON TO MY GRADE 1 BUDDY IS...

"Enjoy the little things." - Tyler Reid

"Work hard and do your best in order to be the most successful person you can be." - Tobiloba Oladapo

"To always have fun." - Sammy Felsmann

"You are not going to like or be great at everything but you can still try your hardest and have a good attitude."
- Vivian Grasmeyer

"You reap what you sow: academically, socially, emotionally and physically. Commit to kindness, empathy, wisdom, good habits, and hardwork and good things will follow."
- Kiera Driediger

"Enjoy all of it, have fun and study hard!" - Joey Bianchini

"Failure is just a lack of success. In some ways when you fail at one thing you succeed in another. You can always make a difference in your actions for the better so remember to stay positive and love who you are." - Zaira Jonah

"No matter what happens - be you and love yourself, you are loved, please never forget that."
- Trinity Macelwain

HOW WILL YOUR CLASS REMEMBER YOU?

"For making dad jokes 'The roof is not my son but I will raise it!'"
- Kael Baskin

"Funny, loud, and hangry" - Caleb Kuntz

"The Asian invasion. Resilient in the 400 meter dash. Smoking hot. Asian Boy Gang. Absolutely hilarious. Distracted driver. JeeSoo Lee's descendant."
- Brian Wei

"The human cannonball" - Julien Beneke

"Tall and killer sense of humour" - Rachel Dost

"They will remember me by my obsession with KPop, Tik Tok dances, my insane math skills, and my laugh. Also that I fall asleep in all my classes." - Dateme Dami-Fiberesima

WHAT I WILL MISS MOST ABOUT MENNO...

"I will miss trips like Valaqua and Waterton and hanging out as a class as the majority of us have been here since Kindergarten."
- Mackenzie Miller

"How much of a family we are. It feels like even when we fight deep down we still care about each other and are always happy for one another when we succeed." - Maddy Beach

"The people. From the staff that I could laugh with and talk about anything to my friends who love me for the crazy person I am."
- Dateme Dami-Fiberesima

"The tight-knit loving community and the people whose charger and personalities create it."
- Kiera Driediger

"The boyz..." - Julien Beneke

"The people." - Sammy Felsmann

"The fact that it's like a family, which might be uncommon to experience in other schools."
- Angela Zhang

"The way we can just laugh with the teachers. The way the teachers go above and beyond with helping you with anything - school or your personal life." - Ethan Willms

IN 10 YEARS I WILL BE...

"24 years old." - Kael Baskin

"An engineer, or a professional basketball playing in the NBA."
- Tobiloba Oladapo

"Happy hopefully!" - Caleb Kuntz

"I will keep being myself, and continue to love myself as well."
- Eugena Lee

"Even more awesome with a degree that I earned in university."
- Rachel Dost

"Hopefully I will have gotten myself a master degree in chemical research and have started a family. I also hope that I would have bought a horse of my own by then."
- Annelise Torwalt

"Priministor" - Joey Bianchini

Authenticity

Retreats, EF Tours and so much more. These activities made our time at Menno more memorable, and allowed us to bond as a family. Another unique and exceptional opportunity for Menno students to feel like a family was Buddies. We, as a class, were given chances to spend time with younger grades, and build relationships with them by doing activities together. Meanwhile, we tried to be good examples because we knew they looked up to us, but we also learned to be authentic to ourselves through understanding and accepting our little buddies. One last opportunity we had to bond as a class was Menno traditions. Penny Carnival, Pancake breakfast, and First Day Ice Cream were anticipated every year and so enjoyable. These particular days at Menno gave us opportunities to spend time with others in our community, while also having fun. I reminisce about those days waiting in the ice cream lines, plastic bags full of candy and the smell of pancakes cooking on the stove. They may have not been much, but the relationships we made on those days will be cherished forever.


As is probably true for most, we could have never imagined our final year of Junior High to come to an end in this unusual way. The world was turned upside down by a global pandemic, and we were forced to stay home and adjust our ways of learning. This is not exactly what we envisioned our last few months of Grade 9 to look like. Google Hangouts and online work, everything seemed so distant and disconnected. But the most amazing thing happened during the quarantine — our friendships grew stronger, even though we couldn't see each other in person. We kept on initiating ways to connect with each other. Despite our physical distance, we tried to make this year a good send-off.

As our year at Menno is now coming to an end, things still seem uncertain and daunting. If there is something that I've learned from the last few months, it would be that I should never be afraid and instead be courageous. Joshua 1:9, the bible verse we chose for our graduation, does a good job of concluding this chapter in our lives.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

We may have moments of anger, fear or self-doubt under these circumstances, but we should be authentic to ourselves, and tread forward because God is with us. Hope we all remember this moving forward, “when life is scary, God is good.”

Eugena Lee, Valedictorian
Grade 9 Student



What is authenticity? Authenticity is about presence, living in the moment with conviction and confidence and staying true to yourself. It is also defined as cultivating “the courage to be imperfect - and vulnerable” (Brene Brown.) Our class chose ‘authenticity’ as the theme of the class, early this year. When I heard the theme for the first time, I thought of how well it fit to describe our classmates perfectly. Our class is one colourful cast of characters. Each color is distinguished by its own uniqueness and charm, and is special from the rest. Yet, we blend to create a masterpiece as a whole. While attending Menno, our teachers, from elementary to junior high, encouraged us to be authentic and to accept others for who they are. As classmates, we also helped each other to mold our identities. We were encouraged to focus on what we want our futures to look like, and to keep looking forward. At this moment, there is so much to look forward to, but I'd like to look back on the last 10 years of our lives at Menno before we move to another chapter of life.

When I started school 10 years ago, I was dropped into a whole new world. I still remember the first day at Menno vividly. I was frightened. If it wasn't for my friendly classmates, I couldn't have fit in that quickly. I felt a sense of acceptance wash over me when I was with them. That's how Menno quickly became special to me. After a decade, I still feel the same way. Over half of my class has been together since kindergarten, and those who came along the way were also welcomed. Whenever a new student was going to join our class, we all were excited because we were getting a new friend. New students, on the first day of school, often were nervous to be with us, but it didn't take long for them to come out of their shells and join us.

From the beginning of our years at Menno Simons, the school has provided us numerous opportunities to have valuable learning experiences, such as Waterton field trips, Evergreen, Camp Valaqua



My family and I moved to Calgary 20 years ago. I asked a close friend, a school recruiter, if he would put together for us a package of information regarding the faith based schools. I read through half a dozen mission statements, philosophy of education statements and lists of schools' values. I scrubbed through each of the documents, looking for what might be different or special about each school. The statements were surprisingly similar. Common themes included being Christ-centered, integrating faith and learning, kids reaching their God-given potential, educating the whole child, striving for excellence and expansive educational experiences. Nothing at all wrong with any of these concepts of course; all good and right sentiments that any searching parent would expect from a school claiming to represent Christianity. However, for me, there was little in the documents that could be described as truly inspiring or motivating.

I wish that my friend had told me then about this little school called Menno Simons Christian School. Yes, the statements of mission, values and philosophy at Menno Simons, when first read, seem similar to what one might read on any school website, showcasing any other faith based school. That is, until you take a closer second read. Rather than integration of faith and learning (the go-to position of many faith-based schools), the Menno Simons Christian School

mission statement refers to students "... integrating Christian faith with their experience and living." The difference seems insignificant (student learning is distinct from, though not separate from students' lives and experience). One is all about abstractions; the other is about life and relationships. I suspect that you can recognise the difference and if you have chosen Menno Simons, highly value the difference.

But the clincher for us would have been how the mission of the school is and has been deeply connected to how people feel about the school. The statements one reads representing Menno Simons—who are we, what do we stand for, how do we want to be known—are emotional insights, generated through decades of parents and teachers themselves living into the particular way of being in the world Jesus taught us, the ways of right relationships. The evidence at Menno Simons is tangible, evident and visible. The teachers work with parents seeking better and better ways of nurturing children, honouring students' questioning, guiding them in forming life values, encouraging participation in the community, teaching them how to seek justice for all. The statements you read representing Menno Simons are far more than a parade of shadows, they are authentic representations of the school's true identity and its peoples' lives and experiences.

The future of Menno Simons Christian School is strong and clear because the values of the school, the hills to die on, are strong and clear. Peacemaking and justice will always be paramount; as will right relationships being both the source and consequence of effective teaching and optimal learning. The future here at Menno Simons Christian School is a good one, and will continue to be good as we create together new futures, new possibilities for how Menno Simons will live out its mission and visibly express its values.

Bernie Potvin, MSCS Principal