



# Selkirk Montessori School E-Newsletter

## From the Head of School, Erin Hayes

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Every February the issue of bullying is highlighted on the 24<sup>th</sup> with Pink Shirt Day. One year, we had a student ask, “Why should it matter if I wear a pink shirt? People can wear shirts whatever colour they like. There are no boy colours and girl colours.”

This wasn’t a question demonstrating misunderstanding of the intention of the day; the student understood the history and the context of the Pink Shirt movement. Instead, it was a reframing of the focus, rather than responding to injustice with judgement, the student was maintaining an expectation of respect, kindness, and acceptance.

What a reaffirming moment of the power of children to create long-lasting peaceful relationship. When confronted with the challenges of the world, our youth are working on being

genuinely curious and honestly reflective, and on putting their values into action.

So how do our teachers and students work at building healthy relationships and boundaries and develop the ability to communicate when someone isn’t behaving as expected?

We talk about types of behaviour, not types of people. We share experiences and problem solve with learned strategies and supported practice.

Whatever your feelings about Pink Shirt Day, take some time this month to chat with your child about what virtues and values matter in your family and how those look in action, both with friends and with those we find difficult to get along with.

(continued on Page 2)

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“All you need is love, but a little chocolate now and then doesn’t hurt.”

Charles M. Schultz

# From the Head of School, Erin Hayes (continued)

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You may also be interested in participating in the Random Acts of Kindness Day on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Information can be found here on the [Victoria Foundation's website](#).

*Love is more than the electricity which lightens our darkness, more than the etheric waves that transmit our voices across space, more than any of the energies that man has discovered and learned to use.*

*Of all things love is the most potent. All that [humans] can do with their discoveries depends on the conscience of [those] who uses them. But this energy of love is given us so that each shall have it in himself. - Maria Montessori, the Absorbent Mind*

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## Selkirk Montessori ROCKS Art!

It's so sad that you aren't able to come into the school to see all the wonderful pieces of art the students are creating. Here are a few examples, including what's on the WOW WORK board this week (see below). More on Page 4!



Eagle students wove a colourful tapestry to display outside their classroom.



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# Counsellor's Corner

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## WIRED FOR CONNECTION!

I think many of us can agree that this school year has been a very different one. It's true – we humans are wired for connection, so the current health and safety orders are hard on us all. It is incredible, though, to see the resilience of our students and the ways they are managing to safely maintain connections with one another, despite the restrictions.

Thankfully, because students are able to attend school on-site, they are able to continue to build friendships and spend time with their peers in person. For certain grade levels, there are a variety of teacher-led clubs up and running before and after school, as well as during recess times.

It has also been a priority of mine to continue to offer classroom-specific social groups in order to provide additional opportunities for social-emotional development and friendship skill practice. These groups are organized in collaboration with classroom teachers and are based on need as well as the dynamics of student relationships. So far, the groups have been successful in providing much-needed additional time for students to connect with one another.

During a typical school year, many students and families would be getting together after school or on the weekends and, because of the province-wide restrictions, children have found other ways to stay connected and engaged outside of school.

One primary way both children and adults have managed to stay connected is through technology and the internet. FaceTime, Zoom, Messenger, and a number of other video-conferencing and messaging programs have allowed us all to continue to maintain our relationships with friends and family. Additionally, social media platforms have gifted us with a way to share videos and photos with one another, something that has become much more a part of our daily lives - probably more than ever before!

With many extra-curricular activities on pause and all social gatherings prohibited, we are left with the dilemma of how to keep our kids entertained and engaged. Some of us may be extra creative with planning activities, while some of us (myself included) have been easing up on screen-time rules. With all of this in mind, it is important to consider how our children are being influenced by this growing reliance on technology. So, some questions worth asking ourselves are:

- \* How much screen time is my child getting?
- \* Do I know what my child is doing on their device?
- \* What programs /apps can my child access on their device?
- \* Who is my child communicating with when using their device?

Many children today have the internet at their fingertips. Unfortunately, many of us parents did not have the education and exposure to what is now available online, which makes it difficult to provide the proper guidance and coaching for our children. Thankfully however, there are resources available to support parents in raising digitally responsible children.

(For resources and tips, see Page 4)

# Counsellor's Corner (cont'd)

For helpful tips on creating screen time limits, visit:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Tips-for-Parents-Digital-Age.aspx>.

The *Safer Schools Together* website has a number of valuable resources such as a Social Media Checklist for Parents, a Common-Sense Digital Contract, and Internet Lingo and Slang Terms.

Please visit

<https://saferschoolstogether.com/resources/parent-resources/> to access these articles. Also, at this link you can download a parent's guide on *Raising Digitally Responsible Youth*, created by Safer Schools Together and the BC Ministry of Education.

Our children need our guidance in making wise choices online, and together as a school community, we can hopefully support one another in gaining the knowledge and skills to keep up with the ever-changing online world.

I look forward to continuing to support our students' social and emotional journey here at Selkirk. If you have any questions or concerns regarding school counselling or SEL programming at our school, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Warmly,

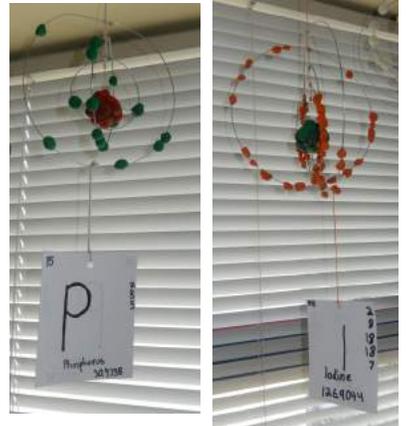
**Carmelle Hermoso**

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Orca Class (left and further left).



Art and Science go hand in hand in the Cormorant Class (right).



Raccoon Class (left)

Owl Class (above)



More art on Page 9!

## Group Photo and Mother—Sheila Elaine Longton



"Everybody say 'Montessori!'" the photographer high atop the stepladder called across the playground to the hundred or so families assembled in front of the school.

Women chatted and laughed. Babies squirmed in their strollers. Kids elbowed each other, and a couple of older boys dared to hang off the rail. I tried to include Mother, but she stubbornly refused. "No. You and the kids go ahead. No. My hair, this skirt's no good. I'll wait over there."

She left to stand off to one side alone. The photograph hangs in the school lobby. I know I'm in there somewhere, and the baby and the boys, but I've never found us. Excepting a few front row revellers, we are an anonymous, grainy blur.

But there, away from the mob, clearly outlined against the vacant playground, a solitary figure leans on her cane, hair like white straw, skirt askew, watching.

*"Hi Penny, Wrote this 30 years ago. Always intended to forward it to you. Hope everything's well with you and yours. Happy New Year!"* Sheila messaged this lovely memory of the 10th anniversary of our school to me on January 16th. I asked if I could put it in the next newsletter and she agreed. On Saturday, January 30th, I heard that Sheila had died of cancer. Sheila was a parent of three exceptional students who graduated from our school. She was also an incredible musician, and played at our 35th anniversary concert. We send our love and condolences to her husband, Michael, her sons Matheson and Hollas and her daughter, Laine.

# COVID Fatigue—Suggestions from Parents

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I asked our school community for some idea about talking to children about why they can't have play dates right now and here's what they had to say! Thanks to everyone who took the time to contribute:

*"[As part of] our coping strategy, we just bought the girls Nintendo with a "Just Dance" game only so they can get some more movement into their bodies since we are not doing any of our after school activities either!"*

"Here are some strategies [our family] came up with for other kids who are upset that they can't have playdates (all involving screen time unfortunately):

- Play some virtual games like Minecraft by screen sharing with your friends (Asher recommends using Facetime for this).
- Do facetime play dates.
- Doing an art/craft project virtually together with your friends on zoom (Tesla does this with her Guides troupe and they all have a great time – all done on zoom).
- Virtual scavenger hunt; someone creates a list, and then everyone finds the items and reports back on zoom.
- Make a virtual poem with your friends on zoom (each person has one sentence and takes turns).
- Make a collaborative video – agree on a story and act it out. Each person is a character and films themselves, and then someone puts it all together.

Early on in this pandemic, we listened to the Brains On podcast episodes about COVID, and it was really well done: <https://www.brainson.org/page/coronavirus> This page has a lot of learning resources and may be helpful for the elementary aged kids."

*"We just focus on the future and say, "when the sickness is over, you'll get to have friends over again. It's not forever, it's just for right now".*

*I know it's not much different than "when COVID is over" but keeping that eye on a future time where they can visit with friends again helps...and reassuring them it's not forever."*

"Though I believe many know what COVID is and how it affects them... but maybe some people are getting a bit numb of COVID.

I found this video (link below) very successful in communicating to both kids and adults in an accessible and yet detailed scientific manner (this company is a pro at crafting videos for the science). Maybe you might find this a useful tool/reminder of COVID ramifications.

**The Coronavirus Explained & What You Should Do:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtN-goy9VOY>"

*"That's basically my strategy for the playdate questions - I point out to [my son] that he is able to spend 5 days a week in a classroom with other kids (and he gets to play every day in after-school care), and that's a LOT more socializing time than us grownups get. \*I\* don't get "after-work care" where I get to run around with my coworkers, and I rarely see any of them in real life at all. So, I frequently expressing envy at his good fortune to be surrounded by real live other kids for most of the week. (This works, btw - I don't get a LOT of requests for playdates.) I also don't hide my own disappointment and frustration at not being able to spend time with my friends - I think it's important for kids to understand that parents need socialization that they're not getting now, too - it's not like kids are getting short shrift because they're kids, they're actually better off than most people.*

*I've also started to do more "forced family fun" as the kids call it - making sure we go out as a family and do a hike or go paddling or some other outside activity, preferably each day on the weekend, but at least once. I'm not sure if socializing with siblings, parents and parents' partners really fills the playdate void, but it's better than more YouTube.*

*(continued on Page 7)*

## COVID Fatigue (cont'd)

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*He is fortunate that he has adults who are playful with him - my boyfriend turns hikes in the woods into games for him, and when he's with his dad, his uncle likes to spend time with him doing crafts and building things. I've never been a "playing" parent but I'm putting more effort into involving him in projects and boat-chores. I know not every family has a structure and routines that accommodate that sort of integration - but it may end up being one of the unforeseen gifts of COVID: a degree of active participation in adult work and interactions that had previously been diminishing since the passing of child labour laws midway through the Industrial Revolution. To be clear, I'm not in favour of child labour - but COVID has brought kids WAY more into contact with adult work and life than they had been, and I don't think that's a bad thing."*

"I have put A LOT of thought into virtual connections for [our son] during this time. Over the course of the past 10 months, we've found a few things that work really well for us.

He helped create this weekly calendar, which gives him a virtual visit to look forward to almost every day (usually 30-60 min). (Side note: dad's mum is the only other person in our core bubble and assists with child care every two weeks, so her visits are on there as well.)

Most of his dates are with family (he hasn't seen my parents in person in over a year!), although he does have a regular video playdate with [a friend from school], too. This year they are in different classrooms and haven't seen each other in person since the summer. It's a joy to hear them chatter away about being space ninjas or witness them each building a headquarters fort in their own homes.

He is five, and I've found that having something specific, and often something to actually touch/play with, to anchor his visits makes a huge difference. Some ideas that work for us, and that have all evolved really naturally over the course of this time:

- He and my dad each pull out their LEGO and build together. They have a team of minifigures (some at our house, some at my dad's) that have time travel/space adventures each week.
- His weekly tea party with his Aunt Genevieve is a wonderful thing. They each set up their miniature tea sets, drink pretend chocolate tea, and have a few stuffies who are always invited.
- He connects with my mum on an app called [Caribu](#), which is fantastic. They can see each other on video and it has loads of options for synchronous engagement. They colour together, read e-books together, or do memory games or sudoku puzzles.
- These video dates are no substitute for real life, but right now my focus is ensuring he maintains these good connections and relationships. (Plus, it gives me a few moments to do my own yoga video or prep dinner or do our online banking!)"

*"As a parent that has experienced the anguish of having a child in the ICU environment for an extended period of time in the past, as well as the fact that I have worked in the ICU as a physical therapist - I have seen and experienced the nightmare and trauma of critical illness. I would not be able to sleep at night if our family were to catch or spread Covid because we didn't follow the guidelines. My kids regularly ask when they can see their friends and return to "normal". I feel that 'information is power' and I talk with them about what is happening around the world and our own level of privilege and resilience. I also talk with them about the potential consequences of our actions on others if we behave with our own self interest at the forefront - the kids agree that they wouldn't be able to sleep at night either if they had a 'play-date' and were to catch or spread Covid."*

*(continued on Page 8)*

## COVID Fatigue (cont'd)

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"[Our children] are very fortunate to attend in the Wolf class. This has been a god send; however, it is not without its difficulties.

They attend for two hours each day and this is a **work time period** with very little capacity or allowance for socializing.

Perhaps parents can be reassured that while their children do not have 'playdates' happening after school. . .their children have access to 5 hours of time at school with their peers and their friends and that 5 hours includes a great deal of cooperative work and socializing which I can attest very clearly that when you don't have this, it is very, very difficult to deal with. There have been very unhappy moments in the evenings, mourning the loss of that time with friends during school hours. Never mind the adjustment to having to work completely independently without being able in a social context bounce ideas and brainstorm with friends/peers.

Perhaps this might help parents and children place their situation in perspective in comparison to a situation which is not as good as what they've got."

*"I find when the kids ask questions like, "why can't we go to the aquarium" or "why can't I play with my cousins" I have started to jest that they know the answer already. I'll say, "remember, it's the answer to every question right now" and they laugh and shout, "Covid!". I even overheard them playing the other day, leaping from couch to chair to pillow shouting, "don't touch the ground, it's covid!" And I just had to laugh, because as I said, if I don't laugh I'll cry."*

"Personally, I find "Covid" to be too banal a word. I like to be more dramatic and then the kids repeat it - somewhat in glee, as in "duh". For example:

"Hey, why don't we go to Whistler for a week?"

"Well, there's this small matter of a **GLOBAL PANDEMIC** with **100 MILLION** cases."

*"I tell you even as a young parent I have never seen so many arts and crafts being done at home. We have drawings from Rhys all over our walls and now he is even using pictures from the internet of puppies and their breed. He is writing each letter on his own and a picture to go with!"*

*Parents just need to be creative! There will be a time to socialize more soon!"*

On a different note:

"All I want to say is a resounding THANK YOU.

I am so grateful we have our daughter at a school that is acting with integrity and standing behind the provincial health orders. I feel safe sending my child to Selkirk and it is you, our teachers and the administration staff I have to thank. Messages like the one you sent are necessary: yes we are tired and yes this sucks, but we won't get through this without the collective efforts of everyone. Part of the Montessori philosophy is to foster an understanding of our role in the community and world, and what better opportunity for us parents to lead as examples for our children?"

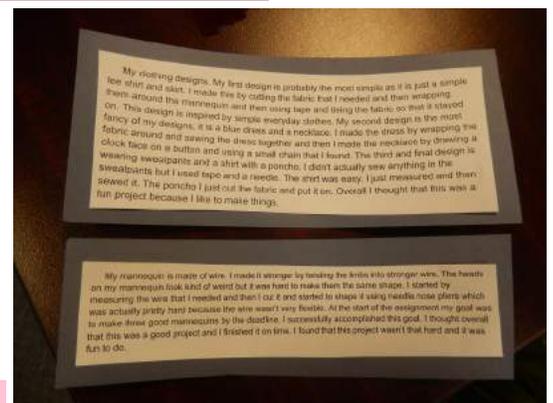
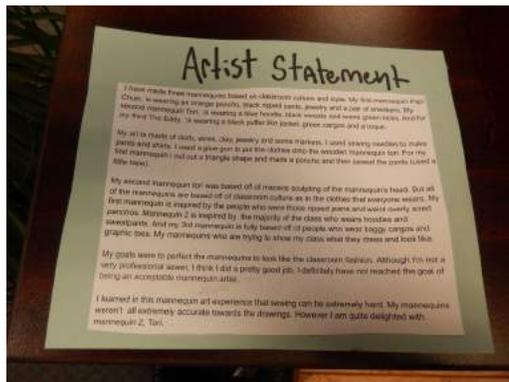
*"I don't know [if it's] the kids or their parents that have the need of playdates, likely both. But we need to lay out the priorities. We just could not introduce more and unnecessary risks to COVID-19. The new variants are very concerning for their capabilities of spreading faster. I went to Costco yesterday and I saw at least double line up outside but maybe half the number people inside. It looked like the store has already adjusted and tightened up strings in responding to the variants."*

We truly appreciate the continuing support of our Selkirk Montessori families. Being a teacher during this pandemic is tough, but you are making it easier on all of us when you stick to the health orders. As Doctor Bonnie Henry says: *"This is not forever, but it is for now."*

# Even MORE Art at Selkirk!



Hummingbird students created a winter wonderland outside their classroom. Sadly, I couldn't include all the many versions the children created. This is just a small sample for you to enjoy.



Check out the artist's statements and these gorgeous mannequins and designs! I don't have enough room in the newsletter this month to share all the work the Kingfisher students have on display right now. Hopefully more to share next month!

# Selkirk Parent Group (SPG)

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## Thank you



Thank you Lara for organizing pink shirt availability for Pink Shirt Day this **February 24<sup>th</sup>**! Pink Shirt Day encourages self esteem, empathy, compassion and kindness. For those who ordered shirts through Spiritwear, you will be contacted and given dates and times in which you can pick-up your order soon.



## What's NEW

Selkirk **ROCKS** hunt!

Watch for an email, posters and flyers with information on how to participate!

## Help Wanted

Looking for creative ways to connect the Selkirk Montessori community. If you have an idea please send us a note. If you are interested in hosting a **Virtual Class Games Night** please contact your Class Rep and have fun! Ideas: Trivia night, Bingo, Jeopardy, Charades, Headbands.



**Purdy's Chocolates** will be available for Easter orders – stay tuned!

**Thrifty's Smile Cards Program** Please keep using your Thrifty's Smile Card, if you don't have one, pop by the office window and Laura can give you one. To use the card, ask the cashier to load your Smile Card before they begin ringing things through, then use it to pay after the groceries are rung up. The SPG will get 5% of your total to go towards special projects! (Imagine a 5% cash rewards credit card!)



**Wiser WASH fundraiser** Hand sanitizer sprays, larger gel pump hand sanitizer, biodegradable grassroots disinfectant spray and more! <https://spg-fundraising-store.myshopify.com/>

**Next SPG Meetings:** Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> 7PM via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81101985744?pwd=MS9INVNIWExsVDRqS2p4LzZBVXdnZz09>

April 13<sup>th</sup> 7PM via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84315768366?pwd=dDZNUlJjS1Zpbm94OVBLSkcvRkJPOT09>



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*We can make a difference.*

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The **Ox** year of **2021** is under the influence of the metal element. This **year predicts** new career opportunities, so don't let anxiety or negative thinking affect you. Those who are born under the **Ox** sign are independent and strong people, but very stubborn.

Gung hay fat choy and 过年好 / 過年好!

## Dates to Remember

- February 12—Non-Instructional Day (no school for children)
- February 14—Valentine's Day
- February 15—Family Day (no school for children)
- February 20—World Day of Social Justice
- February 24—Pink Shirt Day
- March 12—Last day of school before Spring Break
- March 29—First day back from Spring Break

