



ISC Views and Voices

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

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Flow...

by Nicolette Groeneveld

Welcome to our second year! It's wonderful to be back! We've started the year with 19 students—17 returning students and two new ones (welcome Adam (15) and Chris (10)!)



Chris

We've also made changes in the building! We moved our computer room upstairs, which has resulted in a really nice set-up, and we also now have a combination art room / young children's room

and a quiet room / library.

This first month has also made us “resource richer”! Enid Dufresne donated a high tech treadmill and a universal gym, and Ashley Tomm-Smith gave us a hydraulic hairdressing chair, a large mirror, a hairdressing cabinet on wheels, a hair washing sink and a tip-back hair washing chair!

The most notable thing about the start of this school year, however, is the *flow* in the school environment. The year started, and all the students just seemed to flow into their preferred spaces and activities. We set up a JC Review Committee to recommend changes to the Campus Meeting, Corporations had to be



Adam

renewed, and officer and clerkship positions had to be voted on, but other than that, everything was already in place so life at the school just flowed on like it had never been interrupted.

Changes in the students were obvious, though. Somehow the two summer months always result in growth—whether physical growth, maturity or both. In terms of maturity, we're seeing less mediation and JC cases and more students involving themselves in Clerkship and Officer positions.

Another indicator of growth is that students seem to have a greater sense of direction. There are many interests that are actively being pursued ie. art lessons, dance lessons, yoga classes, the building of a skating rink for winter, mastering Linux, rock climbing and others!

As always, it's a tremendous joy and privilege to be here witnessing the magic of free learning in action! Thanks to everyone who continues to support our school... Cheers to another great year!



September's Memorable Quotes:

At 5:00 on the first Friday of the year, Nathen said to me, “Nicolette, could you *please* come to school tomorrow?” “Why?” I asked, “It's Saturday tomorrow!” “I know!” Nathen said, “It's just I have so much I want to do!”



One morning Greg came in at 10:30; looking at the clock, he said, “I missed two and a half hours of school—damn!”

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Summer Highlights

by Nicolette Groeneveld

According to a sign outside a “regular” school I drive past every once in a while, summer should be for “resting, relaxing and rejuvenating.” I think (here comes a very unbiased opinion, of course!) the education system should be reevaluated if it is causing children so much stress that they need two months to rest, relax and rejuvenate! As far as I can see, learning should be rejuvenating and when done in a natural way, it shouldn’t be so hard on a person that they have to recuperate (“rest and relax”) afterwards!

The joy of natural learning is such that if a youth does it for the ten school months of the year, s/he should be able to continue doing it right through the summer! And that’s what our students did!

Following are a few summer highlights from our students and staff.

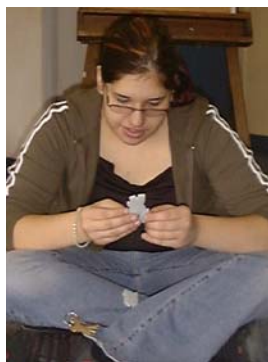
In July, Amanda went to Peak Potential’s Wizard Training Camp. It was a five-day camp held at the Nakoda



Lodge. There were approximately 200 participants, of which Amanda was easily one of the youngest! At this camp, thanks to fun, exciting and challenging activities, Amanda learned about

“going with the flow” and not always being a ‘warrior’ and fighting for what she wants, but rather creating space in her life, or a vacuum, to draw into her life that which she wants.

Rebecca also went to a camp, but hers was the Alberta Beach Youth Ministry camp. For one week, Rebecca was responsible for children of elementary school age. She supervised and partook in a wide variety of outdoor activities that included games in a “mud playground”. As a counselor, Rebecca also had to accomplish tasks in order to earn meals for their campers; one of the more memorable ones for Rebecca was being tied at the hands to her fellow counselors



and having to eat with irregular kitchen utensils! Rebecca says her camp experience made her more adventurous and highlighted her risk-taking nature.

Jessica went to yet another camp: the RSI Youth Camp in California. The theme of the week-long camp was “Reflection of Perfection” and all the activities were centered around helping camp participants to accept themselves by recognizing their own perfection. Jessica says it was only after the camp that she truly realized all she had gotten from the experience; she especially prized her increased sense of independence and the traveling she got to do.

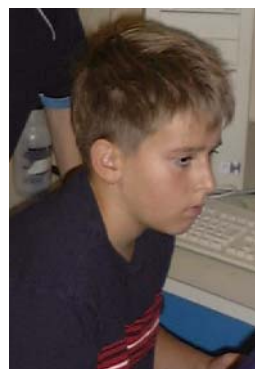
Boomer traveled back and forth between Millenium Place and the Sherwood Park Golf Course as part of the Canadian Professional Hockey School. With coaches like Georges La Roque, Boomer spent his mornings practicing skating, shooting, deaking, hitting, and defense techniques, and he spent his afternoons getting golf lessons and playing 18 holes. During Boomer’s week of hockey/golf school he got a hole in one, improved his drive from 100 to 250 yards, and became much better at wrist shots, slap shots, snapshots and back hands. Boomer says hockey school is something he plans to do every summer!

Dylan may be permanently busy in the summer too at his mother’s new restaurant, The Place. Named by Dylan, The Place is a new fast food restaurant in Fort Saskatchewan. Dylan spent much of this summer decorating the restaurant, choosing the placement of tables, cleaning and doing food preparation. The Place will likely employ Logan and Bretton too and will serve homemade foods like: hamburgers with specialty toppings, steamed hotdogs, subs, fries, and desserts—including my self-invented chocolate hazelnut cheesecake. So, if you happen to be looking for Dylan when he’s not at school, go to The Place and you’ll likely find him behind the cash or the grill!

And if you happen to be looking for me, I’ll likely be in Cowboy Country! This August, I went to a weekend retreat offered just south of Nanton by *Winning Strides*. It was a weekend of Equine Assisted Growth and Learning, and it was amazing! The weekend consisted of activities and challenges done with horses, and while it did not involve riding or horsemanship or any kind, it did require participants to be willing to look at themselves and how they interact with the world. *Equine Wise* just outside of Edmonton offers E.A.G.A.L. as well, so if you like horses and are into personal growth, this is a fascinating learning tool that’s available close by!

Little blurbs...

Linda Jackson is a staff member at Fairhaven School in Maryland. In a recent e-mail to the Sudbury network, she wrote the following about her son, Jimmy, who is a student at Fairhaven: “Jimmy told me tonight that his new passion of writing and drawing comic books is more fun than all computer games and



Brodie loves to play!

video games rolled together! And believe me, he has really enjoyed video and computer games for about 6 years.”

Be reassured, parents of gamers, there is life after video games!

Aoccdnrig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in what oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit plcae.

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School = Back to Reality????

by Nicolette Groeneveld

I recently submitted this article to both the Edmonton Journal and the Edmonton Sun as a Letter to the Editor. I haven't had word yet that they've printed it, so maybe it's just too radical!

Driving down St. Albert Trail recently, I happened across a billboard that shows a teenage girl and a boy with a backpack and says something like, "Back to REALITY with style". This billboard's slogan is obviously a spin-off of the back-to-school slogan and the reason it struck me is because to me, traditional schools have very little to do with reality! If we take a close look at the school system and compare it to "real life" in the adult world, is it a reflection of reality?

Let's begin with age mixing, or the lack of it.



In what workplace do we ever see all the twenty-year olds in one space, all the forty-year olds in another space, and all the fifty-year olds in

their own space? The old one-room schools that housed all the grades and functioned in part because older students helped younger ones were somewhat reflective of a "real life" workplace, but having all grade one students together, and all grade five students together and all grade ten students together... how *real* is that?

Next "real life" conflict. We take 33 grade seven students, put them in a room together, sit them one in front of the other with neighbors (often their best friends) on either side of them, and then we tell them, "Don't talk, listen to the teacher and concentrate." How realistic is that? Have you ever sat in on a Junior High staff meeting? In the ten years I taught Junior High and went to staff meetings, I saw as much, if not more note passing, whispering, off-task behavior and lack of focus among the adults as

one sees in a classroom! It's human nature to want to communicate, especially when we're surrounded by our friends. So is it realistic to put children together in close quarters and expect them not to talk?

I also question how realistic it is that a child's school life is basically completely structured for him. From the moment a child gets to school, his day is directed either by teachers or bells. He is told where to sit, what to do, how to behave, when to eat (not when he's hungry but when the bell strikes twelve) and I've even heard of younger children being taken "en masse" to the bathroom and being told, "Now is the time to go pee." It all looks strikingly like life in a factory and brings to mind the current theories that mass education was actually "invented" to create adults who would simply melt into structure and do as they were told. The bell-to-bell structure and constant direction also, frighteningly, brings to mind images of prison, so do we wonder that so many of our children dislike school?

In schools, students are considered "good" when they are motivated and seem to enjoy learning while students who lack effort, show poor concentration etc tend to be labeled "bad", failures etc. But considering the way learning is set up and the way learning is evaluated, are those labels realistic, let alone fair? I have absolutely no interest in nor any aptitude for physics. If someone sat me in a room and told me I have to spend eighty minutes per day studying physics, that I have to go home and do an extra half hour of physics every night, that I can't spend time with my husband until all my work is done, that I'm going to be tested on the material and considered a failure if I don't do well *and* receive comments like, "Nicolette is not motivated, she does not concentrate in class, her homework is often not complete, Nicolette needs to study harder for tests," I can say with absolute certainty that my love of learning would be seriously dampened, I would *strongly* resent the person or people forcing this learning on me, and I would most likely never want anything to do with physics again! Now, what if the same authorities sat me in a building

and told me that for *five hours* per day I had to study things I had no interest in and that if I didn't comply and try hard, the things I liked to do in my spare time would be "taken away". Would I, as an adult, accept that? Of course not! Yet we do it to our children all the time. Is it any wonder so many don't like school and don't do well?

One can argue, of course, that in "real life", we have to do things we don't like to do. Most often, however, those "things" ultimately carry some kind of reward: it may be the fact that we keep our job, have a clean house, can afford something we really want etc. But for the average school student, what is the reward? A high school diploma? In most cases, if you know the truth (what's *real*), you don't need a diploma to get into post-secondary so what kind of reward is that? Maybe you think you need the diploma for a job application? As far as I know, employers prefer to hire individuals who are confident, self-motivated, capable in communicating, strong in problem solving, and full of initiative and creative thinking. So if an applicant can prove himself to be that, does he not have an advantage over the high school graduate who has "successfully" obtained his diploma by melting into the follow-please-and-perform mould or the high school graduate who just barely got by and never got the chance to discover his true greatness (and thus lacks confidence etc)?

I see many other reality conflicts when it comes to traditional school, but the above should be enough to stimulate independent thought on the matter. Also, I think it worthwhile to add some good news before finishing: there are alternative schools that *do* reflect reality! So if we want our children to be well prepared for life in the "real world", maybe it's time to step "out of the box" and check out some of the educational alternatives available in Edmonton!

(Author note: This article is not intended to devalue the efforts of the truly excellent public school teachers. Said best by John Taylor Gatto: "Although there are many caring teachers who work hard in the system, the institution itself will always overwhelm their individual contributions.")

Sandra Dodd on Unschooling

Sandra Dodd is the mother of three unschoolers and a strong advocate of unschooling. Following are quotes from an article she wrote that is available on her website www.sandraddod.com

On reading: “Teachers and specialists have theories about learning to read, and timelines for learning to read and the crucial nature of this method or that method. They fear to wait. Unschoolers who have the courage to wait find that children learn to read as naturally as they learned to speak, walk or use a toilet. They learn to read as effectively and effortlessly as they learned to use eating utensils and cups. Some learn it at four, and some learn at eight or twelve, but they can figure it out if they have input, opportunity, encouragement and peace.

“My children learned to read without phonics lessons, without programmed readers and without pressure. Kirby had two and a half lessons, and that cured me of doubt... I read to him, played word

games with him, sang with him, watched movies with him, bought him video games and magazines to go with them, and from Nintendo gaming guides and magazines, he learned to read fluently when he was nine.

“My other two read at ten and eleven. Holly read ‘late’ (for a girl, I thought, unfairly), a year ago she wasn’t reading and now she reads very well... It comes almost suddenly, once they ‘get it’...

“Because my children learned to read without having been taught, they have no doubt whatsoever that they could learn anything else. Few things are as important or as complex as reading, yet they figured it out and enjoyed doing it. If I thought I had taught them, they too would think I taught them, and they would be waiting for me to teach them something else.”

On evaluating: “Each tree grows from a single seed, and when a tree is growing...what is the best thing you can

do for it? You can nurture it and protect it, but measuring it doesn’t make it grow faster. Pulling it up to see how the roots are doing has never helped a tree a bit... So it is with children... Their growth can’t be rushed, but it can be enriched.”

On outcomes: “My children are different from most of their schooled friends... They are comfortable with people of many ages, they are kind-hearted and tolerant. Because they haven’t been shamed and molded by school life and expectations and ‘peer pressure’, they’re more willing to appear different without adding value to that appearance. Some schooled kids conform to become invisible, and some rebel to become visible, but my children are who they are, where they are, now. They’re not embarrassed about their interests and hobbies, they’re not afraid to wear used clothes, or to play with younger children, or to hang around with adults. Because they are respected, they are respectful.”

2003-2004 Calendar

2003

Tuesday, September 2	First day of school (Yay!)
Monday, October 13	Thanksgiving
Tuesday , November 11	Remembrance Day
Friday, December 19	Last Day of school before the Christmas break



Exercise and acrobatics are ‘in’ thanks to all our new fitness equipment!

2004

Monday, January 5	Back to school (Yay!)
Monday, February 16	Family Day
Friday, March 26	Last day of school (Spring Break)
Monday, April 5	Back from Spring Break
Friday, April 9	Good Friday
Monday, April 12	Easter Monday
Monday, May 24	Victoria Day
Thursday, June 25	Last day of school



It’s all rather puzzling!

* * School Shirt Order * *

By special request, we are offering our school shirts for sale! Here are the details:

Covering the front of the shirt is our **logo** and on the back, in gold, it says: **Our 3 R's: Respect, Responsibility, Resourcefulness** (If you're wondering, our school rule *is* Be Respectful, Responsible and Reasonable, but on the shirt we prefer to put the school's ultimate goals.)

You can order a shirt by filling out the form below and either dropping it off at the school or mailing it to 11342-127 Street, Edmonton, T5M 0T8. I will be placing the order on **Friday, October 17th** so please have the order in to me before then! All orders must be paid in full up front and once the shirts are in, we will request you pick them up at the school (unless you live out of town and then we can make other arrangements.)

Shirt styles and Prices:

T-shirt	\$15 + GST= \$16.05
Hoodie	\$37 + GST= \$39.59
Sweat shirt	\$30 + GST= \$32.10
Long sleeve with mock neck	\$29 + GST= \$31.03
Long sleeve with crew neck	\$23 + GST= \$24.61

Standard colors are available (ie. white, black, grey, blue, green). Please **be specific** when indicating your color choice (ie. light blue, forest green etc.) Do remember our logo is red, blue, gold and green so it will show up better on some colors than on others. (Note: Ric has an olive green shirt and I have a pastel blue one and the logo works well on both.)

Standard sizes are available. Please **add \$3** for any order of **XXL or larger**.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Order:

Quantity	Style	Color	Size	Price with GST

Total number of items:

 Total price:

Paid by: **Cash** **Cheque** (payable to Indigo Sudbury Campus)

ISC use only:	Order received on: _____ by: _____
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