

Intelligent News

12 February 2009 Vol. 5



News from Multiple Intelligence Centre

The newsletter from the Multiple Intelligence Centre - 'Nuff said'! If you are a new parent to the *Multiple Intelligence Centre* in 2009, then welcome to our wee newsletter. We aim to produce a newsletter once a term, normally between the terms. Each Pod (class) also has a newsletter produced once a term, normally at about week 7. Your child may bring short administrative notices home when it is required.

Quick Roundup

- We seemed to have finished our first year and we're still trying to catch our breath. It has been a whirlwind.
- **Despite all enjoying our break (but not the rain) we were all pleased to be back at MIC.**
- Our current enrolment for the start of 2009 is about 50 pupils (and counting).
- We have had an Australian Youth Volunteer Vanessa Maginnis join us as our fourth teacher.
- **We said *moce mada* to Eleazar O'Connor as our Admin Officer as he gets ready to complete his masters thesis and welcomed Ms. Agnes Madigi.**
- We started in Term 3 last year our '*Project Wednesdays*' and our '*Apprentice Thursdays*'.
- Our first ever field trip occurred in Term 3 was a 'night field trip' which we believe is a Fiji first, encompassing mud crab fishing, nocturnal animals and astronomy.
- Our PE programme has really taken off with the help of Mr. Jone Koroi. Our structured programme is probably one of the most advanced in the country.
- Our small garden has also really flourished, with children taking home some of the produce to their homes or selling it during last term's bazaar.

Quick Administrative Round Up

By now you've realised that we've tweaked our timetable a wee bit now that we have the benefit of one year's experience.

Firstly because many families have children in younger and older classes, we've changed the timetable for Wednesday afternoons so that all the children stop at 3pm.

Secondly we changed our morning breaks very slightly. Our first break starts at 9.30am as before but lasts 20 minutes until 9.50am. We feel this gives enough time for the children to eat their mid morning snack properly

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
7:30	MIC doors open				
8:00	Early morning lessons				
9:30	1st break				
9:50	Mid morning lessons				
11:20	2nd break				
11:30	Late Morning Lessons				
1:00	School ends or Lunch break				
1:45		Sports day or survival skills		Club / apprentice day	
3:00			Project day		

and also give the teachers a sensible break. The second break is now only 10 minutes and lasts between, 11.10-11.30. We recommend packing a light snack for the first break and lunch for Tues, Wed. & Thurs.

Finally, we have a request that if you need to speak to one of the senior teachers please make an appointment, or try and time your visit during one of the breaks. We are just trying to avoid having our senior educators having to break off in the middle of the class. Aggie our Administrative Assistant can answer most questions, if not then she will help make an appointment for you to see any of our educators.

Blink, blink – where did the time go?

The last time we wrote a school newsletter we had not finished term 1 yet. Originally we thought that there would be a Centre newsletter at the beginning and at the end of term. We also thought that we would have time for two pod newsletters in each term. We have not been able to do this which, depending on your point of view, is either good or bad. It is bad because we have not

MIC Garden

Many of you would have seen and maybe tasted the 'fruits' of our children's gardens. As small as the plots are, we have all classes in charge of small plots to grow various vegetables and fruits. Some of them get taken home to use in your own cooking. Recently we began selling our produce in part to raise some money for future Pod (class) activities.

Some of you may however be asking what is the purpose of having our children learn how to plant. This is a legitimate question to ask. The answer is that it is not the ability to plant and grow vegetables and fruits that is our main concern – as valuable as these skills are. Rather we use the planting to teach other abilities, such as observation, biology and specifically botany, as well as social science (agriculture a human activity), health & well being (nutritional value of food grown) as well as spatial skills (physically planting the seeds) and responsibility (watering and weeding the plants during its life-cycle).

communicated as frequently as before, but it's good because we've been too busy creating, innovating and so on.

We have definitely come to the 'end' of a significant chapter of MIC, namely that we completed our first year. That may not sound like much but given that it was about 20 months ago that the 'hint' of a suggestion of starting MIC was born, we're all simply amazed at how far we've come along, not just in getting the Centre up and running but also in getting to know your amazing children. Of course as the parents of your children you know they are 'wonderful'. But from the bottom of our hearts, we at MIC do genuinely believe that we've been

blessed with 'easy' children. We don't mean that they are a push-over, we mean that all the children are genuine characters who all have their hearts in the right place. It makes teaching a zillion times easier when they are as positive as this.

What are Project Wednesdays?

Project Wednesdays, are after lunch activities that run from 1.45-3.00pm. The idea behind this is to provide an environment which is more 'real' and provides a context for children to use their learnt skills.

If that sounded like a load of academic-ese then let's try it again in English.

Each Pod embarks on projects which tend to combine many skills or intelligences that are required to do the project well. Typically the projects reflect something that seems to reflect what happens in the 'real' world and children can therefore see the relevance of using 'maths' or 'social skills', or 'good spelling'.

Examples of our projects last year were:

- Establishing a Pot Plant Business
- Having a 'sound-effect' choir
- Animal survey and possible habitat construction for indigenous species.
- A print & video social marketing campaign revolving around global warming.

Sometimes the projects will continue thematically across the terms for the whole year.

How is MIC Run?

At the *Multiple Intelligence Centre* we are not only trying to be at the forefront of educational innovation, but also to try and be at the forefront of school administration and management. We'd like to explain what we have set up and why we did it this way.

We have an 'inner management circle' (IMC), which consists of a minimum of two and can go up to four senior staff members. Selection is by invitation only. These are the most senior positions at MIC. There is no 'Principal' as such. The current IMC are the three founders of MIC, Rusila Jioji, Sofia Koroj and Robin Taylor. Within the IMC we have different areas of responsibility that match our strengths (or intelligences if you will). All major decisions are discussed at the IMC level. However, in the case of an emergency where a decision must be made straight away, any member of the IMC can take an executive decision.

OK now why did we set up MIC this way? The answer is that we've all experienced schools which function excellently when there is a good Principal, but the same school can not only lose their vision but may even collapse when there is a bad Principal. From the start we have a vision of laying the foundation of an education Centre that will be bringing excellent teaching to children in 70-90 years time (our target is our great or great-great grandchildren).

Our solution therefore is to have a small group of 'Principals'. If one of them happens to be weaker than we would ideally prefer, then this can be countered by the strengths of the others.

The potential 'weakness' of this model is that decisions may take longer to come to because we work through a consensus or failing this, a majority. To counter this we tend to invite only those to join the IMC who we feel we

can 'trust' to share the same vision for MIC.

We also have two trustees to the Centre. We like to think of these trustees as the 'moral' guardians of the Centre. They receive biannual reports on the activities of MIC and make commentaries and recommendations to the IMC.

And what of the role of parents in the management of MIC? Parents are of course considered partners in terms of the education of the children at MIC, however they have no direct management role at MIC. Having said that, of course we welcome and encourage suggestions to the IMC at any time and in any format. Of course parents have the ultimate say in the longevity of MIC by being able to vote with their feet! In other words we are really constantly on trial and answerable to parents in the long run.

You may though ask how do projects realistically help children in a learning environment? You may hear of 'integrated learning', or 'holistic learning', or 'embedded tuition', and even if these are truisms, they do sound a lot like a techno-speak. However, there is ample educational research to back up the observation that children have higher motivation to learn when the learning takes place in an environment which uses a variety of skills that interlink together and which they know happens in the real world. In other words the activity feels like a valid one to them.

Extending our Survival Skills

Last year we spent a considerable amount of time building up our 'Survival Swimming' programme. That is teaching our children to eventually be able to cope with either being swept away by a fast river or rip-tide current, or to be able to cope with a boat capsizing. If you are expecting your child to learn how to swim all the different strokes and how to swim fast, then you should bring them to a swimming club. At MIC we teach them to conserve energy, tread water for longer periods of time, duck dive (to get under wreckage), orientate 'upwards' if they are unexpectedly thrown into water and learning not to panic. See the box below for a reminder of equipment that children are advised to have for this programme.

Reminder of Swimming Classes Equipment

- Swim goggles
- Especially for the girls, a one piece swimsuit, especially ones that have straps that cross at the back (or are joined in the middle) to prevent the inevitable strap slippage.
- Otherwise (and for the boys too) a 50-60+ PF long sleeved swimming top, this is a snug fitting top that effectively keeps the sun at bay. Saves on sunscreen!
- Aqua-ear - ear drops that help dry out the ear of water. Available from most chemists.

At the end of last year we started to introduce our other survival skills: road awareness & safety; and bush walking. For both activities our children need sensible walking shoes. They don't quite need tramping shoes, but something like sensible 'trainers' (or 'canvas' as is said here in Fiji) that can be worn with socks, will suffice. Our initial programmes are about 20-30 minute walks, but these will extend eventually to longer periods up to several hours.

What are Apprentice Thursdays?

Our 'apprentice' programme started towards the end of Term 3 and then throughout Term 4 last year. We are feeling our way through this gradually but in essence our Thursday afternoon programmes are where children from the different Pods but with similar interests or intelligence strengths, get together with a 'Master' in order to become an 'apprentice' and learn from the

Parents Wanted!!!

If you feel you'd like to actively participate in helping out in MIC we would be very happy to have you help us out, particularly for our Survival Tuesdays. We try to keep our ratios of adult eyes over seeing our children at about 1 for every three-four children.

Master some set of skills that will stretch them. Last year our experts were of course ourselves as teachers and included painting and handicraft, but also basket weaving and traditional broom construction (a *sasa* broom). One might think of it as a 'hobby' day but in fact our children are assessed for signs of their engagement and their apparent progress in the area of expertise.

Apprentices Seeking Masters?

Perhaps you know someone who is a 'master' in some skill or trade. Perhaps it is you? If so would you (or the person you know) want to take on two or three pupils? Perhaps you are a 'black belt in origami', or you can play the nose flute like no other, or you can build working model hovercraft, or you are an expert in cats cradle. It is not important that the skill or expertise be 'academic'. It is more important that the 'master' has a demonstrated skill level that shows a higher level of proficiency than most people. We want our children to experience activities in which skilled performance or activity is demonstrated and that our children stretch themselves to achieve high levels of performance.

If you think you or an acquaintance would be interested in becoming an MIC 'master' then please see us. We would love to hear from you.

Environmentally Aware & Responsible Pupils

One of our core aims is to install an awareness of environmental issues and to eventually take ethical and moral decisions with regard to the environment. Do not worry, that does not mean that they are being instructed to become radical environmental activists placing themselves between harpoons and whales! Rather we want them to have enough awareness that they consider what impact they have when they simply throw things away, or to be aware that it's probably a good idea to turn the lights off when they are not used as it's nice for the electric bill and it's nice for the environment too.

One of the ways that we are doing that is by trying to model the behaviour ourselves. For instance we are starting to get big on recycling material. You may remember from last year that we were asking for all your empty cartons and glass jars, and plastic bottles, to be used for our arts & crafts activities.

Recently we've asked Coca Cola to give us some bins for their bottles and their aluminium cans. So we now have collection points for them. Coca Cola actually take

Talking with our Australian volunteer teacher Vanessa Maginnis

Q. *What has been your impressions of MIC since arriving here in July last year?*

A. Well for one thing I felt very at home because the school I was working in NSW has a very similar ethos behind it. Of course because MIC is just starting, much of what my old school has in teaching resources is not available at the present. However, the staff here are making an incredible effort to use everything. Probably it would be fair to say that the teachers here are a lot more resourceful because they have to be.

Q. *What has surprised you for the school.*

For me, in Australia we have been working with a new concept called 'authentic assessment' a fancy way of saying that the assessment is more child centred and focussed on their demonstrated abilities. I was surprised that MIC's

teachers are already doing this in a very matter of fact way.

I think too of one of the first things we did shortly after I arrived, namely to do our night field trip. How brilliant is that for a child to be 'at school' whilst hunting for mud crabs?

Q. *What brought you to MIC?*

A. I'm part of the Australian Youth Volunteer Programme. So really it's the Australian government that is paying for me to be in this wonderful but hot country.

Q. *How's your stay been?*

A. Well since we're talking about the heat!! I'm being teased because even though I fainted on the first few days of being in Fiji, I thought it was not too bad. However, I did arrive in July which of course is the middle of winter. Now though!! I feel like I could start melting any moment now.

Q. *So will you miss us when you have to leave?*

A. Of course, being here is something I'll never forget. The children here are absolute characters. And of course there's a special energy in starting up something new. I could not have met or learnt about Fiji the way I have as a tourist. MIC is totally cool. I must say though I will not miss the mosquitoes!



the PET bottles and aluminium cans away and then weigh the total amounts and give us a small refund for the materials that we've saved. So the more plastic bottles or containers you give us (strictly it's supposed to be PET bottles, most likely from Coke's own brand but don't sweat it too much), or aluminium cans, the more that we can do something good for the environment and earn a bit for the Centre.

In addition, if you have used newspapers or colour magazines, then please bring them along. Our (older) children read reasonably current newspapers for current affairs (if the newspaper is only a few days old) and other children cutting out magazine pictures to make collages and so on. Eventually of course we put the unused or finished paper into our paper recycling bin which also gets picked up.

Please help us to instil good environmental habits into the children. Remember we're keen on:

- Plastic (PET) bottles and containers

- Aluminium cans
- Glass containers
- Newspapers
- Other paper/light cardboard
- Old clothes

Term Dates

Our term dates have shifted somewhat from those planned initially at the end of last year. Last year we had 40 weeks of tuition for the year. This year we've changed that to be 39 weeks. The reason is that this allows us to finish at the same time as the Fiji schools. We did find that last year half our school left a week early because family and friends in the Fiji schools had already finished. So we're taking our lead from the experience last year.

Term 1: 26th January – 3rd April (10 weeks)

Term 2: 20th April – 26th June (10 weeks)

Term 3: 13th July – 18th September (10 weeks)

Term 4: 5th October – 4th December (9 weeks)

Staying in Contact

Our web site visit: <http://www.intelligencefiji.org> or email: info@intelligencefiji.org.

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A/H, Ms. Rusila Jioji (907 6506),
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Our new tel/fax # (waiting for Telecom to finally fix it up) is: 337 2289

If you would like to write to us other than electronically, please write to PO Box 18722, Suva, Fiji.

More information on the Web Pages

Our web pages (in 'pdf' format) now include:

- [MIC Parents Brochure](#)
- [Enrolment Form](#)
- [MIC curriculum](#) (final version for this year)
- [A school promotional leaflet](#)
- [Intelligent News Vol. 1.](#)
- [Intelligent News Vol. 2](#)
- [Intelligent News Vol. 3](#)
- [Intelligent News Vol. 4](#)
- [Intelligent News Vol. 5 \(this newsletter\)](#)