

MONTREALER WINS MENSA DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR AWARD

By Katherine Zhang
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Anya Figlarz-Grassino, Gefei Zhang and Charles Fournier

Paramount Study teacher Gefei Zhang was recently honoured with an award for the positive impact she has had on her students. The MENSA Distinguished Educator Award is given to an individual based on nominations from students. MENSA is a non-profit organization that is a collective for high-IQ individuals.

Source: <https://www.montrealfamilies.ca/montrealer-wins-mensa-distinguished-educator-award/>

Zhang was nominated by a long-time student, Anya Figlarz-Grassino and says she was very touched by the nomination letter. “It motivates me to continue helping children and youth because I know it is making a difference in their lives,” she said.

Zhang has known Anya since she was 5 years old and has taught her a variety of subjects, ranging from Mandarin to art. In the nomination letter, Anya explains why she believes Zhang is such a special teacher who always goes the extra mile.

“She has also helped me embrace all my other passions. She encouraged my artistic side by getting me to draw something to get printed and sold as an official Christmas card. She tried to start my ill-fated singing career when I was seven. She helped me overcome stage fright when she let me MC her organization’s annual showcase... In Mandarin. Those showcases were, in retrospect, some of the best days of my life. Mrs. Gefei also made me fall back in love with writing during the quarantine when she suggested that I write for this competition on journal entries during the pandemic. At first, I had to be... coerced. Eventually, though, I started looking forward to those entries more than anything else, since they helped break up the monotony. When I won, I was shocked. I was even more so when she got my story illustrated, and ultimately published in a book along with other winning entries. As someone who loves writing, it was a beautiful experience to see the words that I wrote printed in a shiny hardcover.”

Zhang works at Paramount Study, an educational institution where youth can sign up for a variety of courses ranging from language and STEM to arts and graphic design. She is also the board chair of the Creative Arts Foundation of Canada (CAFC), a Montreal-based non-profit organization that works to promote multiculturalism, critical thinking and mental health through arts.

When asked what inspired her to start teaching, Zhang said “More than anything else, it’s the students. I think of the love and responsibility I have toward them.

My inspiration to be a teacher stems from my love of teaching today's youth to be productive, well-respected, creative and healthy.”

She explains that being a teaching assistant in her university years inspired her to continue helping others by making learning interesting and engaging. She then went on to become a university professor before coming to Canada. Zhang says she is honoured that her students place their professional and personal development in her hands.

For more information about the award, **[click here](#)**.