

Remarks made by former Barton principal Steve DeLapp honoring Felicity Miel Crosby at the all school Morning Meeting on May 26, 2015.

Thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts about Felicity and what she meant to Barton Open School. I plan to do so by connecting features of the garden with attributes Felicity exhibited as a teacher. My hope is to help everyone see how the unique elements of the Native Garden, built in her name, capture so many of her qualities and, I think, the qualities exhibited by open school teachers at Barton.

I am extremely grateful for the loving attention her third-fourth graders gave this garden project, joined and supported by parents, staff, her family members, and older students throughout the school. These community-building efforts help all of us heal from our loss, and honor and affirm the loving gifts Felicity gave to our school.

The garden features native plants. Felicity always exhibited a keen interest in the natural world, rooted in a deep love for the daily care of plants and animals. She started each day by tending to the animals on her farm, this done before her very long drive to school each morning. She often shared stories of her animals during her morning meetings. Her chickens were regular visitors to the room. Felicity and Mark took their students overnight tent camping every spring, with the kids engaged in the important work of restoring native grasses to Minnesota prairies. Felicity was always excited and energized following these camping trips as she observed how experiences in the natural environment could transform individual learners to a level that she knew was difficult to reach in the indoor classroom alone.

The garden features a granite bench, designed with loving attention by Felicity's family. I encourage you to see the bench as an invitation for whoever enters the garden to sit with a close friend, side by side. This was Felicity's preferred teaching interaction, sitting one-on-one with a student, shoulder-to-shoulder, listening to someone read or discuss a book, helping edit a piece of writing, or explaining a math concept. The family selected the quote on the bench from A.A.Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*: "Some people care too much. I think it's called love." When an individual student gets the full attention of a very busy teacher, know that it's rooted in love and affection for that individual. This was Felicity's preferred and most common teaching interaction, day-in and day-out. And we know that she was able to give to her students this way because she came to Barton with such a strong foundation of love from her own family.

The garden features a little library where books can be exchanged through a small model of a barn. Felicity was an avid reader, loved books, and strove to build that same love of literature in the students she taught. She did it through her read aloud selections and in her careful nurturing of independent reading habits from students. Her book conferences lent themselves to her favorite teaching interaction, that shoulder-to-shoulder conversation, relishing quiet moments of enjoying books with

others. The little library can also be viewed as a gentle reminder to us that the building's original library entrance was from this very corner of the school.

The garden features a restored peace pole with inscriptions in English, Somali, Spanish and Japanese stating *May Peace Prevail on Earth*. The original peace pole on this site was planted about 30 years ago. The peace pole symbolically links Barton with people all over the world who have planted peace poles in the same spirit of peace. It will serve as an enduring reminder for what Felicity desired and what all Barton teachers seek for their classrooms and for the larger community, peaceful and harmonious group interactions, and caring relationships that reflect kindness and respect to others.

The garden features a community-designed mosaic with themes drawn from Felicity's life. All of us recognize the unique power of art to represent feeling and emotions that are hard to express when we lose someone. I think what most resonates for me with the mosaic, and what might be its strongest connection to Felicity, is the community-building process that went into its creation, people coming together to do something for a purpose greater than themselves. Felicity always gave much to the school-wide community. She was connected for years to the popcorn and plant sales. She got her classrooms involved in these kinds of projects because she valued service learning. It was also a lot of extra work for her. But she was modeling for her students that doing things for the larger community, giving to others, may be one of the most important things we can learn in school. I think the mosaic, with its multitude of images, will always stand as an affirmation of the power and importance of taking care of others through our commitments to community needs.

The Native Garden, through all of these unique features, truly honors Felicity Miel Crosby. I think the garden also speaks strongly to affirming the values that guide the work of all staff members at Barton Open School, and in this sense, the garden honors all teachers as well. This small plot of land will continually need nurturing, care and tending from the larger community. It stands as a vivid metaphor for the work all teachers do daily, tending delicate learning cultures that balance so many profound needs. For Barton teachers, I hope the garden is always seen as an extension of your own learning environments, recognizing that even within small ecosystems, there can be much for students to learn. I hope the garden always represents for you the power of a community working together, the centrality of artistic expression, and our deep respect for nature and out of door learning. And, most of all, I hope the garden will always represent for all of us how essential it is to live the values of nurturing and caring for others as we know Felicity did in her life.

--Steven R. DeLapp
May 26, 2015