

# Banbury Independent News

## Creativity, Connections, and School Culture

Recently, in exploring blogs written by other teachers, I came across one where a high school English teacher in Pennsylvania decided to emulate Google’s 20% Time<sup>1</sup> and give 20% of class time over to the students pursuing whatever they are interested in. Students aren’t marked on this, but they are held accountable for accomplishing something, journaling about their progress and presenting their learning at the end of the year. My initial thoughts when reading this were “Well, yeah, student interest should be a part of learning” and “But, why doesn’t it count towards completing a class, or credits?”.

Having been at Banbury long enough to see the development of the Internship and Personal Interest Project, I guess I have come to see student interests and passions as a natural source of learning experiences. And, while I applaud any teacher out there for making any attempt to incorporate students’ interests into the learning process, I am shocked that it is considered such a novel idea. At Banbury, basing learning off of students’ interests starts as young as preschool with thematic units on topics such as dinosaurs, princesses, cars, or whatever the students are excited about at the time. Looking at the work of the elementary side, you see touches of student interest all over the place, whether it is turning a Math assignment on shapes and polygons into a work of art, or doing a presentation on birthstones for Language Arts. Even when the topics are prescribed, students make the work their own by choosing how they demonstrate their learning. Secondary students take part in Internships and Personal Interest Projects, and make requests for things they would like to be a part of their academic courses. This moves well beyond requesting to read certain books, or to research specific topics of interest. Students are willing to prove the academic rigour of seemingly un-academic ideas, such as a field trip to see Avengers: Age of Ultron, which spurs teachers to create whole classes based around those ideas. Social Studies taught using the Avengers movies? Why not?

A world of possibilities opens up when teachers listen to their students and actively make student interests a part of the learning process. The benefits of this are well known – students engage with their learning, develop deeper understandings and find more motivation. But, more than that, it makes learning fun, contributing to a positive learning environment in the school. At Banbury, one thing that stands out is how relaxed and positive the school feels. Maybe it’s all that interest-based learning that’s going on.

Tara Fry

1. Google allows employees to use up to one day a week (20% of their time at work) to work on side projects – this concept led to the creation of Gmail, among other things.

### Important Dates for May:

- Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> – Bake Sale
- Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup> – PD day, No Classes
- Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup> – Victoria Day, School Closed
- Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> – Secondary Field Trip to Vertigo
- Friday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> – Banbury’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

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## 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

**Please pick up your tickets for the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala as soon as possible! Deadline is May 10<sup>th</sup>!**

Invite your family and friends and reserve a private table for 8 just for your group! (Note, we are unable to reserve specific tables for groups less than 8).

Anne is taking reservations in the office by cash or cheque or buy online:

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1369783>

Adults \$40, Children \$25 (these have to be purchased through Anne).

We are all looking forward to an exciting event...we have many wonderful plans in the evening program!

(By the way, we are still hoping for some big ticket items for the silent auction please...gift certificates to hotels, restaurants, spas, etc. would be wonderful! Please support the school by asking companies for a donation. A letter to give donors is in the package that was sent home...charitable tax receipts will be issued).

**Thanks so much!!**

### Travel Opportunity for Next Year

In the spring of 2016, grade 9 to 12 students have the opportunity to participate in an 11 day trip to Italy and Germany. This trip will include stops in Rome, Florence, Munich, and Prague. For the full itinerary, check out this link:

<http://www.eftours.ca/eliterature/DBD/13/IGE.pdf>

To enrol in the trip, please use the following link:

<http://www.eftours.ca/tour-website/1710452KZ>

Early enrolment is encouraged, to take advantage of the payment plans offered.

Please note that grade 8 students can request permission to join the trip, provided there are enough chaperones.

### Knitting Circle

With a growing interest in knitting among students, an after school knitting circle is being held Mondays, 3:35 to 4:35. This will be a drop in group – no need to commit to every week. The first Knitting circle will be held on Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. Parents and teachers are encouraged to come, too!

If anyone has any knitting needles, crochet hooks, or yarn they would like to donate, it would be greatly appreciated. Those participating in the knitting circle will be encouraged to use donated yarn to make at least one project to be donated to Inn From the Cold in the fall.

## **BAKE SALE**

### **MAY 6!**

## **COOKIES, CUPCAKES AND MORE!**

### **BAKED DONATIONS WELCOME**

**GLUTEN, DAIRY, FAT, AND SUGAR FREE  
OPTIONS AVAILABLE  
ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TOWARD THE  
PRODUCTION OF THE ALLIANCE PART III,  
COMING JUNE 2015**

## **SUPPORT THE DRAMA CLASS TODAY!**

### Community Education Services

This month, Alberta Health Services and the Alberta Children's Hospital are offering a wide variety of community education opportunities. Information on the sessions can be found here:

<https://fcr.albertahealthservices.ca/ces/newsletter/2015-05-newsletter.pdf>