



Selkirk Montessori School E-News

New Beginnings

It always seems so strange to be thinking of a “new year” in the middle of a school year. I do so enjoy the second term. At this time of year, most have completely settled in, everyone is happily engaged in their routines and clear about expectations. Communication is open and positive energy is high. The momentum is almost tangible.

January begins full of growth - the level of independence and responsibility increasing, student mastery of the curriculum developing, work habits becoming more refined, and peer relationships strengthen as together they engage in the most challenging curriculum they have encountered thus far. This is the time when teachers grow as much as the students; they can get creative, stretching they way they address the curriculum. I will miss the class

room this January. My growth will certainly be mostly in width. I will be spending as much time with the kids as possible in the early days of January with the anticipation of having my hands full with a newborn as January comes to a close.

Take a little time each week to reflect on your child’s growing independence and responsibility. Acknowledge the little changes you see, from walking up to the classroom on his or her own to talking to others about his or her thoughts and feelings. Ask your child what makes him or her feel successful and what skills he or she has mastered on their way to these successes. Later, the skills can be the basis of problem solving around new situations that may arise.

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“Peace begins
with a smile.”

Mother Teresa

I will soon begin maternity leave and will be working on my perpetual New Year's resolution – balance. This year balance will be more important than ever with two families to stay on top of, our family at home and our school family. I am so excited to have a little boy joining our family and eventually our school. What a gift.

My other gift is truly this exceptional school that became my passion from the very first day I spent here. I couldn't remove myself from this job for a year, even if I wanted to. Though I will be making every effort to balance my life by scaling back my duties here at work, I will be around. I will be busy bringing my own daughter to and from school, attending Board and SPG meetings (please join us if you haven't already), and keeping informed about all the wonderful staff and students that keep this place humming.

I intend to check my email when I have a few moments in the school, so please feel free to stay in touch. I would love to hear about your experiences during the 2012 portion of the school year and plan to be as involved as possible with all the exciting events that happen over the course of the year.

Happy "New" Year!

Erin Hayes

Co-Academic Head

The BC Government announced in the 2011 Speech from the Throne, that British Columbia will be changing the BC Education system and moving towards a more personalized learning model throughout the Province for all of our learners. The Ministry is reaching out to the citizens of BC in a unique way, through the BC Education Plan Blog (www.bcedplan.ca), and we want your opinion.

The Blog is a forum in which the Ministry is posting a number of different questions over the coming months, that we want your assistance in answering. While we know that BC's Education system is a good one, there is definitely room for change and we need to move to a 21st Century Learning model, that will include input from teachers and district staff in the field, parents, students, citizens of the Province, and staff within the Ministry of Education. This will be collaboration as we move forward and develop the specifics of the BC Education Plan.

By providing the opportunity for personalized learning for all of our learners, we can provide a model which focuses on the individual needs, strengths and aspirations of each student, giving them the chance to be more responsible for their own success. We will continue to assist them in learning basic core skills but we will also provide them with the freedom to pursue their individual interests and passions in life. We will also encourage a more inclusive relationship between the teacher, parent and individual learner and an increased commitment of parents to be partners in their child's education.

The role of the teachers will continue to be as guides, mentors, coaches and content experts and they will be required to work more closely with individual students and their parents to create a learning atmosphere that is beneficial to every learner.

Editor's note: I have been monitoring this blog over the holidays and it is well worth checking out. What they are proposing is very much in keeping with our Montessori philosophy! :)

Registration for 2012-2013

Re-Registration

We have emailed a registration form to you this week. Deadline for the return of completed registration forms is Monday, January 30th. Please be sure that you have read and understood all of the information on the forms. You must mark the programs you require and sign the form for it to be considered complete. Remember that space is limited and we do operate using a first-come, first-served model to fill spots.

Siblings

If you are a returning family and have a new sibling to enrol for the 2012-2013 school year, instructions for registration of siblings have been emailed to you. Again, the deadline for registration is Monday, January 30th

Waitlisted Children

We expect to be in touch with families of children on the waitlist by mid to late February. Please be patient...but don't hesitate to contact me if you are anxious! I am always happy to hear from parents that they are still keen to get their child(ren) enrolled.

Not Returning

The decision to move a child from one school to another is never an easy one; however, for many reasons (religious affiliation, finances, convenience, family history – just

to name a few) you may decide not to return to Selkirk for the 2012-2013 school year. We'll be sorry to see you go.

We ask that you let us know as soon as possible. Your child will let us know if you don't; maybe not in so many words, but in their own way, that they are not coming back. It has been our experience that children become confused when they are told they are making a move. They wonder, "Is Selkirk still my school? Is there any reason to keep working hard here? Do I still have to follow the rules of the school?" We've even had children say, "I don't have to listen to you because I'm not coming back to this school." You can imagine the detrimental effect this can have on your child's education, especially as we still have six months of school to get through!

We want to ensure that your child's experience at Selkirk is a positive one, right down to their last day of school. It's a fact of life that some of you will be leaving. Come talk to us about making the transition an easy one for your child, for their teachers and for the school community as a whole.

If you have any questions about registration for 2012-2013, please email me at penny@selkirkmontessori.ca or call 250-384-3414.

Angel Gift Thanks



December 29th

A message of thanks:

Each year, many hundreds of people in greater Victoria answer the call to be an angel, to give an ANGEL GIFT to someone at Our Place. Jordan Cooper, Outreach Manager at Our Place, looks after compiling the list of those who will receive gifts and he looks forward each year to playing Santa and distributing the many ANGEL GIFTS. Jordan is perfectly placed to provide donors with feedback and the gratitude expressed by recipients of the gifts. In Jordan's words, here are a few stories from last week.



“There was a fellow that came in for his ANGEL GIFT and was very excited to receive his gift. He said that this year was the first year in 20 years that he had a place of his own. He had bought a small tree so that he would have somewhere to put his ANGEL GIFT until December 25th.

A woman came in and she told me that her gift was not something that she would wear. She was however able to trade it with another family member for a different gift that suited her.

One man was brought to the brink of tears when he received his gift. The wrapping paper had drawings and pictures done by children. He said that he didn't want to open the gift because the wrapping paper meant so much to him.



Every year people want to know who they can thank for the gift. I tell them that there are so many people that buy the gifts it is difficult to thank them. So for everyone that provided a gift for ANGEL GIFTS, I say thank you.”

Please share these stories with people in your congregation, your workplace, your family and with friends. Your gifts are very important and they are very much appreciated. Thank you for your gifts and for sharing the Christmas message.

Christmas blessings for the New Year,

Audrey McLennan
Coordinator, Angel Gift Program
For Our Place



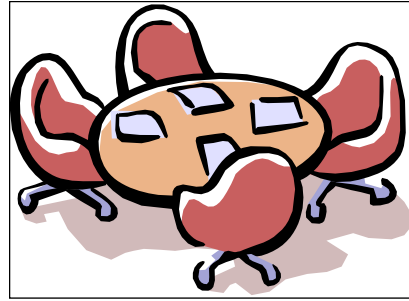
Thank you to the many families who donated items to the bake sale. It was a wonderfully yummy success. The group made well over \$450. Our biggest bake sale profit in history.

We would also like to thank the families who donated to the Water Project in Kenya – check out the new drop-lets on the wall to see who these kind folks are. Donations will continue to be accepted throughout the year.



What a scene it was outside the staff room window on the 5th, as the senior class sorted bottles, drink containers and aluminum cans (in the POURING rain) dropped off at the school as a contribution to the Water Project!

So far, the students have raised more than \$500. Thanks to all who collected, dropped off, sorted and delivered to the recycling depots!



8:30 Opening Sub-Committee Update

As previously mentioned in the Summer 2011 newsletter, and follow up email on August 29, 2011, we have found it necessary to enforce the Supervision Policy this year. This policy was approved in September of 2005, and is located on the Selkirk Montessori website: <http://selkirkmontessori.ca/sites/default/files/Supervision%20Policy%20approved.pdf>. This policy states that children may enter the building at 8:30am. Children in the building prior to 8:30am must be accompanied by a parent/guardian.

We have received both positive and negative feedback regarding this policy and its recent enforcement. We have formed a sub-committee to gather information, review the issues and concerns, as well as the wins. The sub-committee has representation from: the board, parents, and Selkirk staff members. We've had excellent dialogue, and have discovered that this issue is like an onion - it has many layers!

Please know that we are listening. We continue to review and plan for the future with these concerns in mind.

Dina Wood, Director

Selkirk Parent Group (SPG) News



Happy New Year from the SPG!

Thank you to the school

community for its generous support of the Angel Gift program, socks and shoes drive, and food collection. Elsewhere in the newsletter is the letter of thanks from Our Place.

The Mustard Seed was very grateful for the food we sent, and, in my husband's words "they were beaming at Rock Bay Landing shelter when I dropped off the boxes of shoes and socks."

At our clinic, we have been sharing the rest of the nearly 400 pairs of socks Selkirk collected. I have personally handed these to people whose feet were disintegrating from wet and cold—a wonderful thing to be able to share.



Coming up:



Parent Education evening January 12 from 7 to 9 pm. An evening exploring the power of natural play for children and grown ups.

We will have a guest speaker from the Nature Alliance, and watch the Play Again DVD from Success by 6. Please sign up outside the office. Check out this video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erVmBIx2IUy&feature=related!>



Swim Club runs from January 18 to March 7, on Wednesdays at the Crystal Pool

from 3:30 to 4:15. Sign up is due by Friday, January 13. For more info, please contact rhondasyven@shaw.ca

Next SPG meeting is on January 26 at 7:00 pm. All welcome!

And thanks to everyone who is using their Thrifty's cards –we'll let you know soon how that fundraiser is going.

Office Corner

The New Year is under way!

You may have noticed some changes in the front office. Dawne Wooten is filling in at the reception position until the middle of January. Isobel Rapoport will be back at that time to take over the position permanently. Sonia will not be returning due to personal reasons. I know that many of you will miss her and we wish her well.

As we move through this transition phase in the office, please be assured that we are readily available to answer any and all questions that you may have. If you need to have information and are not able to come in please direct your questions to us at 250-384-3414 or via email to office@selkirkmontessori.ca.

Registration forms have been sent out to all families via email. If you have not received your forms, please get in touch with Linda, to ensure that your address is added to our list. Dawne will have paper copies of the forms for those who need them.



Flu and cold season is once again upon us! The best preventative measure to avoid getting the bugs is to do regular hand washing.

It takes a good hand washing with soap and water and a song of Happy Birthday sang 2 times to ensure that all germs have vacated your hands! The younger children in the KP and CASA classes are all encouraged to do this before snacks, meals and bathroom breaks. Please help by encouraging this good habit at home as well. Coughing into your elbow or covering your mouth is another good measure of not spreading germs.

We hope that everyone continues to be healthy but if you are keeping your child/ren home because they are sick, please let the school know. We can then keep track of the number of students who are away due to illness.

Happy January everyone!

Linda

Alumni Update—Xavier Chong



It's actually quite difficult to think back to my Montessori days, as it is something that I probably took for granted. I attended Selkirk Montessori from preschool all the way to Grade 8, graduating in 2009 with 15 others. I entered into Esquimalt Secondary's Challenge program with ease, along with one other Montessori graduate.

Honestly speaking, I'm a music nerd. By the end of September, I was heavily involved in the both the Concert and Jazz music programs. I made friends with other music-minded people there quickly, and soon enough I was out playing at fundraisers and charity events all over Victoria with my jazz quartet. It's a great work experience, and is probably the most enjoyable part of my high school life. Some of the more interesting gigs include election parties, parades, and background music at the Union Club; this year, we're aiming for the nationals! Piano is my instrument of choice, but I can play half a dozen other instruments thanks to the craziness of the music teachers at Montessori. Music isn't everybody's thing, but it happens to be mine, and I found tremendous support for that in the Montessori program.

Besides music, I excelled in my studies from the very start of Grade 9, my GPA sitting comfortably at 5.0 throughout that year, the following, and this one as well. Be it math, science, or even socials (not really a socials person, haha), I knew that as long as I put in the effort, success was possible. Of course, as my studies become more intense each year, it becomes more difficult to perform well in every area. Even so, I relish the challenge, pushing myself further in order to achieve things beyond my own expectations, just like I did in Montessori.

Frankly, when I look around me, I see many fellow classmates who have already 'given up the fight', so to speak. I see people who have lost the drive to achieve and succeed, and would rather indulge carelessly in what youth they have left. This may be presumptuous of me, but I truly wish that this were different. Everybody has the potential to succeed, but not everybody does, and this is the most unfortunate truth that I have come to observe during my short time in high school.

High school is admittedly very different from Montessori, but that is not to say that I wasn't prepared. I understood that the middle school experience I had was unique, and that high school was going to be a significant change of scenery. The student body was far bigger, the classrooms were decidedly different, and I wasn't sure how I'd get along with the teachers, let alone the students. In retrospect, I was pretty reluctant to leave the community that I had come to feel so safe in. That's not unusual though, and despite any worries I may have had, getting used to high school was not a problem. I had the skills and common sense needed, and teacher-student relations were as simple as going up to people and introducing myself. I may not know every face in the school like before, but it has become just as comfortable, though maybe not as fun sometimes. :)

I'm currently in Grade 11. I have plans for where I want to go for post-secondary and what I want to do. By the end of this year I will have finished my Grade 12 requirements, leaving my last year of high school free for whatever I wish to do. When it is over, I know that one thing I'll be doing is going back to Selkirk Montessori to thank all of the staff and teachers who supported me as a student, as a musician, and as a person. There was no better place for me to start my future than at that sanctuary.



Mambo from Moshi!

After ten hours on a bus we arrived last night and then met all the volunteers giving their time at projects organized by Hostel Hoff. After settling in for a nice dinner we brought up the big bag of supplies that were gathered by the resourceful students at the Montessori school in Victoria. The eyes of the volunteers lit up as they heard. After much discussion on the different options it was decided that the majority of the supplies should go to `Born to Learn`.



[Kids working at their benches](#)

It is a transitional school set up about a year ago for kids that either couldn't afford to go to school or didn't have access. Currently there is a Canadian couple going out and working with a group of six or seven of the special needs kids and I tagged along with them this morning.

The trip out was an adventure all in itself. After a short walk we climbed into the back of a dump truck. We drove through the fields of a sugarcane plantation for about twenty minutes. In the distance, huge rafiki trees cast shade on lounging locals. Once or twice along the way we had to duck down to hide from security check points. They could still see us but it apparently was rude not to try to hide from them. Once off the truck we each climbed onto the mousetrap on the back of a locals bicycle and headed another fifteen minutes down a red dirt road.



[handing out the pencils](#)

I felt sorry for my guy as I handed him the 30 cents for the ride as I was definitely the heaviest load in the group. I have pictured African schools in my mind before. This school isn't what I was picturing. Right now they are using the two room church to teach out of. The church is made out of brick, there was no running water as far as I could tell and the toilets are holes in the ground out back. Maybe it is what you were thinking. The kids here were all just hanging around on the streets of the local village before the school was started...some of them were hanging around on the streets last week. Either their parents couldn't afford the thirty dollars a year for public school or they have no parents. Other than the plantation, the main employment in the area is brick making, from the red dirt in the area, both of which pay about 20000 shillings a week (\$12US).



[one of the students looking for affection](#)

Not surprising that families can't afford the school costs. I was told that once a child misses a year they are seldom able to catch back up. This program tries to bridge the gap. There are two teachers, each working with about fifteen kids. There is also a group of more challenging students I was able to spend my day with. They have one small box of supplies for the whole school, mainly old workbooks and not a lot else. The directors estimate there are more than two hundred kids in the area that aren't able to go to school right now. They just don't have the resources to reach that many... yet. Have you ever seen a bunch of kids rush the ice cream truck and walk away with big smiles and a rocket pop in their hands? This was the scene as we handed out a pencil to each one of them; it was as if we were giving them the world.

(cont'd on page 6)

Mambo (cont'd)



The teacher explaining who gathered the supplies

The teachers and organizers at the program were also ecstatic with the supplies and were coming up with different ways they can put them to good use. As the day went on, I heard about the history of some of the kids. For all the smiles, and they were continuous, there were sad stories all around. Kids with FAS, some abandoned after a split, and some living through abuse.

The smiles persist. The school is their haven, their release and their chance to be kids. Throughout the day different kids would come up to me with their workbooks and show me the different words they had learned proudly. Many of them putting their arm around me or grasping my hand, feeding off the affection and attention that is lacking in their home lives.

Many of the older kids are ready to go back into the public system but the money is still lacking. There is a girl of fourteen who was living on the street on her own, an orphan of HIV. She just had a house built for her last week and is being sponsored \$40 a month so she can go to school instead of working as a brick maker. Her sponsor just backed out. Her future is up in the air... I walked around the area a little bit, someone pointed out another school down the road.

The pastor/teacher at the school currently has over sixty orphans living with him. The time and energy being put in by everyone here is very motivating. The thought that one Starbucks coffee a month could put a child through school and I've never donated is embarrassing. The things I brought will make a difference, I do believe that. I also don't think I have done enough. How is this level of poverty acceptable? On a high note we finished the day with a soccer match, Tanzanians versus 'mizungos'. In a heavily contested match Tanzania won 3-2 and smiles and high fives were all around in this safe place where kids can be kids.

Graham Young (Erin Hayes' brother)

Dear Graham and Erin

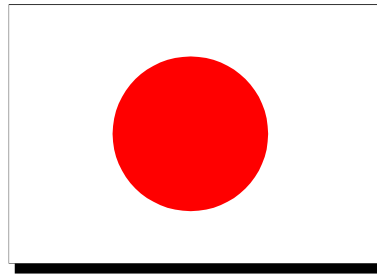
I just wanted to offer a formal thank you to Erin and the leadership students, Victor, Cody, Jeeven and Achintya at the Selkirk Montessori School for the fabulous supplies that they collected and Graham transported to us at Born To Learn in Newlands, Tanzania. Graham, I am sure that you have told Erin that we are a very new organization and all supplies are desperately needed. Your trunk of exercise books, pencils, crayons, scissors, markers, paper and erasers will be invaluable for the upcoming school year. The art supplies were used on Art Day during the week long summer camp held at the conclusion of the academic year. The children made masks from paper plates using the pencils, markers and crayons and also wax resist animal pictures. There are some great photos of the camp on the Born To Learn Face Book page. Maybe Victor, Cody, Jeeven and Achintya might like to take a look at the fun the kids had with the supplies.

We would love for you to stay in touch as we grow and develop. Face Book is probably the best venue for this. If any of your children ever want to visit Africa, we always have spaces for volunteers for helping in the classes, facilitating English art or games.

Hoping that you have very happy holiday season.

Best regards from Tanzania

Ailsa Bennell



Hope For Japan Update

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We can make a difference.

www.selkirkmontessori.ca

Congratulations to staff member/parent Yoshiko Barber and her amazing group of volunteers for raising a total of \$6,522.57 for the Canadian Red Cross in response to the earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

The final cheque was sent in December. What a difference you have all made!

Dates to Remember

January 19th—Open House and Transition Meetings: 5:30-8:30 pm (more info to come)

February 17th—Professional Development Day (no school for children)

February 20th—Mid Winter Break (school closed)

