



A PUBLICATION OF BEACON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



Beacon's 1st Celebration of Learning

by Albert Kok, Vice Principal

On Tuesday, November 24th, we had our first Celebration of Learning. Our celebration of learning was an opportunity for the students at Beacon to tell the community about the exciting projects they have been working on since October. Parents were invited to freely walk from place to place to experience all the different projects around the school and talk with the student about the exciting work they are presenting. A celebration of learning is an exciting culmination of the project based learning (PBL) experiences the students have been experiencing here at Beacon Christian School.

What is project based learning and how is it different?

In many jobs, people work on projects that involve solving a problem, collaborating with others, communicating solutions clearly and thinking creatively. Schools need to reflect this type of experience in their curriculum and pedagogy.

PBL is a set of learning experiences and tasks that guide students in inquiry answering a central question, solving a problem, or meeting a challenge using 21st century skills. So what did this look like in our Celebration of Learning on November 24th? PBL experiences guide students in inquiry answering a central question, solving a problem, or meeting a challenge. Pairs of classes were presented with a health related question, or problem that they were responsible for solving.

- How can we encourage other students to become healthier and energetic through exercising?
- How can we, as scientists, teach others about our five senses?
- How can we encourage our families to eat healthy?
- How can we display and encourage a balance of body, mind and soul to teens?
- How can we make a healthy, locally grown lunch?

From these questions, students put together a list of things that they needed to know in order to answer these questions. Teachers did not tell them what they needed to know. Instead, students asked to be taught about these things so they could solve the bigger problem.

From the students' lists, teachers then created a list of learning experiences and tasks to help them answer some of their most important questions. Experts were brought in to talk to our students about mental health and videography. Mini-lessons were taught on the heart, senses and good eating. Students were taken on trips, all to help figure out they could best answer those questions.

continued on next page



DECEMBER 2015
www.beaconchristian.org

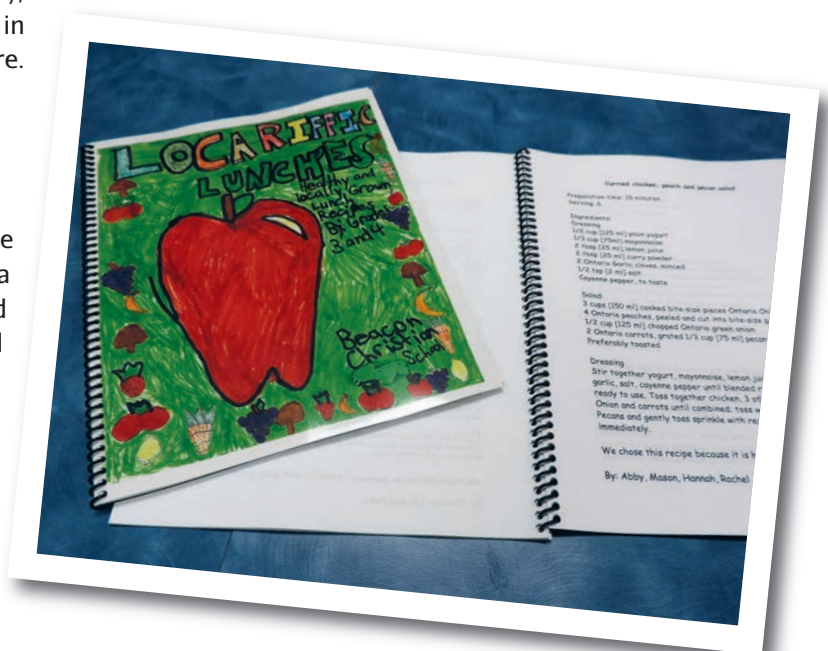


Project based learning uses 21st century skills. These are the skills that will help prepare our students. Creativity was taught in creating multiple ideas and brainstorming. Collaboration skills were taught and how students can best work together. Critical thinking skills were taught when students analyzed ideas and were engaged in a multiple-step process of revision and refinement. And finally, students were taught how to bring across their ideas clearly in communication skills. All skills needed both now and in the future.

Why is this important to do at Beacon Christian School?

Our vision at Beacon Christian school is to influence culture for Christ. Culture making is part of that calling and a tangible way to influence culture for Christ. We are called by God to make good stuff! When Grade 7/8 students produced Mental Health Break videos, they made good stuff to share and help other teens to think about their mental health. The Grade 5/6's designed an exercise circuit to remind students to keep their bodies, God's temples, healthy and strong. The cookbooks the Grade 3/4's produced will be given to Community Care (a local charity) to help everyone have nutritious, locally grown meals. The Grade 1/2's plates will remind families to eat a balanced

meal, and finally the SK/JK's reminded everyone that the senses God has given us can help us explore his wonderful creation. This is good stuff, and it is a way to remind students that we have a calling and a responsibility to influence culture for Christ, both now and in the future.



Joy and Hope

by Ralph Pot, Principal

Thank you for taking the time to read this issue of The Signal. We are excited to share with you a snapshot of our school.

Two words come to mind for me this time of year. Joy and Hope.

As a school, there are many reasons for joy: celebrations of learning, future-focused teachers, dedicated parents, a supportive community, healthy enrolments, surprise gifts, and an absolutely beautiful property in which to grow.

Beacon is also a school of hope. The hope I am referring to is not just a simple optimistic attitude, but it is a "confident expectation" that God has great plans for this school. With that in mind, work is being done on developing and refining a 2020 Vision for Beacon.

The characteristics of Beacon Christian School in 2020 include:

- An educational institution that is renowned for being:
 - Distinctively Christian in all aspects.
 - Modern and research based.
 - Inclusive of a wide range of students.
- Beautiful, well maintained and modern facilities and grounds.
- High standards of professionalism amongst staff and faculty.
- Debt free.
- A school that has moved from "Maintenance" to "Mission".

The mission of Beacon Christian School is to equip students to impact communities by serving Christ. It is the belief of those involved and supportive of Beacon Christian School that this mission is rooted in joy and hope. We believe all of the time, talents, and treasures invested in this place are worth it, because it is based on the joy and hope that we have in Christ.

We live in a world that is in need of joy and hope. As 2015 comes to a close, and as we move forward faithfully into the year ahead, may we do so in the joy and hope expressed in this familiar carol:

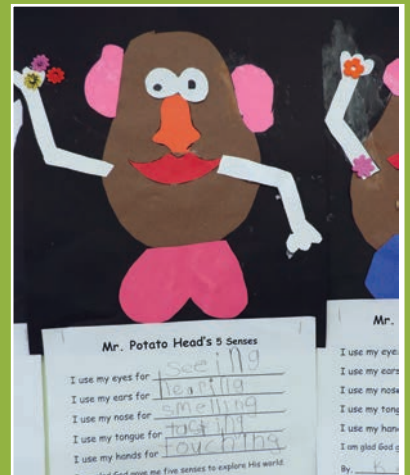
Come, Thou long-expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee
Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear Desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

- Charles Wesley

#LetYOURLightSHINE!

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MATT 5:16





At **BEACON**
we desire
our students
to be:

Community Builders
God Worshippers
Justice Seekers
Servant Workers
Beauty Creators
Creation Enjoyers
Earth Keepers
Idol Discerners
Image Reflectors
Order Discoverers



Servant Working

ROSE CITY KIDS

by Wilma Harris, Grade One Teacher



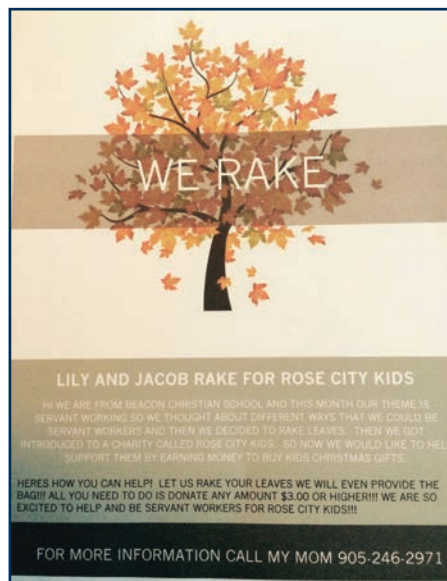
The Grade 1's helped load the van with the toys for the Rose City Kids.

The chapel theme throughline for the month of November was Servant Working. During the 4th week of the month, GIFT (Growing In Faith Together) groups usually get together and DO something pertaining to the throughline. Students were introduced to Rose City Kids during the first chapel and encouraged to do jobs during the month to earn some money. Each GIFT group leader had 2 bins (about the size of a shoe box) which needed to be filled with items to be given at Christmas. The GIFT groups got together to brainstorm some ideas about what to fill the bins with. Our school committed to filling 28 bins for children ranging in age from 4-13. During the last chapel, the groups got together in the gym to fill the bins, and the response was amazing! The bins were filled and the 'extras' placed in big boxes in the centre of the gym to be put into additional bins for distribution. It was exciting to see what kids could do for kids!

Praise the Lord for Beacon's servant-working students!

Check out the full story on our blog:

<http://beaconchristianschool.blogspot.ca/2015/11/servant-working.html>





What's New in Room 105?

by Brenda Boks, Director of Student Support Services

Ignacio Estrada said, "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn."

So how about a small trampoline to facilitate the energy that comes from high blood sugar or as an energy stimulator for tired, inattentive students or as a physical release needed for a student that has missed recess and can't focus? The trampoline is an effort to "teach the way they learn."

The resource room has been transformed to reflect the view that "fair is giving everyone what they need to be successful". The large classroom, room 105, has been renovated to include more than just a trampoline.

One focus of the renovation was to create a visually calm environment. Neutral colours were used, materials displayed on the shelves were simplified, and cupboard doors were installed to reduce the visual clutter of teacher resources. Natural materials like branches and stones and pinecones, along with the natural light that pours into room 105 create a peaceful environment. There is even a hammock for a student that needs to stretch and rest.

A horseshoe table allows a small group of students to really bring their focus in on

the teacher, sitting in the centre. Students have chairs on wheels to allow some wiggle but no tipping. Students have been able to concentrate on their tasks at this table even while other activities are going on in the room.

A quiet corner has been created with deep brown drapes, carpet and plenty of books. This corner serves multiple purposes - it provides an enclosed safe area for exercises that have been prescribed by a physiotherapist, it provides a quiet area for reading, and it provides an area for a student to learn to calm himself, or herself, in a time of crisis. There are sensory tools in this area (objects to touch, feel, or squeeze) and tools such as exercise balls and LEGO to be used to calm down, give physical release, or as a reward for work well done. This is the way some learn.

A small table at the back of the room facilitates the work of younger students. Here age-appropriate items can be kept, and the area stays separate so that it can be used anytime without disturbing the work of older students (at the horseshoe

table). This separate work space has allowed younger students to feel welcome in the room at any time of the day that it is needed.

Another extra work space is a small desk that is back-to-back with the teacher's desk. This area is affectionately called 'the office' and provides an independent work space for students that may work better away from the classroom environment. This is also a space that can be used simultaneously with the other activity areas in the classroom. It allows the extra time and extra quiet that may be needed to be successful on a given day and a given task.

To reflect the physical changes and activities happening this year in the resource room, the name has changed to "Student Support Services". It is such a blessing to be able to support many diverse needs of our student population and strive to 'teach the way they learn'. Come for a visit to room 105!!



BEACON SPORTS REPORT

CROSS COUNTRY 2015



Embracing Life at the Fence

by Jen deVries, Parent

For what feels like a short season, parents and caregivers pick up their JK and SK children at 11:30 am for dismissal every weekday morning. (Beacon Christian School provides an optional full day kindergarten program.) What might seem as a quick midday pickup soon becomes so much more.

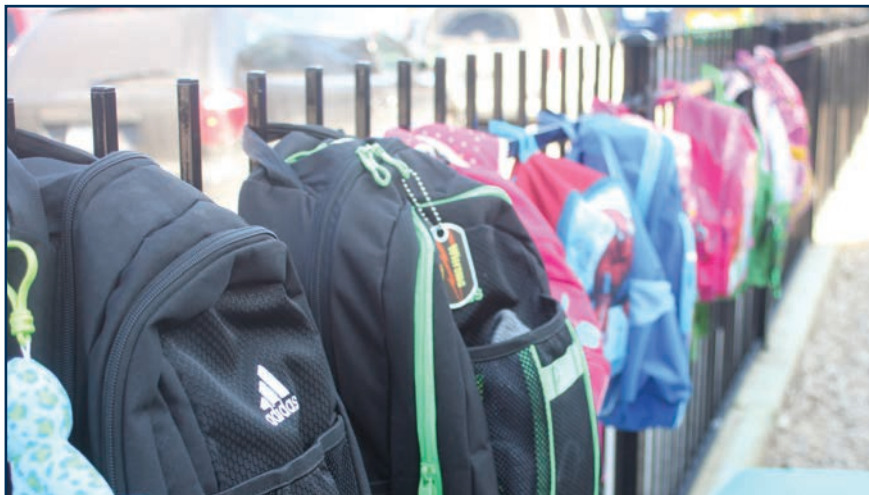
Why is life good at the fence? This is what parents had to say about it:

- We get a snap shot into the relationships being built.
- This is a great opportunity for me to meet other parents and build friendships.
- I like being a spectator and watching how my child interacts with others and their teachers.
- So much energy and creative playing happens here.
- I appreciate the informal conversations with teachers and seeing how they interact with my child.
- I get to see what discipline in the Lord looks like from teachers who desire to see my children grow inside and outside the classroom.
- I like being greeted with a smile from the kids playing or from other adults.
- I appreciate the reminders of what letter day it is or what special day it is the following day!
- My younger children get to be familiar with the school setting and get excited for their turn!

So next time you are out and about midday and drive by 300 Scott Street, you will know what all the hype and activity is about at the fence.



beaconchristian.org



FUN AT THE SAFETY VILLAGE

In Grade One the students learn about how to be safe at home, at school and on the street. A trip to the Children's Safety Village in Welland is always a highlight!



Seeking God's Will for Today's Decisions

by Jill Woodland on behalf of the BCS Property Possibilities Ad-Hoc Committee

Have you ever started a project with absolutely no idea what the outcome might be?

When the Board established an ad-hoc committee to begin exploring the most visionary course of action regarding the use of building and property owned by the Association for Christian Education of St. Catharines, we knew a large underlying question was, "What should we do with our Secondary School building?" It is a difficult and heavy question that has lingered for a few years. We agreed to humble our hearts and ask God to help us work through this question and possible answers. A key foundation of this process was a strong declaration that Beacon Christian School belongs to God and has been called to influence culture for Christ!

If you are new to our Beacon community, you may not realize the building directly behind the elementary school soccer fields was Beacon Christian Secondary School from 1971-2011. Many in our community have wonderful stories and cherished memories to share of Beacon High School. We are grateful for this history telling us of vision, sacrifice and service. Over time, enrollment trends and financial pressure made it difficult to continue its operation. In June 2011, a painful decision was made by the school Board and Association to close. Since that time, many Beacon families have made Smithville Christian High their high school home. The former Beacon Secondary building has been leased to Royal Elite International Academy since the fall of 2011 with a positive cash balance.

Over the last four years, Beacon Christian School (BCS) has reduced its debt load by over \$1.9 million. This has been done with excellent annual fundraising and conservative budgeting, resulting in substantial operational surpluses. Donors have also quietly stepped forward with significant capital donations. Thanks be to God.

We clearly recognize that Beacon is currently using the elementary school property daily, with the former secondary school building as the only exception. This fact provides direction in seeking God's will for property decisions today and the future, specifically for and with the secondary school building. Considering the elementary school has capacity for 400 students, our property and parking space need to reflect our building's capacity for now- and for the future. Additional on-site parking is a current need since the generous overflow church parking we enjoy across the road at Scott Street will not be available in the near future. A potential future tenant of the secondary school building could also require more parking space than our current tenant.

If we were to sell the secondary school property and building, Beacon property would be reduced by 25%. The Logan Street entrance would not remain Beacon property, and since zoning is clearly residential non-profit, any future for-profit business would not meet zoning requirements. In addition, significant changes to our site plan would be lengthy and costly. Any demolition of the secondary school building would also be very costly.

Our conclusion is that Beacon's current financial status does not require serious consideration to sell the secondary school building, and there is no advantage to sell a portion of our current property. In fact, selling the secondary school building and required surrounding property would lower our net worth more than it would lower our debt.

We do not know the future. We do know, however, that seeking meaningful and financially viable use of the secondary school building today allows future possibilities God may have planned even beyond our generation. Our vision is not holding tight to what we have but opening our hands and asking God to reveal His plans for the secondary school building, both now and in the future. If we are faithful with what we are given today, and trust the Lord with the rest, who knows what plans He may have for Beacon property in the future!



EYE ON ALUMNI

by Mike Vanoostveen, Alumnus & Parent



My parents sent me to Beacon (Calvin Memorial at the time) for grade one, back in 1988. If memory serves correctly, there were enough students entering that year for a full class of first-graders with Mrs. Kiers, and a grade one/two split with Ms. Koene.

Twelve years later, I graduated from Beacon Christian High School, a proud member of a class of 19 students.

After high school, I attended the University of Waterloo, where I graduated, in 2005, with a master's degree in English Language and Literature.

In May of 2007, I went on a blind date with Leanne Petrecca. Shout-out to Michelle Ritzema (Van Spronsen), my Beacon classmate, for setting that up. During the date, I told Leanne that I had applied to law school for the fall, and she thought I was lying to make myself seem impressive. Four months later, I was packing my bags and off to Osgoode Hall in Toronto.

Leanne and I were married on November 1, 2008. And despite her doubts (and with her financial support!), I did in fact become a lawyer. I currently practice in civil litigation, wills and estates at Sullivan Mahoney LLP in St. Catharines (905-688-4337!).

Leanne is the managing pharmacist at Hauser's Pharmacy, the out-patient pharmacy located inside the new St. Catharines location of the Niagara Health System. And don't worry, she has a professional obligation not to discuss your prescriptions with me.

Leanne and I were blessed with a boy, Asher, in 2011, and a girl, Nico, in 2014. Asher started JK at Beacon in September, and so far he has loved every minute. I've heard stories about the emotional impact many parents feel on their child's first day of school. I feel robbed of that moment, because when Asher climbed on the school bus, he hardly turned around to wave.

As for Nico, her current favourite activities include taking things off shelves, demanding to be read to, and yelling "cookie!" Keeping children away from sugar is hard when dad can hardly get through the day without a surreptitious donut.

We attend Southridge Community Church in St. Catharines, and we love it. God is doing great things there, and I encourage you to check it out.

Although 19 students may seem thin for a graduating high school class, it was not without its benefits. I was first clarinet in the school band, played bass in a rock band, and made most of the sports teams. And when I got cut, it was only because of a bad attitude (sorry, Mrs. Brooks!). There was no shortage of opportunity. Most of all, I made friendships and built relationships that are still going strong today. I hope and pray that Beacon will be as much of a blessing in Asher's and Nico's lives as it has been in mine.

If you would like to be featured in an upcoming "Eye on Alumni", please send an email to: advancement@beaconchristian.org.

BEACON REMEMBERS!





FOUNDATION NEWS



To request a confidential appointment
with Henry Koornneef, CFP, CPCA -
email hkoornneef@christianschoolfoundation.ca



For more information about
Christian Stewardship Services
visit www.CSservices.ca.
For a confidential appointment with
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#LetYOUR Light SHINE!

beaconchristian.org MAT 5:16

Foundation event inspires members to THINK BIG!

*By Marlene Bergsma
Communications Coordinator, Christian School Foundation*

Members of the Christian School Foundation got top expertise from a fundraising leader at a recent development event.

Principal Ralph Pot, along with financial administrator David Dion and board chair Erin Knight, joined a dozen other member schools at the invitation-only roundtable, which featured advice from Henry Contant, the recently retired executive director of the Society of Christian Schools of British Columbia.

After decades of work as a fundraiser and fundraising consultant for Christian schools around the world, Contant said Christian schools have a great story to tell.

"Raising funds should grow out of vision and mission," said Contant, who has led 19 successful capital campaigns during the past 21 years. A good campaign rekindles the mission and vision of a school.

Participants at the event said it was excellent.

"As we consider a campaign it's good to hear from other schools," said Ralph Pot, "what they are doing, what is successful, what is not successful, do you do it in-house, do you hire a consultant?"

"An event like this forces us to raise some good questions."

"Some of the ideas that were shared were very helpful," agreed Tony Kamphuis, executive director of NACE, another member. "We will be implementing some of them in our fall drive."

"It was encouraging and motivating," said Paula Stubbart, director of development at John Knox Christian School Oakville.

After Contant's presentation, Foundation interim CEO Michael VanPelt led participants in a discussion on what has worked for them and what didn't.

Making expert advice and resources available to Beacon and other member schools is one of the main tasks of the Christian School Foundation.

The event also served as a way for member schools to tell the Foundation what they are looking for as they seek to meet their financial goals, said VanPelt. "Help us think through these things and we will put them to work tomorrow."

People who support the cause of Christian education will feel joy, Contant said, "when they know how our Christian school is changing the lives of children for the kingdom and for eternity."



BEACON NEWS

A Surprise Gift

by Ralph Pot, Principal

Last April, we received a notice in the mail that our school had been named in a will. No details were provided at the time, other than a request of clarification regarding our legal name (The Association for Christian Education of St. Catharines). We provided all of the necessary information and awaited further news.

It is not unusual for our school to be named in a will. Last year, we received a number of these notices. Many supporters of Beacon Christian School have used the services of the Christian School Foundation (www.christianschoolfoundation.ca) or Christian Stewardship Services (www.CSservices.ca) to plan their estates and bless Beacon Christian School in the process. If you are reading this, perhaps you will consider working with these professionals when you create or update your will.

In October, we received further news about the will. What was unique about this particular gift is that the deceased was not a previous donor to our school, and her name did not appear in our database. She was not a former student, former parent, or former employee. She had no grandchildren in the school. We are not aware of her attendance at any of our school functions or events, and we are not aware of any connection from the school to the church that she attended. As far as Beacon Christian School was concerned, she was unknown.

What we have learned is that she was pre-deceased by her husband, and they did not have any children. Her entire estate was split between three organizations, our school being one of them. We have also learned that everything she knew about Beacon Christian School she learned from a Beacon supporter over years of casual conversations at a local grocery store. God only knows how these conversations affected this woman, but we do know that one of the results of those conversations was a gift of over \$165,000 to our school. This is an astonishing and humbling gift.

One of Beacon's strategic priorities over the last number of years is fiscal responsibility and to begin to pay down our school's debt. This substantial gift, combined with some other gifts from generous donors and an operational cash surplus, allowed our finance office to issue a cheque of \$210,000 to our mortgage holder, the CRC Extension Fund in October of this year.

This is just another example of God's provision for our school. In a little over four years, Beacon Christian School has paid off nearly \$2 million in debt. There is still much work to be done in this regard, but God's provision continues to bring more than we could ask or imagine. It astounds me how God continues to answer our heartfelt prayers for our school...and sometimes through the most unlikely of sources such as conversations in a grocery store.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

BACK TO SCHOOL 2016

Monday, January 4th

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

January 26, 27 & 28

OPEN HOUSE

Monday, February 1st

BEACON GALA

Saturday, February 27th

MARCH BREAK

March 14th - 25th



BEACON SWAG

NOW AVAILABLE! Contact advancement@beaconchristian.org for details & pricing.

What a joy it is to see the incredible community of support that surrounds and upholds Beacon Christian School! Every prayer, gift and sacrifice, whether small or large, is vitally important. Thank you for your commitment as you invest in the exciting vision of Christian education here at Beacon.

DONOR CARD



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Payments will be withdrawn on the 15th day of the month starting _____, 20____ until _____, 20____

- ☐ Other: _____

Please use my gift for the following:

- ☐ Beacon General Fund ☐ Beacon Bursary/Tuition Assistance ☐ Debt Reduction/Capital Projects

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