

Building relationships through research at Regina Huda School

By Ellen Whiteman, Manager, McDowell Foundation

Since September, Kari Krug along with another Saskatchewan curriculum teacher have been meeting with three of their Muslim teacher counterparts to further develop relationships, share stories and identify ways to increase collaboration. The goal of these focus groups is to increase understanding and collaboration between the two groups.

This project, funded by the McDowell Foundation, was developed out of Krug's graduate work that looked at how teacher collaboration can nurture a sense of belonging for teachers and students in a faith-based school.

Krug outlines how the research conversations have supported small changes

within the school. Simple things such as creating both Arabic and English nametags for the students, issuing invitations to staff events such as Friday Treats day and celebrating accomplishments within the staff strengthen the relationships and lead to greater collaboration.

"I learned a lot about their community," said Krug. "I have worked here for eight years and I feel like these conversations really deepened my understandings. I am always learning new things about their religion, culture and sense of community."

As part of the project, the team is working to translate *O Canada* into all languages within the school. Sixteen different distinct languages are spoken among the

student population and all will be represented in the final version.

Regina Huda is an associate school with Regina Public Schools whose mission includes, "Gaining the Best of the Canadian Culture While Preserving the Islamic Identity."

The school infuses Islamic studies with the Saskatchewan curriculum and includes both Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation members and Islamic community members who also instruct in Arabic and Quranic studies. The school opened in 1999 and now has over 600 students in Grades K-12.

"It's the little things that we do that make all the difference in our relationship with each other," Krug said. ■