

Keeping students moving forward



By definition, gift planning is “the process of planning charitable gifts, whether current or future gifts, that meet philanthropic goals and balance personal, family and tax considerations.” But to hear what it means to donors sounds more like this retired principal’s story of what is valuable to him in public education...

Throughout Jim Hoepfner’s career as an educator in Calgary, he was always looking for a way to make a difference for his students. He knew that even one person who cared could change a student’s life and that not everyone takes the same route to a destination.

Jim started his career at a traditional school, but in 1980 he was presented with the opportunity to help students who needed to have a voice and

be heard. Working with a group of like-minded individuals, Alternative High School was created to provide students with a more democratic style of leadership and the chance to graduate. This was a significant step forward for parents, educators and more importantly the students who had given up on finishing grade 12.

Jim was a principal and teacher in this innovative school for 18 years, until he retired in 1998. Though he retired from the day-to-day classroom, Jim never removed his students from his mind, so in 2008 he established a school scholarship at EducationMatters – The Jim Hoepfner Award. This scholarship rewards the values of citizenship and democratic involvement as a representative of the school. The award has a preference for students who can’t afford to pursue post secondary education. To ensure this award will always be available for the students of Alternative High, Jim generously gifted a bequest through his estate to fund the award permanently.



Today, these students who have struggled at a ‘regular’ school are not only succeeding but excelling in life and education.

“My connection is to my Grade 6 teacher, Mrs. Vivian Wilson. She was a strong lady who showed me that it’s okay for girls to be proud to excel in subjects like math and science and be leaders.”

– Tamera Van Brunt

“I valued the friendships I made with students from different faiths. It made me realize that we can all get along well if we respect each other’s beliefs and cultures.”

– Dr. Vettivelu Nallainayagam