



ISC Views and Voices

“Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.” - John Dewey

Volume 5 Issue 2

December 2006

www.indigosudburycampus.com (780) 929-6792 indigoinfo@shaw.ca

Celebrating ISC Parents

by Nicolette Groeneveld

Over the past four years and four months, Ric and I have seen many parents come through the school's doors. Some came for tours and quickly left, never to return; some stayed a while, asked many questions but also didn't return; some asked many questions and did enroll their children; and a few had very few questions, being “in” pretty much as soon as they walked in the doors. Parents' reasons for choosing ISC have varied, ranging from their child being bullied in regular school to a desire to spare their child's free spirit. Parents hopes and expectations when enrolling their children have also varied, and here I believe Ric and I have witnessed parents getting much more than they might have thought they would, both in terms of excitement and rewards and fear and challenges.

As you will read in some of the following articles, there is much joy in being an ISC parent. The transformations many of our students have experienced have been magnificent, beautiful and

inspiring, and Ric and I have been blessed, sharing parents' delight as their children have blossomed.

Ric and I have also witnessed the hard times parents have gone through. In some cases, parents have opened up to us and allowed us to walk through those hard times with them; in other cases, parents have reached out to other parents for support. Some parents have chosen to struggle through their fears and challenges alone, and we are thankful they stuck it out, despite being without support.

One of the struggles many parents have had to deal with is the fact that when students come to ISC, it doesn't necessarily “make everything better”. Often weary from years of difficulties in regular school, parents come to us hoping “everything will now be okay”. However, we've seen problems students were having in regular school follow them to ISC—for example, students who were victims of bullying found they still had to take responsibility for their part of that problem and learn to stand up for themselves. Other students went through the transition phases we talk about in the admissions interview, and the parents who witnessed that discovered it can be as difficult as we explain. Yet other students went through a serious adjustment period, discovering that the expectations at ISC for responsible, reasonable and respectful behavior truly are high. And with all these challenges, parents had to do their best to support their children, even though they were also on a learning curve and trying to figure out how to mesh parenting with ISC's philosophies.

And the challenges didn't stop there. Once the adjustments happened, the struggles ceased and the students became empowered, they brought their new “selves” home. Parents were suddenly faced with children who were “calling

them” on their “stuff”; it wasn't uncommon to hear parents saying, “Last night my son/daughter said to me, ‘Mom (Dad) you're not being reasonable (respectful, responsible!)’” What to do with that? Parents were forced to re-examine their parenting and themselves.

Other self re-examination occurred in parents who found themselves on the verge of a mid-life crisis; with children suddenly pursuing their passions and interests, parents became inspired to do the same. Suddenly the chosen job/career didn't seem to be enough anymore.

Despite all this, does ISC make everything better? I think parents like Harvey Garrison—who beamed with pride when his daughter Amanda received a unanimous vote to get her ISC diploma after a grueling thesis defense—would say that in the long run, ISC makes things even better than better—great, in fact! But to get to that point it can be very challenging, and many families feel the truth of Ric's statement of a few years ago: “ISC is the toughest school in the city.”

And so we celebrate all our parents—those who have been with us for our full four years and four months, those who are new to us and all the others in between. You are walking a path few others choose, and you are our best support resource for those who do decide to come our way. Thank you for your courage, your openness and your willingness not only to watch your children become empowered, but to stretch yourselves too.



In this issue:

Finally Happy	2
The Greatest Gift	2
Free to Express	2
To Our Delight	3
A Place of Inquiry	4
Confidence	4
The Non-Reader Reads	4
Standardized Tests	7
What Does He Do All Day?	7
In This Together	8

Finally Happy

by Gloria Mapplebeck

Ray came to Indigo in February 2006. He should have been in Grade 11 but had not received more than 25 credits. He spent his days smoking by garbage cans and playing Xbox live. He had few friends. Teachers called, constantly complaining, "not trying, lack of effort, oppositional, failing". He was an increasingly unhappy young man, and I was worried about his pending adult life.

The day I phoned about the school, I spoke to Ric. He discussed Ray's struggles like he knew him. He told me how to ask Ray to come for a visit and try the environment. Ray walked into the school and immediately fit in. He is a gamer, and the computer room widened his eyes. The boys sat and began talking, and I could barely get Ray to leave. Upon leaving Ric said to him, "Welcome home." Ray's response was, "Well I'm sure there will still be suffering, after all it is school."

Ray's journey at Indigo has been interesting. Since coming to the school, I have watched Ray progress into a likeable young man. He's had sleepovers (first ones), he's gone to the Fringe, he's been taken to Beaumont and Whyte Ave. He jumps on the trampoline and plays guitar with other kids. He plays computer games, reads books on spirituality, and has lengthy conversations with both the youngest child and adults. He actually carried around a dictionary for a time while he explored poetry and song writing.

Ray started watching the show *Heros* with me, and I was blown away by his reading ability. Interesting since the education system stated he read at a Grade 3 level. At social events now, people talk to Ray and he politely answers; I have been told several times in the past year that he is a pleasant young man who I should be (and am) proud of. Ray recently wrote me a long letter explaining some dynamics between the two of us that were troubling him. We are now working on our relationship without name calling or blaming.

As I am now a single mother with a bit of a demanding job, I have had some "emergencies" come up; the wonderful community of Indigo jumped in to pick up my son for me. Ray has gone home

with Dawn, Tim, Bretton and Kaelyn's families without hesitation. They all discuss how easy he is to talk to and how polite he was in their homes. Oppositional?

I feel a friendship and a bond at this school, and I know my son does too. Sleepovers, haunted houses, live bands, videos, sweats, road trips, potlucks, all provide more "real life experiences and learning" than Ray has ever had elsewhere.

Last year, there was a newsletter with Ray's picture in it; he has his head back and he is laughing out loud. My son is finally happy, and that makes for a better young man than any honor role list.

The Greatest Gift

by Wendy Sobieski

After many years of searching for why I felt so alien, restless and unhappy, I finally came to see that the "identity" I had been living was actually not "me" but rather an accumulation of who I had been told to be. I came to see that the "self" I had been living was a result of what I had been told "I was" by my parents, teachers, society etc. In my innocence, I bought it all. How could I do anything else? I was surrounded. In a flash the mystery became crystal clear. How could I be happy when "I" was actually someone else's creation. Someone else's misperception of themselves that they had been lead to believe, just as I had, projected onto me. What a conundrum. In-authenticity passed down and down and down. Wow. It is from this realization that I came to appreciate, so deeply, the Indigo Sudbury way. The gift of space and freedom to be who we "truly" are is the greatest gift we can give our children and ourselves.



At Indigo Sudbury C a m - pus, we are reminded that wisdom and creativity are o u r E S - SENCE. Not something we acquire. To begin from or return to this fundamental truth opens life to be what it is meant to be. An awesome privilege and adventure.

Free to Express

by Jennifer Janz

My son is brilliant. He sparkles with kindness and empathy. He has an encyclopedia brain and he's interesting to talk to. He invents and creates. He takes things apart and usually fits them back together. He's not afraid to voice bold opinions and to express his point of view.

Can you imagine that all this beauty was frowned upon in the conventional school system? Branded distracted and disruptive and disorganized, ejected from grade five for responding honestly to an inquisition, and required to devote days and months to topics that didn't capture his imagination, Steve folded up and only showed his hard-shelled angry side. Faced with five more years of restrictive "education", I cringe just thinking about the end product that may have emerged.

It's cool the way the right thing shows up when you're ready for it. In June, reaching the end of another painful school year, I happened upon the ISC Open House advert in the local newspaper. I usually pay little attention to the ads, but that evening the ISC bulletin was the first thing to catch my eye – an open house the very next morning. I knew this was for us. Making it "priority number one" on a Saturday morning when we had rented equipment booked and family helpers arriving for a major yard clean-up project, I called the "school" and set aside our plans so we could check out the campus. Suspicious of the pursuit of any educational forum, Steve was reluctant to come with me, but at the last moment (with some negotiating over a Tim Hortons run!) he jumped in for the fieldtrip.

I knew we were in the right place the moment we walked through the front door. The atmosphere enveloped us. As Tim and Ric and Nicolette showed us around and explained the ISC philosophy, Steve was captivated by the notion of having the freedom to explore all the ideas and projects that had been pushed into the dark, cobwebby corners of his imagination. He opted to stay for the rest of the day.

I never thought I'd hear him complain about having summer holidays, but Steve couldn't wait to start school this year. He started counting down the weeks at the beginning of July! Once the doors opened he was so joyous. There never

seemed to be enough hours in the day to explore all the ideas that were pouring forth from every nook and cranny. I was treated to flying-leap hugs every evening and a kid who couldn't wait to get out the door in the morning. School supply shopping has evolved into prowling trips to Peavey Mart or Canadian Tire where we scour every aisle for useful bits and pieces. With creativity unleashed, treasures can be gleaned from every garage sale and town clean-up pile!

"Learning" is no longer confined within institutional walls, and our house is not a place to do battle over homework. In fact, the "H" word is never mentioned – there's no need. All of life is a learning experience now! We have all relaxed. We laugh and eat meals together and enjoy each other's company. And I think I've learned more about myself in the last three months than in the last three years. We've all grown and grown closer.

My son is brilliant. He sparkles with kindness. He invents and creates. He's free to express his point of view. And we celebrate this beauty.



To Our Delight

by Debra Munroe

It is truly an honor to write our experience and butterfly effect in how many changes have occurred in our sons Mike and Jim Bob this past year.

Since losing their dad, Neil, four years ago, their lives had changed dramatically. The boys had to learn how to adjust to the loss of their dad. I knew this experience brought an inner strength in seeing and feeling the world differently. I have witnessed that despite facing such a loss, their hearts and minds remained open.

I knew there had to be something out there to match their feelings. We began our search for a way of learning and being, not in a "school" setting but in a "living" setting. An environment that let them be themselves and feel safe in expressing their feelings, their ideas, thoughts, experiences...

We met Nicolette through Mark three years ago and had heard she had started the Indigo Campus. We waited for the following open house and approached Ric and Nicolette about having the boys continue their journey with them. It felt right AND the boys wanted it!

It was a long process and although we were satisfied with them feeling happy and free at Indigo, something really clicked this past summer. It proved to us that in time, the changes will come, and as parents, all we had to do was wait, learn and listen to them. And because of that, I believe changes can happen gradually and sometimes really suddenly.

In our experience with Jim Bob, he has gradually blossomed socially and has created friendships at the school. Before starting, he stayed home and kept to himself. He just didn't seem happy, and something was missing. It took some time for us to see the changes and yet they were already happening. He came home with a new nick name and you can see he "connected." Jim Bob's humor developed and is absolutely funny and witty. His one liner's make you bust your gut laughing! He is a quiet and gentle spirit, and I can see his happiness. He's even speaking his mind and standing up for himself. I absolutely love it because he's not afraid of expressing his power through his words. I love the fact he takes pride in his nick name "Jim Bob" and feels a part of the school. Mike speaks highly of his brother

and tells us how well liked Jim Bob is at school. I see the changes and know that he's unique and unlike any other.

In our experience with Mike, his change happened since this summer and in huge volume!! Michael's made a huge commitment towards his spiritual path and is transforming right before our eyes. He's found his voice and spiritual path which has taken him back into his artwork and meaningful friendships. When I heard for the first time Michael started a song in the sweat lodge a few months ago, I cried! My boy can sing!! I remember not too long ago that Michael refused to sweat or sing around the big drum. I never forced him to follow a spiritual path; I just prayed he'd find his own. In sharing in the Sun Dance ceremony this summer with him, he just engaged and involved himself in the ceremony. No one asked him to help, he just did! The "just doing it" part is what I believe Indigo has encouraged. Since then, Michael's made a choice to follow and share this spiritual journey with us. I hear a lot of positive words on how much Michael has changed. I feel the same way too! It is inspiring and a blessing all at the same time. Michael is who he wants to be now and transforming into a respectful, generous and loving man.

That's what Indigo is all about; our children can be themselves and really draw on their passions, even if they don't know what they are yet!

In James and Michael, the process was already in place, and Indigo and other sources just helped them along the way....

In essence, seeing these changes has inspired me to get back into painting and finding creative ways to make their life at Indigo possible. I know Neil is proud and would want this for them. I haven't painted in five years and something happened for me too and now I want to paint! It's exciting and exhilarating for me.

No words can express the feelings I have about the process that happens for our Indigo children, so continue to watch and wait and see....



A Place of Inquiry

by Denise Moore

I like writing. It's one of the things I really enjoy. That's why I had to take a hard look at why I've been so unwilling to write an article for the ISC newsletter. Especially in the face of Nicolette's gentle, yet insistent urging.

Expectation. That's what tripped me up. My ideas around what is expected of me and my belief in the ultimate value of living up to those outward expectations. Everyone will be expecting paragraph after paragraph of gushing commentary about what a marvel the school is and how awesome the effects of it have been on my children. I'm not there right now. (Mind you, I'm not a "gusher" at the best of times.)

So where am I at? I am in a place of inquiry. I am slowly learning the joy of not believing in anything. Of letting in uncertainty and living in the questions. Of constantly letting go of all my firmly held beliefs. Sometimes it is obvious and easy. The belief that good grades and a University degree were necessary for "success" in life was the first thing to go when I began to look into the concepts of a Sudbury education. I'm not putting down formal education if that's what you love or is part of the path on the road to what you love. But for me, it was a huge relief to stop worshipping at the altar of "Doing Well at School". Other times letting go has been painful and difficult. Like the belief that my children SHOULD respect me simply because I'm their mother, and that as their mother I should always know what's best for them. Becoming a respectful, responsible and reasonable parent is an incredibly humbling experience. Of course, it is about simply being a respectful, responsible, reasonable, person. It is realizing that I am a person first and mother second and that my children are people first and my children second. The hardest part for me has been the realization that the glue that I have used to hold my whole life together is nothing but belief.

So, I no longer believe in ISC or the "Sudbury Way", as THE way. That is only me sliding down the slippery slope of substituting one belief system for another. I know my children are in the right place for now, and possibly for a long

time to come. The fact that I'm open to the possibility that it could all change tomorrow in no way diminishes the deep gratitude and respect I have for Nicolette and Ric, for their vision and commitment. As well as the opportunity they, and all the parents and children at ISC give our family to grow as human beings.

Just like the opportunity to write this article. Whether it meets anyone's expectations, or not.

Confidence

by Janice Windjack

Sarah has come to a place of wanting to explore her options. One of the options she's looking into is taking course work. She's checked into the programs Education Unlimited promotes, and in order to see what the Alberta curriculum has to offer, she stopped in with me at Next Step Outreach.

When we went to Next Step, we thought we'd just quietly look through some books, but we were asked to first meet with the assistant principal. At first Sarah asked me to do the talking, but very early into the meeting, Sarah took over. I sensed skepticism in the assistant principal when Sarah told her she is a student at Indigo, but this didn't phase Sarah who expressed herself clearly and with confidence.

At one point, the assistant principal told Sarah that if she takes courses through Next Step, she will have to be at the storefront school a minimum of fifteen hours per week. When Sarah asked if she could just do her course work at home, the lady replied that normally students have to be pushed to get anything done, which is the reason for the minimum time requirement. I realized that because Sarah is choosing for herself to do the work, she won't need to be pushed, and this is exactly the self-motivation Sudbury Schools are always saying their students gain.

Sarah hasn't quite decided yet which path she's going to follow, but whatever she decides, I'm proud of who she's become in her time at Indigo, I'm delighted with the confidence I see in her, and I trust that she truly is choosing the path she feels is right for her at this time.

What Does a Non-Reader Do All Day at Indigo Sudbury Campus? He Reads.

by Rochelle Skogen

My son Adam was 11 years old and still not able to read. Even though I had transferred him to a new school where he was repeating grade four, things were not improving. Upon our arrival in September, his teacher had assured me that this was a 'Balanced Literacy' school (which surely meant that there was no possible way that he would not learn to read here). As a teacher myself for many years, I was only just slightly reassured as I'd heard this type of talk before. Adam had been on an I.P.P. (Individualized Program Plan) since Kindergarten. I had signed dozens of these plans, put together for the most part, by well meaning teachers, who believed that adapting their program to him would be all that was needed to solve his problems. Up until this point all this had meant was that he was still reading grade one books (baby books as he called them) at the age of 11. As David Jardine recognizes,

With reading, many elementary schools end up having files full of little developmentally color-coded 'readers', each of which has been specifically designed to developmentally follow the others, but none of which contains a story that is actually worth reading (Jardine, Friesen & Clifford, 2006, p.70).

Well this was certainly the case with Adam. He had learned to hate reading because the books he was able to read were not at all interesting for a child his age. By the end of that grade four year not only was Adam still testing at a mid-grade one level in reading but was now being called names like 'retard' as well as being physically threatened by some of the kids at his school. So much for the miracles of Balanced Literacy! It was at this point that I decided that his safety and peace of mind were more important than learning to read and I placed him at Indigo Sudbury.

This was a year and 3 months ago. Knowing that I was going to begin a

study at Indigo Sudbury in 2007, I purposely did not read to Adam or even speak to him about reading over the time he has been there. Also I wanted to allow him time to ‘recover’ from the pain and humiliation he had suffered throughout his schooling years. Recently though I began to wonder how it was that he seemed able to play video games as well as he was. Although I know next to nothing about these games (other than the fact that I’m the one buying them!), it seemed to me that there was quite a bit of writing that had to be read in order to advance and win at them. I started to question what degree of skill in reading was needed in order to accomplish this. Did one have to read in order to play these games or was there some way around this? I really didn’t know. So I decided to ask Adam in an interview what his thoughts were on this. This interview will become part of the larger study that I will begin in 2007.

Adam (A) and I (R) sat down together one evening and he talked to me about reading. The following is an excerpt of this interview.

R: Do you feel that you read better now than you did when you were in regular school (1 year and 3 months ago)?

A: Yes.

R: How did this happen?

A: Playing [video] games. Because the games I play you need to read.

R: Why can you read the video game words (facts/directions) but you couldn’t read in regular school?

A: There was too much pressure. They forced you to read books and stuff like textbooks. It was bad because they were too big. There was too much reading that wasn’t interesting like legends and I didn’t like to read in all subjects.

R: Why did you not like reading the books they sent home when you were in regular school?

A: It was boring. I had to read the same book over and over.

R: Why is it different reading video games?

A: Because they’re pretty easy and more fun. *[At this point I asked him to read me a few words that I wouldn’t consider ‘easy’ from the game he was playing – he read words like ...without a problem].* Because you can read and it tells you what the story is. You hear what the Bosses say as they’re plotting to take over the world. They explain it better than regular books. There’s more of a point, better storyline than in school books.

R: I think a book like the Hobbit has a really interesting storyline. Would you read the Hobbit on your own?

A: Maybe. *[Here it is interesting because a year ago he never would even have considered this].*

R: When?

A: When I’m done the next two games.

R: Would you rather read the Hobbit or play a new game?

A: Play a new game.

R: Why?

A: It’s more fun.

R: Can you read all the words in your video games?

A: Most of them like 95%.

R: What about the words you can’t read? What do you do?

A: I keep reading the rest and then I pretty much know what that word means *[in literacy research this is a reading strategy that strong readers use – using the larger context to make sense of the word that is not understood].*

R: Is there ever a time that not being able to read something in a game makes you give up?

A: No. The only time I give up is when I can’t beat the guy.

R: But does that have anything to do with reading?

A: No it just means I’m not strong enough to beat that part. That’s what I’m doing right now *[he is showing me the game he is playing right now on his DS handheld game].* I go back to training to become strong enough.

R: Are there any games that might be too hard for you just because of the reading?

A: Yeah not that many. Yes some. I can read some words but just not enough.

R: So do you imagine that in a year or so you’ll learn to read more and that will mean that you will be able to play those games you can’t play now?

A: Yes.

R: How will you learn those new words?

A: From other games. Seeing some of those words and learning them *[He’s talking about the language in one game scaffolding him to a harder one. The notion of scaffolding is a Vygotskian concept where teachers need to teach a concept that is only slightly more difficult than the student can handle and then play the role of ‘scaffolder’ in order to help the student move to the next level].*

R: I see that you read very quickly. How do you know when you haven’t read right?

A: I just read it again. If it makes no sense then just read it again. Sometimes it’s not important information. Like when the guys talking to each other sometimes it’s not important but sometimes

it is. [The ability to 'skip' information by recognizing whether or not it is important to the text as a whole is considered a high level skill that only good readers possess. Also the ability to 'come back' to the text when it is noted to be important further on is another noted skill in good readers].

R: How do you know if it is or not important?

A: I don't know you just know [All good readers would likely answer in the same way. Once we have mastered something we simply take it for granted].

R: Do you read everything or do you skip?

A: I skip.

R: Why do you like video games?

A: They're entertaining. It's like T.V. but you control the guy.

R: But T.V. you don't have to do anything?

A: Yeah you need to change the channel. [Ha! Ha!].

R: In school you didn't like to read but in the game it doesn't bother you to read? How is it different?

A: It isn't really. [Here Adam explains the game to me. If we consider Bloom's taxonomy – He recounts in great detail the storyline (Level 1: describing) of the game which also involves restating (Level 2: comprehension) in a logical sequence so that I can understand what he is saying. As he is explaining and describing the game to me he is also showing me on his handheld game what or who he means (Level 3: illustrating). And of course when he is speaking of not being 'strong' enough and must go back to train more, he has had to (Level 4: analyze) the situation in order to determine this. In a very

short period of time Adam was able to explain the game in a way that I was able to make sense of (Level 5: synthesis – this is what teachers were asking you to do in a novel study or book report). In being able to beat this game, Adam showed that he was in fact able to predict, assess and judge, the different aspects of the game in order to succeed but he was also able to judge the nature of the game (good/easy/hard etc) both of which represent Bloom's highest level of thinking (Level 6: Evaluation).

R: Why do you like beating games?

A: The challenge.

R: Do you think that regular schools should allow kids to play video games to learn to read?

A: Yes.

What does all this mean? What I can say is that after only a year and 3 months at Indigo Sudbury, Adam can now read. I won't state at what level he now reads because I refuse to put him through any more 'tests'. What I do know is that not only can he read but he is now a reader. The point being, that while many children can read, they don't read much. I had always hoped that like his older brother, Adam would like to read and not simply read when he was being forced to. He now reads because he is highly motivated to do so. I do not believe, had he remained in the regular schooling system that he would have learned to read like he does now. In fact I am absolutely convinced of this. Some might say (teachers especially) that it isn't 'good' that he is only reading one kind of text (video games) but for me as his mother I could not care less what kind of text he is reading as long as he is learning to read and becoming stronger and more fluent every day. Will he ever read poetry – likely not, but how many people do? What will he do with his life? I don't know but I do know that being able to read is a huge step in being able to function in this complex world. Today as a teacher educator of pre-service teachers, would I recommend that we allow students to play video games at school? Not necessarily. But

what I say to my students who will one day be teachers is, "If you want students to learn to read; you need to find a way. Not the Balanced Literacy way or Phonics way or remedial reading way but a way that will motivate the child in front of you. Find a way even if this way is not sanctioned by the system. Whether it be the Sears catalogue, Harlequin Romance novels or video games – you need to find what works. It is your responsibility to teach every child to read - so find a way". My son found his own way but only when he was given the complete freedom to do so. And this, thankfully, he was able to find at Indigo. If someone asks me what Adam does all day at Indigo, I say, "He reads."

References

Jardine, D., Friesen, S. & Clifford, P. (2006). *Curriculum in Abundance*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers. Bloom's Taxonomy. Retrieved 10-12-06 at: <http://www.officeport.com/edu/blooms.htm>

Quotable Quotes

Ric offered Kris some left-over Halloween chocolate. Kris shook his head. "You don't want it?" asked Ric. Said Kris, "I'm Swiss, I don't eat gross chocolate!"

A visiting potential new student was trying to grasp being at a school where no one tells her what to do. I mentioned this to Gaian in the car on the way home. "Hey!" he said. "If she wants someone to tell her what to do, I'll be happy to! I can give her all kinds of things to do... chores..."

I was "wearing" sleeping Josephine in my Ergo carrier when I went upstairs to water a plant. Knowing students aren't allowed upstairs, Caleb, who was playing in the living room, asked, "Is your baby allowed up there?"

Sebastian and Lucas were talking about being animals. When Lucas said he likes monkeys, Sebastian replied, "I'd rather be a wolf than a monkey, because if I were a monkey, I'd just be a smaller, fatter, hairier version of myself!"

Standardized Tests

by Dawn Schumacher

One of my English assignments requires me to summarize a local controversy. I chose to summarize the controversy over standardized tests and their value. Since I am very familiar with the arguments against standardized tests I went online to find websites that supported testing. I had no idea what a challenge this would be! I have found lots of sites that are against testing but almost none that support it. The few sites I have found that talk about the pros of standardized testing seem to only include one or two points and then go on to use the great big BUT.... The only arguments I have found to support testing appear to be financially driven: tests are the most cost effective way to evaluate thousands of students quickly. The website also states that they are time effective and easier for teachers. Nowhere have I come across any site that states they are true evaluations of a student's progress, nor do any of the sites talk about any benefits for the students. Having discovered that there are far more arguments against testing than there are for testing, it reaffirms my belief in the education choices I have made for my boys.



What Does He Do All Day?

by Dawn Schumacher

Even though I volunteer at the school, I don't always know what it is my kids are doing. I see them spending a lot of time on their computers, but what are they getting out of it? I know the obvious things, their typing skills are improving, as are their spelling and reading. I know they are having fun and enjoying themselves. Those are the things I can see, but is there anything else they are getting out of spending so much time in that computer room?

Just this past Sunday, I found out several things Robert is getting out of spending his days on the computer. We were out driving, and a very excited Robert started talking, and there was no stopping him. He was so excited sharing all the great things that he's doing. First, he's been creating comics. Wow. I wouldn't even know where to start, but he doesn't hesitate. It would appear that he comes up with an idea and then just goes for it. He was sharing with me how he's really good at getting screen shots and manipulating them so they look good, but he's not great with the caption bubbles. So he has a friend online who's great at caption bubbles but not so great with screen shots, and so he wants to invite this friend to work on a comic together; and since "David is so creative", he wants to invite his brother to be part of this as well. On and on Robert went, his excitement evident.

For me, though, I was hearing so much that he wasn't saying. He's able to recognize his strengths and weaknesses; he knows what he's good at and what he's not. He's not afraid to ask someone to join him or help him. If he gets his brother and friend together, he will learn all about co-operation, how to work with others, when to stand up for what he wants and when to back off and compromise. All these skills will be needed as he becomes an adult, both in personal relationships and in work relationships. I also heard, or noted, the lack of fear. He is not afraid to try something new and maybe be good at it and maybe not. I was thinking about all the adults today who I hear saying, "I always wanted to try that, but was afraid of being laughed at, or afraid I

wouldn't be any good at it." I don't think that will be an issue with our kids. Robert is not afraid and that more than anything is a wonderful place to be.

The other big, exciting thing Robert is doing is he is now the leader of a clan on one of his game sites. This is really neat because he didn't start with that in mind. He was a member of a clan, and no one really liked the clan leader. He didn't seem to be a good leader so when he decided to change their "tag" yet again, Robert stated that he was keeping this "tag" and anyone who wanted to stay with him could. This resulted in several members staying with Robert and he suddenly became a clan leader. I don't really understand what all this means, but Robert was telling me that he tries to touch base, one on one, with each of his clan members so they will know that he cares about them and that they are important members of the clan. As I understand it, the clan has been in one "clan vs. clan" battle and did quite well. I can't help but believe that being a clan leader will help Robert with leadership skills and communication skills.

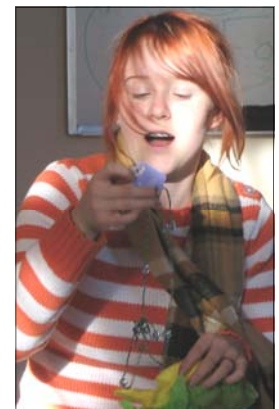
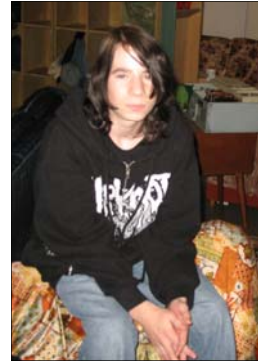
After having listened to Robert's excitement I know the "magic" is in the unseen; skills and character development are happening inside our children. So "what does he do all day"? He is busy "being", and in "being" he is changing and growing and becoming who he chooses to become.



In This Together

by Cheryl Bergquist

When Nicolette first mentioned about the December newsletter and parent contributions, I first thought of talking to Kaelyn and Izzy about what their thoughts were about the school. I did this, and the girls had lots of interesting things to say, but it didn't turn out to be really what I wanted to say. I found myself thinking more about how important the school is period, not just to me and my family. What happens at ISC is big and real. It is good for the world. I am grateful that the founding members had clarity, strength and courage to make ISC a reality. And, I am grateful and respectful of all of the students, staff members, volunteers and families that help now to hold this space where people are respected and allowed to be. I am also keenly aware of my role and my responsibility in holding this space too. Recently, I felt I had forgotten to pay attention to the importance of what is happening at ISC for all of us; I had focussed my eyes elsewhere. Nicolette's asking for input from the parents has offered me a perfect opportunity to re-examine why I am part of Indigo Sudbury Campus and why I want my children to attend this school. Mostly, what I discovered is that I am a part of the school too and so are all of the parents – we are all in this together. Our attention to, our thoughts about and our energy towards the school matter. Right here. Right now. Thank you everyone for this experience. Have a joyous, lovely holiday!



THANK YOU!

Christmas came early to ISC! On December 19th, an anonymous donor gave fifteen 19" flat screen monitors to the school. Said Josh, "This is a boost to school morale!"

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." *Alvin Toffler*

"All the people we call 'geniuses' are men and women who somehow escaped having to put that curious, wondering child in themselves to sleep." *Barbara She*

Prepared by Nicolette Groeneveld