

THE COMET

Volume 16, Issue 3

November 2011

QUAKER ROAD P.S.

From the Office...

It has been a busy month at Quaker Road, with activities ranging from Green Team planting to Halloween Hunger. Regardless of the activities, we are extremely proud of the way that our students have reached out to support and connect with the Quaker Road community.

Our Green Team spent many hours behind the scenes planning for our partnership with Climate Action Niagara and Acer. They braved the elements and planted our mini-forest, setting the playground up for generations to come. They also organized and ran our Litter Free Lunch Week and collected the composting. Overall, it has been a very busy month for this envi-

ronmentally supportive team.

Our Intermediate students warmed our hearts when they gave up their Halloween candy collection in favour of collecting non-perishable food items. They filled our foyer with items and were even featured in the Tribune! That dedicated group of compassionate students truly deserves an acknowledgement.

Our primary students made us smile when they took to the streets in their Halloween costumes. It is always entertaining to see how creative and cute they are!

The kindergarten team headed to the Pumpkin Patch and trekked through the mud to see a



whole bunch of fall sights. They came back rosy cheeked and full of excitement.

Thank you to all of you for supporting these wonderful initiatives and activities at Quaker Road.

We are looking forward to another month full of new experiences and learning.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Romano & Mrs. Kosh

Key Reminders for our School Community

Absenteeism and Lates

If your child will be late or absent, please call the school at 905-732-5412 before 9:00am to report. This eliminates unnecessary phone calls home and ensures accurate attendance.

Toys at School

Please do not send your child to school with any toys (including cards) from home. We cannot assume responsibility for loss or damage.

Nutrition Breaks

A reminder to all parents that no children are to be going home for the nutrition portion of the First Break (10:40-11:20am). This is a time for students to engage in social activities.

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Special points of interest:

- Green Team Digs In
- EZ Rock Brings Lunch
- Parents and Visitors Signing In
- Students Take Niagara Marathon by Storm
- Grade 7/8's Compassionate Collection
- Learning Matters

Quaker Road Green Team



Quaker Road is proud to be a part of the Welland community. Read here to learn about some of our exciting partnership activities!

On a cold and windy Friday, October 23rd, 2011, a group of Quaker Road Comets and their parents braved the elements to lay the foundation for the Quaker Road Mini-Forest.

In partnership with ACER and Climate Action Niagara, Mrs. Secord and Mrs. Toews-Peplinski led a team in the planting of over 65 trees and shrubs. The end goal was to create the beginnings of what will grow to be a mini-forest. The mini-forest will provide shade and protection for many generations of students on the tarvia at Quaker Road.

The Quaker forest currently consists of numerous varieties of shrubs and trees— some indige-

nous to the area, some endangered and some common shade trees. It is easy to spot right now as most of the growth is being supported by canvas cloths and wooden stakes.

First thing in the morning, students and their parents were given a demonstration lesson on how to properly dig the holes for planting, how to place the trees in the holes and how to carefully and properly replace the soil so that the trees and shrubs are protected properly and will flourish. The team then dug in and planted all the greenery in record time.

At the end of the planting, students enjoyed a celebration of their work with

a cupcake cake made by Mrs. Secord and students Ashley Michael and Cassie Anger. It was a fantastic display of baking skills!

The mini-forest is located on the east side of the school, along the soccer field and behind the baseball backstop. In the spring, mulch will be added to the area surrounding the plants and there will be paths and clear walkways.

The Quaker Road school community would like to thank all the students, parents, Mrs. Secord and Mrs. Toews— Peplinski, ACER and Climate Action Niagara for their time, effort and dedication to the current and future students of Quaker Road!

105.7's Jack and Lori Visit 3D!

Last week was a very exciting week for the student's in Mrs. DeGasperis' Grade 3 class. The class won a contest called "Salute Your School" from the radio station 105.7. To enter the contest the class created different creative things including invitations, wordles, and posters. Mrs. DeGasperis' then mailed our work to the radio station. Our class also wrote persuasive letters to the station saying that they have never came to our school and we would to have them as our guests.. Some children went on a

website called kids pix and they made their creative posters with different backgrounds and different sayings. Some kids even made wordles which are a bunch of words in different ways on the page about the person you are writing about. We were the lucky class who won that fantastic contest. Jack and Lori then came to visit our school on Oct. 27th. They came to have lunch with our class and they brought pancakes, fruit, and potato wedges. We had our party in the gym and some of the parents got to come and eat with Jack and Lori.

Our class got our picture with Jack and Lori on our gym stage. We were announced on the radio that our grade 3 class won at the end of the party we got recorded by Lori of what we were going to be on Halloween. After a week our pictures got put on their website. Our class made a banner saying "Welcome Jack and Lori from 105.7."

We had tons of fun and it was a wonderful celebration!

Written By: Emilie Pitman and Abbey Pastirik



Important Notice- Visiting Quaker Road

In order to ensure the safety of all our students, Quaker Road has a policy that **all visitors to the school must enter the school through the front doors and sign in at the office.**

It has come to the attention of the office that there have been a number of parents and visitors wandering throughout both the school and the playground at various points in the day. As a staff, we ask that you be mindful of

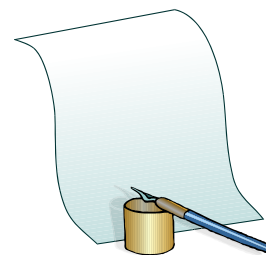
the Quaker Road policy and please ensure you are checking in at the office at all times. This policy allows us to monitor the flow of traffic in the school and to be aware of who is in the building at all times.

If you need to speak to your child, we will make every effort to expedite the process for you through the office. Please **do not come onto the playground during the Fitness por-**

tion of Nutrition Breaks.

This presents an immense safety concern. For parents who drop off or pick up their children, we ask that you please remain in the foyer of the school and do not go through the sets of double doors leading into the hallways.

Our policy is in place for the safety and protection of all students and we thank you for your cooperation with this matter.



Please ensure that you are checking in at the office and waiting in the foyer for your children when you arrive at Quaker Road. We appreciate your support in securing the safety of our students.

Halloween For Hunger

In true Quaker Road spirit, 27 of our intermediate students gave up their Halloween candy in favour of collecting canned goods and other non-perishable food items to donate to the Salvation Army Food Bank.

A big thank you goes out to these students from both Quaker Road and the Salvation Army.

Mrs. Tonnos and Ms.

L'Ecuyer could not be happier to announce the following compassionate and caring students who want to make a positive change in the community: Marci Clarke, Noah Stickney, Bram Greczkowski, Joel Larmand, Jaimie Rainville, Jordan Barnartt, Jordan Anger, Josh Benfield, Malav Patel, Debbie Johnson, Sloane McDowell, Taylor Rice, Avery Edge, Olivia Palermo,

John Bunting, Dayton Duong and all of the parents and siblings who also helped out.

As well, the students would like to thank Mrs. Tonnos and Ms. L'Ecuyer who gave up their evening to support the students in their caring endeavor.

Way to go Comets!

Students give to the community and show true Comet Spirit!

Quaker Road Run Club

For the past two months, 23 Quaker Road PS students have been training hard for the Niagara Falls Marathon. Under the guidance of Mrs. Royer, a Quaker Road PS parent, the students have arrived at school bright and early in the morning to practice, train and learn the techniques of running a marathon.



A special thank you goes out to Mrs. Royer for her time, guidance and mentorship. Without her, the students would not have been able to experience the Marathon, the team work and the work ethic that made the Quaker Road Run Club.

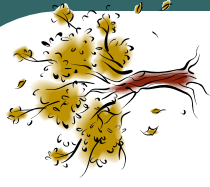
Congratulations to everyone!

OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

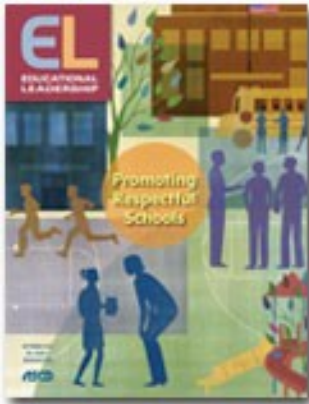




NOVEMBER 2011 AT QUAKER RD.



Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1 Picture Retake Day	2 Gr. 7/8 Anti-Discrimination Trip	3	4
7 Primary Jack Grunsky Trip	8	9 Mad Science	10	11 Remembrance Day (Assembly at 10:20am)
14	15 Progress Reports Go Home	16 Mad Science	17 Parent and Teacher Interview night	18
21 Pasta Fundraiser Begins	22	23 Mad Science	24 Grade 8 Day at Centennial and E.L. Crossley	25
28 Niagara Ice Dogs Assembly	29 Grade 8 HPV Shots 3D Marshville Heritage Tour	30 Mad Science 3/4S Marshville Heri-	1 Quaker Rd. Family Skate with Niagara Ice Dogs	2



September 2011 | Volume 69 | Number 1
Promoting Respectful Schools Pages 40-44
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Respect—Where Do We Start?

Marie-Nathalie Beaudoin

Teachers who are stressed, unhappy, and unsupported by their peers are more inclined to treat their students with disrespect.

Talk to educators, and they'll all share their commitment to fostering an environment of respect in their schools. This finding was clear from a survey a colleague and I conducted of more than 200 educators in California (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004, 2009).

Respect is important because it contributes to a context of safety, openness, and reflection; this context is crucial for the brain to effectively process and encode academic material, as opposed to being preoccupied with emotional concerns. Although educators genuinely intend to foster respect—and they spend much time identifying and following a wide variety of programs for doing so—disrespect and bullying continue to be rampant in many schools. If we're putting so much effort, money, and commitment into creating respectful school cultures, then why are bullying rates still so high?

Many factors, including broken families, poverty, exposure to violent media, and an increasing amount of pressure on students, have been proposed as explanations for high bullying rates. A closer look at these factors can be quite discouraging because we, as individuals, have little power to change them. There is, however, an overlooked factor that can give us noteworthy levels of control and influence over school culture: staff members' well-being and professional relationships.

It's fascinating to visit schools that spend many precious resources on antibullying programs but where staff members are burned out, unhappy, stressed, and resentful. Such feelings often lead them to be impatient with and disrespectful of their students in spite of their good intentions. In a teacher's own words, "I start every day telling myself that I won't yell at this particular student and end every day remorseful and discouraged because I just had too much on my plate and yelled after all."

We should not underestimate how much a teacher's or principal's mood can affect students. Even when you think you're hiding negative feelings, or at least containing them, your very status as a teacher or principal magnifies the little you express.

Whether we like it or not, creating a school culture of respect starts deep in the heart of a staff's well-being and professional relationships. The buzz in the staff lunchroom can be as telling of school culture as the suspension rate. What are teachers talking about? Are they divided into groups that never mingle? How many teachers prefer to eat in their classrooms instead?

Problem-Saturated Conversation

What teachers talk about during their lunch break has dramatic implications. For many, it's the only time during the day they can sit down with fellow staff members and connect in a more personal way. Unfortunately, given the immense workload, stress, responsibilities, pressures, and large classroom sizes that teachers are required to handle daily, it's easy for negativity to creep into the conversation.

Some teachers use their lunch break to rant about the latest misbehavior of a struggling student. The description is often the same: "The student is awful," and the teacher is "at a loss as to what to do." Day after day you hear, "You'll never believe what he did this morning!" Soon, lunchtime becomes filled with problem-saturated conversation.

A false sense of intimacy can develop as staff members commiserate with one another about these challenges. Although teachers may *appear* to be bonding, supporting one another, or simply unwinding, the reality couldn't be further from the truth. Sharing and being understood differ from problem-saturated conversation, which is a counterproductive process of complaining, criticizing, and dwelling negatively and repeatedly on the same narrow view (Weber, 2008).

The habit of engaging in problem-saturated conversations day after day raises a number of concerns. First, these conversations rarely lead to constructive solutions; rather, they lead to teachers seeing students in increasingly negative ways. After engaging in problem-saturated conversations, many teachers go back to their classes with renewed frustration toward the targeted students and, unknowingly, a heightened sense that they are *entitled* to be disrespectful. If colleagues confirmed that a student's behaviour was "unacceptable," why should a teacher make an effort to treat this student with respect and kindness? Problem-saturated conversa-

tions set the stage for more problem behaviour.

When teachers spend their only free time rehashing what brings them down, they don't talk about what energizes them, such as exciting projects or meaningful developments in their personal lives. It's easy for people to dwell on negative affective states because, according to neuroscientists, there are more neural networks in the brain associated with negative affect than with positive affect (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001); some scientists even speculate that these may be in the ratio of 5 to 1.

However, indulging in our negative experiences exacts a great cost because every time we engage in a brain state—such as talking a certain way, feeling down, or being negative—we increase the likelihood that our brains will "go there" again. The flip side of this finding is also true: Every time we choose to be positive and patient, we slightly increase our likelihood of being more positive next time.

Problem-saturated conversations in the staff room also greatly affect how other adults in the school, such as maintenance workers, custodians, or resource specialists, treat struggling students. When struggling students develop problem reputations, other adults who have heard the stories often treat them with greater impatience and suspicion; unknowingly, the adults become less tolerant and kind. These students gradually lose the possibility of getting a break from tense interactions. Every day, they become a little more alienated from everyone at school, and their hatred of being there grows.

Cliques and Gossip

Cliques that never mingle with one another also contribute to a poor staff climate. Cliques overlap with, yet are different from, friendships.

Friendships contribute to a teacher's sense of belonging and being supported at school, as illustrated by one teacher who said,

When I first joined my last district, I felt like Goldilocks in the house of the three bears. The first group I sat with for lunch was too hard. They were cynical, negative, and cliquish. The second group was too soft. I couldn't imagine how they got teaching degrees. The third was just right for me. I loved this group. We supported one another, and it lifted our spirits to spend lunch together.

Friendships among staff members energize, sustain, inspire, and do not adversely affect the community.

However, belonging to a clique often implies a *disconnection* from the rest of the staff. This is especially problematic when the staff is divided into some lunchtime cliques that have strong negative voices and others that have shy creative voices, with a scattering of individuals who eat in isolation in their classrooms.

The existence of cliques often means that some people are excluded from certain activities or put down or that unhelpful gossip about others infiltrates conversations. Many teachers anonymously report that when they hear a piece of gossip, they experience a sense of complicity, status, and belonging that can be satisfying if their daily experience at school is one of powerlessness or discontentment. Occasional gossip may be unavoidable in a group of coworkers, but it becomes a concern when it's constant, negative, or systematically targets certain people.

A school climate of gossip and cliques greatly interferes with trust, collaboration, and openness. It stifles creativity and makes it daunting for many teachers to share anything personal, making them feel isolated, disconnected, and sometimes reluctant to go to school. Stigmatized and isolated teachers are more likely to respond to students' struggles in impatient, disrespectful, and marginalizing ways.

Educators are important role models of socio-emotional skills. A teacher who continually shows that he or she is annoyed by a student gives the rest of the class permission to be annoyed by the student, too. The struggling student becomes caught in a downward spiral; the more he or she is the target of a teacher's and classmates' frustration, the more likely he or she is to be unhappy, resentful, and inattentive, which in turn, increases the likelihood that he or she will make mistakes and respond to everyone in disrespectful ways. We are all interconnected in a web of relationships.

Improving Staff Well-Being

Improving staff well-being, attitudes, and relationships is a journey, not an event. No single workshop, lecture, or lesson will make it happen. The process involves reflection, putting words to experiences, experimenting with new ways of being, and eventually committing to more constructive approaches. Here are three culture-improving practices.

Contrast Intentions and Effects

When a teacher engages in a problem-saturated conversation, what is his or her intention? If it's to get support, does the behaviour accomplish the desired purpose? Blowing out a frustration may provide some immediate relief, but it may not accomplish the goal of improving the situation in the long run. It may, in fact, have the opposite effect.

For example, if a teacher is negative with her class, a principal's direct feedback on the issue, intended to reduce the problem, may simply *increase* this teacher's unhappiness and thus her negativity with students. By the same token, when a student behaves in angry and hateful ways, intensifying punishments (with the intention of reducing the problem) may actually increase the child's overload of anger (producing the opposite effect).

Congruence between intentions and effects is more likely to occur when we raise questions about our own and others' goals. For example, when a school culture is undermined by problem-saturated conversations, it's helpful to hold a 30-minute discussion in a staff meeting, making staff members aware of the myriad effects of problem-saturated conversations on their moods, enthusiasm, energy level, relationships, patience with students, and educational values. A significant portion of staff members typically will become interested in implementing a "no-student-talk" agreement during lunch breaks. They'll also become more committed to this plan because they will have contributed to developing it.

In schools where I've facilitated such a discussion, most educators were still paying attention to how they talked to one another even several months later. They had developed more satisfying relationships by experimenting with different types of lunch conversations. In some cases, teachers felt less need to talk about struggles because the energy they received from their more collegial lunches indirectly reduced their level of burnout with struggling students. In other cases, teachers simply discussed problems privately to avoid spreading problem-saturated descriptions and to consider a broader perspective.

Staff members came to realize that more solutions and compassion are to be found in broad perspectives than in narrow, problem-saturated views. Usually, when we don't have compassion for someone's struggles, it's because we don't understand the complexity of that person's experiences. Understanding and compassion greatly contribute to taking actions that are congruent with our intentions.

Consider How You Use Power

Although many principals and teachers feel powerless in their day-to-day work, they nevertheless have knowledge and status in their community, both of which can give them power in a variety of interactions. In a complex system like schools, it's valuable to regularly ask oneself, "If I can use power, does that mean I should?" People can easily misuse power and unwittingly repress new, cutting-edge ideas.

For example, one teacher I spoke with mentioned how, in her early teaching days, she decided to have her students work in small groups. Annoyed by the students' sometimes noisy industriousness, the principal would come by and roar, "When your teacher isn't in the classroom, I don't want to hear a sound out of you!" The teacher could never decide whether it was worse to stand up and reveal that she was, in fact, present or just wait until the principal finished glaring and left the room. "Whenever I tried to explain my methods," she said, "there was no respect for such innovation. Years later, one of my former students thanked me for these classes; she had never forgotten their humanness in the midst of the rigidity of the school system."

Misuse of power can easily trickle down to how educators handle students' mistakes and behaviours. Because schools tend to be isomorphic systems, what happens at one level often gets replicated at the level below. For example, a district's intolerance of a school's intricacies can indirectly contribute to a principal's overly critical eye, which in turn can affect teachers' tolerance levels toward students. Using power to solve a problem is often tempting because it may look like a quick solution and may even feel satisfying. But in reality, it can lead to more insidious problems, such as resentment, rebellion, gossip, and disconnection.

Deciding whether to use power can be a tough dilemma for principals who sometimes must make an unpopular choice for the best interest of the school. In many instances, it's worth exploring other avenues at the outset by actively listening to people's experiences, asking important questions, finding out what an issue really means, and most important, going slowly. Contextual and invisible information may be more important than the visible issue we're tempted to address with authority.

For example, I once worked with a principal who was confused by a teacher who had seemed enthusiastic with her class the first year she taught but who had become increasingly impatient with her students during the second year. Before making a drastic decision, the principal decided to see whether the teacher needed extra support. The principal encouraged the teacher's grade-level colleagues to consider taking some of the load off her shoulders and to reach out to her. In response to her colleagues' kindness, she eventually

confided that her teenage son had recently attempted suicide. This serious event (invisible to the staff) left her feeling like an inadequate single mother, which in turn led her to constantly criticize herself and others (the visible issue). Being supported at such a time encouraged her to ask for what she needed. She eventually became the enthusiastic and creative teacher whom the school had initially appreciated, and a few years later, she won the district's best teacher of the year award.

Foster Appreciation

Educators are so giving of their time, energy, hearts, and sometimes even their own personal finances that appreciation needs to be at the forefront of school reform. Studies show that 30–50 percent of all teachers, including some of the country's most enthusiastic educators, drop out of the profession after five years because the education system fails to sustain their enthusiasm (Morrow, 2001; Smith & Eisterhold, 2010). The constant pressure to do more, coupled with under appreciation and negativity in staff relationships, creates a draining work environment.

It was astonishing to interview principals who described all they did to foster appreciation in their schools and then to discover, in our surveys, the extent to which the staff felt underappreciated. It became clear that a leader can give a large amount of appreciation, but when it's divided among so many staff members and students, each recipient may receive only a minute amount. For appreciation to truly exist in a school, community members need to circulate it.

For example, schools can have appreciation days for different grade levels or feature each educator in a weekly newsletter. They can reserve a number of staff meetings for development, team building, and discussion of educational values, addressing more bureaucratic issues through e-mails. Some schools have even playfully taken up ideas from "secret-success-spies" activities for students, in which students secretly notice other students' successes; in this version, teachers and administrators notice and share the successes of the educators in their school.

The more teachers know about one another, the more likely they are to discover something they like or have in common. Several principals I interviewed shared their strategies for fostering appreciation in school:

- ✦ Create an Apple Award, which one teacher offers to another teacher each month. A teacher might, for example, recognize someone who was courageous enough to ask for support when he or she needed it.
- ✦ Pick two names at a staff meeting, and encourage staff members to either write a note of appreciation or make a positive comment about those selected.
- ✦ Hold an appreciation day twice each year when students write a note to anyone in the school who's made a difference. Educators look forward to these days; students' comments lift their spirits.

Save a small part of your budget for staff outings and development, such as interesting conferences, fun team-building retreats, and creativity workshops. If teachers aren't happy, no one will be happy.

First Things First

Teachers who feel appreciated, connected, and energized by their colleagues bring out the best in their students. *Respected* adults engage in *respect-full* interactions in which *respectful* students can blossom.

So how do we begin to create a respectful culture for our students? By first creating a supportive, uplifting, positive school culture for our teachers and other school staff members.

Marie-Nathalie Beaudoin is the training director at Bay Area Family Therapy and Training Associates in Cupertino, California, where she consults with educators and supervises the counseling services in several San Francisco Bay Area schools. Her latest book is *The Skill-ionaire in Every Child: Boosting Children's Socio-Emotional Skills Using the Latest in Brain Research* (Goshawk Publications, 2010); www.skillionaire.org