



Edge Hill Country School

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Newsletter: December 2011



KIDS AND COMPUTING

by Holly Willis

This autumn, the *New York Times* published a story about a Waldorf School in Silicone Valley that, like all Waldorf schools, eschews technology use in the classroom. Titled "A Silicon Valley School That Doesn't Compute" and written by Matt Richtel, the story has so far prompted more than 250 comments from readers, many of them passionately advocating for, or violently opposing, the use of computers and iPads in K-12 education.

"It touched a nerve," said Eugene Schwartz at a recent talk titled "Continuing the National Conversation: Schooling That Does Not Compute." "A few years ago, the response might have been, 'Those poor kids.' But now, technology has advanced so much that many people are asking if it's all a bit too much."

Schwartz has been a teacher on and off for more than 30 years, and has acted as a consultant regarding the Waldorf educational philosophy for six years. "I am not a Luddite," he continued, "and I'm not coming to this out of a position of fear." He admitted to owning an iPhone and computer and said, too, that he loves computers and all that they offer. He also



St. Martin's Lanterns, Citrine Class

said that he loves cars. "But I don't feel that 8-year-olds should drive."

Schwartz contended instead that K-8 education should be devoted to the life of the senses, to understanding the body and its relationship to the wonders of the material world. Our eyes see and experience depth, and our ears are attuned to an incredible range of sounds. Screens and ear buds flatten that experience. He acknowledged that many iPad apps are creative – there are apps for sketching, drawing and painting. "But that doesn't compare with the experience of mixing colors of paint, and seeing firsthand a particular shade of green."

Ironically, the highlight of the talk did incorporate technology. Schwartz led the audience through a dazzling visual

presentation of the incredible artwork created by former students, explaining the development of concepts, physical skills and ethical insight that takes place as students work with the real world. "They create their own textbooks," Schwartz explained, showing examples of brightly colored pages exploring letters, words and basic imagery created by students in first grade. He showed stunning geometric shapes drawn by students in third grade to learn various aspects of mathematics. He continued, moving grade by grade to demonstrate a highly integrated curriculum devoted in large part to building a lifelong love of learning. And computers? Students learn the foundational concepts of algorithms - in part through knitting - and how computers actually function - by dismantling them.

(from http://www.kcet.org/updaily/socal_focus/arts-culture/kids-and-computing-eugene-schwartz-continues-the-conversation.html)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Thursday, December 22

Last day before Christmas holidays; Festival Assembly

Wednesday, December 20

Edge Hill Cookie Exchange

3:30 - 4:30 pm

Admission: \$5 and 5 dozen cookies

Have a cup of cheer and take home 5 dozen cookies!

Monday, January 9

Classes resume

Saturday, February 25

Community Spelling Bee

2 - 5 pm

Register a team - events for both children and adults!

Watch our website for details!

A warm thank you from the faculty to Edge Hill parents for the gift of nourishing soups.

Class News

Rose Quartz Kindergarten

Marie-Eve Perreault



This year the Martinmas lantern walk was like no other. The innumerable lighting and re-lighting of lanterns in the wet falling snow, the wonderful ukulele caroling, and the return walk in the blinding blizzard were certainly unique and memorable. It almost seems like a dream, and it probably has just that quality in the children as they are still in a dream-consciousness in early childhood. The other festival event was the Advent Spiral which carries a special reverence and was a beautiful community event - thank you to Tony Massett for organizing, to the Dyck family for harmonious recorder playing, and to Cleo Markowitz-Dyer for letting the angel be present.

Thinking of festivals, a remarkable moment occurred during our outdoor play in the last week of November. On a grey day, the clouds seemed thinner around the sun and created a light shape of a winged being with a sword; the kindergarten children joyously exclaimed "Look - it's Micha-el!" ... a fleeting moment that was not missed.

This year the Rose Quartz class has the opportunity to have a Kindergarten baby. We have enjoyed the visit of alumna Phaedra Tettero-Crosby a week before her baby was born, and the children were eager to think of possible gifts we could make for the new arrival as well as guess if it would be a boy or a girl. We have recently had the second visit, now that the baby is on the outside! The compassion and empathy of the children regarding Mextli's expressions and their

delight at his smiles and touch are priceless. Thank you Phaedra, Mextli, and big sister Chaska for your relationship with our class. We look forward to a few more visits throughout the year.

As we turn our attention to this year's four weeks of Advent at school, we have shifted our painting to blue and the children seem held in a different way with the quality of blue, quite like the big blue sky that wraps its loving arms around the earth.

Amethyst Class

Megan Gruner



Our little class just got a bit bigger! Athens Batten joined the Amethyst Class this month and we have enjoyed having her with us. Her big brother Talis joined the Citrine Class. A warm welcome to both of them and their family.

It has been a busy month for the Amethyst Class. We just completed our first math block. The Qualities of Numbers were introduced through a story of little Gnome Rootling and his fairy friends Freya and Enofrio who were on a quest to find all the numbers up to 12 in order to save them from being stolen from the wicked witch of the underworld. The children delighted in hearing the daily adventures of these three friends as they travelled through the

forest collecting numbers and recorded them in a book. Of course, the children created their own number book along with them. Now that it is complete it can be delivered to the Amethyst Kingdom for safe keeping. We will continue this tale in our second math block when we return from our Christmas Break. The grade two students are working away at their times tables and are learning songs and rhymes to help remember them. We are doing plenty of clapping, stomping and using rhythm sticks to help us remember these tables. Our almost daily skipping practice is also very important as we continue our rhythmic counting of the 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11s. The new year will bring rhythmic counting of 6, 7, 8, 9 and 12.

We have been hard at work on our Christmas play, *A Star Child Comes to Earth*. It is a story of children waiting in the heavens to be born and follows the adventures of one child whose time has come to descend to earth and live with her chosen family. We will present this play to our parents and families on December 5th at 6:30 in the middle building at the school. We welcome the whole school community to come to see it!



Trees by the blue playhouse, Edge Hill School (photo by Christina Schwarz)

The children continue to work away at their recorder cases and the Grade 2 students have almost finished knitting little lambs. We look forward to our handwork class when we can listen to the adventures of Tiptoes the Fairy and her forest friends. This is a beautiful book series by Reg Down, and a great read aloud for our class. Our first sewing project is now complete. Lovely leaf babies are ready to go home next week after spending a little time on our nature table. We are now hard at work crafting Christmas presents and decorations.

We have just embarked on our second Language Arts block in which we are hearing stories about the saints. The Grade 1 students will be introduced to the vowels through these stories and the Grade 2 students will continue to work on spelling and composition. Hearing these stories about love, acceptance and giving ties in nicely with the Advent season. We have been painting and modelling beeswax figures from these stories, a beautiful complement to this saints block. Last week the children modelled birds from the story of St. Francis. The children are so proud of their creations and have asked to take them home, so keep an eye out for them in the next week or so.

On a final and sad note, we will soon be saying good bye to one of our classmates. Prema-Sol is preparing to leave on an epic trip to India with her family. Prema's bright smile and helpful nature will be sorely missed in the Amethyst Class. We wish her and family all the best on their new adventure. We are looking forward to having both Prema and Lyjah back at Edge Hill School soon.

Pick-up Time

Please remember that pick-up time at the end of the school day is between 3:15 and 3:30. There is supervision until 3:30, at which time we will ring the school bell to indicate that faculty is no longer on duty and parents are responsible for their children. Faculty will ensure that all children have a parent/guardian/pre-arranged carpooling driver present. After-care can be arranged at \$5 per ½ hour per child. Note that

after school all children must be directly supervised by a parent/guardian. Playground rules require adult permission and direct supervision when climbing trees.

ARRIVAL: Please note that children should be in class and ready to work no later than 9 a.m.

Citrine Class

Christina Schwarz



The Citrine Class would like to give a very enthusiastic welcome to our new student Talis Batten and his family. How lucky we are that our class is now one person richer. Speaking of riches we were also lucky to have Talis bring in an interesting variety of money from all over the globe for us to inspect and discuss. We have just finished our money block during which we were able use a stack of change to help us understand coins more clearly and realistically. How many different combinations of coins can make the same amount! We will still plan a trip to the grocery store to purchase lunch supplies to prepare in the classroom. First though we will plan a budget then after we will study the receipt.

We are now learning about clothing and fibres. Our first question was 'why is it that people wear clothing?' leading to some lively discussion. Leather was the next topic and everyone brought in a leather article of clothing from home to pass around and feel. We reminisced about a book we read last year that told how native people always thanked the animals ceremoniously for the gift of their lives and how they wouldn't waste any part of the animals they hunted. Next we moved onto hearing a story about a wasteful prince who realized the human cost of laboring in the silk factories in an unusual way. How very different silk feels to leather.

The class was particularly proud of the lanterns they created for the Saint Martin's walk. To make the lanterns they needed to design a pattern, cut out the pattern in the thick paper with much precision, add to the design by drawing with beeswax crayons, paint a design over that, paint over everything with mineral oil to make it more weatherproof, glue in a round bottom piece then use wool yarn to sew up the sides and make a handle. They looked just stunning when lit and it was good for the students to put in the effort to achieve such grand results. Bravo!



Marisol, Jasmine, Megan, and Hana ready for the Lantern Walk.

In circle we have been skipping and jumping Chinese rope. We have been walking a verse in a variety of patterns and have been tossing balls and beanbags. We have recited number patterns forwards and backwards, balancing those beanbags on our heads, and have started using our rhythm sticks again.

We painted gnomes and children walking with lanterns and bears hibernating in caves under the pine forests. Everyone's handwork is moving along nicely and we have the first completed seat cushion! We also have a knitted cat and a few mice, a dog and another cat just about finished. One new student finished her recorder case in record time!

In math we have been working on carrying and borrowing with three-digit numbers,

money problems with a subtle introduction to fractions, mental math using all four processes and of course times tables practice.

We have been preparing for the Christmas assembly and are in the process of deciding on parts for our seasonal play. It is always such a lovely time of year full of music and crafting and special secrets. I am hoping for snow.

Jasper Class

Lise Gunby



The theme for the past month in the Jasper Class has been Egyptian, from our open house to display Egyptian projects to our field trip to the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre in Southampton. Local Egyptologist Daniel Kolos kindly came along as our volunteer guide - note that Daniel is opening a private museum of Egyptology at his Durham home. We were fortunate to have his help to decipher hieroglyphs and to answer questions about the exhibit. Daniel then attended our class open house. It was heartening to see the expertise shown by Edge Hill students, both at school and away.

We have also, rather relentlessly, been practising our class play for the performance at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, December 5. Many thanks to the parents who have been so helpful with costume headpieces - essential components of Egyptian fashion! The play dramatizes the conflict between two fundamental Egyptian gods: Set and Osiris. Set believes that humans are incapable of coming to the good out of their own free will, that they must be disciplined and ruled with an iron fist. Osiris calls on the natural goodness of the human heart and carries the conviction that people will seek the light of co-operation and peace. The theme is appropriate for both the season and for all time.

At the end of the coming week, with sadness, we will say good bye to Lyjah-Sai Mellor, at least for a time, as she travels to India with her family. Lyjah has been playing Nephthys in our class play. Nephthys is a gentle, peace-loving, gracious, thoughtful, tolerant, loving character – just like Lyjah. We love you and will miss you, Lyjah-Sai!



Lyjah with her Egypt presentation.

We have also been practising a variety of rounds and part-songs for Christmas, with the help of our classroom assistant, Emma Fuller. Ukuleles continue to play an important part in

our circle, and we have been invited to act as strolling minstrels at the Schmidt barn during the evening, December 17, of the choir performance of Handel's Messiah.

In art class, students are completing Egyptian sketches using grids to enlarge detailed drawings. Feel free to visit the classroom to see the display of their work.

Preparing for a dramatic production calls on many skills, from reading to movement, from elocution to memorization. Perhaps most importantly, drama calls on students to focus, use good will and a strong will, and to cooperate intricately with others. Math may not have the same appeal, but it also calls upon a multitude of skills and the capacity to concentrate the will forces. Our math main lesson block continues to Christmas break, with problem-solving using words, pictures, and numbers. For the Jasper Class of multiple grades, math is a complicated business. But the rigor of mathematics itself is a welcome study. As Francis Bacon wrote in *Of Studies*: "So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again."



ADVENT FAIR NEWS

This past weekend featured a very successful Advent Fair. Additional activities were offered for school-aged children as well as our traditional Woodland Pond and the enchanted garden for toddlers, both in the Kindergarten building. Crafts by the faculty and outside candle-dipping, as well as the Reindeer Games offered a full day of activities and entertainment. Yolanda Van Keeken started things off with a performance with puppets and ventriloquism, including an audience sing-along. Carnival games were available for the afternoon, and the day ended with Bob Bainborough's story about special pigs Jake and Jack, who this year decided to help out with the local school's Christmas pageant, bringing along Daisy and Eleanora the cows, Rosalind and her chicken flock and Charles Raphael, the beat-goat. Approximately \$300 was raised in this room (candle-dipping, Woodland Pond and craft totals not included). Thanks to all volunteers, with a special nod to Ray, Lisa, Natasha, Tanya and the Jennifers. And the Jasper Class volunteers were a big help: thanks to Bree, Ethan, Tessie, Malcolm, Jaimie, Jaimen, Yumi and Lyjah!

CODE OF CONDUCT

Edge Hill School Board of Directors

As a member of the board of directors for Edge Hill School, I will do my utmost to represent the interest of all stakeholders in the School's educational purposes by adhering to the following standards and principles:

1. I will represent all stakeholders honestly and to the best of my ability, and refuse to surrender my responsibilities to special interest or partisan groups.
2. I will avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety which could result from my position, and will not use my board membership for personal gain.

3. I will recognize that a board member has no legal authority as an individual and that decisions can be made only by a majority vote at a board meeting.
4. I will take no private action that might compromise the board or administration and will respect the confidentiality of privileged information.
5. I will abide by majority decisions of the board, while retaining the right to seek changes in such decisions through ethical and constructive channels.
6. I will encourage and respect the free expression of opinion by other board members and will participate in board discussions in an open, honest and respectful manner, honouring differences of opinion or perspective.
7. I will prepare for, attend and actively participate in board meetings.
8. I will be sufficiently informed about and prepared to act on the specific issues before the board, and become and remain reasonably knowledgeable about Ontario and Waldorf-specific education issues.
9. I will respectfully listen to those who communicate with the board, seeking to understand their views, while recognizing my responsibility to represent the interests of the entire community.
10. I will strive for a positive working relationship with the faculty group, respecting their training and experience, and their knowledge of education in general and Waldorf education in particular.
11. I will model continuous learning and work to ensure good governance by taking advantage of personal and board member development opportunities.
12. I will strive to keep the board focused on its primary work of clarifying the School's purpose, direction and goals, and operations.