



ISC Views and Voices

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

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Focus on the “Sudbury Transition”

by Nicolette Groeneveld

When newly enrolled families leave the Admissions Interview, I always hope that if there is one thing they remember from *all* the information we’ve just covered, it’s the brief look we took together at the “Sudbury transition”.

The “Sudbury transition” consists of five phases: 1) **Euphoria**: The newly enrolled student is thrilled to be free of regular school and at a school where s/he doesn’t *have* to do anything! 2) **Deprogramming**: The student is starting to get bored or starting to question being at the school. 3) **Bottoming out**: The student is totally bored, frustrated with the school, doesn’t know what to do with him/herself and/or may be feeling like leaving the school. 4) **Change begins**: The student starts to feel happy again and may or may not start to develop and explore interests. 5) **Flow**: The student is totally happy at the school whether or not s/he has any projects or interests.

Not all Sudbury students go through this transition but for the ones who do, it can be *very* challenging. It can be hard on families too, particularly when parents are still harboring their own doubts about the school.

But what every Sudbury staff member knows is that the students who make it all the way through the process come out truly transformed! I stand in wonderment of the students I’ve seen go through it—their transformations have been nothing short of amazing, beautiful and highly inspiring!

In this newsletter, you will get to see the processes three of our students went

through, and I will share the communications that happened between two unschooling families and me.

Surviving the Sudbury Transition: Three Interviews

Marlaena, Bretton and Sarah kindly accepted to tell their transition stories for this newsletter. Without any further ado...

Marlaena’s story:

1) Why did you come to ISC? *My parents noticed that Josh was becoming stupid in public school so when a friend told them about ISC, my parents looked up the school and visited it. At first they thought it was far out, but then they got used to the idea and decided that if Josh was coming then I should too. I was doing quite well in regular school. I was totally programmed to regular school (this took years of effort on my parents’ part!) and now I needed to be deprogrammed.*

2) What was it like for you in your first days/weeks at ISC (phase 1)? What were you particularly happy about regarding being here? How long did your phase 1 last? *At first I thought it was awesome. I tried to fit in and be really involved; I did a lot of things, re-*

searched things; I tried to be smart and make a few friends. I felt alright for the first few weeks. I realized ISC wasn’t the same as regular school, and I felt the joy of being able to do whatever I wanted. I accepted there was another way to do things; I understood the philosophy really well. It was easy for the first month.

3) Did anything in particular happen to spark phase 2-3, were you just getting bored, or was there something in particular about the school that you didn’t like? *It wasn’t boredom really. It was not understanding that the kids here were different than most kids. I was trying too hard to make friends. At the same time, I didn’t want to be friends with some of the other kids because I didn’t think they were cool (looking back now I see that as stupid!) For me it was mostly about making friends. When I was trying to be who I was programmed to be, it didn’t work. I tried getting attention but the impression I was making was that I was really annoying. So I “fell down”.*

4) What complaints did you have when you were in phase 3? Did you still want to come to ISC or would you have quit if you could have? What made you stay? I thought of quitting, but whenever I thought of it, I knew I wouldn’t be able to go back to public school. I understood the philosophy of ISC too much.

But at school, I felt there was no one like me and no one who understood who I was. I was going downhill, I wasn’t doing work properly, and I was always forgetting things so I got written up a lot for chores. I felt like there wasn’t anywhere I could go when I was upset – there just always seemed there were people there; I didn’t feel people cared about privacy. Now I realize if I ask for private space I’ll get it.

About going to school, part of me said it was the right thing to do; the other 50%



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said, "Don't go, they don't like you there." My parents pushed me to go because they knew it was the right thing. I think if I had stayed out of this school, I would still be very unhappy.

At the worst of phase 3, I cried every day. There was always something, but mostly, I felt like I was always trying to get friends.

5) How did you feel when you were in phases 2-3? Did how you feel about school affect your home life? I felt angry, embarrassed (I often felt I was making an idiot of myself) and disappointed with myself for not having lots of friends. This really affected my home life: I had a lot of arguments with my parents, trying to convince them it wasn't a good school. I still had some good times at home, but it wasn't the same because I was mostly depressed.

6) Did something change at school or in you that took you into phase 4? Sarah got me to come out because we'd sit in the bowl and talk, and I wanted to come to school to be with her. In Sarah, I found someone who treated me like an equal. We also had a lot to share because she was coming out of the same phase I was going through. We relaxed with each other so we helped each other get through it. Eventually we started hanging out with other people.

7) How did you feel different when you got to phase 4? How did you feel about the school? I started to open my mind a bit. For the longest time I wanted to be a singer and be famous, and I realized from being at ISC that I don't need to be famous. But I am the kind of person who needs to know what I'm doing with my life. I decided I wanted to write a book. I was trampolining and wondered, "What should I do?" I thought about the dreams I'd had that would be good for a book – and, wow! The answer was right in front of me! I told my mom I was going to be a writer, and I started working because I had a lot of ideas. People at the school gave me ideas, and I expanded my imagination in writing the book. I read my story to people and they really encouraged me. People said my story was great, which made me want to write more! Sarah really liked my book, which was the best part.

At this point, I was happy to be at the school because people were accepting the real me, not the programmed me. I felt better being the real me; there was

no pressure anymore to be the programmed me. I could relax.

8) What phase would you say you're in now? How do you feel now about being at ISC? I'm in phase 5. There's nothing I'm upset about and if there is, I can handle it. As long as there are the people who helped me through the first year, I'll be okay. By the time Sarah graduates, I'll be able to handle things myself and there will always be other people willing to help me.

9) Do you really believe in the school philosophy? Do you have any concerns about your future because you are at ISC? Do you feel there are things you "should" be doing that you're not? Do you get any outside pressure to "do" things at school? I definitely believe in school philosophy! I don't worry about the what if's. I have no concerns at all about my future – I know I'll turn out really well because I'm here! I don't have any things I feel I should be doing; I think I'm doing the right thing – all the things I'm doing have value. I don't get any outside pressure; if someone says I should be doing Math, for example, I say, "Whatever, I'm not going to listen to you, I'm going to listen to myself."

10) What positive changes do you feel have happened in you since coming to ISC and going through the various phases? I go to Campus Meeting and I always have something to say; I have an opinion and I'm never afraid to say what I think. I'm not afraid to dress the way I dress or feel the way I feel. I don't care what anyone else says. I've gone through that. **So you're really okay with who you are?** Most definitely!

11) Do you feel the changes in you have affected your home life? Oh yeah, there have been lots of improvements! My room is cleaner, I have a better relationship with my brother and my parents, I can tell what's reasonable, and I stand up to adults more often! Things are a lot more peaceful at home now than a year ago.

12) What advice would you give someone who's currently in phases 2-3? If you're bored, just do something – it's simple to do something. When you're in phase 3, all you need to do is talk to people, find a friend who will really care about you. Also, try not to feel pressured about how you look and feel – just completely relax!

Other comments: If I had stayed in public school, I would be one of those robots

who goes out in the streets in mini skirts, not wearing enough in winter. I would have conformed and would absolutely be one of those superficial people. It would be pretty sad to me that way! I'm so thankful there's a Sudbury school here!

A final comment from Mars:

If anyone who reads this has a problem and wants someone to talk to, they can definitely talk to me! I will listen to anything and will respond and help!

Bretton's story:

1) Why did you come to ISC? I was frustrated with public school because I wasn't free to do what I wanted to do. And when I didn't go to public school, I was at home homeschooling.

2) What was it like for you in your first days/weeks at ISC (phase 1)? What were you particularly happy about regarding being here? How long did your phase 1 last? I felt free of the structure of public school so I could have fun doing anything—even just walking around. I didn't have to do anything, and I didn't do much the first few weeks; we just all sat around and talked, which I thought was great! I was happy my whole first year at ISC.



3) Did anything in particular happen to spark phase 2-3, were you just getting bored, or was there something in particular about the school that you didn't like? I think boredom played a big role. But also, because I had friends in public school, there was a lot of pressure from them. I hadn't thought about what I was going to do with the rest of my life until my friends started talking about it, and then I felt pressured to think about what I was going to do. I ended up thinking I wasn't getting what I needed from ISC.

4) What complaints did you have when

you were in phase 3? What made you leave the school, and what made you come back? *There was nothing I didn't like; I thought the school was great! I thought it was working for others, but I didn't realize it was working for me. I thought that because of who I am, it wouldn't help me. I thought I'd need all the knowledge of math and curriculum to be happy. I left the school because of the pressure I was feeling – thinking I needed the curriculum. There was definitely no passion about doing curriculum, though; I was doing it for others, not for me.*

I was also partly influenced by my sisters, who both got high school diplomas and are either done college or in college. They didn't pressure me, but I felt pressure inside. It was all fear based, ego driven.

After the summer, I didn't come back to ISC. But then I wasn't doing anything so I decided to go to the YMCA program. But after about two days of that, I realized I really didn't like how public school is running things! So I was supposed to come back to ISC before Christmas, but I was scared to come back; my ego had me thinking people would be mad at me and think I had made a bad choice in leaving. But really, everyone wanted me back, I just didn't think they did.

Things got better, though, because I started talking to my mom about things. I had never really talked to her about stuff before. Getting to know my mom better helped my process. Seeing what my mom went through in her childhood and seeing that she went through the public system made me see the opportunity I had in coming to ISC and how much better it is here. My mom was never against me coming to the school as Kassie was still here even when I wasn't.

5) How did you feel when you were in phases 2-3? Did how you feel about school affect your home life? *I fell into a depression because I was at home day in, day out; I didn't go out or go anywhere. In the back of my head I was constantly thinking, 'Why am I not at school?' where I really wanted to be. Ego conflicts in my head said that ISC couldn't help me even though another part of me knew it could. I certainly wasn't as happy then as I am now. I was certainly not the same person as I am now.*

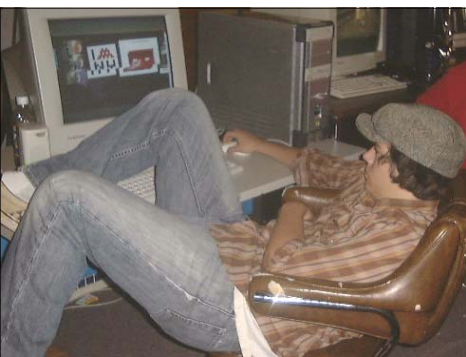
6) How long would you say phases 2-3

lasted for you? *It started in my second year and got worse when school started in September and I wasn't registered anywhere. That's when I signed up with YMCA.*

7) Did something change at school or in you that took you into phase 4? *Because I spent so much time alone in my head, I had to get past my ego and find out who I really am. Knowing that helped me to do what I want to do and stopped me from caring what others think. That's a big thing to get over. Alone time really served me.*

8) How did you feel different when you were in phase 4? How did you feel about the school? *I felt different knowing I didn't care what anyone else thought. When I came back to ISC, that half year I was back I did the most I've ever done here! Tim being here made a difference because I could explore the areas he worked in. I was also at a place where I really believed in the school.*

9) What phase would you say you're in now? How do you feel now about being at ISC? *I'm in phase 5, and I feel great! This past summer went so fast because I knew I wanted to be back! I'm still not doing a lot, but I feel great. I'm happy being around the people here at ISC. It's a whole other world out here. Sometimes I still have feelings of pressure, especially looking at having one more year here and thinking of graduating next year, but generally I know I'm going to be alright. I'm not influenced at all by friends anymore. I feel confident and okay with everything.*



10) What positive changes do you feel have happened in you since coming to ISC and going through the various phases? *I've gained a lot of self-confidence. I look back at myself in my first year at ISC, and the mentality I had back then was "immature"; it was someone else's mentality, not my own. In public school, everyone has the same mentality because they're all together all the*

time doing the same thing. I'm happy because I'm different from everyone else. I feel like my own person.

11) Do you feel the changes in you have affected your home life? *They've affected it a lot. I used to be really angry—I wasn't a very nice brother. I have more respect for what my mom does and what she does for the family. I respect all my siblings—I have respect for who they are. They've been helping me through everything I've had to go through. I'm really happy to call us a family now.*

12) What advice would you give someone who's currently in phases 2-3? *Really try to get to know who you are; if you don't know, who will? You have to know who you are. In public school they tell you who you are, but here at ISC, you have to figure it out yourself.*

Sarah's story:



1) Why did you come to ISC? *I was unhappy in regular school. I didn't have many friends, I hated the school work and I found*

it took up all my time. I didn't think there was any point to being forced to learn the stuff I was learning, and I wasn't able to say what I thought. I was also failing because I didn't care about the work – I wasn't interested so I didn't do a good job. Then I heard about ISC and thought, "Yes! Totally!" It sounded much better.

2) What was it like for you in your first days/weeks at ISC? What were you particularly happy about? How long did your phase 1 last? *I had a lot of fun in the first few weeks. It was good knowing I didn't have to do anything, and I was totally happy that I didn't have to go to regular school. I liked the 25 hours per week, and I was making friends. I felt totally happy because I was free. This lasted till about January.*

3) Did anything in particular happen to spark phase 2-3, were you just getting bored, or was there something in particular about the school that you didn't like? *Things at home weren't great because I spent a lot of time alone. I didn't have any friends outside of school, which*

made me feel down a lot. I started becoming aware of how bad I felt about myself, and then I started thinking that maybe the kids at school didn't like me either. That made me feel depressed. There was nothing wrong with the school—I was projecting my home stuff onto school. I was still happy about not having to be in public school.

4) What complaints did you have when you were in phase 3? Did you still want to come to ISC or would you have quit if you could have? What made you stay? I wanted to stay home all the time. I didn't want to go to public school and I didn't want to come to ISC because I thought no one liked me. I wasn't getting enough sleep at night (too many things on my mind) so I'd sleep a lot when I was at school. If I'd have had the option of staying home, I would have done that, but I knew that wasn't an option. However, I did have in the back of my mind the knowledge that it was a phase I was going through and that it would get better. I hadn't thought I'd go through the phases, but when I did, I recognized them and that was partly why I didn't want to quit fully. It was a hard time and my mom was worried too.

5) How did you feel when you were in phases 2-3? Did how you feel about school affect your home life? I felt bummed out. I wasn't angry, but I felt it was my fault that I didn't have friends. I thought there was something wrong with me. I got in a few fights with my mom.

6) How long would you say phases 2-3 lasted for you? About two months. But I had a hard time this past summer, and I had a very difficult situation happen in September that made me feel like I was slipping back into phase 3.

7) Did something change at school or in you that took you into phase 4? Getting to be friends with Marlaena made the difference. She's my best friend in the world! She totally understood because she was going through the same thing; we leaned on each other and helped each other through it. If it weren't for Mars, I'd still be in phase 3. Over time, more people were asking me to do things like build bikes so then I started thinking maybe people actually did like me. But I wasn't totally sure. I was feeling happier, but I also still had my mind telling me maybe people didn't like me. So it was a bit up and down, but more up than down. In September, Mars helped me not to slip back to phase

3. I'd think about her and smile, and Kylen helped me too. I knew neither of them would do anything to hurt me so when I'd think about them, I'd feel better. I knew they were there for me.

8) How did you feel different when you were in phase 4? How did you feel about the school? I felt happier; I felt people were accepting me more, and my mom and Mars were helping me to accept myself more. I realized that when I was at school I was happier so thought I should come to school more.

9) What phase would you say you're in



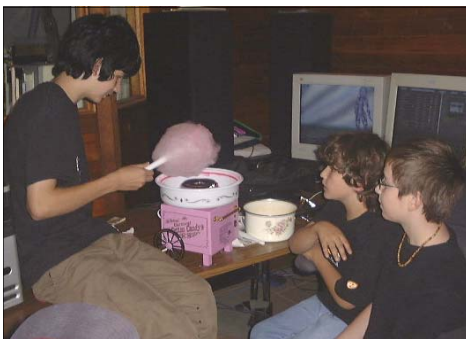
now? How do you feel now about being at ISC? I'm between phases 4 and 5. I feel awesome about being at ISC! I am totally happy I'm here!

10) Do you really believe in the school philosophy? Oh yes! For me personally – for some people it doesn't work out – they need curriculum. For me, it definitely works. **Do you have any concerns about your future because you are at ISC?** I had concerns about my future when I was in public school! I didn't have any time after school to study what I was actually interested in. At this school I have the freedom to learn what is going to help me in my future. I know what I want to be, and I am working toward that. I am pursuing my interests earlier than if I was in public school. **Do you feel there are things you "should" be doing that you're not?** Sometimes I feel I should be learning the curriculum. It gets confusing. But it's only a very small percent of the time, and then I realize I can learn it if I want to and I can also do other stuff to help me toward my future so I have two options instead of just one – actually, I have lots of options! I already have a

contact to help me learn hairdressing and make-up artistry. I'm so excited about it! **Do you get any outside pressure to "do" things at school?** One person in my life questions if I'm learning anything. I don't think she believes in the school, but she can think whatever she wants, I'm not letting that affect me. Sometimes other people make comments about me not learning anything, but I feel this school is right for me. So while there is some pressure, I'm not letting it affect me. **11) What positive changes do you feel have happened in you since coming to ISC and going through the various phases?** I am more myself, which is way better! In public school, I would put on an act – I wasn't me and still people didn't like me. Now I know that if people don't like me for who I am, they're not worth my time. I've learned to love myself more for who I am – I'm not totally there yet, but I'm way better than when I started here. I can be crazy and giggle and laugh and do what I want – and I feel comfortable about that.

12) Do you feel the changes in you have affected your home life? Yes, I'm more respectful responsible, reasonable and peaceful, and I don't know why this is like this, but my room is no longer a disaster! I'm motivated to keep it clean, and I help clean up the house. There are chores at home now and I'm happy to help out more. Also, I used to have fear of communicating with adults, and now I'm way more open and can talk to adults. I'm not afraid to phone people or do job interviews.

13) What advice would you give someone who's currently in phases 2-3? That mostly everyone goes through this – it's totally normal. You may feel like quitting but don't give up – you'll come through in the end, and it's totally worth it to stick it through!



Speaking of "stick", there's a new business being spun here at ISC!

Communications on Unschooling

The following is an e-mail sent to me by a woman, Ginny, who is working to start a Sudbury School in Puerto Rico. She's been unschooling her five children while trying to make her Sudbury School happen.

When I received Ginny's e-mail, I decided to get input on her questions from a good friend of mine, Lorie, who has been unschooling her three children for many years. Lorie's feedback follows Ginny's e-mail, and then I've added my response, too.

From Ginny:

As you know I am unschooling my five children ages 4,6,7,9,12. We have been using the Sudbury model as best we can, being just a small group and only my kids. My kids have never had classes or tests and are doing fine.

From moment to moment my kids present a "need" to compare themselves to their friends who are in traditional school. We have managed fine talking about the philosophy and benefits of unschooling and talking about the subjects their friends are doing in school. My kids say they want to keep unschooling, but they feel very "weird" and sometimes ashamed of staying home. They sometimes say this is not a "real" school.

My question is that my 12-year old has always been very creative and inventive but lately she is not motivated and she's feeling ashamed. She told me she wants to know how much she knows, especially in Math. She has a Math Mind—she has always liked math. We sat down to have a "class" and discovered she is well behind her age. She can do basic math and wants to know more, but when we start doing it, she blocks her mind and says she can't. She also makes comments like, "This is of no use for anything", "Why do I need to learn this?" But she keeps trying, and she keeps wanting to do it.

Is she doing it to "socially" fit? Does she have difficulty grasping concepts beyond the basics? How important is it that she know fractions, geometry, percentages, square roots?

What is the research or your own experiences with children who have never had any formal Math and all of a sudden, at 12, 13, 14, want to learn it

all? Is it difficult because they have fallen too much behind, or should it be easy?

I am having second thoughts about unschooling because we still live in a society that puts so much emphasis on academics. My children interact with children who think the traditional way and have learned in the traditional way. If my children have been following the Sudbury model, will that leave them with no space to really choose what they want to do (comparing alternative vs traditional)? And when they get to the "rebel" years, will they resist what they have been exposed to all their life and not appreciate the alternative they have experienced?

Why is offering classes and workshops seen as so harmful in a Sudbury environment? My 12-year old says to me, "I don't mind people telling me what to do!" I need to clarify this and take a stand on it for my own sake.

My interest is in alternative democratic education like the Sudbury model. I am just trying to understand what is happening with my kids, and I'm wondering if I am doing the right thing? I do not want my kids to feel that because I believe in this, they have to believe what I believe.

From Lorie:

We are an unschooling family in Alberta, Canada. We do this at home, and not at Nicolette's school because it is one hour away and for now, our girls are happy staying at home. Nicolette has asked me if I might have insight into your questions because we have three girls and have been unschooling for 10 years. Our oldest is 19 and now living away from home, and we have a 14-year old and an 11-year old. All girls.

I think every unschooling family goes through some of the same things that are happening to yours. Motivation is always the question. Sometimes our girls have to get so bored before they will do

something. And feeling ashamed is not a bad thing either, if they use it to change their lives. One of the things we always struggle with is allowing them to do 'nothing' if that's what they want. It works though. I try to remember to show them all the other things they are learning, and to remind them that they are in such a blessed position to *choose*. They must *choose* to change their life. If they are feeling ashamed, they need to do something about it. They need to pick something they love and do it. Learn



it. Get good at it. Then pick again. There is no failure. Each learning is an experience. Each experience a stepping stone to the next and on it goes. No comparing.

Just learning and enjoying. Look for the opportunities to seek a new thing!

Congratulations, Ginny! You are successfully unschooling! By the broadest definition, the term means 'child-led learning'. And that is what she is doing. Leading. When the child is ready



for the information, then it is time to seek out the resources. If she wants to learn math, then she must start where she is—grade 3 by the sounds of it—and then work her way up. If she is Math Minded, or even likes it, she will pick it up very quickly. Our way to accomplish this is to work through the grades at their pace. She may work through some of it



very fast, and other parts of it more slowly. It doesn't matter. She's leading.

I would like to speak to the idea of competing children and their ability to 'hold their own' in and amongst their peers. Our philosophy here goes beyond education. When we allow our children to lead the learning in their own lives, to express themselves as who they are in all that they do, we create leaders. They will



know themselves to be perfect as they are when we truly let them own it. That means, if they think they are being left behind their friends, then *they* need to do the work to catch up. Their friends are being forced to learn material they may or may not believe in. They may or may not remember it in a year. They may never use half the information they learn in formal school. Your kids will learn what they need for their lives because they will be led to the information on their own. They will 'believe in your philosophy' because they see it work. It is part of who they are.



You are at the hardest stage right now if your teenagers are looking for confirmation that what they are doing is okay in the big world. We must make it okay. Remind them, they will learn what they put themselves into. If they want math, put some effort into it. If they want

mechanics, put some effort into it. Each of them is unique and your way of raising them is about giving them the opportunity to be unique individuals. So challenge them to become their unique selves to the fullest. If they spend their time comparing themselves to others, they have wasted their lives instead of making themselves who they are. I would suggest that if they were in school full time, they would be doing the same thing, and would have far more things to compare about.

In unschooling philosophies, it is not up to the parents to provide entertainment and education. It is up to the children to use their own brilliance and interests to lead them to their education. They must have motivation. When my kids compare themselves to others, as we all do, we ask them whose scale they are using. In other areas, our children are much further ahead, including character, social skills, life skills, life wisdom and understand-



ing. Which means we ask them not to compare each other. No person is better than the next. Just different. Remind your children who they are. See the good points that have developed because of their lifestyle. Celebrate their differences...it is this that will help them succeed. The differences are what will lead them to their life path.

I believe that unschooling is not just an education philosophy. It requires a commitment to a lifestyle of learning. Your children may not know their grade level math today, but *if they want it* they can certainly learn it! Does she want it? Then she can learn it. It is up to the kids to decide how much they want to learn. If they are looking for information, then it is up to us to provide the resources. If that means workshops and tutors for a subject, then we find it. If they learn on the internet or by books... great!

Ask your kids to compare the freedom they have with the freedom the other kids

have. Have them compare their life ex-



periences. Perhaps it is time they found an interest that really holds their attention. I also remind my girls often how blessed they are to have the chance to choose their life. If they waste that, that is their choice.

And as a last comment...one of our unschooled kids, now 14, has decided she wants to do curriculum. So she is. Math, Science and LA. At home. And that's her choice. I consider this to be unschooling too. She led the way. Demanded it. And now she's happy doing the work and still not going to school. If they want to learn it, let them learn. It took her almost a year to catch up to grade level and to get used to doing the book work, but now she is on track and doing the work every day.

Congratulations! Your kids are blessed to have you!

From Nicolette:

I'm thinking that when coming close to the teen years, children will start comparing themselves more to others. For younger kids, life is mostly about playing



and having fun. Teenagers start questioning things more and trying to figure out

who they are in the world. That will be especially hard for your children since their world is so different from all the kids around them.

It sounds to me like your daughter is not trying to learn math for the right reasons. She is not doing it because she is passionate about it; she seems to be doing it out of shame and out of fear of not being at the same level as others. You might try bringing up with her things that she has learned easily because she truly was interested, and maybe that will help her to know she can learn easily, but just not when it's for the wrong reasons.

You asked if it's important to know fractions etc. It's only important to know that when there is a need for the knowledge, or genuine interest. That's why, in a Sudbury school, some kids never learn high level math, and others do. It depends on what kids' natural interests are, and also where they see themselves going in life. Will the career they want to pursue require higher level math? If yes, then it is important to know it. But the key is that *anyone* can learn just about *anything* at any time. A student may not touch math till he's 15, but if passion kicks in, he can learn all math *very* quickly and be right caught up with kids his own age. I believe this reflects Hal Sadofsky's story—if I remember right, he didn't touch math till he was 15, and now he's got a Ph.D. in math.

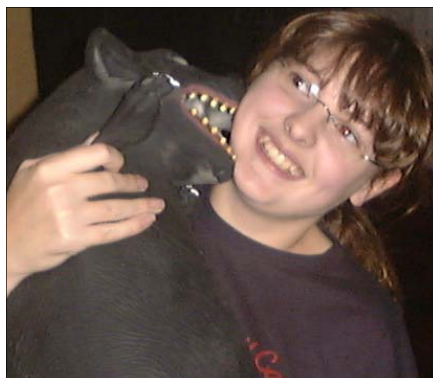
You asked why offering classes is seen as harmful in a Sudbury environment and you said your daughter doesn't mind people telling her what to do.

From the Sudbury point of view, offering a class *once a student has expressed interest* is not a problem at all. It is offering material with the *agenda of trying to interest* the child in something that is counter-philosophy. Your daughter says she doesn't mind people telling her what to do because if others tell her, she doesn't have to decide for herself! It's easy to follow what others say; it's hard to take responsibility and carve your own life! If another chooses for you, it's easy to blame the other if things don't work out. If you have to choose yourself, you are the only one to thank or blame for the outcome. It can be a hard place for a young person to be, but the rewards of pushing through personal decision-making are well worth it!

And this is where I echo what Lorie said about the children choosing. If your children want to choose *themselves* to try

public school, then let them. I've known some unschooling families where the parents had to grit their teeth and let their kids try regular school. One girl lasted only two days, but at least she knew when she left *why* she was leaving and that she did, in fact, prefer to unschool.

You may have already given your children the choice of going to school, or



maybe in the future you will have to. They know very well what you believe, but if you can freely offer them the choice, then you will further empower them and once again, they will be reminded that their lives are *up to them*! They will also know you support them, even if what they choose does not match your preferences!



In the meantime, I suggest you just keep telling your kids you trust them to make the right decisions and that you will support whatever they decide. And if you see your 12-year old suffering through math lessons, know it's part of her process; if you can remind her of how easily she learns the things she does love, she may come around to understanding her real reasons for doing the math.

Also, when it comes to her feelings of shame, maybe remind her people are smart in different ways, and just because she doesn't know math, doesn't mean she's not great at other things. But tell her

this at a time when she's open. Otherwise, just listen to her! Listen to all your children. Let them voice their fears and concerns and just hear them—without asking questions, without making comments, without offering advice. Children have their own answers, and if you can just listen to what they say and let them keep talking, they will work their way through their challenging feelings and find their own right path.



Quotable Quotes:

Kassie, after our recent fire drill: "I knew it wasn't a real fire because I didn't see anyone running with the bunnies."

Logan S. came to me carrying a package of Ichiban noodles. "Nicolette, does this have aspartame in it?"

"I doubt it, but let me check."

I read the ingredients and said, "No aspartame, but there is MSG."

"Is that bad?" asked Logan.

"It's not good for you, I know that much."

"Well, what should I do?" asked Logan.

"The way I see it, you have two choices: you can eat it anyway or you can throw it away."

"What will happen to me if I eat it?" asked Logan.

"I'm not really sure, but I know when my sister eats food with MSG in it, her brain goes all wonky and she gets all spaced out." I rolled my head around, pretending to be "wonky".

"Oh cool!" said Logan. "I'm going to try these!" And he popped a handful of dry noodles into his mouth!

The following isn't going to make much sense to most readers, however, it is something I feel needs to go down in ISC history! I drive Kris, Gaian, Sebastian and Lucas to and from school every day, and the following is the in-car banter I've been experiencing on a very regular basis since last year! You are welcome to question the involved individuals if you'd like a better understanding of the "conversation"!

Gaian: "No dumping, Kris!"

Kris: "No playing in the dumpster, Gaian!"

Gaian: "No ponding, Kris!"

Kris: "No putting tape on the couches, Gaian!"

Gaian: "Go have a baby somewhere

else, Kris!"

Sebastian: "Yeah, and Nicolette, no driving like a maniac!"

And Kris's recent addition: "And no thinking about fireplaces, Nicolette!"

Kassie was chasing Josh. "Let me get you again!" she said. She reached out her hand and "zapped" Josh. He went down, pretending to be killed.

"Touche!" I commented.

"One-shay, twoshay, three-shay," said Kassie, unaware of the joke, "It's all the same thing!"

Mars was wandering past my desk. "You know, it's so weird because at this school, I don't have to do anything, but really, I *have* to do *something*!"

(That one's deep!)

Alyassa: "It's so amazing! Ever since I've started coming to this school, I read way more, I do way more spelling, and I do math easily in my head now! I used to hate reading, and now I read *all* the time!"

Gaian—while unpacking his things from my car—was discussing carpooling with Kris and Sebastian because I was going to be away for a few days. Lucas was bugging Gaian to hurry up. "Hold on, Lucas!" Gaian exclaimed. "This is important! If we don't figure this out, we won't get to go to school for three days!"

Chase, walking away with his fake beer belly Halloween costume: "I'm going to put my fat away."

"Allow children to be happy their own way, for what better way will they ever find?" Samuel Johnson



This was on the main white board one day...

- Inspiring
- Nice
- Dependable
- Interesting
- Gentle
- Outgoing
- Super
- Understanding
- Decent
- Best
- Ultimately responsible
- Roaringly cool!
- Yin & yang
- Coolest
- Admirable
- Most creative
- Perfectly great
- Ultimately reasonable
- Strongest
- AND DON'T FORGET IT!



Announcements

*If you have any **Canadian Tire** money you are not planning on using, Izzy has started a collection for the school and will happily take it off your hands!

***Parents:** You are invited to a **potluck** and **Q&A meeting with Leo of Education Unlimited** on **Wednesday, November 9th**. We will eat at 6:00 and meet with Leo at around 7:00.

Prepared by Nicolette Groeneveld



The Halloween Party!



A very warm and enthusiastic congratulations to the students who made the Haunted House! It was *really* well done! Parents got quite a fright and I heard many students saying, "Oh! I'm going back through again!"

