



# New Heights Newsletter



## Principals' Address

By Katie Blasetti, Acting Principal and Kaetlon Irwin,  
Acting Vice Principal

The new Spring weather has now arrived and brought with it a fresh energy for the staff and students at New Heights. After all of the changes we've been through this year, it's been wonderful to feel like we've finally settled in and are in a comfortable day to day routine. We all know how important routines are for New Heights! With this renewed energy, we look forward to showing off our school to Alberta Learning during their visit with us next month.

We have another Open House coming up on Saturday, May 23 from 10 am to 1 pm. The Open House is receiving a great response. Our classes are quickly filling up for next year! If you are interested in volunteering your time to chat with potential families, we would love to see you there.

We would also like to say, "Well done!" to the PAC for raising funds for our library through the Coco Brooks pizza sales. Showing support in this way really helps us know that our parents are on board. It's a great encouragement to us all. We are excited to see what PAC has up their sleeves next with their Year End Garage Sale and Barbeque Event on June 13th.

We look forward to seeing you all there!

### Important Dates

May 18	Victoria Day, No School
May 19	Team Meeting Day, No School
May 20	FOP Day, No ECS
May 22	Annual General Meeting, 7pm, New Heights Gym
May 23	Open House 10am - 1pm
June 1	FOP Day, No ECS
June 2	PAC Meeting
June 8	PD Day, No School- Age
June 13	PAC Year End BBQ and Garage Sale

## May 2009

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## Life on the Farm Maggie's AM Class Update

Our literature theme for the month of May is, The Little Red Hen. In the morning class, we are getting there by way of Old Macdonald and The Big Red Barn. This lovely book by Margaret Wise Brown has captured everyone's attention at circle time. They are imitating the various actions and sounds represented in the

story, and somehow just seem to naturally pick up on the tone set by the simple rising and falling of the sun on a typical day at the farm. Later in the month, we will plant and tend to miniature crops of wheat. I'll bring in my grinder to make some flour and if I get really adventurous, we may even bake some bread. In the meantime, we are practicing name recognition, balancing on one foot like the little Ban-

tam hen, and a variety of basic preschool concepts: numbers, counting, colours, big/little, same/different, yes/no. It has been wonderful to have Justin in the class; not merely because it bumps up our ratio to a more comfortable level, but also because he is introducing his music to an adoring audience.

## Hands On Learning Katie and Angie's Jr. Class Update

In the junior class, we like to do lots of activities that are energetic and hands on (and the junior class teachers love anything with caffeine!). This month, some of these activities include our new unit in LA on descriptive writing focusing on our five senses (which can get messy), learning badminton in phys ed, practicing big group games in DPA and continuing our ever-favorite Kung Fu class....

### Kung Fu Wednesdays By: Arden Grovue and Zane Stelmaschuk

On Wednesday afternoons, we get to learn Kung Fu from Mr. Crossman. We can change into gym clothes if we have some, because then we don't feel the sweat. Before we go in the gym, we line up so he can call us in to do sensei kneeling down. Mr. Crossman teaches us to do better tiger rolls but sometimes we do other stuff. When someone is inside Big Blue, it is fun to do a tiger roll and then a strong front kick on it to make it move. It feels good when I am inside Big Blue waiting for someone to kick it, it makes me move sometimes. It is very cool and awesome that we get to go in partners or groups to practice our moves. Mr. Crossman makes me feel good and strong; and also, he makes us laugh. Mr. Crossman teaches us cool moves like at the end when we bow out and say, "Hiy-ahh!". We really want to get our belts like Mr. Crossman and then we will be the best like him.

## Parent Advisory Council Update By: Keith Uyeno, PAC President

While summer holiday is only seven weeks away, the schedule for the New Heights PAC is starting to get busy! We're excited to host the end-of-school-year cookout and garage sale on Saturday, June 13th. We will be accepting garage sale items in the coming weeks- please keep an eye out for notices coming home. We're going to need some volunteers to help organize and run the event- a sign-up board will be posted at the school- please take the time to volunteer for one of the jobs.

The Coco Brooks pizza sale was a huge success! Many thanks to all who helped out.

The next PAC meeting will be held on **Tuesday, June 2nd at 7:00pm**, and will focus on the cookout. It will also be the last PAC meeting of the school year, so **PLEASE PLAN ON ATTENDING**. It would mean a great deal to the parents and staff at New Heights if they could see that the parent base is showing interest in the goings-on of the school. Again, it is the last meeting of the year- if you haven't joined us all year, please come out. Thanks a lot!



## A Return to Play

### Maggie's PM Class Update

In our very busy afternoon, we have several different themes unfolding. Of course, the Little Red Hen is teaching us about the importance of cooperation, but we have also been working very hard on graphic skills: printing numerals, drawing shapes and the human figure. In fact, we have been working so hard that play has been a little neglected lately. Consequently, these next few weeks will feature a return to this very important part of the day. All of the boys have social communication goals that can be met with some added scaffolding to support their play ideas. Hence, The Pet Shop, beginning tomorrow and hopefully leading up to a, 'pet week' when those of us who have portable pets will bring them to visit for a day. Andrea has already volunteered

to come back and visit us with her dog, Angela has a guinea pig and Maggie has a Budgie bird. The biggest news from the afternoon, however, involves the teachers. After this week, I (Maggie) will be placing the class in the capable hands of Sacha Kimball. She filled in for me for two weeks in April. Personal circumstances make it necessary for me to lighten my work load; however I will still be in the school, teaching the morning class and will be available to make the transition as smooth as possible. We are fortunate to have someone to step in who is already very familiar with the program and the children. I know the boys all enjoyed their time with Mrs. Kimball in April.

## Until I Believe In Me

-Ivan Fitzwater

God gave me many talents and a choice of what I can be.  
But I will amount to nothing unless I can believe in me.  
He gave strength to my arms and a brain to use and visions for me to see,  
But my dreams will be empty wishes until I can believe in me.  
He gave me the love and strong support of friends and a family.  
But these will all be wasted until I can believe in me.  
So let me live life boldly—not boastful, but eagerly—  
Deserving of others' faith and trust because first  
I BELIEVED IN ME.

## Working Together

### Kaetlon's Classroom Update

We have had a busy time since the last newsletter. Laurie was away for two weeks and Kim was in to take her place in the classroom. Jane and Colombia were also there to lend a helping hand and I would like to thank them for their assistance. As well, a special thank you to Kim who did a wonderful job and made the transition as painless as possible. All the children in our class loved her. That being said, it is wonderful to have, "our Laurie" back.

We have begun receiving specialist visits from other school districts to determine placements for the few of our students who are moving on from New Heights this year.

Our May story unit is, The Little Red Hen. Old MacDonald, The Three Pigs, the farm and especially springtime on the farm, are other books and topics we will explore during the month of May. Sub themes of our unit are farming, growing and cooperation.

We continue to work on and practice a number of cognitive and academic skills: pre-reading and

reading skills as well as pre-math and math skills including temporal concepts (before and after, first, then, last, etc). We continue to work on the use of present progressive forms of verbs (running, jumping), prepositions (in, on), past tense of verbs (went, gone), plurals and phonology.

Songs and activities from the "Handwriting Without Tears" program provide opportunities to learn and practice the names and alignment of body parts, positional concepts, social skills, body awareness, drawing and counting skills, etc.

Our focus on social participation and simple games has continued with an even greater emphasis on cooperation and sharing.



## Social Heroes

By: Louane Piché

In cooperation with our Psychology Intern, Colombia Carter, I've recently developed several specific Social Skill groups for the school age students. Having closely read the parent and teacher questionnaires on the individual student's needs, we are targeting specific skill development in areas such as initiating appropriate conversations, learning to take another's perspective and managing stress/anger. Groups are held twice a week which allows us to present content material and follow-up with direct practicing of those skills in a fun and interactive format.

Some groups are exploring their social thinking using the "Superflex" curriculum developed by Michelle Garcia Winner. There are cool comic characters that personify a certain way of ineffective thinking (called the "Team of Unthinkables") that are defeated by super-flexible thinking, personified by "Superflex" the Social Thinking superhero. A slightly different format is also being used with other students, looking at exploring social skills as a Social Detective. Materials from both Michelle Garcia Winner and Dr. Mel Levine are adapted for this group.

Dr. Tony Atwood has developed some great resources for anxiety and anger management skills for teenagers. Some adapted materials are used to introduce these concepts and have the students reflect upon their personal positive and negative experiences and discover more effective coping strategies.

So far, the students have been very responsive and several are eager to learn! What a fun group of kids to work with.

## Message from the Chair

By Robert Gasper, Chair, New Heights Board of Directors

Our school is expanding! After our first Open House, it has become clear that we will need to add a 3<sup>rd</sup> school-age classroom for next year. This will take us to 100% use of our leased space. We will start the construction of a new computer lab as early as June 20<sup>th</sup>.

To enable our growth, we will be voting on revised school bylaws and on a possible name change at the AGM on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. As well, we will be assigning resources to look for a larger facility for the 2010-11 school year. I wish to recognize our staff and volunteers for their ongoing commitment to excellence.

See you at the AGM!

## DID YOU KNOW?

### THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Recent research shows that students who engage in physical activity on a daily basis have better attendance at school, increased positive attitude toward school and superior academic performance. Researcher Howard Gardner and his theory of Multiple Intelligences attempts to steer the definition of intelligence away from the traditional concept defined by IQ tests. In Gardner's theory, intelligence can be expressed in eight different ways. Once such intelligence, Bodily Kinesthetic Intelligence is defined as strength towards skills that require coordination, balance, flexibility or speed. By allowing students to incorporate physical activity into their learning experiences, they may actually learn and retain more information. According to recent brain research, even students who are not necessarily strong in the Bodily Kinesthetic Intelligence can benefit academically from short breaks of physical activity. The ability to recall information is shown to improve when material is presented in shorter segments rather than all at once. Brain research has long demonstrated that attention requires "periodic novelty" and that the brain needs downtime to process chemicals needed for long-term memory function. As teachers, most of this research is readily observable in the classroom environment. Students that sit too long fall asleep, at least mentally and are not engaged in the learning process.

From Ever Active newsletter, "Take Action!".  
[www.everactive.org](http://www.everactive.org)

Adapted from [www.fitkidsnc.com](http://www.fitkidsnc.com) — For Administrators—  
Physical Activity and Academic Achievement



By: Bev Appel, Project Leader

Over the past three years (2006 to 2009), the focus of our Cycle Three AISI Project at New Heights has been Self Regulation in Students with Autism.

The goal of this project has been to help students assume greater control of their regulation of behavior, cognitive functions and emotions. In turn, students are more able to become self-directed learners and their participation in learning and social settings is enhanced. This project has been an integral part of the learning plan and teaching philosophy at New Heights.

Early in the New Year, we were advised that there would be an opportunity for another project proposal (Cycle Four) for 2009 to 2012. Our new project, "Generalization of Self Regulation Skills" will build on our previous project, "Self Regulation in Students with Autism".

In Cycle 4, we will go into greater depth by researching new information and developing additional strategies and supports to facilitate the effective use of learned self regulation skills independently in settings outside of the secure, predictable environment of the school.

This is a project that is applicable to all students, at all age and grade levels. It is also a project that provides many opportunities for parent / community involvement through innovative student / home surveys, parents sharing groups, home, school and community sharing.

We hope you will share our enthusiasm about the next project and we look forward to your participation over the next three years.

## Fitness First

### Carrie's Sr. Class Update

The senior class has been working on a fitness program in hopes of reaching personal goals. Because each student is performing at a different level, the challenges vary. Many of us have started at square one, combining our running with walking. We are using one of The Running Room's programs set for beginners.

Our ultimate goal as a group is to be able to feel good about what we have accomplished. Even better is if most, if not all students, understand and gain an attitude of wanting to have fitness as part of their daily lives.



## FOP News

Our next F.O.P. sessions will be held on Wednesday, May 20th. The topic is "Play".

June will see two F.O.P. sessions. The topic for the F.O.P. on Monday, June 1st will be, "Transitions - into summer holidays and back to school again in the fall" and the F.O.P. on Tuesday June 30th will be a, "Caterpillar's Picnic" which will focus on social skills and interaction.

## Your Home Program

### By: Jane and Betty, Home Program Coordinators

Hello friends and family of New Heights!

We would like to welcome Alana and Kiely to the team! We are pleased with our fabulous team of Developmental Assistants and look forward to lots of fun playdates to enjoy the warm weather!

Enjoy the long weekend and remember home program will also be closed on Tuesday, May 19 for staff meetings.

## Ode to Tim Horton's -Anonymous

How could you leave us now?  
After all we've been through.  
I will miss your warm soup to comfort me on the hard days.  
Your cappuccinos to celebrate the good days.

Alas, you are gone, and have only left a trailer.  
Will you be back?

