



NEWSLETTER

June, 2010



GREETINGS

By Eugenia Papadaki

We have reached the end of another school year and through this newsletter, the last for this school year, I would like to take the opportunity to share with you some reflections on how the year went and offer you some information on what to expect for the upcoming school year. I would like to also thank you and the children for everything you have contributed into making this a successful year for us all.

REFLECTIONS

2009-2010 has been a very productive and challenging year for our school.

We have worked solidly and consistently into getting our school ready for two big authorization visits. The ECIS one last March with a successful outcome and the PYP one which we have just had, the outcome of which will not be communicated to us before mid August. This work entailed, bringing our thinking, beliefs and practices further in line with what the expectations of these two International school organizations put upon schools in order to meet their standards. We had to review our Vision and Mission statements and ensure that our practices in terms of teaching, learning, planning, policy and decision making were as aligned as possible to our new Mission and Vision. We had to invest in staff professional development in order to ensure that the majority of our teachers were trained in the PYP and Bilingual Education; we developed our thinking and practices in documentation and data collection through school-wide assessments, questionnaires and surveys; we used for the first time visual documentation through filming as a tool for both professional development and parent education. We engaged in thoughtful curriculum mapping and developed our Language and Literacy as well as the Mathematics and Reasoning curriculum. We invested efforts in empowering staff, children and parents alike by creating steering group committees, and pedagogical leadership teams who took the lead in developing certain areas of the school. Some of these were the advocacy group, the Language and Literacy committee, the Mathematics and Reasoning committee the Pedagogical Leadership Team. Systems and processes were put in place for more collaboration including at decision making level. The Senior Leadership team of the school played an important role in all this. At our Villasanta campus we introduced for

the first time four new projects/subjects; Drama taught by Sara Vaiana, Art Therapy led by our special needs teacher Elena Cotta in Grades 3/4, the Cambridge European license exams in English KET and PET taken by our Gr5 and Gr8 students and led by Mrs. Amanda Anderson and the European Computer Driving License (ECDL). For our Middle school this has been a significant year, too. Our gr8 students have successfully completed their 3 year middle school cycle and will be moving to Italian "Licei" and a new Grade 6 class has been formed which gives continuation to our Middle Years Programme of studies.

Our school was chosen by the University of Manchester to carry out field research on Bilingualism and Second Language acquisition where samples of our students' language competencies were selected as a contribution to this project.

An International Youth Club was started last January with the aim to offer an opportunity to local English speaking children to meet and socialize in English. This was run by two parents of the school, Mrs. Sandy Wild and Mr. Demetrius Laffitte.

The parent theatre group has been another big achievement of this year. They offered us a great opportunity for community building during this year's production, especially by bringing together existing parents, ex-parents and friends of the school.

In closing off the year therefore I feel more than satisfied over the intense efforts and hard work put towards whole school improvement. I am confident that this has inevitably had a positive impact on overall student learning.

Needless to say that none of this would have been possible without the strong commitment and leadership skills of our Deputy Head and PYP Coordinator, Mrs. Mary Marjerrison, the hard work and dedication of all our teaching and non teaching staff and of the parent community. I am expressing therefore my immense gratitude to you all for your valuable support and ongoing trust in our school's mission.

GOODBYES AND FAREWELLS TO STAFF LEAVING US THIS YEAR.

It is with great regret that we will have to give our farewells to some of our staff who have decided to move on for the next school year. They will be greatly missed but we are all so grateful for having been part of our school and for having contributed to its

development so far.

The staff members that are leaving us are: Mrs. Mary Marjerrison, Mrs. Betty Huesmann, Mr. Alex Sampson, Mr. Nathaniel Katz, Ms Justine Ma, Ms Davida Carta, and Ms Kelly Mac Laughlin.

NEW STAFF JOINING US IN SEPTEMBER 2010

Dr Gloria Kauffman: Deputy Head and PYP Coordinator

Mrs. Martha Andre: Gr6 teacher (Sept. to Dec), Spanish Teacher and Multilingual Coordinator

Ms Helen Bird: Gr3 teacher

Ms Vicky Fridenstine: Pre-school Teacher

Ms Emily Jones: ICT/ESL teacher and Technical support

Ms Jennifer de Vanne: Day Nursery English teacher

Mrs. Eva Chan: Chinese teacher and Gr1 classroom assistant

Our best wishes go to Mrs. Chantelle Burgess(Gr2 teacher) who will be going on maternity leave in July. Chantelle will be coming back from maternity leave in January 2011 and will take over from Ms Martha Andre the responsibility of gr 6 English teacher.

Ms Hollyce Yoken will move from her Pre-school teacher responsibility to being the elementary and Middle school Art teacher.

TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS PER GRADE LEVEL

A letter has been sent to parents of each classroom informing them of classroom teacher assignments. Please let us know if you have not received this by the end of this month.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURING

One of the recommendations put forward by both the ECIS and the IBO was for the school to investigate the possibility of some restructuring at its organizational and management levels. After careful consideration the school has called in a consultant with the expertise in this area of business development and is currently carrying out an audit which will lead to an action plan for school restructuring implementation. Our aim is to create a structure which increases efficiency at both organizational and management levels. We will be happy to share more information on this once a plan is

in place.

JUNE 14TH TO 24TH- ITALIAN STATE SCHOOL EXAMS

During these dates our gr5s and gr8s will be taking the Italian state school exams. Parents have been informed by the school office on details. Classroom teacher representatives will be present during the exams to offer support and assistance in the case of need. We wish all our children the best of luck.

LANGUAGE INPUT RATIOS

Following the March newsletter where parents were informed of the new language input ratios introduced this year, a number of queries and concerns were expressed by different members fo the school community. We listened to all of them very carefully, we took time to reconsider and discuss at length the various implications the new ratios may have had on our children's education and we have come to the conclusion to revisit and adjust the new language input ratios which will come into effect as from September 2010, as follows:

Early Years- 50-50 with the intention to look into ways of creating distinct language contexts

Transition- 80(English)-20(Italian)

Grade 1- 70-30

Grade 2- 70-30

Grade 3- 70-30

Grade 4- 60-40

Grade 5- 60-40

Grade 6/7/8- 50-50

The rationale behind these ratios is that children will benefit from a higher English language input(Second Language for most of our students) in the Early years where learning is more concrete, experiential and less abstract unlike the upper elementary grades where the academic demands of the curriculum become much more complex and abstract. The higher input of Italian language in upper elementary will enable students to learn these complex concepts in their mother tongue which should facilitate the learning in their second language. For us to be able to say whether a model design is more effective than another , we will need to implement it and monitor it by collecting data over a period of at least one full cycle and then review it. It

is unlikely therefore that we will be bringing in any further drastic changes to the above model. Please do let us know if you need more clarification on this and we will be happy to offer it.

THANK YOU TO PTSA, DI.CO, AND ADVOCACY GROUP

I would like to address a special thank you to the parent classroom representatives on the school's PTSA committee for all their support and hard work throughout this year. Your roles are essential to the school community and you have contributed to a great extent in developing the sense of community in our school. Thank you!

Thank you to the Di.Co parent and ex parent group for organizing the activity afternoons during our calendar early school closures plus other events. These have been greatly appreciated by all.

Thank you to the Advocacy group members (staff and parents). Thanks to this group's work and creative ideas we have managed bring improvements to our Open Days events, run the parent questionnaire and address concerns with immediate action, participate in the Monza BIMBO event last month and explore ways of promoting further our Bilingual Model.

NEWAM UNIVERISTY, UK STUDENTS

We are pleased to announce that Newam University has chosen our school once again for three of their student teachers to come and spend three months in our school for their teaching practice. They will be arriving in January 2011.

We are also delighted to have back Sarah Danks and Nikita Potter, the two Newam University students of last year who will be teaching our summer school courses for the first two weeks.

I am wishing you all a very pleasant and restful summer break and look forward to seeing you in September.

CONGRATULATIONS!

We have just been informed that all our Grade 5 and Gr 8 students have passed their KET and PET Cambridge English exams and most of them with very high scores! Congratulations to them all, this is excellent news for all of us! We would also like to congratulate and thank Ms Amanda Anderson who through her skillful teaching has managed to prepare her students at such a high standard.

We have also received the first feedback from the Italian state school exams. Our grade 4 students came out with 10, 9 and 8 grades. Congratulations to them, too!

I am sure that this is very reassuring news for the whole school community and offers once again tangible evidence of the great advantages of our model of Bilingual Education.

PYP NEWS

PYP AUTHORIZATION VISIT REPORT

By Mary Marjerrison

On June 7th and 8th, our school had an official PYP Authorization Visit. The School Visitors were Cathie Mullen, a head of school of the International School of Augsburg, Germany and David Sargeant, the PYP Coordinator from Zurich International School. They visited classrooms, met with various groups (children, parents, teachers), and read through our documentation. The visit was extremely valuable for all of us, as it signified the culmination of more than two years of intense work.

In their oral report with the School Leadership Team at the end of the two days, the visitors repeatedly praised the professionalism, commitment, and warmth of the staff. They were very impressed by the work the teachers have done with creating inviting learning environments. They appreciated their investment in time to create an effective curriculum. They valued the headteacher's commitment to bilingual education and teachers' professional learning. They noticed how effectively teachers are making children's learning visible in our school community. It is critically important that in a school that offers the PYP, time is provided for teachers to collaborate in planning, teaching, and assessing learning. They noticed that we have developed effective practices for this, including reflection, inquiry, varied strategies, student-led conferences, and self-assessment. They commented very favorably about their meetings with children and parents. They were impressed by the caring relationships among children.

The visitors also offered a number of recommendations for our further development. The strongest recommendation was that the school needs to have a clear identity that is communicated to all. They recommend that the school identify its priorities and act on those effectively, in order to make

the school's focus evident for all. In addition to other recommendations, they suggested we make improvements with our resources, libraries, and technology.

The visitors are currently in the process of producing a written report, which they will complete in collaboration with the PYP office in Geneva. The report will indicate whether we have successfully received status as a PYP Authorized School. We expect to receive this document before the new school year begins in September.

Many, many thanks to our whole school community for everyone's efforts to improve the school and to meet the expectations of the IBO-PYP for this program.

HOW MY CHILD DIVENTA BILINGUE

WHY ISN'T MY CHILD EQUALLY FLUENT IN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN?

By Betty Huesmann

A "balanced bilingual", that is, a person who speaks two languages with equal fluency, is not as easy to find as one would think; although there are a few exceptions. Let's begin by undoing a myth. First and foremost, it is idealistic and unrealistic to think that a person will speak two (or more) languages equally. A bilingual person is not the same as two monolinguals (a monolingual is a person that only speaks one language) inside a bilingual person. Why is this so? A monolingual has learned one language system in the country in which the language is spoken. Although there are countries where more than one spoken language is common even in this circumstance, both languages are not always used for the same purposes. It is therefore, unfair and inaccurate to compare bilinguals to monolinguals. For bilinguals, language is a tool of communication; it is also fluid: circumstances will determine patterns in language use due to changing countries, homes, jobs or schools, or having a monolingual relative or friend live with a family. The percentage of the language use will increase or decrease through time, thus giving opportunity for a language to become more active while the other may become more passive.

Bilinguals use languages for different functions, different purposes, different reasons and in different circumstances. Many are able to move in and out of language with ease but might find certain concepts

more difficult to explain solely because they do not use one of his/her languages for this purpose. So they may be linguistically stronger in one of their languages to communicate a specific message.

Let us look at some circumstances in which bilinguals use language: for religious purposes through a church, synagogue or mosque; social groups or cultural organizations (as in learning Japanese or Greek in Saturday school); the work setting where the language spoken by employees is that of the country of origin of the business; communication with friends and family members or neighbors; international or multilingual school communities; ethnic restaurants; festivals, etc.

The child who studies in a bilingual school setting will learn English and Italian for both academic purposes (math, language, science, geography, etc in both languages) and for social purposes; however the languages are not used equally during the school day. As soon as the child returns home from school, it is likely that he/she will not use English or Italian equally because they may live in a home where only one of these two languages is spoken or neither of these two languages is spoken, thus limiting the exposure and the content of English or Italian used. (At this point, *passive* means of language enhancement are used, as in movies, music, etc. Although these are legitimate means to *hear* language, language growth is best done through active conversation.) Becoming academically bilingual takes four to seven years; therefore, we must be PATIENT, UNDERSTANDING, HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS and BE KNOWLEDGEABLE about the bilingual experience. Acquiring and implementing language is a life-long process!

VOICES FROM THE LIBRARY

By Valentina Valenti

Here we are with the last edition of VOICES FROM THE LIBRARY for this scholastic year... sigh sigh sigh!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all children and parents that came to visit me so often during these past months, coming to the library every morning and/or afternoons to choose books and magazines to read at home with their children... Thank you!

Looking at our readers' faces, so excited for coming into the library and choosing new books, and so amazed while looking at the shelves full of coloured covers, is such an emotion for me, quite difficult to explain in

words and, for sure, difficult to forget!

In these months children have shown a great interest for reading and books; the early years children have learned the value of books and of the secrets that they hide inside the pages; the older students have increased improved a lot in reading, each time choosing books every time that are more difficult and longer...

If they continue reading all summer long with the same enthusiasm they showed me during the year, next year they will be ready to cover me whenever I'm sick J

And now, it's time for greeting, but before doing that, I would like to remind you something really important for maintaining the circulation of books and resources of our libraries always active.

Before leaving for the holidays, look carefully all around your house, inside trays, on libraries and shelves, in your children's bedrooms for the books your children have may have taken on loan from the library or classroom during the year. All books have to be given back to the library by Friday 18th June.

If you are not sure about a book, just open it: if on the first pages there is a stamp with the name and address of the school, it means you have to bring it back to the library!

Returning books back to the library is really really important, in order to give new children, and children coming back in September, the possibility to enjoy the same stories and fables that you too enjoyed and loved!

So, don't be lazy and return all books before the school ends! I wish you all a great vacation time, reading and exploring gorgeous adventures!!!

Enjoy your summer, and don't forget to read!!!

FROM THE PTSA

By Angela Paladino

The school year is coming to its end. Though we still have the last days and some more appointments coming. It has been a hard year but full of events. The PTSA work has been intense, but we close the year with a positive balance, in every aspect. The group has worked very well and has been solid and cooperative and I personally wish to thank all the PTSA Ladies, school staff and management, the teachers and also all those who have helped us to make any event not only possible, but also a big success.

Thank you moms, dads, grandparents, nannies, all those who have worked with us!

I wish all of you marvellous and relaxing holidays and see you in September!



UNIT OF INQUIRY

By Hollyce Yoken

Mrs. Verma, Vanshika's mom told me that she hasn't been certain that her daughter grasps certain concepts of the UOI, because neither Italian nor English are her mother tongue. After our 3rd unit "REMIDA/KING MIDAS", an inquiry into recycling and the environment Mrs. Verma shared two great stories with us. While visiting family friends, Vanshika noticed that these friends were not so conscious of their garbage and threw some wrappers on the floor. Vashika began to sing a song she had learned during the study. "If you see a piece of litter, PICK IT UP, If you see a piece of litter, PICK IT UP, If you see a piece of litter, PICK IT UP, and put it in the garbage pail so the world will be more beautiful".

Several weeks ago while in the post office in Milan, Vanshika noticed a lot of paper strewn on the floor. She started picking up all the paper and throwing them away in the trash bin. She even asked people to move so she could collect every piece!!!

DOCUMENTATION

Atelier Report - April 2010

By Laura Fumagali

“The baby birds nest”

Thomas, Charlize, Anna, Francesca, Adele, Asja

Paper is transformed, its look changed.

The smell, texture and colour of the dough allow to create new shapes.

The spheres shaped in the palms of little hands or on the table are solid, coloured in the shades of white, pink and grey.

To Anna and Thomas's eyes, they look like “Easter eggs”. “No, no...chicken eggs...actually, baby bird eggs”. Charlize tells about those she found “at grandma's house”.

I ask the children where they can imagine and place the paper eggs.

Francesca suggests to leave them in the garden, near a tree.

I ask the group if there is a way to hang them or put them around the tree, or on its branches, roots or between the leaves.

“Let's make a nest!” says Francesca excitedly.

“Yes let's do it!” the children say triumphantly all together.

The original idea encourages us to look for ways to make the nest, and what materials to use, before moving to new ideas.

The children move about in the atelier and in the hall, near the King Mida's shelves. Together, we consider the possibility of using a wide variety of brown materials. We start gathering chocolate brown fabrics, passanterie and yarn in hazelnut and almond hues; small tiles, corks, laces, light and dark wood fragments.

The next activity selected is choosing a small straw basket to decorate.

Four different containers are laid on the table.

“A square nest...I don't like it so much” declares Adele, joining the group.

“No, I don't” adds Asja who expressed the wish to take part in the bird nest construction.

Charlize and Francesca are sticking, cutting, fixing, and superimposing fabric strips, cotton balls and wool inside a small round basket.

Adele and Asja, after sticking corks, leather and fabric bits, imagine a handle that can cover and protect the eggs.



SUMMER CONCERT, GRADE 5 AND GRADE 8 GRADUATION CEREMONY AND BARBECUE, 2010

