

NACE Notes

Spring 2018

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Relationships

KEVIN HUININK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This issue of NACE Notes focuses on the most often cited 'best thing' about our schools: Relationships!

We are a community in so many ways, and that community is based on the wide and intricate web of relationships that are nurtured each day between students, students and teachers, teachers and parents, support staff and students, and even service animals and community! When you send your kids to a NACE school, you aren't just buying a service, you are becoming a part of a

network of people that love and care for one another. Relationships do occur naturally, but to flourish and improve a culture, they need to be nurtured. There are many things we do at and around our schools to establish good relationships from the way we meet and greet one another daily, to the way we involve parents in our operations, to the way we deal with harm and difficulty. Relationships will always carry with them a measure of pain and brokenness. With the forgiveness of our Saviour and the

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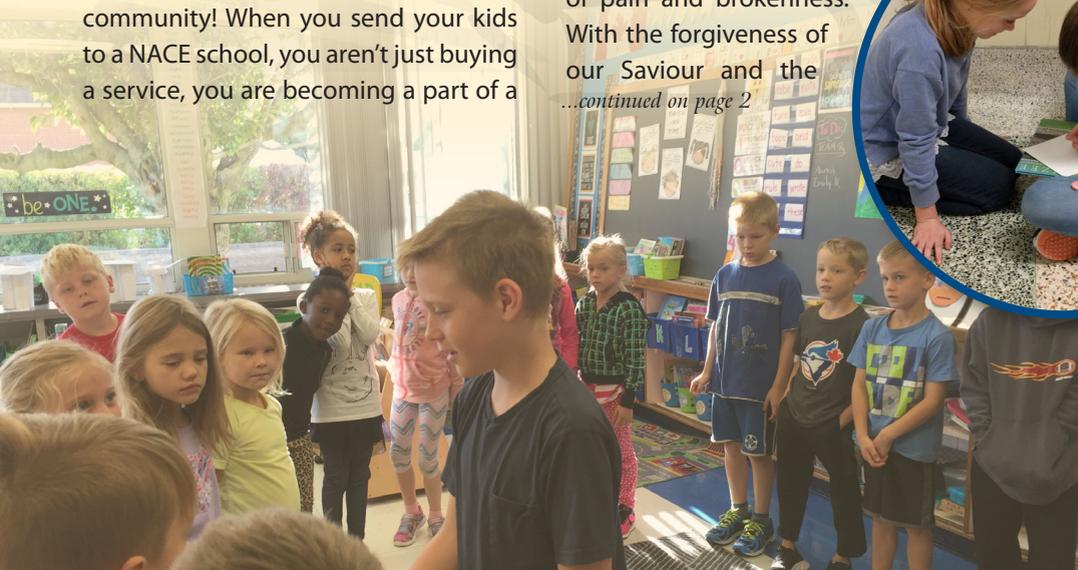
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Buddy Program

“Is it Friday afternoon yet?” “Is today a day that we have buddies?”

These questions can often be heard from intermediate, junior, primary and kindergarten students at the JKCS site.

All students from JK-Grade 8 are buddied up with another class of students; we are intentional about pairing an older class with a younger class.

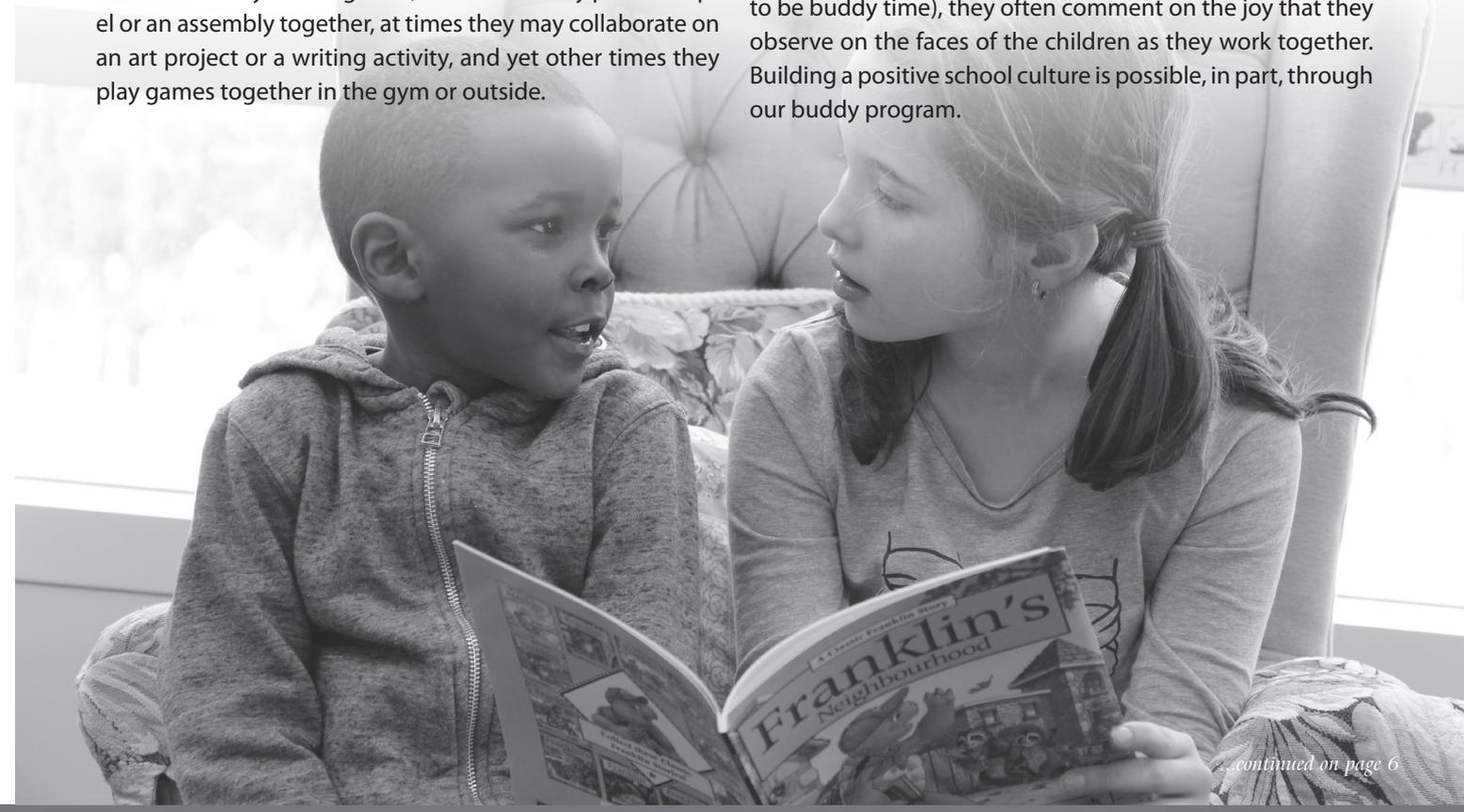
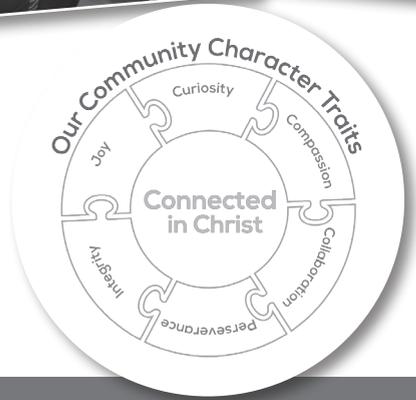
Students look forward to these almost weekly sessions. Sometimes they read together, sometimes they plan a chapel or an assembly together, at times they may collaborate on an art project or a writing activity, and yet other times they play games together in the gym or outside.

Fostering positive relationships across our entire student body is something that teachers take seriously, and the buddy program is one way of including all children in cross-grade activities. Students appreciate being known, not only by God, their parents, teachers and grade level peers, but by the entire group of students at JKCS.

When I tour families through the school (and if it happens to be buddy time), they often comment on the joy that they observe on the faces of the children as they work together. Building a positive school culture is possible, in part, through our buddy program.

During this school year I have seen a few unlikely friendships form that have stood out as an illustration for me of Christ’s character exhibited by students. One particular relationship was forged through an academic pairing of reading buddies. Our students may not have appeared on the surface as a likely match. However, having had the opportunity to observe these students when “no one was watching”, I really felt it would work well, and in fact it has! The older student in this pairing is now more likely to stop and help or talk to his buddy within the school and on the playground - not just in the classroom. This is not because he is required to, or because someone is looking, but because he has the confidence in knowing they have a relationship, and they both have something to offer one another. Watching them, they have both benefited from this pairing and for myself, watching them grow as increasingly connected in Christ is both encouraging and rewarding.

us. As we have a chance to model and support relationships for our students, and they for us, each of us in this school family has an opportunity to grow in our relationship with Christ....this really is the ultimate teaching!



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The Value of Relationships

From The Perspective of A New Family

We became a new family to Covenant Christian School when our son started Junior Kindergarten in September, 2017. To date, our experience with the school community has been a very positive one. The value given to relationships in every aspect of school life (spiritual, professional, community and personal) is evident to us in numerous ways.

Firstly, we believe the school is teaching our son that the most important relationship is his relationship with God and that this should affect the way in which he relates to his family and friends. Secondly, we find the staff and volunteers at Covenant eager to help with every detail, large or small, of our son's education.



Our son is not only learning his letters and numbers in a student centred environment, but more importantly, he is being cultured to understand the value of helping others, the worth of listening to his elders, and the importance of following directions, to name just the obvious. He is developing friendships with classmates and positive warm relationships with staff that we hope will last a lifetime. Our son enjoys his teacher, Mrs. Baker, often wants to remember her in his bedtime prayers, and looks forward to the days he is at school.

We have not only "heard" about his growth in relationships at school, but have been witness to it in observing his interactions with his sister and cousins. Covenant Christian School **reinforces what we are trying to teach at home about recognizing others who are sad, or in need, about being inclusive and willing to share, and what it means and looks like to "get along".**

The highlight for us of our son's education so far, just recently occurred. We were given the opportunity to take part in a new "student led" conference. What a wonderful experience! It gave our son such confidence. He was so proud to show us his accomplishments through his portfolio and it provided us the chance to have a firsthand look at what he has already learned this year. Thank you, Mrs. Baker, for being such an amazing, caring and student focused teacher. Thank you Mrs. Baker and Covenant for allowing us to feel and know that our son is going to a safe place, and the right place, when he gets on the school bus in the morning.

We look forward to the next few years as we work together with the Covenant Christian School community to nurture, shape and build the lives and future of our children.

Relationships with Area Schools

While developing positive internal relationships among our students is a critical part of why we 'do' Christian education, so is further developing our relationships with area Christian schools. These relationships are developed, not only in terms of our administrative team working with colleagues from other schools, but also with students sharing a variety of activities with students from other schools.

A recent example of this would be our trip to the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Students from Dunnville, St. Catharines, Hamilton, as well as NACE gathered for a day of workshops and a tour. Students were deliberately placed into cross-school groups and encouraged to work together in a number of settings. It was interesting to

observe how a tentative group of students at the beginning of the day became an engaged and focused learning community as the day progressed.

Another recent example of collaboration with partner schools is the speech competition that recently took place in St. Catharines. Each school had an 'in-house' competition, and the top candidates from each school moved on to this district competition. An interesting comment made by one of the judges at the end of the day was how our students stood out for applying their faith in some way. This judge observed that it seemed like an authentic expression for them; we are certainly proud of the way our students are able to articulate their faith, not only on our own campuses, but in a larger setting, as well.



Christian School Foundation

WRITTEN BY TONY KAMPHUIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FOUNDATION

Most of us can grasp the idea of relationship when it comes to our individual interactions with other people and with God. But God has given us some things beside individuals that can help us love God, love others and love creation. God has given us institutions. But what do institutions and relationships have to do with each other? First, institutions are based on relationships. They are one way that communities get busy, making a difference in God's world. Different people, with different sets of gifts and different ideas have a common goal and they form an institution to work toward that goal. Institutions are based on relationships that occur within them. Schools are institutions. Marriage is an institution. Churches are institutions. So are Foundations. Second, institutions can have relationships between them. Institutions working toward a common goal can each come from a different angle to help accomplish something more effectively because they have a relationship. In the Christian school arena, we haven't always established institutions that worked well together. Sometimes we have set up organizations that try to work away, each in their own 'silo', hardly considering how they might be more effective, together.

I see a different approach coming to the fore of late. Recently, the Ontario Alliance of Chris-

tian Schools, Edifide (the Christian Teachers' Association) and OCSAA (the Christian School Administrators' Association), joined forces and have now announced the appointment of their new Executive Director, Dr. Deani Van Pelt. One of Dr. Van Pelt's intentions is to have this new organization – based on institutional relationships – take the lead in building even more relationships to strengthen the Christian education movement and to serve the public good. The Christian School Foundation has always been committed to being a bridge-builder organization. Recently we announced a whole new bursary program that is completely the result of institutional relationships. Naturally, it is called the Partnership Bursary, and it is the result of a partnership between some family foundations and individual donors, the Christian School Foundation, and the 60 Christian schools that are members of the Foundation.

By working together, these institutions – in relationship – will be able to more effectively support families across Eastern Canada who are hard-pressed to afford a Christian education. God is good! And one of His good gifts is institutions that each has special expertise, but can push things to a whole new level when they work as partners; in a relationship with a common goal: to bring God glory.



Best Job in the World

WRITTEN BY FREDA KLEINE-DETERS, RESOURCE TEACHER AT JKCS

I have the best job in the world. I get to walk beside students during difficult moments in school. I see students in small group settings or one on one. This allows me the opportunity to listen to their joys and struggles in school and in life. Building these important relationships within these contexts helps me to understand why students may be experiencing sadness, anxiety, fear, worry, or even happiness. Recently I had a situation where a student decided not to come to school on the day before spring break. Within my small group class, she began to share why she wasn't going to go to school. She communicated that she was unable to get from the arena to the city bus. I told her that I was more than happy to give her a ride. She then proceeded to tell me that she had no skates. Again, I assured her that I would be able to find skates for her. She agreed to come and she enjoyed the experience of ice skating with her friends. Without having a relationship with her, she would have stayed home. It is moments like this that remind me that I do indeed have the best job.



Two Parent Perspectives

WRITTEN BY MELANIE KIERS, PARENT OF A JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENT

"I've recently had the pleasure of participating in a student-led parent/teacher conference with my son in JK and his teacher. My son was so excited to come with me to talk to his teacher. We got there and he was first asked to show me 3 of his favourite things to do. It was fun for me to see how he enjoyed spending his time at school. He told me what he liked about JK, what he didn't like and showed me what he could do regarding letters and sounds. I also had the opportunity to ask him any questions about school. Throughout this time, I could see how my son and his teacher interact and it's clear to me that he enjoys a wonderful relationship with his teacher and for this I am truly thankful.

I've also enjoyed having good relationships with the teachers and staff at Covenant. I feel everyone truly cares for the students, from the administrative assistant, to my kids' teachers and EAs, to the principal and executive director. I've had to pick up my kids from school because they were sick and it was obvious to me that everyone involved was concerned and worried for them. It's reassuring knowing my kids are in such great care while they're at school.

These relationships have given me a true sense of community and belonging. As a new family at Covenant, this has been such a blessing."



WRITTEN BY GONDA VOORTMAN, EA & PAST PARENT AT CCS

Years ago (my son graduated many years ago from NACE), the summer between my son's SK and grade one year a classmate was tragically killed in a car accident. As a school community we were deeply saddened. As parents we were wondering how to deal with a 6-year-old boy and his grief and understanding of the whole situation. His SK teacher at that time really took the time to help the students work through their feelings. Just before the funeral she took her students aside in a Sunday School room and got on her knees and had a circle time with them. She spoke to them in a way they could understand. She told them she was hurting too and showed them her cut finger to explain the difference between a small physical injury and a deep hurt in our hearts. Over the summer she kept in contact with the students by sending them cards in the mail to let them know she was thinking of them and praying for them. On the first day of grade one she came to the class to speak to them again. Now the students were going to realize that their classmate would not be there with them.

As a parent that situation had a profound effect on me and reinforced to me the reason we send our kids to a Christian school. The teacher shared our faith and was able to be a support for our child during this sad time. Our son has also never forgotten this and thinks of this teacher with fondness.



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