



Paw Prints

Unionville Public School



February 2008

Principal: Dr. Debbie Donsky
Trustee: E. Richardson 905.940.9818

Vice Principal: Ms. Carol Takagi
Superintendent: R. Lambert 905.940.7800

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Tuesday February 5— Junior Literacy Night, 7:00-8:00 pm
- Thursday February 7 and Friday February 22—Ski Day for Grades 7 and 8
- Monday February 11—Concert Band Festival at Le Parc, 7:30 pm
- Monday February 18—Family Day, No School
- Tuesday February 19—School Council Meeting @ 7:30pm in the library
- Thursday February 21— Graduation Photos for Grade 8s
- Wednesday February 27-Friday February 29—Grades 7 and 8 Music Retreat

A Warm Welcome and a Look Forward

This month has felt like a whirlwind. The warm welcome from the community is appreciated as well as the input from school council and the many parents who have emailed, called or visited in the school. There have been several issues that have come up during the month of January and often the information is preceded by an apology for the conversation about to happen. It is so important to us that parents come with their concerns and that we solve them together. Often, parents have a different perspective on the issues that arise and your feedback is welcome in order to provide the safe and supportive learning environment for our students and your children.

It is hard to believe but already, at the schools, we are putting together our organizations for next fall. There will continue to be both combined and single-grade classrooms. There are benefits to both types of classrooms. When working with differentiated instruction, the teachers are looking at the students in the room and meeting the needs of all students. I know in the last newsletter you liked my Max and Rachel stories so here goes another

one...

This year, Rachel, my seven-year-old, was entering second grade. The school model at my children's school included a grade 1/2 classroom, a grade 2 classroom as well as a 2/3 classroom. They do not encourage requests for placements but I made one knowing that it would make the principal's life easier (isn't that considerate?) because I requested that Rachel go into the 1/2 classroom.

Many parents believe that putting their child in the higher of the two grades in a combined classroom will slow their progress as the other younger children will bring down the standards in the classroom. *This is simply just not the case!* In Rachel's case, she is a strong student but often doubts her own intelligence and ability. I knew, as her mother, and as an educator, that the benefits to her growth would come from being a role model and leader in the classroom. This experience would constantly serve as a reminder of how far she had come since early grade 1 and would continue to help her grow as she honed her skills by supporting those younger than her.

This year has been very successful for her and I am so pleased with the decision to place her in the combined grade.

There are so many reasons why we might think our children will succeed in one environment over another and these considerations are made when we place your children in the various classrooms.

When we think about our own learning and working environments consider how much more effective they are when there are diverse teams with multiple perspectives! Combined grades offer so many opportunities and I, as a mother, will continue to request them for my own children.

For more information on combined grades, please visit the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca and do a search on "Combined Grades".



4 Men, 4 Mics and No Instruments

As part of our Arts Package, the intermediate division was entertained by Cadence, an a cappella group. Using an interactive and highly entertaining approach, our students were introduced to a form of music that uses no instruments except the

sounds produced by the singers themselves. After the performance was over, students could be heard practicing the sounds for the various instruments.

Our next Arts performances will be on February 4 and 7 for the Junior

and Intermediate divisions. The focus will be on history and First Nations People performed through two separate dramatic presentations by Mr. David Morris and Mr. Jim Wellheiser.

Lunchtime Assistants Needed

Unionville Public School is in need of a Lunchtime Assistants to help with the supervision of students during the lunchtime period of 12:50—1:50 pm. We also require several people willing to be on the supply list when assistants are not able to attend for their shift.

The assistant works with a team of others, circulating around the school yard and hallway to ensure the safety and supervision of the students at our school.

If you are interested in this position, please call the school at 905 477-1824 and speak to either Dr. Don-sky or Ms. Takagi.

This is a wonderful opportunity to support the school and welcome all applicants.



Thanks to Glen

We are very grateful for the supervision that Glen has offered to the students of Unionville as our crossing guard.

We continue to seek people interested in working as a crossing guard not only at the corner of Bridal Walk and Main Street but also Bridal Walk and Kennedy Road.

If you are interested or know of someone who may be, please contact the school or the Town of Markham.

ECO TEAM treads lightly on UPS to reduce our footprint

Our Eco Team of students have been busy conducting both waste and energy audits throughout the school. This involves observing the garbage and recycling bins around the school, measuring the amount and type of items in both.

For the energy portion of the audit, students are circulating throughout the school to determine how wasteful we are being in terms of energy consumption. For example, if they enter a room, where

no one is present, lights are turned off. Reminders have been placed on light switches and computers to turn them off when not needed.

An analysis of the audit determines next steps for the focus of our eco team at UPS.

The ecoteam is currently preparing a PowerPoint presentation to be shared at the Primary, Junior and Intermediate

sharing assemblies, revealing what all of us need to do to tread lighter on our planet.

Did you know?

“A lunch packed with reusable items is typically 45% less expensive and contains 89% less waste than a lunch packed with single-use items.”

Ontario EcoSchools: Waste Minimization Guide

Literacy Corner...



Unionville Public School teachers are committed to improving the reading skills of all our students. Reading comprehension can be improved by: teaching students to assess their own comprehension, and by improving [metacognition](#). Metacognition is the conscious awareness of strategies being used while reading. Skilled readers don't just read, they interact with the text. Reading is the process of constructing meaning from a written text. Effective early reading instruction enables all children to become fluent readers who comprehend what they are reading, can apply and communicate their knowledge and skills in new contexts, and have a strong motivation to read. Here are some strategies that students need to keep in mind:

- Good readers **read daily** and read a variety of texts. They do not keep choosing the same types of material to read.
- Good readers **determine how much they know** about the subject before they read. They know if this is something they are interested in or not interested in.
- Good readers **take chances** and relate their own experience to the text. They do this by using what they know about the world, what they have read before and what they already know about themselves to relate to the words on the page and to make meaning.
- Good readers **figure out what the difficult words mean**, by looking for whole meanings instead of just looking at individual letters or words. They are able to make inferences; by using sentences before and after, or paragraphs before and after to draw conclusions about what they are reading.
- Good readers **guess at words** they are not sure of. Sometimes they have to skip words and then go back and say the sentence again. Or sometimes by the time they finish the paragraph they have already understood what the skipped word meant.
- Good readers **instinctively know** how to adjust their reading rate and vary it to match purpose and difficulty. They know when they are stumbling and will stop and restart. They re-read to make sure they are on the right track.
- Good readers are *active* readers who think about what they are reading and use their reading experiences for support. They bring their own knowledge of the world to the material they are reading.
- Good readers **ask themselves questions** as they go along. They may use sticky notes to mark the places they were wondering about. They know when their mind begins to wander and are able to get back on track.
- Good readers **create mental pictures** as they read descriptive passages. They visualize and create mental pictures as they read.
- Good readers **expect** the material to get easier and read on, using the context to make sense or help them make meaning of what they read.
- Good readers **know how to use pictures**, graphs, marginal notes, bold words, titles and other text supports on the page to figure out the meaning of the difficult or long passages they are trying to read.
- Good readers **try not to read too slowly** and are able to change their approaches for special materials depending on the purpose of their reading. They understand that they read the newspaper differently than a non-fiction selection.
- Good readers **know reading for meaning is a process** that requires active participation from the reader—whether when reading for pleasure, to complete an assignment, or to find information to help with questions they may have.
- Good readers recognize when what they read is difficult; they identify parts of the text that confuse them. They use [I'M Stuck-fix-up strategies](#) such as rereading, changing their reading rate, or go for a dictionary. They work to correct the difficulty. They don't just give up.
- Good readers **know if they liked what they have just read**, why or why not it appealed to them, and whether or not they would recommend it to anyone else.
- Good readers **use story details** to support their opinion.
- Good readers use [Comprehension Strategies](#) to draw conclusions, analyze, synthesize, and to compare and contrast. They may use strategies such as predicting, summarizing, questioning the text, and questioning author's purpose in order to make sense of what they read.

Based on *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do* by Kyleen Beers [p.34-35]

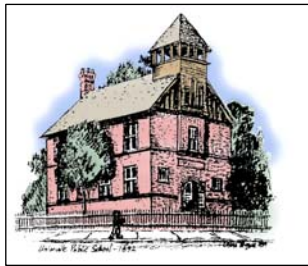
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Together We're Better Conference

By Nikita Wallia

On Thursday January 31st, seven students from Unionville Public School attended the *Together We're Better* conference, a yearly convention held in the York Region District School Board for Intermediate students. Its goal—to teach seven student leaders from every school in York Region about Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity. You hear from world known speakers and attend workshops dealing with leadership and conflict resolution. The speakers are known for their leadership in anti-racism and their dedication in teaching the people.

The day started out by hearing from Glenn Marais, a Juno award nominee and an award winning singer/songwriter. His inspirational songs bring together the students and teachers attending the conference. Then, by attending workshops with other students, you learn effective strategies for dealing with conflict and develop communication and problem solving skills. You hear from motivating speakers Ida and Martin Shulman, who teach you about their struggle for equity and how they overcame it. The speakers also include how they think we can become leaders in our schools to around the world. The *Together We're Better* conference opened the students' minds and taught them how to lead the school into a society of equity and equality for all.

Did you know? A Look at the Data...

Last year only 21% of our grade three students and only 1% of our grade six students said that they read with someone older than them at home on a regular basis.

Reading with and to our children is one of the greatest gifts we can give to them. It shows them not only what good readers do, but why reading can be so enjoyable.

Each night, pick a book or a poem that you love and invite your child to do the same.

With your older children, read a book with them by taking turns reading aloud to each other or by reading your own copy of the book and talking about it.

So often we hear parents tell us that they ask their kids what they did at school

that day and the response is the infamous, "nothing...". If you read with your child and take the time to talk about what they have read, you will know what your child is doing at school.

Other ideas that may be helpful are:

- Hold book exchange parties. Invite your friends and your children's classmates over to exchange previously read books.
- Check out the used books on Amazon! You can get gently used books for \$1.00 and develop an amazing collection. Just recently, I ordered a copy of Etan Thomas's (of the Washington Wizards) book of poetry, *More Than an Athlete*, from Amazon for \$5.00 and it was a signed copy!

- Share your favourite book with your child! I have an old copy of *Super Pickle*, a pop-up book from the 1970s that my father used to read to me when I was a little girl. My name is signed in it with my 7 year old handwriting. It is falling apart but each time I read it to my kids, I think of the amazing memories I have of my father reading to me as a child...He still has at least three books on him at any one time!

We are all so intent on giving everything we can to our children when all they really want is a moment to sit down and be with the people who love them most.

Taking that time with a book in hand can be a memory that lasts a life time and then some!