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# HOMETOWN NEWS

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Herald photo by Ian Martens

Grade 5 students Kason Furukawa and Seth Graham, who played the part of honorary self-esteem angels, help author Wendy Collier demonstrate signing "I am one of a kind" and "you are one of a kind" during a self-esteem event Friday morning at Nicholas Sheran Community School.

## Self-Esteem Angels tell students 'being different is a good thing'

SELF-ESTEEM ANGEL  
AUTHOR VISITS NICHOLAS  
SHERAN SCHOOL

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As a student, Wendy Collier was teased because she had brown skin and, as a teacher, she saw many students being teased and bullied.

Those experiences convinced her to get involved in self-esteem education to help children learn to cope. She started by writing and illustrating a book called "being different is cool" and that launched her Self-Esteem Angel series. The book was turned into a play and she has since taken it to schools and community events. Friday, the Red Deer resident was at Nicholas Sheran Community School, after students there won a free author visit.

"I really want families to know (self-esteem) is a skill their kids are going to need," Collier said. "I don't think people realize we can reverse the negative impact of teasing and bullying simply by teaching them the skill of reframing and building their

self-esteem."

Prior to a school visit, Collier sends out the script so the students can create costumes and scenery and rehearse. On performance day, Collier leads a presentation about teasing and bullying and the students perform the play. About 15 students in Laurie Chinn's Grade 5 class worked on the production all week. Friday morning, they performed for Grade 4 and 5 students.

"Everything was student-directed. It definitely built their self-esteem to be part of this. They were very proud to do it," Chinn said.

By using true-to-life scenarios, the students learn from Self-Esteem Angels how to handle bullying. Whether it's the colour of their skin, the size of their ears, being smart or having a disability, the self-esteem angel said kids sometimes say things that are hurtful and then said the first thing they should do is ask themselves if it's true.

By acting out the situations, the students learn no one deserves to be treated badly for the way their body looks, their physical traits or what they can and cannot do. The Self-Esteem Angels tell the youngsters most put-downs and teasing are opinions. Words can hurt and that's because everyone wants to feel they belong and are accepted by people

who like and respect them. What others say can't diminish a person's value and what really matters is how one thinks of oneself. Self-esteem is the way you feel about yourself as a person. When thoughts are positive words are also more likely to be positive and so will actions. All that leads to better self-esteem.

No two things in nature are exactly alike and, just as animals come in all different sizes and shapes, so do people.

"Being different is a good thing. It makes us one-of-a-kind people," a Self-Esteem Angel tells the students.

After the performance, Collier reviewed the concepts and talked about reframing. She told students to ask themselves if a hurtful comment is fact or opinion, to remember that opinions don't matter and to choose to let it go. However, such comments are hurtful and an emotional reaction will occur. Taking three big breaths and exhaling fully can help those feelings disappear.

In addition to presenting at schools, she has an annual Self-Esteem Angel Mission where donors and sponsors enable her to provide free books to organizations like women's shelters and youth groups.

Parents interested in buying the books can order them online at [www.angelbooks.ca](http://www.angelbooks.ca).