Spring/Summer Newsletter 2012

An inspirational education

Building on the well-established foundation of Steiner education to nurture creativity and innovation and develop articulate, confident and socially aware students ready for the future.

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With this edition, we introduce a new publication that will bring articles about what is happening at school, carrying contributions from the teachers and students. It gives an opportunity to share some of the exciting things that take place, giving a glimpse into what goes on in and out of the classrooms.

The last 12 months have been truly tumultuous in the enormous changes that have been achieved at Sophia Mundi. In that time we have received authorisation for and commenced the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program for Years 11 and 12. This program provides internationally recognised accreditation for our Year 12 students and is seen as a suitable graduating pathway because of the compatibility of its philosophy with Steiner Education.

Our next achievement was to receive approval to build a block of four new classrooms after a long struggle to find more room in this wonderful heritage precinct. The building was completed and opened early in Term 3 and allowed the Prep class to join us so we were all together again on one site — a joyous moment. At the same time we opened a community space which has newly constructed playgrounds and a community meeting space. We are pleased that these new spaces are also open to the wider community, along with the tennis/basketball courts, outside of school hours.

At the beginning of Term 4 we moved into two state-of-the-art laboratories, newly refurbished in the derelict building known as the Blond wing. All this mammoth building work has been accomplished in incredibly short time thanks largely to the formidable duo of Chris Smith and Robin Power who made miracles happen. So now our future is secure in this remarkable precinct which helps to give Sophia Mundi its unique vibrancy and energy.

As you approach the school from the bike path and the Nun’s Walk we have created a beautiful vegetable garden, helped by a grant from Bendigo Bank and a large donation from the School canteen. Already Class 3 are growing their grains which will be soon be harvested.

Reflections from Prep

Mary Howell, Head of Early Childhood & Prep Teacher

The coming of spring brings with it the promise of new and beautiful things and for us this is most appropriate as we discover all the possibilities of our new realm.

We wait and watch whilst all the things we have planted begin to grow. The apple trees are in leaf, new shoots are coming on the bamboo, we have roses and paper daisies and our much loved peppercorn trees are wearing rosy peppercorns.

The children are busily finding new corners, new ways to use old equipment and exploring the depths of the sandpit. The little house in the garden is very much loved and is home, or bakery, or café and has been cleaned and painted so often it should shine.

Spring always seems such a special season in the prep year as the children at this time are growing, changing and blossoming into their new realm of middle childhood. Preparing to move out into the world of primary school and class 1. And so in our work with the children we support this journey with stories of growth, change, moving out into the world, awakening and overcoming difficulties.

We work with stories of the natural world and its rhythms, caterpillars to butterflies, seeds to plants, to flowers, to fruit. In our circle work we experience growing and blossoming, building nests and baby birds who fly away, the work of the sun and the rain and the joy of life in its roundness. We live in spring.

Golden sun in skies so blue
Come and warm us through and through
Come and give us of your gold
That the blossoms may unfold.

Jennifer West, Principal
The independent variable which I was changing was the aerodynamics of the 1.25L bottles we were using as rockets.

Jeremy
Rockets, sun and heat. This is what my group faced on Monday. Having chosen to explore how different variables affect the height a rocket achieves, I chose to investigate the pressure we pumped the rocket up to. Over the course of the day, I fired rockets made out of soft drink bottles at 40, 50, 60 and 70psi. As was to be expected, rockets with a higher pressure reached higher altitudes. Some reached over 30 metres. By and large, the day was a great success. Barring the obstacles we faced for about an hour when the rockets wouldn’t fire, we all managed to attain the results we needed in order to draw conclusions.

Chris
We decided to test for CO2 emissions from humans, because it is relevant to present times. We planned a series of activities for testing the amount of CO2 we were breathing out each time. It was quite challenging and hectic counting all the data while undergoing exercise activities but we managed to finish everything by the end of the day - which was fabulous!

Spandana
My group was testing CO2 emissions using walking and running to find out the results. We used a CO2 monitor. One of the challenges was when we breathed into the plastic bag - we had to hold the breath in there while it was being tested, measuring our pulse at the same time. It was a real test of teamwork.

Lilian
Group 3 On Monday we had great fun with NERF guns, and although my shooting skills were not really up to par, Lily’s and Caesar’s were, and the guns were well chosen. It was funny seeing the younger students watching, and it felt like we were inspiring them and showing how fun the IB is despite all the hard work. We did most of our experiments out on the basketball court in the hot sun. Our two NERF guns performed extremely well, and we had a great time.

Olivia
A person was positioned a set distance away from the rocket launch with an inclinometer, which they used to measure the angle of the maximum height reached by the rocket. With these two measurements, we were able to calculate the height using trigonometry.
Asian history has arrived at Sophia Mundi! Class 10 has just completed the first History of China main lesson at our school, covering a span from pre-history through to the present. The results are exciting. Student work and attitudes have been impressive. It is an apt subject as China is strongly in our awareness at the moment, appearing regularly in the news; the mining boom, China’s dominance on the world’s financial stage, their acquisition of Australian companies and land, and now the suggestion by the prime minister that Asian languages be given priority in schools. No longer is China seen as a footnote in the history of our gold-rushes in the 1850’s.

So, for sixteen-year-olds China holds currency and this is reflected in their interest in the subject. And what a rich subject. It covers the gamut of human endeavour, pioneering the change from nomadic tribes to agriculture and village life in the region, establishing highly elaborate forms of governance and inventing many of the most important tools and processes of ancient times. It stands as a wonderful example of the progress of world civilization, amid an unsurpassed cultural richness, beauty and refinement. It is replete with larger-than-life characters like the first emperor, Huang di, Confucius, Genghis Khan and Mao Tse-tung.

Students were whole-hearted in their openness to the topic and this is reflected in their research and the beauty of their work. A truly successful main lesson. Congratulations to Class 10.

CHINESE HISTORY
Robert Stemp, Humanities /Art Teacher

CLASS 8 PROJECTS
Thursday 25 October was presentation night for Class 8’s projects. It was a very successful evening as students confidently and enthusiastically described their year-long journey on a topic of interest to them. The topics ranged from restoration of a boat, making a cricket bat, a fishing rod, to writing, illustrating and publishing a children’s book to photography, producing a magazine, a cookery book, model airplane, an ingenious machine and spray painting a car. Each and every project represented a substantial amount of independent work for the student and took them on a learning path that presented many challenges and obstacles, personal and physical. The quality of their work was impressive, a testament to the motivating power of doing something you are passionate about. Warm congratulations to every one of them.

Fiona Cock, Teacher