

Banbury Independent News

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THE RESULTS ARE IN, AND THEY ARE GOOD!

One of the challenges of our student-directed approach is the training of time management. Mentoring time-management can be a real challenge, due to the individualistic nature of each student's learning style, motivation and ability. What works for one person, doesn't necessarily work for another.

Nevertheless, our teachers attempt to help, and train, students to manage their time effectively. There isn't a lot of methodology on the subject that exists in the teaching world, since most schools are not self-directed. We have to pioneer new methods for this approach to education. Students have to develop their own personal methods of time management before they are successful. So, we must experiment with trial-and-error strategies to help them.

In a traditional teacher-directed classroom, students don't learn to manage their time for themselves; the teacher does it for them. At any given time, the teacher tells their students what to do, how much of it to do and when to have it done. Then the teacher imposes punishments when it's not done. As a result, some students who have initiative will adopt the teacher's ways, simply from observing them, and they will have further success when they are on their own later in post-secondary schooling.

However, others, if not most, will continue to flounder and never really learn what works for them, hence the reason so many young adults still struggle with time management after high school. This one aspect of academic life—time management—is very powerful in determining whether a student merely copes or thrives in college or university.

On the elementary side, teachers are further challenged, because their young protégés are often fully in the curiosity stage of their development, still lacking a solid concept of time, still acquiring that self-regulation that allows them to tune out internal and external distractions, and still learning how to adjust their effort levels (that sense of urgency). There is a huge range in student abilities. Some are "slap and dash" workers (slap it together and dash off), others get so engrossed that they lose track of time, and still others spend too much time on non-learning exercises, such as coloring.

A few years ago, the elementary teachers at Banbury became determined to meet this challenge by starting to implement a number of initiatives, on a trial-and-error basis, to see if we could actually "train" our young learners to develop more effective time-management skills. It started with planning goals for the day, and although that was effective in helping students to become *aware* of their daily productivity, it didn't make a huge difference. Then we added the step of recording what was actually accomplished at a given sitting in a given subject. However, it wasn't until we started reflecting on the day, and even more so, after we started reflecting on the week, that we began to witness an increase in productivity. Friday afternoons are now a big eye-opening occurrence for many students after they highlight, on their planners, the number of times they've been to each subject that week and then add up the number of pages or project work that was actually completed. Once they compare those results to what they wanted to be striving for, they engage in conversations around how to adjust the way they conduct their week, or how to reduce time-wasting activities. Although not all students can complete the curriculum requirements of one grade in 10 months, most can. But it requires focused effort. If a student is unable to accomplish the amount of work required, due to a learning challenge of some kind, they should still be striving to improve the quality and quantity of work.

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In the last few weeks of school, before and after Christmas, the elementary teachers have begun to see some positive results of these initiatives. Those students who have been losing track of time are beginning to be more aware of time, and of how much they can do with it. When there are 10 or 15 minutes left until recess, they now know they can still get another page of math or language arts binder work done, but they realize that there isn't enough time to get out a computer, open a document and get a significant amount of writing or research done. Those who have been avoiding a subject can't hide from dealing with it anymore. The evidence is revealed at the end of the week, and they have to face the reasons for the avoidance and discuss possible solutions. The questions of, "Have I done enough work?", "Am I using my time wisely?" and "Am I getting distracted or avoiding work?" are reflected upon each week. From there, students re-adjust their plans and goals, and we are beginning to see them developing ways to remind themselves of priorities. This is the road to taking ownership and being an active participant in their own learning. This process is the result of teachers mentoring their students. The results are in, and they are good! It's working!

The next step is to see if these new habits can be sustained along with a continued high quality of work. We expect that they can!

Karen Harrison

International Day

Friday, January 16, elementary students are invited to dress in a traditional outfit (from their culture or from other cultures), bring in a traditional dish to share with their peers, and bring in a souvenir or a traditional object that they have for show and tell.

Organizational Days

Please note that January 29th and 30th are organizational days. There are no classes either day.

Mitten Tree Success!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this year's mitten tree. Because of your generosity, we were able to donate items to both Inn From the Cold and the Mustard Seed.

Attention Parent!

Be on the lookout for the annual Alberta Education Survey for grades 4 to 12. This is the Parent part of the survey, and will be coming to you via snail mail. Please fill it out, as your feedback is invaluable to the continued improvement of the school.

Silent Auction Items

If you have any items you would like to contribute to this year's silent auction – taking place the Banbury's 35th Anniversary Celebration (May 23rd at Valley Ridge Golf Course) – please bring them to the office as soon as possible

Report Cards

Report cards will be available in the office for parents to pick them up starting February 2nd. Any report cards that are not picked up by the end of day on February 3rd will be mailed home.

Knitting/Crocheting Supplies

A number of students have expressed an interest in learning to knit or crochet. A club will be starting during lunch hour, but we are in need of knitting needles, crochet hooks, and yarn for students to practice with. Any extra yarn will be used to make hats/mitts/scarves for shelters in Calgary.