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Dear Educators and Partners of WE,

I need to state at the outset that I am an advocate for WE and the work they do in Canada and around the world. However, this was not always the case for me. When I first came to know of WE I had many questions about what WE was attempting to accomplish and how they were doing it. Today, after many years of observing students change lives, and through these efforts alter their own perspectives, my questions have been answered. In addition, my own first hand experience this past summer has convinced me that WE brings a desperately needed change to this world, a change that transforms people's lives.

I remember years ago the local high school in our division held a fund raising event where the students explained the money raised would build a well. What was most impactful on me was their passionate explanation of how that single well would transform the lives of the people living near it. Their passion caused me to buy a second hand picture with a somewhat less than stellar frame. The picture was not award winning but it did have vibrant colours. But that wasn't the point, purchasing the picture was about supporting those passionate high school students build a well. Since that time my wife and I have moved twice and never once considered throwing out the used picture. We have thrown out others, but not this one. This picture represents being a small part of something special with a group of high school students committed to building a well for people they had never met, and becoming better human beings themselves as a result.

This past summer my wife and I went to Kenya's Maasai Mara region and witnessed first hand the work that was occurring because of WE's involvement. We visited elementary schools, high schools, the new college, the hospital and saw wells with safe drinking water. Education and health care, two of the most prized and valuable aspects of our democracy are now available to a great many people in the Maasai Mara. It was accomplished without destroying the local culture and way of life, a reality that we in Canada would do well to learn from given our history with Indigenous people.

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It was obvious from what we witnessed that funds raised by WE are going to projects as intended. I was impressed with the transparency of WE and their ongoing openness to what they stand for and represent. Everyone in the organization that I spent time with was clear on what WE is all about and how their work helps to achieve the goals WE has set out. While in Kenya we met a group of students from Canada that were there for a week of building. They came from many different places and all of them understood why they were doing this work and the impact it would have on the lives of the people in the local community. It was also evident from speaking with these young people that this cultural immersion was impacting their lives and their thinking and they would forever see our global community differently, if nothing else, more accepting of others.

Yesterday I attended WE Day in Winnipeg with many school personnel and 16,000 students. It was a great day for students who were privy to powerful stories from individuals who have overcome unbelievable odds, and those who have changed our world for the better. Since our first WE Day in Winnipeg much has changed, there has been a decrease in branding and thank you's to sponsors and an increase in impactful life stories. The WE message was clear and simple for our students, everyone is responsible for the change we want to see in our world, ME to WE. They left wanting to make the world a better place.

As a Superintendent I appreciate that the WE classroom resources are straight forward and easy to implement in the classroom. Viewing WE Day as a stand alone event is misguided, it is only one day in the year of a WE school. In addition to WE Day there are numerous resources for the classroom that all come without cost. With the ever increasing price of books and resources for classrooms it is refreshing that WE is about making a better world and not about making money. And the logos of those organizations that have supported the development of these resources have only been placed on teacher resources and not on student material. That is not the case for all the materials that come into our schools.

And finally I leave you with this story from a small Nursery to grade 9 school that has been involved with WE since 2013. Here is how a small group of students are making a difference.

- This year they supported a local dog rescue. The students knew that access to a nearby vet and animal control services was a huge challenge for their northern community, so they decided to fundraise to support transporting stray animals to new homes and help with their vet costs.

- They continued their support with the local dog rescue by also volunteering at a vet clinic, by helping take care of animals coming out of surgery, with paperwork, providing information to people using the services, and helping sell items to continue fundraising efforts.
- They also support the environment through the recycling program they started 6 years ago. Since they don't have the infrastructure for recycling in the community, the students fundraised and wrote grant applications to be able to purchase bins. From there they were able to create their own recycling system in the community and have even engaged other local organizations for support.
- To address hunger in their school and community, students sell farm to school veggie bundles, and the funds collected from the sale of the veggies go back to support local families and elders who are experiencing hunger.

These youth, are inspiring and are making a difference in their community, not everything about WE occurs in another country. Yes, they might have accomplished the same without WE, but it was their exposure to the belief and philosophy that drives WE that motivated them to make a difference in their local community.

Sincerely,



Reg Klassen
Chief Superintendent
Frontier School Division

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