

Intelligent News

27 December 2010 Vol. 7



News from Multiple Intelligence Centre

Welcome to our newsletter for the end of the year at 2010. This is an opportunity for us to reflect on the year that's been and look forward to next year at our pioneering and exciting school.

In this issue:

- We moved! We had pretty much outgrown our location at Nararo Rd. and have moved to McGregor Road just on the outskirts of Suva's CBD.
- Our second Australian youth volunteer Lise McCabe had to leave us half way through the year as her year had come to a close. As before with Vanessa her predecessor, we tried our best to tie her down to us but unfortunately she had to get on the plane regardless.
- Lise has been responsible of co-developing an innovative music curriculum that has broad educational implications beyond just 'music'.
- We introduced our 'language' classes with a very strong linguistic scientific underpinning.
- A 'PTA' was established called the '*Friends of MIC*'.
- We have co-developed a radical PE programme that is relevant for the 21st century.
- We took part in the second Fiji Literacy & Numeracy Assessment (LANA).
- We have made significant changes to the foundation of our 'maths' programme.
- We started a marketing/advertising/branding campaign for MIC.
- And more... but our newsletter can only go on for so long!

Numeracy

From the beginning we've always been keen to develop an educational programme that took away the 'pain' that most people experience when they think of 'maths'. In the very first Volume of 'Intelligence News' we announced our intention to make maths relevant beyond just the exercises in the 'maths class room'.

During one of our workshops during the summer break of 2009-2010, we had a conceptual breakthrough that we really should re-conceive our maths curriculum to be mainly concerned about *quantities*. We came to realise that most people in everyday life need to work with quantities, size, area and volume, mostly for trade, commerce and bartering. In fact we recognised that

many of our young adults today do not work well with quantities. We have had more than several experiences of young shop keepers resorting to a calculator to work out what the change should be for an item that cost \$6 and a \$10 bill was handed over; or another where three items costing \$20 each required a calculator, and even then the numbers were punched in wrong, so the answer remained wrong!

We also considered which of us used, or knew people that used advanced trigonometry or calculus in their adult life. None of us do, and we don't know people who do either unless they are a school teacher.

This made us consider that our focus needs to be on the study of 'quantities' which has been given the title 'Numeracy'. This is a modern trend in other countries too. Working with quantities can be quite informal and 'rough' but it remains a viable way of working. A 'precise' way of working with quantities is of course the science that we know as mathematics.

Having a solid grounding, particularly in the informal workings with quantities, will actually make any future formal mathematic studies in late secondary or tertiary education, actually easier because children will have a 'feel' for what the numbers represent, rather than rote learning meaningless formulas and mathematical strategies.



Pod 2 using their 'informal' quantities to measure lengths of beams to construct their traditional Fijian Bure.

We remain committed however, to formal maths most particularly in arithmetic, algebra (transformations, think exchange rates), and statistics.

In summary:

- Our maths programme has become 'Numeracy'.
- It includes 'informal' working with quantities as well as the more formal 'maths' components.
- The focus is on having a *fluency* with quantities to be able to quickly and efficiently do mental calculations that most adults use everyday in life.

Second Language

This year saw the introduction of our second language based programme. We were lucky to have the input and guidance of a published linguistics academic, Dr. France Mugler formerly from the *University of the South Pacific*, to help us to develop this programme. The highlights of which are:

- Children are learning a new language which means that they feel awkward and constrained when trying to communicate in this language.

- We want to take that awkward experience to sensitise them to have empathy when others try to communicate with them outside of their own native language. Since the world is becoming more global, this is inevitable.
- Following on from this point, we want to base their second language learning around practical verbal communication, rather than correctly written language and/or literature.
- Our language classes are based around food, both preparation and eating of food in a social setting – everyone can relate to this the world over.
- About three quarters of our children are learning Fijian. The other quarter who can already speak or understand fluent Fijian are learning Rotuman. All our children are thus exposed to a new language.
- We have started negotiations with the Chinese Embassy so that we could start the same programme for all children in our future secondary school (to start in 2012) in Mandarin, currently the most spoken language in the world.

Although we believe that we are on a leading edge of second language instruction, perhaps what is most exciting about this programme is that it has a strong

Comparing Your Child's Progress with Other Children?

Which parent does not consciously or unconsciously compare the progress of their child compared to other children. We want to be re-assured that there's nothing 'wrong' with our children if they appear to be slower at learning to read (say), than we can remember ourselves learning to read, or what we assume children at a certain age should be able to do.

And of course there's a pride issue. It's hard not to feel a certain amount when our child seems to be 'ahead' of where most children are in their art work (say) of the same age.

However, if you find you're comparing the progress of your child who is learning with us at MIC, to other children who are attending other schools, especially the Fiji state schools, you may be in for a rude shock. Many parents feel that their children who attend schools similar to MIC are 'behind' compared to children attending conventional 'chalk & talk' schools.

Please be re-assured that your child is NOT 'falling behind'.

The difference between our teaching and that of the conventional schools is that we teach with a heavier emphasis on *understanding*; the conventional schools teach with a far heavier emphasis on *facts & figures*.

So your child may not know their 'ABC' as quickly as their cousins in conventional schools. They may not know their 'times tables' as quickly either. The difference is most noticeable



Johnny Narawa, explaining his art sculpture (the pink brain to his left) to a critical audience. Part of his 'real world' assessment – 'people skills'.

from Pods 2-5 age ranges. However, it is at about Pod 6 age that children in our style of teaching have a dramatic 'catch up' on the facts and figures and perform as well as children in the conventional schools in formal assessments. After this age, children taught using the same approach as us, exceed the performance of children from conventional schools. To say nothing of the fact that formal assessments done at a national or international standard still only measure something like 2/5ths or 1/3rd of the 'stuff' that we teach. There is no formal assessment done for instance in 'people skills' and yet this is an obvious ability that predicts future success in child.

To summarise, if you have been tempted to compare your child with other children at the same age but in another school, you may feel that your child is 'behind'. However, you should not fret this is normal and it does NOT mean that your child is 'behind'.

Having said all of that, if last year's LANA results (then called FILNA) are anything to go by, our children at MIC are doing more than ok compared to their peers (see LANA article later).

underlying scientific linguistic ‘reason’ to justify why we’re doing it this way. It’s not perfected yet, but we have already made significant strides. Comments from you MIC’s parents, suggest that it is making a significant impact on the children.

PE Programme

We’ve been very creative and busy with Master Jone Koroi in creating what we believe is a first in Fiji, and probably the first in the Pacific region, a ‘Physical Education’ programme that actually makes educational sense. Our break through came when we started to recognise that ‘PE’ is often perceived as a subject or topic that is really preparing athletes and sports people. Many times it is used as a way to give less academically (meaning ‘book-wormish’) inclined students. A well known phenomenon is that schools use ‘PE’ as a ‘buffer’ subject. This is the one that can be easily used if children need additional or extra revision for exams.

Instead we’ve taken the idea that ‘PE’ should actually be a focus on one’s health. Specifically the health in middle aged and older people. Health reports are increasingly showing that with our increasingly desk bound or TV watching lifestyle, people are becoming more and more prone to chronic diseases that can still lead to dramatic

episodes, such as heart attack, strokes, cancer, diabetes and so on; these habits are set up during childhood.

We think ‘PE’ would be more appropriately called ‘Physicality Education’, to stand for the idea of focussing on one’s actual body health. There are three indices to focus on:

- Aerobic endurance – this is an indicator of capillary growth which means good blood supply to feed your body tissues and efficiently take away toxins.
- Functional strength – meaning in particular the ability to lift your own body such as climbing a rope, pulling yourself up from a ledge, or being able to push up your body weight. This training improves body posture meaning that internal organs are properly supported and not folding or crushing each other. This type of training has also been shown to increase bone density meaning that osteoporosis (‘fragile bones’, frequently seen in post-menopausal women) is significantly reduced.
- Flexibility – indicating that all joints are moving across all three dimensions that they are capable of, and this reduces the tendency for cartilaginous or even bone ‘spurs’ to reduce mobility in later life (thus avoiding hip replacements for example).

Assessment at MIC

One of the common questions (and even concerns) that parents often have told us is how we assess the children’s learning. Some of the comments make us realise that this is a genuine concern for two principle reasons:

1. how do we genuinely ‘know’ how the children are doing if they are not subjected to “rigorous standardised testing”; and
2. how will children be able to leave MIC and enter into another institution such as a tertiary educational institution such as USP here in the Pacific, or a reputable New Zealand or Australian university?

These are of course legitimate questions and the answer are not easy to explain in a short summary. However, here is an attempt to do just that.

Firstly, we practice a form of assessment that is more commonly known as ‘continuous assessment’. This means that actually the children are pretty much being assessed every time we ask a child a question in class, they are being assessed. We do this because it enables us to do micro-adjustments to our teaching for not just the individual child, but also the whole class. After all we might realise if the whole class does not seem to understand a concept we thought we had taught, then

the odds are that we didn’t teach it well enough for them to ‘get it’. Compare this to a strategy where teachers will ‘push ahead’ in order to complete their curriculum and then have the children take a ‘test’ perhaps a few times in the term at best.

We still do the ‘tests’ that parents would recognise, but we do not make a big deal of them; partly to avoid getting anxious about ‘exams’. In addition is we use the tests to help us identify whether a child needs additional help because they did not seem to understand a concept. Compared to a traditional test taking scenario where the test is given and then the scores for the whole class are given out in rank order (who came first, who came second etc). Our children pretty much do this comparison by themselves so we don’t need to highlight this.

Secondly we think very hard about our own assessments. In fact we design our assessment as part of our educational design process. It works like this:

1. We consider what the end benchmarks or goals are.
2. We figure out how we can assess that the children have attained these benchmarks.
3. We then ‘teach to the test’ because our ‘test’ is the assessment designed in point 2 above.

For instance, one of our end goals or bench marks is that children should be ‘safe’ in river currents whether it is wading through a river, or swimming in one (perhaps because one has fallen in). We absolutely **know** that a child can do this if they actually can wade or swim in a river. Our assessment therefore is to swim in a river with significant current. Finally, we teach our children the swimming survival skills that would enable them to actually do this assessment. When our children were swimming in the river at Sawani they were actually doing their ‘exam’. This kind of assessment is called ‘authentic assessment’. Compare this perhaps with a more traditional approach where children would have been taught at the black board how to wade and swim in the river. They would have been assessed by reading a question and writing the ‘answer’ on their exam paper. We think you’ll agree that our assessment has more validity than the latter.

But when it’s all said and done, of course children still need to have some assessments that allow outside organisations and institutions to know if our students can be accepted into their organisations. We have to this end, always stated that we will be having our children take standardised tests and assessments that allow them to enter these institutions. This is particularly relevant to our children leaving in after Class 12. Although we do not have a Class 12 (yet),

we have already started this process of taking standardised assessments. In another box you can read about our children who have taken the Fiji 'Literacy & Numeracy Assessment' test that was given out nationally for Class 4 & 6. English & maths being the two common denominators in all English speaking post secondary school educational organisations.

Some parents give us comments that suggest that our assessments are somehow 'soft' and 'subjective'. This could not be further from the truth. Our

assessments are really 'objective' since these are measured to bench-marks that are described in concrete actions (for those that want the technical terms it is called 'criterion referenced assessment'). Since we publish these benchmarks in fact our parents have a more transparent system compared to the closed 'examination' system of traditional schools (their system until recently is called 'norm referenced assessment'). In other words we are open to criticism or questions about our benchmarks and assessment systems.

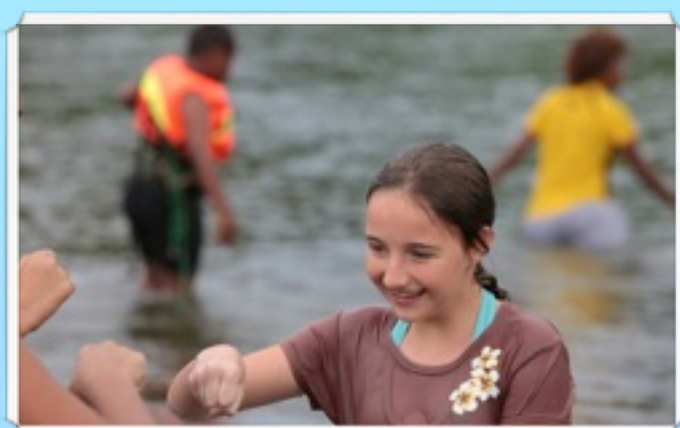
Whilst we adore the children that come to MIC and tend to think of them as part of our family, we certainly do not shy away from telling them if they have not achieved a benchmark. We figure it is better that they hear it from 'friends & family' rather than be molly-coddled through their educational life and then achieve a rude awakening when they either do not get hired for a job, or if they do, they subsequently lose it for incompetence. In other words our assessment are far from 'soft'. You can find our benchmarks on our 'Downloads' pages on our web page.

Survival Swimming Exam in Waimanu River in Sawani

At the end of Term 4, we took ourselves off to Waimanu River to do our 'river' swimming assessment. As you remember our focus is on teaching our children to learn to swim to survive. One of the scenarios we think is relevant is if they were accidentally knocked over, or fell into a river. Of course the only way to actually 'test' this is to place them into a river with a significant current. We chose the Waimanu river at Sawani because at least two of our teachers (Mrs. Jioji and Mrs. Tuilada) know the area well having been students of ACS. A traditional approach was made to Sawani Village who were very hospitable and welcomed us to use a relevant section of the river.

Our first attempt to do the river assessment was postponed due to heavy continuous rain that made the river too full of water. A week later though the levels had fallen sufficiently for us to go. We split the children up into two groups, the first were the younger children who's task was to simply feel the current of the river. Complete with life jacket and rope attached, we had them under the supervision of two teachers, one holding the rope and the other in the water to whom the child had to wade to.

The second group of older stronger children had to actually swim across the river, and of course back again! Each child was accompanied by one of the teachers swimming on their downstream side giving them verbal instructions and encouragement. In addition we had teachers stationed to 'catch' the child should they not have made the side of the river bank if their swimming was too weak. On top of that we also had a number of the men from Sawani village who graciously donated their time to stand down stream from our last line to catch anyone who managed to slip past us. Fortunately none of these precautions were ever seriously tested.



Some parents were justifiably concerned about the safety issues in the environment that we were doing our 'exam'. We were too, hence any time that a child was in the water, we had at least 6 adults looking out for their welfare. Compare that to conventional supervision at a swimming pool where a single teacher is often in charge of many children (our own ratio is not more than 1 teacher for 8 children, we see even higher ratios at the Aquatic Centre - 1:20). So despite appearances to the contrary, our children were safer than they would be at the Aquatic centre where we do our weekly swimming, and yet they were experiencing the 'real' situation. After all it is hard to experience a river current in a swimming pool!

Our aim is to provide a standard set of indices that can be used as a bench mark for the children to leave our school with. This enables them to monitor their own progress as they get older. A good example, most of us were probably able to stretch and reach our toes with straight legs when we were younger children. Not many of us as older people can – and then wonder why we are prone to back ache, slipped discs and so on!

What you will notice with this training is that we do not focus on 'sports' in the PE section, but exercises and drills to enhance: endurance, functional strength and flexibility. This has been an ongoing and exciting development throughout this academic year, many of you have seen parts of this when we have done a number of assessments down at the national stadium.

Some of you may feel however, that a focus away from 'sports' in PE surely misses out on the many benefits that playing competitive sport offers.

We agree!

That is way 'sports' we believe is more appropriately part of 'strategic thinking' and 'teamwork'. We play a team sport ('netball football') and then doing a de-brief afterwards to analyse each of the player's contributions. We aim to expand these skills so that children start seeing the connections between their sporting achievements and how the same principles extend out into their lives outside of sport.

LANA

Stands for 'Literacy & Numeracy Assessment' and is administered by the Ministry of Education. Last year the acronym was FILNA ('Fiji Intermediate Language & Numeracy Assessment') and was developed with specialists from an

AusAID sponsored education programme. This is effectively replacing the Intermediate examinations and places Fiji more in line with the educational practices of Australia and New Zealand. It's purpose is to help identify which benchmarks individual children are currently achieving. Individual schools and their teachers can decide which of these benchmarks have been achieved or not. It is not supposed to be a 'comparative' test. In other words one is not supposed to be making judgements ONLY with respect to comparing a child's score with either the average of their class, or indeed the national average. However, since this information is also provided for by the Ministry of Education, this makes it hard not to do just that.

Like last year we had our children in Pods 4 & 6 take the LANA assessment. Unfortunately the Ministry has still not given back the results of the test – which makes the point of it rather useless. However, we suspect that these are still early days in this new and appropriate assessment process, but we're hoping that next year they will be on time to be of practical use.

Last year the results were out between our term 3 & 4. Our results were above average for both numeracy and literacy in Pod 6. The numeracy in Pod 4 was around the national average. However the literacy for Pod 4 was significantly above the national averages of Class 6!

In other words, we are confident that particularly in the areas of 'English' and 'Maths' our children are more than capable compared to their peers in the rest of the country. Even though we're not supposed to making comparisons ... we're just saying! ☺

Friends of MIC

In May, a spontaneous meeting of parents held at one of the parents house resulted in a sort of school's parent association being formed which is called '*Friends of MIC*'. This was formally adopted in June. It consists of both parents and relative and/or people who are keen and interested in helping out at MIC at a logistical, administrative, marketing and internal and external communications strategy. Concerns raised are brought to the attention of MIC's '*Inner Management Circle*' which currently consists of the three founders; but more importantly solutions to overcome these concerns are also suggested. The Friends of MIC meet approximately once a month.

The results are amazing (proving that our talented children probably have had an influence from home!) in that we have been given advice on Marketing and Advertising (see below), legal matters pertinent to MIC such as our status as a not-for-profit institution, financial control and running of MIC, as well as advice on better internal and external communications.

Marketing/Advertising/Branding

As you know, our funding is entirely from private investments and school fees. We receive no central government grants. As such we are dependant on having sufficient numbers to justify both the location that we are currently at, as well as the number of teachers that we employ. We have been receiving a great number of compliments from yourselves as our existing parents (thank you for this) including passing on these compliments to other friends and family who've come to consider MIC as a option for their child's progressive education.

Never the less we are currently at a 'bottleneck' where we need to grow slightly faster than we currently are (about 10 additional students per year). So we have

Road Crossing Skills

Sadly Fiji 'enjoys' the statistic for having a very high per capita road accident rate. People both on and off the road, appear to have no real conception of the danger that they are in with the introduction of cars and heavy goods vehicles on the road. We have always been of the opinion that children need active tuition to walk and cross the road. We previously taught this in 'static' places on a safe street and simply have the children go through a drill to cross the road and back again.

Our move to McGregor Rd. has helped us to change this instruction into something that is more realistic. The route to walk to the Aquatic Centre where our weekly swimming classes are held, provides a number of roads to cross and yet we could remain in complete control of the children during this exercise. Pods 1&2 continued to take the bus and the children's bags down to the Aquatic Centre.

At least three teachers accompanied the children down with two large prominent traffic cones. One would be placed in the middle of a big road along with a teacher. Children were instructed to make their own decisions as to when to cross, but we were always on hand to 'yank' them to safety should the need have arisen either verbally or physically. We had to employ verbal instructions forcefully from time to time but we never had to pull, harms way! The walk and road crossings occurred in all weathers, sun or rain, since this of course represents 'real' life.

Our aim is no less than 100% safe road crossing skills by the children, since anything less in real life is probably the last chance they would get.



Our Art Volunteer advisor Gwen Davidson

MIC had the incredible good fortune to meet Gwen Davidson who is an interior designer by profession and came with her husband Bruce who was involved in various development projects in the Pacific. Gwen generously donated some of her precious time in Fiji to help us with our various art projects. She started to work with us in the last part of 2009.

Perhaps because of Gwen's training as an interior designer, she seemed to 'click' into our curriculum aims of not considering 'art for art's sake'. Rather we have a strong focus on art being the medium to transfer emotional messages. Think of the way that a movie is filmed, the words that are used in a story, the musical instruments and style of playing in a song or instrumental piece, or the colours, strokes and shapes used in a painting or sculpture.

Gwen herself continued to profess no knowledge of teaching 'art' but the results speak for themselves. Our children had exposure to a talented artist (in the true sense of the word) who was adaptable and able to work with different mediums with different ages of children doing projects which had strong art components.

For instance, Pod 6 this year did repeat of last year's Pod 6 where they had to create a three dimensional structure of their own design. However, Gwen recognised that too much freedom to chose a topic can often create a mental block especially for children

her time with these pods talking about page layout design, including proportions, focus, impact and so on. The children could then focus their actual newspaper production incorporating these features.



Gwen helping Emi in the construction of a water technology diorama project.

who don't quite know where to start. So with the help of Ms. Tuilada, Pod 6s teacher, When established a focus on body parts that would be incorporated into a sculpture.

Pod 4&5 this year focussed on media and aimed to produce a 'newspaper'. Gwen spent

Pod 7 had a diorama to produce on water technology. Gwen spent the first half of the year focussing on the idea of 'story telling' in art (since the diorama is supposed to 'explain' something which has a story like structure), as well as giving children exercises and small project activities to do with scale and proportions.

She also helped Mrs. Jioji's Pod 3 in their project in creating their own 'Alphabet' book that they were constructing out of cloth and other different textures.

This kind of exposure, limited as it was to once or a few times a week, can only be described as priceless. Sadly, Gwen's husband's time in the Pacific has

run out, so she must return to Australia. However we've all learned much more about how to go about bringing our Art curriculum to life in new exciting and innovative ways.

Vinaka vakalevu Gwen, Moce mada!

been trying a number of strategies to promote and advertise ourselves to other potential parents. These included:

- A 30 second television commercial that was shown for a week in early October at prime viewing time (between 6-7:30). These placements were kindly donated by Shiri Ram (Akaash Ram-Nath from Pod 2's father) and his company *Art & Soul*. If you missed these adverts and want to see them please check the web pages where you'll find YouTube videos of them.
- A small campaign that ran in the *Fiji Times* towards the last half of October, that asked questions to peak one's curiosity and then directed readers to our web site for the answers.
- Posters designed (again by *Art & Soul*), and printed by Pacific Building Solutions, or PBS, to hang in relevant locations around Suva's CBD that were eye catching and again pointed people to the web site.
- The web site was successively redesigned with a clearer focus on where to find the relevant content.

- An article written by MIC's curriculum director in the *Fiji Times*, concerned about education matters in general. The articles do not always relate to MIC directly the article's author is always associated with MIC as part of the 'branding' between progressive education and MIC. A blog is also kept with the same and similar other articles (links can be found from the web site's first page).

Most of these items can be found on our web site or links to the relevant section. If you have any great ideas as to how we could do this even better, please let us know.

In the meantime it remains the case that the best 'advertising' is word of mouth. So please let friends and colleagues know that we exist as an option, without having to sound like you're trying to sell them something. We have both brochures and business cards if you feel that this is easier to hand out than explain, then please ask for them. We're hoping that if they come to the web site they will be intrigued enough to take it from there, so that remains our current strategy.

Change of Name

When we first thought of a name for MIC, we wanted to make an impact and to stand out. We certainly did that, but perhaps not quite in the way we intended. Specifically because we had the word 'Centre' in it, we learned that many people thought that we were either:

- A division of the US's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); or
- We were a 'special' school set up for children with special needs.

Our reasoning for choosing 'Centre' was to avoid many children's negative perceptions 'school', such as: it's boring; it's hard; it's full of bullies; the teachers aren't human and so on! However, with feedback, we've come to realise that in the end, it's really the perception of the parents that count in making a decision to consider sending their child to MIC or not. If they don't even consider us because they think we're either CIA or an exclusive school for special children, then this is not productive despite our reasoning.

Long story short, from next year we'll be changing our name and branding to substitute the word 'Centre' for 'School'. So we will be the *Multiple Intelligence School* (or MIS).

At the same time we've been given some professional help from a graphic artist from Pacific Building Solutions who is trying to re-imagine our logo which has the two features of having a dolphin in it (to represent 'intelligence') and a compass (to represent our teaching style as being as a 'guide' or 'signpost'). Two versions we're considering at the moment are:

Either way we think that next year's 'MIS' will be excitingly different but still recognisably the 'MIC' that we started.



Coming for Next Year

Robin Taylor based at MIC

From next year co-founder Robin Taylor will be essentially based full time at school. Up until now, Robin has been based both at the 'back end' of the school from his home office helping to set up and liaise with various organisations and individuals, along with being physically at school between $\frac{1}{4}$ and a $\frac{1}{3}$ of the normal class time helping out in class activities as well as running teacher workshops and developing the curriculum. Most of this was possible in the first two

years of school because Nararo Rd. is just opposite his house. This year, since moving to McGregor Rd. the contact was kept going through modern ICT. Moving full time into MIS, will enable Robin to focus on supporting the teachers with stronger 'hands-on' approach to their teaching activities. This remains an unsalaried post.

"Outside School"

We fully intend to having one morning a week that is focussed on conducting school activities outside within our 'Gully' part of the school. This is focus that comes from Norwegian educational practice ('*Uteskole*') where the whole class takes it's lessons outside. The difference is that most of the activities can be thought of as continuing as they would in the 'normal' part of the school but topics are related to the environment that is right there in front of them. This fits in very well with our own focus on environmental awareness and responsibility.

Gully Development

We've been telling some of our parents about the 'Gully' at the back of the property. One of the reasons why we were so excited about moving into the McGregor Rd. property is the piece of land at the back which extends right down to the creek. We envisaged that we would be able to exploit this back part of the property as a nature reserve. At the very least we will put in a rough pathway down to the creek (but it will be biodegradable, so nothing in concrete). Our plans are:

- to do a species count in both plants and animals;
- to do nocturnal field trips to count the same in nocturnal habitats;
- for our older children to map the area complete with contour maps.
- to place bird and bat friendly homes to in the reserve;
- to plant more indigenous plant species and remove any foreign invasive species.
- particularly with our older children, to use the opportunity to help us expose to effective project management techniques.

Our next door neighbours at the school, by chance happen to be an international environmental secretariat for the Pacific region called *Birdlife International*. Like us, their property extends down to the creek. We are currently exploring opportunities to see what joint work we can do together. One of which is to extend our 'nature reserve' to include their section at the back. These are exciting times for real world projects.

Lise McCabe's contribution to MIC

MIC was lucky to be successful in attracting a second Australian Youth Volunteer who took over from our first Vanessa Maginnis, in July of 2009. Even luckier for MIC was that Lise was able to fill the large boots that Vanessa left.

Lise's own interests are in education, and in particular on leaving MIC, she returns to Australia to complete an education training programme in the Steiner philosophy.

She is also a musician and this is one area that some of our staff have good playing skills (or listening skills) but we are not so strong on the theoretical side of music or music instruction.

As in our Art programme in general, we have been keen to justify a music programme beyond simply 'art for arts sake'. So between

Lise and ourselves we kept on asking 'Why should our children learn music?'

We established that music is a very audible way to get feedback on the concept of 'synergy'. For those that remember their biology, chemistry of business theory, synergy is the process where adding things together gives something that is more than simply the sum of the parts added together. For instance, two voices in opera (or pop song) when sung in harmony combine and a third 'voice' is heard. You cannot hear 'half' of that third voice by taking away one of the actual 'real' voices – both voices must be sung in harmony at the right time and volume in order to produce the effect of the harmony voice.

Synergy occurs of course most dramatically in social settings when people work effectively as a team. That is one of the main reasons that we're keen on teaching drama skills to our children, however, we realised that music instruction suddenly becomes an

'easier' medium in which to show case, practice, and refine team work skills.

Our music programme for all children therefore is as follows:

- We will focus on singing as the musical medium that all children must take part in.
- Children will learn to read musical notation. By Pod 12 they should be able to sight read music for singing with a few notes to correctly start off at the right pitch.
- We will work primarily on teaching to harmonies or variations of musical styles that show case 'synergy'.

Of course people become musicians other than singers, sometimes in a formal way to learn how to read music, sometimes 'by ear' alone. Either way our music programme will only enhance these musicians learning other musical instruments.

Class 8

Next year, of course will be the first year that we offer Class 8. We're excited by our growth year by year as we come to the end of another academic year.

Secondary School Application

Next year we will be submitting our application to the Ministry of Education to approve our secondary school recognition which will start in 2012.

As some of you know, we actually designed our secondary curriculum in broad outlines, in order for us to actually design our primary curriculum. This is known as 'Backwards Design'. There is no rocket science behind this; like plotting any course on a map, you actually have to state where you want to end up at the end of the journey before you can eventually consider in which direction you are going to start out from. So we knew right from the start that we were going to be opening a secondary school when the idea of MIC first started occurring to us in the middle of 2007.

What do MIC Staff do during the Long Break?

Everyone assumes that at MIC since the children are on a break, then so must we be. Of course we do take a break but actually we have lots of administration to clean up. We also habitually do a number of staff development workshops during each of our breaks. This year we are doing quite a few before Christmas and then a few after the New Year. Either way, we're looking forward to our break, but we hope that you and your family and loved ones have a happy and fulfilling Summer Break period.



Unsung Hero(ines)

MIC is amazingly fortunate to have a number of unsung heroes and heroines who help out, for either very little money, or many times for free. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

MIC is cleaned (as in mop, disinfectant etc) by Selai twice a week. Samu Bebe is our grass cutter.

Sefo and Jone have been frequent unpaid visitors and volunteers who come to help out particularly with the PE, but also to help prepare our garden beds etc.

Jone Koroi (snr)'s brother - donates much time and even equipment to help us in our small Pod plantations.

It is no over estimation to say that without these incredible unsung heroes MIC would be considerably 'poorer' in terms of the experience that we are able to offer our children.

THANK YOU.

Parent Activities: Games without Frontiers, Barbecue, Treasure Hunt & Family Day.

At the end of 2009 one of our parents (thank you Lynda) suggested that we really needed to have many more opportunities for parents in our small school to get together. We thought that this was a terrific idea and have now made it a core activity at least once a term specifically designed to bring parents together in a more social setting.

However, because we are so 'miserly' with our time with the children, we have always thought that such a teaching/learning opportunity was too valuable to 'waste'. So we've always tried to figure out a way to incorporate an aspect of our teaching in these activities.

In Term 1, we had an activity that was actually carried over from the end of 2009 which is MIC's version of 'Games without Frontiers', a television event that took hold in the '70s across Europe and then in the '80s in Australia. The children designed the games that teams of parents took part in. Unfortunately, the otherwise great event that took part in Albert Park, was marred by a pick pocket that stole from the bags left under the nearby tree. We felt that it was an unusual and unique event and one that we're keen to repeat – complete with guards to watch over any bags or clothes we may have!

In Term 2, we had a school barbecue which many of you helped by contributing food, or

money to help buy food and drink. At the time however, we forgot to mention that this event was jointly organised by the children with ourselves as facilitators. However, it was really the children's' show, not ours. We jointly put together entertainment items for parents to enjoy.

In Term 3, we had a 'Treasure Hunt' in which teams of parents and their children would go around MIC having been given a clue to take them to the next location where a further clue would occur. The route took us around the block with some twists and turns

us through to the skin. Despite the sodden weather, the atmosphere seemed very jovial and full of good humour. We had two parallel set of clues, one of the children (which revised aspects of their curriculum) and the other for the parents. Given that this was the first time we had tried this, we thought it went very well and are keen to try it again.

Finally in Term 4 we had a family activity day, where parents came in principally to help out to stick small pocket jackets into our reading books, construct small book shelves using recycled wood, and doing a small 'car boot sale'. Judging by the laughter and general atmosphere, it seemed to be a great success. We look forward to similar events in 2011.



every so often. Starting at 5pm, we finished about 3.5 hours later complete with tropical downpour to soak most of

Term Dates 2011

Please remember that children **come to school on the first Monday** of each term. Our 'teacher's day' occurs the week before.

- Term 1: 24th January – 1st April (10 weeks)
- Term 2: 18th April – 24th June (10 weeks)
- Term 3: 11th July – 16th September (10 weeks)
- Term 4: 3rd October – 2nd December (9 weeks)

More information on the Web Pages

Our web pages really is the place where we have more detail, more up to date stories and more links that explain what is happening, including:

- [MIC Parents Brochure 2011](#)
- [Enrolment Form](#)
- [MIC curriculum](#) (parent friendly version)
- [A school promotional leaflet](#)
- Most of the 'Intelligent News' newsletters including this one.
- Many of the class newsletters were written mostly just after the middle of term.
- A blog outlining education matters normally inspired by events going on at MIC.
- A 'parents' focussed web page.

For those that have been following our School newsletters, you'll have figured out that we're missing 'Vol. 6'. It does exist but hasn't been completed (ironically, given you're reading Vol. 7 already). Once it is, we'll let you know.

Staying in Contact

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