

NOMINEE: MEENAKSHI DALMIA

NOMINATION LETTER:

I am writing this letter in response to the email I received regarding the 'Toni Murdock Innovation Award' to support student-led innovations at Antioch University, New England.

I am happy to nominate myself (Meenakshi Dalmia) as a potential recipient of this prestigious award. Kindly allow me to describe my qualifications that make me an eligible candidate for the award.

I hold a Bachelor in Science from Calcutta University, India and a Bachelor in Education from Wheelock College, Boston, MA. Currently I am enrolled in my final semester at Antioch University studying towards Masters in Education with focus on Educating for Sustainability. So far I have completed all requirements for this academic degree and am eligible to participate in the AUNE commencement in May 2013.

I am a self-starter, a teacher who embraces new ideas and creates innovative methods for implementing them in a school wide setting. I was one of the first in my school to embrace Individual Learning Plans (ILP) for students and created practical templates for recording and monitoring student progress. Over the past year I have led several professional development sessions for my colleagues on the proper implementation of the ILP templates. As part of my practicum with Ms Susan Dreyer Leon, I researched and developed student led conferences, initially for my class and then for school wide use. I am always on the quest for better and more effective ways to implement my student-centred instructions so as to empower students to be independent and life-long learners.

I am passionate about place based education and have worked hard to create opportunities in my work to integrate the local environment, economy and the community in the curriculum. In David Sobel's 'Childhood & Nature' course, I created a K-8 Civic Engagement Continuum using the principles of sustainability. I particularly enjoyed this assignment because I enjoyed the challenge of synthesizing my knowledge to create a simpler solution for the complex need of integrating the community as a continuum and not as a one-of activity. This continuum is now gradually being implemented at Green School. I feel very happy to have been of service to the future generation

I am continually assessing my effectiveness and adjusting my instructions to infuse innovative and creative strategies thus ensuring that all my students succeed. My foremost philosophy is to spend the necessary time it takes to build right relationships with my students.

I hope my letter above describes why I think I am eligible for the Toni Murdock Innovation award. Ms Susan Dreyer Leon and Mr. David Sobel will be sending you their letters of recommendation supporting my candidacy. I await your response to my letter.

Thank you,

Yours Sincerely

Meenakshi Dalmia (Mona)

REFERENCE #1

Dear Council for Academic Innovation Members,

This letter is to recommend Meenakshi Dalmia for the Toni Murdock Student Innovation Award for the Spring of 2013. Ms. Dalmia, a finishing student in our Educating for Sustainability M.Ed program has enthusiastically embodied the spirit of this award throughout her time at Antioch New England, and specifically in her practicum work at Green School in Bali, Indonesia.

Ms. Dalmia is an elementary school teacher at Green School and has used her practicum work in the Educating for Sustainability Program to support and extend the groundbreaking work of her internationally recognized workplace. Although Green School is graced with a beautiful physical campus, the actualization of a school-wide curriculum that fosters sustainability has been a struggle for them in these early years. Ms. Dalmia has taken advantage of the expertise here at AUNE and among her EfS colleagues to push Green School to more fully embrace their mission and to insure that this mission is embedded in the curriculum in a way that is equitable for all students.

One specific example of this work was in her curriculum practicum last spring where she helped the Green School staff to come to a common understanding of what it means to be "Educating for Sustainability." She then meticulously collected data from all of Green School's teachers to identify which elements of their curriculum successfully met the definition. From there, she was able to work with school leaders and colleagues to build a set of curricular frameworks for each grade-level which included EfS related content, projects and goals for future implementation. In my view, she has helped Green School's commitment to sustainability evolve from a facilities perspective to a genuine model for the inclusion of the principles of sustainability as part of the fabric of the school's way of teaching and learning.

As Ms. Dalmia contemplates future applications of her work, it is her desire to return to her native India and create an EfS-based school there that would not only serve the students in the K-12 environment, but also provide on-going professional development to educators in the region. She hopes in this way to influence a far wider segment of the Indian educational establishment and build a movement for the inclusion of the principles of Educating for Sustainability as a core part of the national curriculum.

It has been a privilege to serve as Ms. Dalmia's adviser and to watch the passion and dedication that she has given to her studies and the ways that she has successfully applied her learning in the real world. I truly believe that Ms. Dalmia will be an international force within the Educating for Sustainability community for years to come and it is with both her past achievements and this future in mind that I support her nomination for the Toni Murdock Student Innovation Award.

Sincerely,

Susan Dreyer Leon, EdD

Director, Experienced Educators Program &
Core Faculty, Antioch University New England

REFERENCE #2:

Dear Review Committee,

Meenakshi (Mona) Dalmia was a student in my Childhood and Nature course in the Education for Sustainability program during the summer 2012 semester. Mona's work was both the most sophisticated and the most innovative of all the students in the class. Moreover, the project she completed for this class had great likelihood for making a difference in her school and community. As you know, the Education for Sustainability program encourages students to re-conceptualize education so that it insures a balance between environmental, economic and social equity goals. Her project balanced these goals in an innovative fashion.

Mona is a teacher at the Green School in Bali, Indonesia. Though the school has uniquely "green" facilities and an innovative curriculum, Mona recognized that there was not a clear approach towards developing civic engagement articulated in the school's curriculum. Therefore, Mona decided on the following approach.

"For this project I have chosen to design a civic engagement continuum for grades K-8 at Green School Bali. This continuum is inspired by the pedagogy of place-based education and the practice of connecting children with nature and their immediate environment. Place-based learning and civic engagement are inter connected and meaningful civic engagement can only emerge from connecting to the place we inhabit."

Mona first interviewed many of her colleagues to identify different components of civic activism embedded in the curriculum. Using this as a starting point, and integrating ideas from a range of education for sustainability literature and curriculum documents, she created a curriculum matrix that articulates how the teachers will educate students through civic engagement projects that connect the school with local organizations, traditional cultural practices and native ecosystems. (See curriculum matrix attached.)

This kind of innovative thinking is just what schools need as we attempt to develop 21st century skills in students. This is also a great example of "*curriculum with a social purpose*" where schools actively work to improve the quality of the environment and the viability of the local economy.

Mona's work will contribute to moving her school forward and it serves as a model for other schools who want to implement a more conscientious approach towards civic engagement in their curricula.

Sincerely,

David Sobel
Education Faculty