

# Dora McLellan Memorial Scholarship in Elementary Education

The University of Northern Iowa College of Education is excited to offer the Dora McLellan Memorial Scholarship in Elementary Education. Learn more about the requirements on the final page of the flier.

## Learn more about Dora

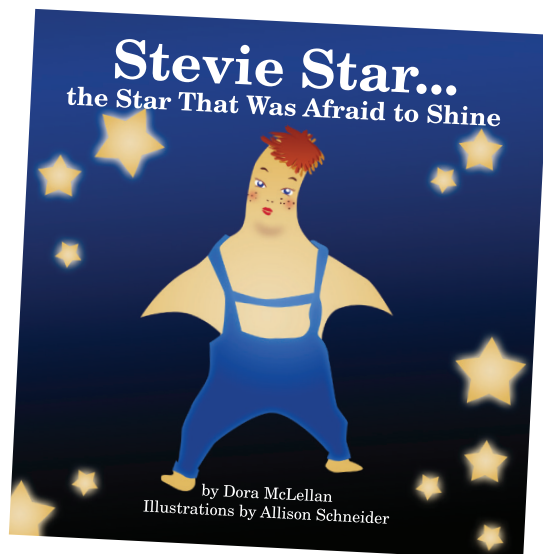


Dora McLellan was born in 1935 to a hard working family where both her mom and dad worked in a dress factory to provide for her

and her younger brother. Her life wasn't without its struggles but it was very happy. Dora was not a natural student and good grades didn't come easy, but she earned the respect of her teachers by working her tail off and she reveled in the social aspects of the clubs she belonged to and the lifelong friends she made. Even in her teens, she understood that school was about a lot more than getting straight A's.

Maybe that's why she decided to be a teacher, so that her classroom could be a safe place for kids like her – kids who had to really work to excel and for some of them, excelling might be a C+.

One of Dora's college assignments was to write a children's story. Her book, *Stevie Star, the Star Who Could Not Shine* was that homework assignment. It was published 40 years later and is now available on Amazon. The book's message was that everyone has a unique



purpose and that once you discover what it is, you can use your talents to bring that purpose to life. That philosophy was at the core of Dora's teaching.

She believed that her job as a teacher went beyond reading, writing and arithmetic. She knew that she could encourage, support and celebrate each student's unique gifts so they could begin to discover how they too should shine.

After getting her teaching degree, Dora went right into a 5th grade classroom and brought her enthusiasm, passion and broader definition of education along with her.

When she would tell stories about her teaching days, there were a few favorites that highlighted some of the ways that Dora was no ordinary teacher. In fact, until her death from dementia in 2016, she still received Christmas cards from some of her students that were in her classroom more than 50 years ago.

## The fieldtrip

Cars and all things mechanical fascinated a group of boys in Dora's class so she planned, organized and chaperoned a trip to The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation in Dearborn, MI (she was teaching in Cleveland at the time). She believed in experiential learning long before it was a classroom norm.

Much to their dismay, she made the boys wear ties on the trip and talked to them about the importance of creating a favorable first impression. She made sure they met some of the museum's administrators who talked to the students about potential careers related to the automotive industry. Several of the boys on that trip went on to pursue careers in related fields like engineering and auto repair.

## The bathing suit

One of the best things about Dora was her ability to laugh at herself and her willingness to look silly if it made a lesson more memorable. Her class was studying the 1920s and they'd planned "dress up day" where they'd all come in 1920s garb. Many of the students borrowed clothes from their grandparents or created an outfit that represented the time period. As the bell rang and the kids were admiring each other's attire, Dora took off her overcoat and there was an explosion of laughter. Dora was wearing a bloomer suit she'd gotten at a thrift store.

The class's eruption of laughter was so loud it brought the principal running to Dora's classroom, fearing that something horrible had happened to cause that kind of ruckus. Having a good sense of humor herself, upon realizing what was going on, the principal had Dora lead her entire class on a school-wide parade so each class could enjoy the salute to the 1920s.

## Dairy Queen

For her entire life, Dora had an uncanny knack of recognizing when someone was hurting or needed to talk. She was famous for her "DQ with Mrs. McLellan" outings. She made sure that every student got to share an ice cream cone with her, one-on-one, at some point during the school year. That way no one was the wiser when she sought out one of her students who was clearly hurting at any given time.

Those conversations covered everything from silly fights among friends to serious



family struggles, learning disorders and very personal issues. Many students referenced those outings in their cards and letters, decades after being in her classroom.

## The perfume

Back when Dora was teaching, students all brought their teacher's holiday gifts to school on a particular day and the teacher would open them during class. One particular year, Dora was opening all of the gifts and got to a shabbily wrapped box from a young boy in her class. When she opened the package, there was a half empty bottle of perfume. Dora smelled the perfume and made a big deal out of how beautiful it smelled, dabbing some on her wrists and behind her ears.

Times were different back then and hugging a student was the norm. Dora's Italian heritage meant she was a master hugger. As she thanked him for the perfume, she hugged her student. He held onto that hug for a long time and whispered in her ear that the perfume had been his mom's and when he smelled it, it made him less sad. His mom had passed away the summer before. Dora wore that perfume every day for the rest of the school year, so

he could find comfort in his mother's scent.

These stories represent what Dora brought into the classroom every day. Going the extra mile, humor in the classroom, a willingness to listen and connect on a personal level and a deep compassion were all part of what made her such a memorable teacher.

## Requirements

To be considered for the Dora McLellan Memorial Scholarship, applicants must be a junior student studying in the area of Elementary Education. Applicants must complete the online scholarship application, <https://finaid.uni.edu/scholarship> for consideration. The priority deadline for the scholarship award is January 15, 2018.

Also, applicants must read *Stevie Star* ([download it here](#)) and the information on Dora McLellan above. Then, complete an essay addressing the two questions below. The essay must be in Word or PDF format and no more than two pages double spaced in length with a font no smaller than 10.

1. After reading *Stevie Star* and the information on Dora McLellan's teaching philosophy, tell us how you will help your future students discover their reason for shining?
2. Dora McLellan brought her unique talents, beliefs and experiences to her classroom. What unique talents, beliefs and experiences do you possess that will bring that broader definition of education to life?

Students should submit their essays to Ms. Ubben, SEC 613 on or before Monday, January 15, 2018.

For questions, contact Jane Halverson, Director of Development, College of Education, [Jane.Halverson@uni.edu](mailto:Jane.Halverson@uni.edu) or by calling the UNI Foundation at 319-273-4665.