

## Newsletter No. 3

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## News from the Headteacher

By Eugenia Papadaki

Dear parents and school community members,

We welcome you to this 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of our newsletter which we hope you will enjoy reading and find useful information on school life, events and learning.

### **A quick glance at contents and news**

***A book review by a parent:*** we are pleased to welcome the contribution of a book review “Raising Emotionally Intelligent Children” by Mrs Elena Fontana, Matteo’s mum in Transition. It is very rewarding to know that parents are using our school library not only for borrowing books for their children but also as a resource for themselves. We will be happy to receive more feedback from parents on any other useful books they have read and wish to share, or on the use of our school library as a resource. A warm thank you to Mrs Fontana for this contribution.

***Pre-school classes new Pilot Project: Separation of Language contexts:*** On our return from the February break, a new pilot project on separation of the language of instruction contexts has been introduced to our two Pre-school classes. We would like to test the hypothesis that separate language contexts may have a positive impact on children’s bilingual development. This will entail the two English teachers teaching together and likewise for the two Italian teachers. Both classes will be getting equal English and Italian language instruction and exposure by organizing the week days accordingly. Teachers have developed a system for monitoring the outcomes of this pilot project and we hope to be able to report back to you with some concrete data towards the end of the school year.



*Pinguini’s class – End of the unit celebration*

***Language Awareness in Transition:*** Our Transition children have had some wonderful language and cultural learning experiences so far by hosting as part of their Language Awareness program languages such as Swedish, Czech and French Canadian. Parents native speakers of these languages have offered to run these courses and we wish to express our immense gratitude to them. The upcoming courses are going to be Rumanian, Greek, Irish and Russian.

***Gr6 Fundraising initiative for Japan earthquake victims:*** We are proud to share with you the news of our Gr6 students and teachers organizing a second hand toys/games/books and cake sale as a fund raising event for the Japan earthquake victims. This will take place on April 1<sup>st</sup> and we hope you will all support them generously in their caring effort for taking action.

### ***ECIS- ESL/MT Conference in Dusseldorf***



Eugenia and Chiara Colombo attended this ECIS, three day Conference at Dusseldorf from March 3<sup>rd</sup> to March 5<sup>th</sup>. The title of the conference was “*Promoting Linguistic Human Rights in International Schools: from Theory to the Classroom*”. The 400 or so participants had come from different international schools around the world and their shared area of interest was the education of second language or multilingual learners in International school settings. Some of the world known names in the field of Bilingual education were presenting their research findings and studies. We had the opportunity to speak personally to several of them and attended a consultation session to get feedback on specific areas of our program(e.g. language ratios, language policy, program evaluation tool). During this conference I was very honored to be asked by the ECIS to become a member of the ESL/MT committee Governing Board. This will be a great opportunity for our school to contribute in a concrete way to the wealth of learning and teaching experiences and knowledge in the International schools arena. The most significant message from this conference, we have brought back to share with you was that “Bilingual Learners thrive academically and personally when their Mother Tongue/s are integrated in the school curriculum and when their bi/multilingualism is developed beyond conversational competence levels and acknowledged by the school and parent community as an asset”.

Chiara will be sharing in greater detail with you her impressions and learnings from this experience.

***Feedback of academic performance from ex Play English and BSM students:*** January and February as we know are the months of school reports. We are delighted to share with you some very positive feedback communicated to us by parents of ex students of our school who now attend other Italian schools after completing their elementary or Middle school education at Play English. The parents of our ex pupils report that despite the different program of studies (PYP) and educational model(Bilingual Education) their children have attended, their Italian school reports with **high** grades in subject areas such as Italian, Maths, Science, Music, Humanities as well as English and Spanish need to be considered as valid and supportive evidence of a sound preparation for entry to the Italian school system. We feel very honored by this news and aside from congratulating our ex pupils for their successes, we would like to thank their parents for keeping in touch and offering us such valuable feedback.

***International School of Turin visit and future collaboration:*** During our February mid term break Dr Gloria Kauffman and Eugenia visited the International school of Turin which is another IBO World school. The purpose of our visit was to look at their PYP and MYP program and establish collaborative

relationships with another IB school on local territory. We spent some time talking to the head of school as well as to their PYP and MYP coordinators. As a result of our visit we have invited their MYP coordinator, Mr Jan Stipek, to offer us a training workshop and consultation with regards to the development of our Middle Years program. Mr Stipek will be coming to our school on April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> to work with our Middle school teachers and members of the educational leadership team.

**British student teachers: Amy and Lucie:** On March 22<sup>nd</sup> our two British student teachers ended their teaching practice experience at our school. We would like to thank both of them for the extra English language support they offered to our Pre-school classes and wish them the best of luck in their studies back home. Both Lucie and Amy are interested in coming back to join us during summer school so you may have the opportunity to meet them again soon. A big thank you goes to our two families who have hosted them during the months of their stay in Italy. Both Amy and Lucie have expressed numerous times how grateful they are and how much they have learned from this experience!

**Student teacher from Canada:** We are pleased to inform you that a student teacher from Canada will be joining us for a two week teaching experience in the elementary school towards the end of March beginning of April.

**Change of teachers in our Day Nursery:** We are sorry to have to say good-bye to Mrs Ana Mazenes, our Day Nursery teacher who will be going on early maternity leave at the end of this month. We thank Ana for her hard work and love to our little community of DN learners and wish her all the best with her pregnancy and preparation for the birth of her new baby.

**PYP curriculum night on Assessment in the PYP:** On February 17<sup>th</sup>, we held our second Curriculum night for our parent on "Assessment in the PYP". We hope that parents who attended found it useful, particularly since it was soon after receiving the pupil report cards. The aim of the presentation was to make parents aware of Assessment serving the purpose of informing our teaching practices and improving student learning and it highlighted how assessment in the PYP is different to traditional assessment methods and practices whose purpose to "judge" pupil performance and to grade students according to ability levels. Dr Gloria Kauffman will be writing a more detailed report on Assessment in one of the newsletters so parents who were unable to attend will have an opportunity to get some information on the subject.

**Article on the "The Childhood roots of adult happiness":** I have recently come across this interesting article and I thought of sharing it with you. I would like to thank Chiara Colombo for translating it in Italian for our newsletter.

**Coffee morning on Bilingualism: "Bilingualism is good for the Brain"** On March 16<sup>th</sup> we held a Coffee Morning for parents on the topic "Bilingualism is good for the brain" A video clip was also projected with some of our students speaking on their experiences and perceptions as language learners. Given the positive feedback and requests from parent participants, we have decided to upload the video clip onto our school's website and facebook page. For those of you who have not yet seen it here is the link. <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=10150460247525425>

The following topics were covered during the coffee morning:

- **Where is language stored in the brain?**
- **Some interesting facts from the field of neuro-linguistics and neuroscience**
- **Second Language Acquisition stages of development**

- **Bilingualism and intelligence**

- Bilingualism and creative thinking
- Bilingualism Cognition & Thinking- CUP, BICS, CALP
- What are the implications for learning in and through two languages?
- What can parents do to support their child's linguistic and academic development?
- So, is Bilingualism good for the brain? Latest research on brain ageing, mental dementia and Alzheimer's disease

Here is a brief report on the first four topics. The remainder will be covered in the next issue of the newsletter.

### **Where is language stored in the brain?**

In the field of neuroscience and neurolinguistics the human brain has been compared in these recent years to a computer with sophisticated hardwiring but with no software. The software of the brain, like the software of desktop computer, harnesses the exceptional processing capacity of the brain in the service of specialized functions such as the vision, smell, and language. All humans have to acquire or develop their own software in order to harness the processing power of the brain with which they are born. Certain areas of the brain with specialized functions are shaped by the fine interaction with the outside world and therefore by experience and learning. Learning by the brain is about making connections within the brain and between the brain and the outside world. So, when we receive a new input, this goes to a certain area of the brain which will set off certain wires(neurons) which will make connections to other areas of the brain where other pieces of information are stored; in this way the input is being processed and turned into new knowledge or learning. Neuroscientists are telling us that not all brains are the same and that certain areas of the brain that are important in specific domains of learning may change overtime. Through brain lateralization, which happens earlier on in life, we learn that most right handed individuals will have most language functions in the left hemisphere of the brain whereas there seems to be evidence of bilinguals making use of both left and right hemispheres. The left hemisphere is attributed functions such as analytical thinking, logic and language whereas the right hemisphere has the functions of holistic thinking, creativity and intuition. The way language is organized in the bilingual's brain has been the topic of many studies over the years and there still seems to be considerable controversy over whether factors such as age and context where the two languages are acquired may impact different areas of the brain or not.

### **Second language stages of acquisition and development.**

- ❖ silent period/receptive/pre-production stage(6 to 12 months)
- ❖ Early production stage: inter-language/language mixing (6 to 18 months)
- ❖ The separation language stage/speech emergence( 12 to 36 months)
- ❖ The intermediate Proficiency stage(24 to 36 months)
- ❖ The fluent/advanced Proficiency stage( after 2 or 3 years of consistent exposure)

All these stages refer to the development of oral communication skills in a second language or “Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills”-BICS as Jim Cummins, a well known researcher, has called it. A sound foundation in oral communication skills will enhance the development of “academic language proficiency” which involves the whole area of literacy learning and abstract thinking. An individual who has reached high levels of both oral language proficiency and academic language proficiency in the two languages is considered to be a fully developed balanced bilingual. This is an important consideration to be born in mind when the benefits of bilingualism are going to be discussed later on in this presentation.

### **Bilingualism and Intelligence**

A historical overview of the research in this area has indicated that, original negative outcomes -dated in the early 1900 and based on discriminatory and biased IQ tests- on bilinguals’ intelligence deficit over that of monolinguals, have been overruled by most recent research findings which, aside from using IQ tests with a broader view of the processes and products of cognition, have given evidence on bilingualism having net positive effects on intelligence. Bilinguals when compared to monolinguals demonstrated a greater mental flexibility, an ability to think in more abstract ways and superiority in concept formation. The plausible argument is that a more enriched bilingual and bicultural experience benefits the development of intelligence.

### **Reading: the importance of Background Knowledge**

*By Dr Gloria Kauffman*

Background knowledge is all that you as a reader bring to a book: your personal history, all you’ve read or seen, your adventures, the experiences of your day-to-day life, your relationships, and your passions. All of this becomes your background knowledge. You may have heard the saying “Things do not change, we change.” That might not be true with everything but it certainly is with reading. Background knowledge colors how people read. Readers can reread the same novel, poem, short story, or essay and have a very different reaction to it each time because of new and different life experiences in the interim. The meaning you get from a piece is intertwined with the meaning you bring to it. A layering occurs, a weaving of past and present, an amalgam of old and new ideas and experiences. As you read, sometimes you need to activate, or awaken, background knowledge, and sometimes you need to build upon it. You strengthen this process each time you read and each time you discuss what you’ve read. In addition, the very act of living your life adds to your background knowledge. Talking about your own background knowledge with your child is one of the great pleasures you can share. You can tell stories, start conversations, read a page or a paragraph and say, “This reminds me of the book I read, or this story I heard on the news...” or “That makes me remember when...” Sharing your background knowledge is a way to build stronger bonds with your children, to let them get to know you better and get to know them better. When you read with your young child, look at the book cover together, read the title, the author description, the text on the back of the book. Discuss what the book might be about, what you think about the book. If you read about a dog or cat, talk about any pets you had as a child. If you are reading about a city, tell about the first time you saw a high rise building, etc. or if you are a city person the first time you went to the country and realized there were open fields and forests. You might think you have nothing of interest to share with your child but your memories and childhood experiences are fascinating to your child. Immerse your child in your memories. It helps build background knowledge and strengthen your child’s grasp of language. Building background knowledge is also a way for you to help your child pursue a passion. Kids have an intense natural curiosity. When some topic strikes their fancy, they instantly become motivated to learn. They want to know more and more. You can encourage your child to make various connections around reading:

text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world. With text-to-self connections what you read reminds you of something from your own life. With text-to-text connections, what you read reminds you something else you have read or seen on television or at the movies. When text-to-world connections are made, what you read reminds you of something in the broader world. Books, articles, and stories that make you think about something beyond your own life help you create text-to-world connections.

### **For Preschool Readers:**

It is easy to encourage your preschooler child to make connections. Even very young connect their lives to words, ideas and pictures. Be encouraged when your child stops to talk about the time when... These interruptions are actually an excellent sign. Making connections is what good readers do. Give your child the go ahead by sharing your own memories.

### **For Emerging Readers:**

Just as your child needs to hear you read and reflect when a phrase brings to mind a personal experience or connection, she/he also needs to hear what happens when you lack adequate background knowledge to understand what's going on. Show your emerging reader how you build your storehouse of knowledge with each reading experience.

### **For Advancing Readers:**

When children face longer books, the prospect of wading through all those words can be overwhelming. Some children abandon books with the excuse that they are bored. The fact is, following a more elaborate plot structure is probably more than they can handle. Therefore, they can't seem to "get into" the book.

These kids need help. Background knowledge can be a key to get them hooked on longer books. Relating scenes or characters from books to their personal lives will help give them the staying power they need to become engaged readers.

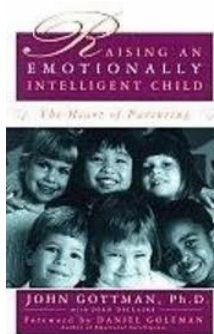
Even though your child can read all the words, it's important to continue sharing connections. Take turns reading alternate chapters, pages, or paragraphs. Have a stack of sticky notes and mark the pages where you have connections. Share your memories. Encourage your child to do the same. Hang the sticky notes, "footprints" of your thinking-- off the page like bookmarks.

## **A book review by a parent**

*By Elena Fontana (Matteo's mum – Transition)*

### ***"Raising an emotionally intelligent child"***

Dear Parents,



*first of all I'd like to thank Eugenia Papadaki for the opportunity to write a few words in the school's newsletter.*

Surely enough, you'll all have your opinion on what *intelligent* means. You've probably heard this word lots of times, haven't you? And you can easily find its definition in any dictionary. Now, what if you were asked to give your definition of what *emotionally intelligent* means to you?

Not only intellect, but also EMOTION- this is the new key word. New, because it's a recent and innovative concept. But what is it the key for?

Well, according to John Gottman, author of '*Raising an emotionally intelligent child*' "[...] good parenting requires more than intellect. It touches a dimension of the personality that's been ignored in much of the advice dispensed to parents over the past thirty years. Good parenting involves *emotion*."<sup>1</sup>

Why is emotional intelligence become so crucial? Why has emotion become the key word in parent-child relationships?

Well, always according to John Gottman emotionally intelligent children are more resilient and therefore more likely to deal with any emotional situation (anger, fear, frustration etc) they're faced with in a better way. Now, a child is not born emotionally intelligent, but learns to be one under parents' guidance. And here is where we, parents, come into action. Only by being emotion coaches we can teach our children how to become emotionally intelligent. However, by now, many of you might have wondered why we should do all this. Well, according to scientific research, the world our children are facing today and will be facing tomorrow is much more challenging than the past world. And research shows that an emotionally intelligent child is more likely to face better issues that range from a simple tantrum to drug abuse and alcoholism. But letting alone the most extreme situations, we consider everyday situations (your child doesn't want to go to school, but wants to stay home to play, your child doesn't want to eat something, quarrels between brothers and sisters) and we probably have several occasions every day to experience emotion coaching.

If you were on a plane and your 3-year-old daughter wanted her doll that had been put in the suitcase and checked in, and she didn't accept a mere 'Honey, it's not possible to get it right now.', and if she started to annoy other passengers because she's not willing to give it up so easily, what would you do, how would deal with your daughter who is not able to understand the reason why her dad cannot take her doll. In situations like the one mentioned above, parents might react in different ways, according to the type of approach they use. (If you want to find out what kind of approach you use, the book suggests quite a few tests with scores.) The book gives practical advice on how to behave as emotion coaches, reminding us of the importance of *empathy* <sup>2</sup>which is the foundation of Emotional Coaching and showing us how effective it could be in virtually all situations.

In order to build empathy, we need the 5 steps of Emotion Coaching (all set out by John Gottman):

1. BEING AWARE OF THE CHILD'S EMOTIONS;
2. RECOGNISING THE EMOTION AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTIMACY AND TEACHING;
3. LISTEN EMPATHETICALLY AND VALIDATING THE CHILD'S FEELINGS;
4. HELPING THE CHILD VERBALLY LABEL EMOTIONS;
5. SETTING LIMITS WHILE HELPING THE CHILD PROBLEM-SOLVE.

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<sup>1</sup> John Gottman, *Raising an emotionally intelligent child*, Simon and Schuster paperbacks, 1997

<sup>2</sup> Ability to share another person's feelings and emotions as if they were your own. Collins Cobuild Dictionary

I'm sure that all of us have found, now and then, in situations where we lost control, we didn't know what to do or say, behaviors we didn't know how to manage. The book is only offering some advice, it's not telling how you're supposed to be or what you're supposed to do. If you'd like some more practical details on the 5 steps and an alternative point of view on how to build a better emotional relationship with our children, or if you're only curious, you can dedicate some time to go through the pages of this innovative book. A copy is available in the school's library.

I hope you'll enjoy the reading!

Elena Fontana

## ECIS ESL/MT International Conference - Dusseldorf, March 2011

### "Promoting linguistic human rights for second language learners"

By Chiara Colombo

#### *A...second language learner's point of view*

During the first week of March, in the marvellous city of Düsseldorf,

I had the pleasure to take part in the conference



*Promoting Linguistic Human Rights in International Schools- from Theory to the Classroom.*

Trying to put down on paper the enthusiasm and the energy experienced at such an event is not an easy task. However, I'd like to try to make you feel some of the Düsseldorf atmosphere and I'll do it by telling you about this adventure and how I personally lived this experience, as a *Second Language Learner*.

One evening in the late winter, I, a young teacher of a small Italian bilingual school, got to Düsseldorf, Germany, together with the school's head teacher, who's an expert in bilingualism and who's a regular visitor of international forums. The first impression of Düsseldorf was immediately worth noticing- we got out of the airport and the taxi driver who's taking us to our hotel told us he could speak English, but *just a little bit*. We heard the same expression every time we asked directions of passers-by, shopkeepers, policemen etc. Obviously, it's that "*a little bit*" that allowed us to communicate and satisfy our needs, whether they're basic or not, but German people don't even seem to realize how safe we felt thanks to this tiny contact through a common language, safe and able to survive in a new environment we knew nothing about. Even though English is not my mother tongue, I must confess that knowing I can communicate any need I have through a language I feel absolutely comfortable with, here in Düsseldorf, with my extremely limited German vocabulary, is more than something for me. It is generally acknowledged that the emotional confidence is the foundation of our predisposition to learn, and I came to Düsseldorf to learn as much as possible.

The hotel that was hosting the conferences was crowded with teachers like me, coming from all over the world, sharing my same interest in learning languages and with a common language for all of us- English. Right now I'm a student, I said to myself, I attended this conference as if I were once again a university student in a big lecture hall, with the idea of having a lot to learn and being confident I have a good background on the topic. Main topic of the conferences- the importance of mother tongues in learning not only a new language, but also the different school subjects in a language other than your

mother tongue. This is what happens in all international schools and also in our school, the Bilingual School of Monza- most students' mother tongues are different from at least one of the school languages used to communicate.

During the different sessions of the conference, much was said over language theories, metalinguistics and metacognition, learning languages theories and transdisciplinary knowledge, educational strategies and projects to be implemented in schools. All this is delivered in one language- English, in my case not my mother tongue. While I was going over my notes and trying to fix ideas and concepts, I still saw myself as a student that must access the contents of this series of lectures, the workshops, in a language different from mine. I had never been in such a context before, and surely it was the first time I had heard most of the research studies presented there, as many of those were very recent. However, I didn't have any problems in understanding the messages and contents explained, I never felt at a disadvantage to my English colleagues who were attending the same conference.

So, what were the tools that allowed me to successfully engage in this training experience full of challenging topics, in a different language than mine?

Here are, according to me, the answers to my questions.

**Linguistic proficiency in English.** I've been lucky enough to have had many education opportunities to increasingly improve my linguistic knowledge, developing not only communication skills (*BICS, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills* as Jim Cummins calls them), but also academic language skills and knowledge (*CALP, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*, always according to Cummins). With only communication skills, English academic language used in conferences would have been as incomprehensible as any other language I don't know.

**Previous knowledge in my mother tongue.** Using English at an academic level has been very useful, but what, in my opinion, allowed me to greatly benefit from the training sessions in Düsseldorf was my knowledge of the topic, or better, my previous knowledge of the topic in Italian. Knowing linguistic and learning theories and being able to process them in my language was the key to access all I had been exposed to during the German experience. While I was listening to the different speakers, I kept making connections with what I already knew, through previously read articles or thanks to conversations with colleagues, with previous training experiences- the whole learning process was taking place in my mind through a thinking in *Italian*. Some notes I took at different workshops are in Italian, just because in many cases taking notes of some key words or key concepts in my mother tongue was more significant to me, allowing the speaker's original idea to come back to my mind more complete and correct.

**Dialogue in Italian and in English.** It would have been impossible to participate at an event such as the one in Düsseldorf without exchanging first reactions and going over ideas together with your adventure companions. I always had the opportunity, at the end of the different sessions, to share enthusiasm, doubts and new ideas with Eugenia in Italian. These first reactions in my mother tongue allowed me to fix concepts and ideas in a clearer and more solid way in my mind, immediately allowing me to extend the discussion, exchanging opinions with colleagues from all over the world that I met in between the different sessions. If by any chance I didn't know the academic language to talk to them in English, this was made immediately available to me to use during the conference.

Understanding this academic language and remembering it was possible, again, thanks to my previous knowledge on the subject in Italian. The Greek or Latin roots of most of such academic language is common between English and Italian and makes the meaning of technical words clear, making the transfer process of a concept from one language to another easier. Eventually, using these terms in a spontaneous conversation with English-speaking colleagues has strengthened my knowledge of the topic and my ability to talk about it in a language different from mine.

### **...and what about our students and children?**

I personally experienced the Düsseldorf conference's message- the continuous need for referring and making connections to one's mother tongue is fundamental for a learner that starts being exposed to new concepts in a language different from his or hers. Not only isn't your mother tongue an obstacle in learning other languages, but it's exactly the springboard to access abstract and complex concepts, academic language and terms that are apparently incomprehensible. Being able to process your thinking and express it in your mother tongue gives you a privileged access to learning. This is why, we, teachers and parents, members of a multilingual school community, have to encourage and to give the right value to our children's mother tongues, giving them multiple opportunities to think, discuss and express what they learned at school in their mother tongue. Families, holding tight to their invaluable richness of linguistic and cultural identity, play a key role in this. If schools have to acknowledge and value every child's mother tongue, families, whose mother tongue may be different to the school's languages of instruction, can create unique language learning environments for the child's mother tongue to be developed and supported. You can do this by reading books together, watching documentaries, but also playing games and having dialogues to stimulate your child's interest in the different topics addressed at school, getting everything closer to the child's experience precisely because the new concepts transfer more easily through a language which the child feels safer in.

I explained above how my linguistic competence in English, my previous knowledge and the dialogue both in Italian and in English were the tools that allowed me to access the complex contents of a conference. The very same thing happens to our children who learn in one, sometimes in two unfamiliar languages. Giving them the linguistic skills in those languages, as well as creating appropriate learning processes based on their previous knowledge is the school's task. The family's role, on the other hand, is that of engaging in dialogue and offering support in their mother tongue, for without it, children cannot reach their full potential and will not develop the necessary tools to access content knowledge.

### **My Italian Host Family**

*By Amy*

It seems only yesterday that I was boarding the plane to come to Italy ready for my new adventure, and now it is finished I am very sad

to be leaving; since I have made some lovely relationships with the children,

the mum and dad and the rest of the family. Over the past three months of my experience I have spent the time with Cecilia D'Amora and her family. I remember arriving in their house and having a very



warm welcome from everyone! Both of the girls were showing me round and telling me what to do or how to use everything.

I don't think I have laughed as much as I have during this experience, since the entire family makes me laugh especially the dad and the children. One day the girls wanted to come and play in my room and they found all my clothes and shoes and started to try them on to put on a show for all of us. The family have shown me some wonderful places; during my first month they took me to Udine where on the way there we listened to many children's songs in Italian that I have never heard before, but now I can't stop singing them. I remember the dad saying to me 'If you listen to a song more than two times, you are stupid', this made me laugh and still does. In the half term week I was able to go to the mountains with them and spend time with the nonno and nonna, again I have never laughed so much. Katia took me to Milan and showed me some of the amazing views on top of the Duomo and some of the expensive and not so expensive places to shop. During my three months I have learned so much about their family, the culture of Italy, the language and the songs that they like to listen to and especially some of the very tasty Italian wine! I have also learned how nice Italian hot chocolate and espresso shots can be in the morning and after lunch. I mentioned to Katia that I am now addicted to them and she laughed. Katia has introduced me to many new different foods, drinks and yummy deserts that I will be using and trying out when I return back to England. If anyone is thinking about host families from the student side, or to host a student I thoroughly recommend it. You can experience and learn from the family and the way they live plus it is an excellent opportunity to learn more of the language either in Italian or English. From day one of my arrival the family have all been so welcoming, kind, caring and friendly and have treated me as if I was a member of their family. I want to say to all of them a big thank you for all the cooperation and kindness that they have given me over the past three months. I don't know how many times I can say thank you to them; I am going to miss them all so much. If there was an award for the best family I would give it to them!

## My Italian Host Family

By Lucie

My Tickets were booked, and my suitcase was packed, the only thing left to question was who and where was I living for the next 3 months and what were their expectations. Back home, I distinctly remember talking



amongst my friends and stating all the what if's. What if they don't like me, or what if we don't get on, or what if they don't have a shower, internet or even an iron, how was I to cope! Turns out they had an ironing lady, internet and 2 showers! What a result!! Before my trip to Italy the arrangements for my host family were delayed due to some complications, and therefore the time in which we spent emailing each other was very short. Meaning I had no time to tell them how messy, fussy, or indecisive I was! Although if you asked them I'm sure they would disagree with all of the above! Initially I had no idea what to expect from my family, the emails we had exchanged were friendly, however did not paint a true picture of what they themselves were like. When I arrived at the airport the mother and father were there to greet me, and they were nothing at all like I had imagined! They were young, and nice, and very shy. The journey to the house was full of questions and I remember being so quiet and nervous having no idea what to expect. When I arrived at the house, the girls and nonni were there to welcome me. I remember everyone having smiles on their faces, and being so welcoming. The girls

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were so quiet they hardly spoke... at least for the first half an hour anyway, as they were soon happy to show me a big box of all their toys and pictures from holidays in England. They were very excited and extremely kind that they decided to throw me a party. Here I met aunts, uncles and nephews too, it was really nice, and I remember consuming a lot of food! I also remember a comment from the father saying "This isn't lunch by the way" as he laughed. I laughed too and thought "it's ok he's just joking!" only to find myself consuming a 3 course meal 20 minutes later! I was so overwhelmed by the amount of food that everyone could eat and remember thinking that if this was the consumption for the next 3 months I was going to return in England at least 3 stone heavier! From day one my family have made me feel welcome, and have offered me everything they possibly could to make my stay more than comfortable. They have shown a really keen interest in the town I'm from, my friends, my family, the things I like and have only ever asked one small thing of me in return; and that was to try new foods! They have accommodated for me on so many levels, and I hope for them I have done the same. As a family they have introduced me to new people, involved me in their daily lives, outings and holidays. They have shown me some wonderful places, but the thing that I am most grateful of is that they have made me feel like a huge part of their family! Not only have they taken a keen interest in my likes and dislikes, they have taken the time to teach me about Italy, the language, their great love for food, and also the real meaning of family! Living amongst the Lombardo's has been an amazing opportunity that I would recommend to anyone and something that I would do again. What started off as a host family is now pretty much a second family to me, and I hope that they themselves have enjoyed the experience. I cannot explain how beneficial living with a family has been to me on a whole, and I could in no way show them how thankful I am for everything they have done for me! But what I would say is host families aren't just a place for someone to stay. They teach you about the world around you, the different cultures, the different people, but mainly it's a way to broaden your mind to new challenges and new opportunities and encourage you to explore other horizons, and for this I just want to thank my family and Play English for organising it, but also I want to thank everyone who initially offered and were eager to accommodate for me. It truly has been an amazing experience that will never be forgotten.

## The childhood roots of adult happiness

By Edward Hallowell, M.D

By Gloria Kauffman



*What do I really want for my children?* If you spend some time thinking about this question, your reply will almost certainly include one particular word—the simple, almost silly-seeming word, happiness.

Most of us parents just want our kids to be happy, now and forever. Oh, sure, we want them to be good people. We want them to contribute to the world. We want them to care for others and lead responsible lives. But deep down, more than anything else, most of us want our children to be happy.

## What does it mean?

One way to define happiness is as “a feeling that your life is going well.” That feeling does not have to begin in childhood, but it’s a good place to start if you want it to become a habit that endures. One researcher studying the roots of happiness has concluded that “happiness is not something that happens to people but something that they make happen.”

We can’t control everything in our children’s lives, but we can make sure they learn the basics of the skill of happiness. When I say “we,” I mean we as a society and we as individuals interested in the welfare of kids. And those “we’s” need to work together to plant the roots of adult happiness solidly in childhood.

## Making the magic of childhood last

As parents, we don’t get unlimited time to set down these roots. We get only about 15 years of at-home, muddy-river, big-dream, go-out-and-play, kiss-me goodnight, time-is-forever, I’ll-never-die childhood. I remember once asking my youngest, who had just turned six, “Tucker, could you try to find a way to grow up more slowly?”

How can we protect a child long enough for a good spell to be cast? Is there something we can do as parents to allow the magic of childhood to turn our children into resilient and joyful adults? A whole new field of research into the ingredients of happiness has sprouted in recent decades. We now have a more solid idea of what can go right (not just wrong), what can be changed and what can’t, and what children need in order to stand the best chance of finding happiness later on.

Researchers have identified two of the childhood roots of adult happiness as: (a) the ability to create and sustain joy and (b) the capacity to deal with pain and adversity. Here’s what children need in order to thrive—both now and in the future.

**Connection** in the form of unconditional love from an adult, usually one or both parents, is the single most important root of adult happiness. When parents expect more than a child can deliver (when they imply, for example, “I love you but I would love you even more if you get an A”), they are raising children who feel that they can never please their parents, no matter what.

There are many other kinds of connection that, when combined, form an all but unshakable foundation on which you can build an entire life. They include family togetherness and positive connections to friends, neighborhood, school and community, to sports, to the arts and to a sense of the past.

**Play.** Many children these days spend too much time rushing from one lesson or “enriching” activity to the next without ever doing the single most enriching activity ever devised: play. Play builds the imagination. It teaches the skills of problem-solving and cooperation, the ability to tolerate frustration and the all-important ability to fail. And the child who learns to play alone will never be lonely.

In addition when you’re able to “play in your own mind,” you can daydream. This is a special talent that most children have, and it’s a crucial one. People use dreams to chart the courses they take in their lives. Dreams can also lead to or reinforce your beliefs. The stronger your ability to play in your mind—to dream—the greater the likelihood that your beliefs will not begin to crumble as you grow older. Play generates joy, which becomes its own reward.

**Practice.** Rare is the child who can ride a bike on the first try without falling off. But such is the allure of being able to ride—frustration becomes bearable. Although children might not enjoy practicing, they will keep at it because they like how the final result feels.

Plus, as children practice, they usually receive some help. And learning how to get help through teaching or coaching is yet another important skill.

**Mastery.** After a certain amount of practice and discipline, a child will achieve the feeling of mastery—“I can do it!”—and few feelings in life are better than that. It’s a great motivator. When children master something they couldn’t do before, their self-esteem rises, whether they receive praise or not. And, with mastery comes not just self-esteem but also confidence, leadership skills, initiative and an enduring desire to work hard.

**Recognition.** Mastery leads to an ever-widening circle of recognition and connectedness. It may seem trivial, but recognition can make the difference between joyless achievement and joyful mastery. The feeling of being valued by others enhances a child’s sense of belonging and of contributing.

Once you know that what you have done matters to people who matter to you, then what you have done becomes more uplifting to you. You will feel more connected to your group and you will want to do right by that group. And this feeling of genuine connectedness to a larger group becomes the root of moral behavior.

### **More research on the sources of happiness**

What makes for joy in life and how can we set the stage for our children to find happiness throughout their lives? Researchers have explored different aspects of these questions—and here’s what their studies have revealed.

In his book “Adaptation to Life and the Wisdom of the Ego,” George Vaillant has found that how a person deals with stress is pivotal—and that it, too, can be learned. The goal for parents should not be to prevent stress in a child’s life but rather to help the child learn healthy ways of accommodating it.

Researcher and author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has brought us the concept of “flow,” that state of mind when you become one with what you are doing—when the challenge an activity poses and your skill are both high. For example, an expert skier finds “flow” when he or she is skiing the toughest slope. We can all find “flow” when we’re doing what we love to do and doing it well.

In his book “Learned Optimism and The Optimistic Child,” Martin Seligman has shown the extraordinary power of childhood optimism as a protector against future depression and anxiety. This strongly correlates with a happy adulthood. And while genetics may indeed influence the development of optimism, Dr. Seligman says it can be learned at any age. David Myers, author of “The Pursuit of Happiness” has identified four factors that correlate most closely with happiness in adulthood. They are: (1) optimism, (2) extroversion, (3) a feeling that you have control over your life and (4) self-esteem. And all four of these factors take root in childhood.

—Adapted from the author’s book “*The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*” (Ballantine). Visit [www.DrHallowell.com](http://www.DrHallowell.com).

Mily Life. All Rights Reserved.

## From the President of the PTSA

*By Angela Paladino – President of PTSA*

We are really proud and happy of the good job done with the support of the whole school community! Through the Bazaar fund raising, we made a little dream come true for the teachers working with “our” Louisa: to have textbooks! For us, it is really great to see they achieved this important goal! Thank you everybody for your collaboration!

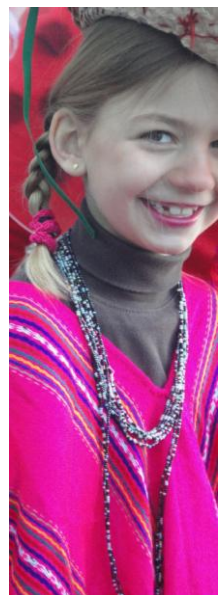


## Carnival Celebrations

*By Valentina*

On Tuesday 8th March we had our traditional Carnival Parade!

Children from Early Years and elementary classes took part in a short parade proudly showing their fancy costumes. Here are some pictures of our children and teachers dressed up for the party:



Well done guys!

## Let's have a day in a Museum...

*By Valentina*

On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March Grade 3 children had a field trip to the Museum of Natural History of Milan.

The day was organized like this: arrival at the museum and guided visit of the museum with a paleontologist – lunch – lab named 'Do you know your ancestors?' and going back to school.

The day after the visit at the museum, some girls from Grade 3 decided to have a short interview with me, to tell me about the experience in the museum ...here are their stories.

'The guided visit was interesting and educational. She told us some anecdotes and really interesting facts, but the visit was quite long...the lady never stopped talking.'

'Some children liked more that part than me, they also asked some questions... but when you talk too much, then everything becomes a bit boring...it's much more better to do things!'

'The activity was great. They made us make some arrows, with the arrowhead. They gave us different materials – to make the arrow and the stick – then they explained to us how to build the arrows and finally we built them. We bought the arrows home.'

Thanks to the girls that took part to this interview: Sofia, Olivia, Dafne, Virginia e Giulia.

### Calendar of upcoming events

April 2011						
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				1	2	3
				GRADE 3 field trip to CAPODIPONTE		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRADE 4/5 'Bernina Express' ----- GIRAFFE, GR 1 & 2 'Nabuccolo'						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
			GRADES 1 - 6 at 3:00 conference with a doctor from Comitato Maria Letizia Verga	SCIENCE FAIR		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
GRADE 4/5 field trip to Val di Cornia ----- BOOK WEEK	GRADE 4/5 field trip to Val di Cornia ----- BOOK WEEK	GRADE 4/5 field trip to Val di Cornia ----- BOOK WEEK	EASTER BONNET PARADE school closes @ 12:00 12:15 Villasanta	EASTER HOLIDAY	EASTER HOLIDAY	EASTER
25	26	27	28	29	30	
EASTER HOLIDAY	EASTER HOLIDAY	EASTER HOLIDAY	EASTER HOLIDAY	EASTER HOLIDAY		

**Voices and images from busy corridors ...**



*Giulia & Cristian in the Atelier with Laura and parents for End of unit Celebration (Pinguini)*



*Cristian explores a sensory box*



*Grade 4/5 students practicing for their Exhibition*

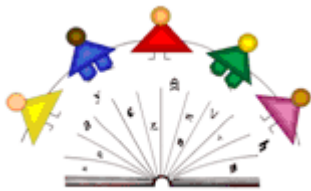


*Grade 6 students during Art lesson*





Grade 6 students during lunch time



### “Diversamente Colti associazione di promozione sociale”

con sede a Monza in via Confalonieri 18  
e a Villasanta via Monte Grappa 2  
P.Iva 06570150968 C.F. 94614960154

Being parents today is not an easy task.  
Listening to an expert’s advice may help.

DI.CO. proposes 4 conferences with experts:

#### Conferences schedule:

- 31<sup>st</sup> March “**Healthy eating habits**”
- 20<sup>th</sup> April “**Sovrain or Tyrant Child**”
- 5<sup>th</sup> May “**Development of emotional competences**”
- 26<sup>th</sup> May “**Headlice, verrucas and dermatitis**”



- Dr. Marina Pietra, Nutritionist
- Dr. Lucrezia Bertato, Child psychologist
- Dr. Cristiana Colonna Child dermatologist

The meetings will be held at the Monza campus in via Confalonieri 18, Monza at 20.30. The cost will be 5 € per family group for Di.Co members and 10 € for non members. For participants requiring child care during these meetings, a creative activities workshop will be on offer upon prior request at the cost of 5 € per child.





**Saturday 14 May 2011**  
10:00-17:00



## ISPRA - OPEN DAY 2011

### Introduction

On 14 May 2011 the JRC site in Ispra will again open its doors to the public. After the highly successful [Open Day in 2009](#) (with more than 8,000 participants), the 2011 Open Day promises to be even bigger and better. The day's programme will give more exposure to interesting laboratories with more interactive experiments as well as lively presentations, shows and entertainment for all age groups. Again, a special programme with scientific games and quizzes will be prepared for kids. Come along to see the latest JRC research - whether its climate change or renewable energies, nanotechnology or electronic passports, predicting floods/fires or ensuring food safety/quality - there's certainly something here for you!

### What is the JRC?

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is a Directorate General (DG) of the European Commission serving the European Union (EU) as a whole. Its overall objective is to help create a safer, cleaner, healthier and more competitive Europe. The JRC coordinates and contributes to numerous EU-wide networks linking industry, universities and Member State institutes, as well as carrying out studies and experiments in its own laboratories on behalf of its customers and stakeholders. The JRC also participates in projects with a large range of partners in the Member States, and liaises with a variety of non-EU and global scientific and standard-setting bodies. This work embraces a broad spectrum of tasks: from establishing standards for healthcare product approval to identifying the sources of illicit nuclear materials; from improving the earthquake-resistance of buildings to detecting the presence of genetically modified (GM) ingredients in foodstuffs; from assessing the quality and sustainability of water resources, to satellite monitoring of land use and deforestation.

### The JRC's Vision

The JRC's vision is to be a trusted provider of science-based policy options to EU policy makers to address key challenges facing our society, underpinned by internationally-recognised research.

### The Mission of the JRC

The mission of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) is to provide customer-driven scientific and technical support for the conception, development, implementation and monitoring of European Union policies. As a service of the European Commission, the JRC functions as a reference centre of science and technology for the Union. Close to the policy-making process, it serves the common interest of the Member States, while being independent of special interests, whether private or national.

**Where**

Joint Research Centre, European Commission,  
Via Enrico Fermi, 2749  
21027 Ispra (VA)

**When**

**14 May, 2011 from 10.00 hrs to 17.00 hrs (last entrance at 15:30 hrs)**

**Entrance requirements**

Only for pre-registered visitors. Bring your personal ID + confirmation with bar code

**Mobility**

Free bus shuttle service available outside and inside the JRC site. Special transport available for disabled

**Weather**

Don't worry about the weather, come rain or shine, it will be fine ☺

**More information**

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