



SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION
community begins here

Community

B E G I N S H E R E

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GOVERNOR SEMPLE SCHOOL

A kindergarten to grade 6 school, Governor Semple School provides a comfortable, welcoming atmosphere for students and visitors alike. It has as its overall focus, three simple beliefs—take care of yourself; take care of each other; and take care of this place. The concept of respect inherent in these beliefs are borne out in the daily activities of the school. Through a wide range of other activities, including the school yard improvements (especially through the Evergreen Committee) and the Parent Advisory Committee open to all parents, the school invites, respects, and builds community within its walls and beyond.

As the students learn in the broader sense about community, Governor Semple School students also are learning about themselves (see All the News that's Fit to Print), about the schools (see Connecting with the Community) and about students in other lands (see Bringing Japanese Culture to Seven Oaks).

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Every Tuesday and Wednesday morning, Dave Mathers, Community Coordinator, welcomes preschool children and their families to Governor Semple School. A core group of 6 to 10 families enjoy a chance to spend time with their young children while helping their children become familiar with their future school.

"We encourage parents to read to their children as we pass on the message about the importance of literacy," Mr. Mathers says. "At the same time, the children and their parents become comfortable with being in the school."

Although the school is too small to have a dedicated room for the program, Mr. Mathers and his families enjoy gathering together either in the gym or in the library. This adds to the exposure of the future students to different areas of the school.

The program has operated for five years now and is open to children from 0 to age 5. They attend with at least one parent or other adult relative. Together, they read books, sing songs, do crafts, and enjoy the company of the other families.

"We have a lending library of backpacks with books, puzzles, and games, as well as magazines and books for parents focusing on behaviour," Mr. Mathers continues. "We have 10 of the backpacks, and half are out right now with families."

In addition to the twice weekly programs, Mr. Mathers and the Early Learning Support teacher Melanie Janzen offer "breakfast and books," generally twice a year. The special event is for parents and young children

to have breakfast together followed by reading in the library.

The community program also hosts other special occasions, including a pyjama party and a literacy night with

different 'stations' for families to visit and with guest readers.

The children in the program have fun while learning about the school environment, how to spell their names and start reading, and enjoying time with one or more of their parents or other relative. Some of the young participants have a sibling (or more) in the school who may have gone through the program too. In the end, the fun experiences in the community program create a sense of familiarity and comfort for both child and parent when it comes time for the child to enter kindergarten.



ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PRINT

The grade 2 students in Mrs. Malka Bazak's class have learned the art of journalism first hand. A first in the school, Mrs. Bazak's class put together a newspaper with interviews conducted by the students with staff book reviews, ads for upcoming events, and school news.

"The students brainstormed about what they wanted to put in the newspaper and wrote down all their ideas," explains Mrs. Bazak. "I held mock interviews with Ms. Janzen to help the students prepare for their interviews."

Winnipeg Free Press reporter, Geoff Kirbyson, visited the class to help the students learn about holding an interview, writing up notes and then writing the final story. He brought note pads for the students to write up their interviews and did a mock interview as well. Through brainstorming with him,

the class learned how to develop good questions for their interviews.

The students worked in pairs to conduct their interviews of teachers. Every student in the class participated in the interviews or in creating advertisements, helping with the design, and in the brainstorming of what to include. Thanks to a digital camera in the school, the stories were accompanied by photos of the interview subjects. Student drawings added to the visual appeal of the final product.

"I walked the students through the process to help them put their interview notes into paragraph format and helped them with their final draft to make it ready for publishing," Mrs. Bazak says.

The final product was well received in the school. Every classroom received a copy of the newspaper. Its content included

the articles based on the interviews, the ads, school events information, and even riddles and jokes. There was a section on what love is to coincide with Valentine's Day and in keeping with the school's 'Project Love.'

Mrs. Bazak's enthusiasm about the project was matched by her students who, she says, were "really into it." The class received compliments from other teachers who dropped in to congratulate the class of reporters.

As the class finished off their stint as reporters, Mrs. Bazak says they not

only learned to brainstorm ideas, hold interviews, and organize their notes into coherent articles, many of the students learned about newspapers. Some had never paid attention to newspapers before. Since the project, the students now come in regularly with reports about what they read in the morning news.



BRINGING JAPANESE CULTURE TO SEVEN OAKS



From haiku poetry to 'blow' paintings, the students in Mrs. Wendy Moglove's grade three class are becoming experts on Japanese culture. In addition to the more traditional activities in learning a social studies curriculum, Mrs. Moglove's class is getting a hands-on approach.

On one day in February, the class was either working on their haiku poems or were in the hallway creating unique

blow paintings. These paintings are an abstract art form that involves dropping dabs of paint onto a piece of paper and then gently blowing the paint across the paper through a straw. The paintings were to relate to the subject matter of the students' haiku poems.

"We also have made counting books and books using Japanese words," says Mrs. Moglove. "Earlier the students made Japanese lanterns and have done some origami."

Every day, the students have been learning some Japanese words. They check out children's websites about Japan (and from Japan) and were preparing to head to the Japanese Cultural Centre.

"I want to try sushi," says Danielle, one of the students in Mrs. Moglove's class. "I've learned to say hello in Japanese," she adds.

Fellow classmate, Samuel, thinks one of the most interesting things he has learned about Japanese culture is that the homes have sliding doors and gardens you walk around but cannot play in.

As the students learn to pronounce more Japanese words, they also were hoping to plan for a Japanese food day. They are reading story books about Japan and generally are getting to experience as much about the culture as possible in their school thousands of kilometres from the islands of Japan.

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