

**SONJA DUNN BUILDS LITERACY SKILLS AT ST. JEROME**

The students at St. Jerome School felt their favorite story characters come to life yesterday thanks to special guest Sonja Dunn. Sonja is a poet, actor, storyteller and television performer who travels around the country building essential reading and writing skills with students.

Sonja boosted student spirit and enthusiasm for literacy during two assemblies at the school. She then worked with the Grade 2 and Grade 3 classes in hands-on workshops that called on their creativity. She shared her own unique interpretation of the well-known fairy tale, Rapunzel, in which she integrates musical rhythm and rhyme to engage her audience. The students listened intently to her story and through her strategies were eagerly able to finish her sentences as the story unfolded. She then tapped into their creative energy to help them extend the story with new and original endings. The message was clear - each of them has the ability to use their imagination to write. They learned this as she walked them through a second activity to create a poetic chant on 'snow'.



The students were thrilled to meet Sonja, many of whom recognized her from her performances on a Canadian children's television network. She is a former teacher and drama consultant who branched into television to write, produce and host TV Shows on the arts. She is also a former president of the Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers. She has written popular children's books including *Gimmie a Break Rattlesnake*, *Primary Rhymery*, *Crackers and Crumbs*, and *Rapunzel's Rap*.

St. Jerome School Principal, Rick Brassard, believes that opportunities such as today's visit help boost students' reading and writing skills. "Sonja was invited to spend a day working with students and staff in order to provide assistance which will have a direct and positive impact on student achievement," explained Brassard. "At St. Jerome, we believe that all students can achieve high standards if they are given sufficient time and support. Sonja's visit provided them with such support by using strategies that grasp their attention and encourage each of them to participate in a writing exercise. The result is enhanced confidence and desire to put their own pencil to paper."

**For more information, please contact Mélanie Bidal-Mainville, Community Relations Officer**



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