

Changing Times

Fall 2024



The Mabin School

Imagine Where We Can Go From Here!

By Simone Gravesande

It seems fitting to be writing a piece for the *Changing Times* as I begin my role as principal at The Mabin School. As I learn about the inner workings of Mabin, I continue to be impressed by the joyful, relevant and purposeful work that culminates in such positive, meaningful learning experiences for our students. These cornerstones are a solid foundation for the trajectory of learning and growth of our magical school. I have joined a committed group of educators and staff members who are dedicated to making each and every student meet their full potential and use their learning to have an impact in the world.

In our 2023-24 Parent Satisfaction Survey, the results affirmed the alignment of our goals with the results evident in our students' performance and experiences at Mabin. A snapshot of the results indicate that of the parents surveyed:

- 91% rated their satisfaction with The Mabin School either Very High or High
- Parents were overwhelmingly pleased with the quality of teachers, high level of safety, opportunities for leadership and character development and small class sizes
- The Mabin School was acknowledged for its strong focus on developing students' creativity, levels of empathy and academic skills in reading, writing and in exposure to the arts
- Parents noted noticeable growth in the development of teachers' instructional practices in mathematics and an overall presentation of a challenging curriculum

Along with the ratings shared in the survey, parents also noted some important distinctions about the education that is offered at our school. They noted how happy they are with how academically rigorous Mabin is, but also with how happy

their kids are being here. A parent commented that Mabin students stand out as intensely curious, kind, reflective, emotionally intelligent, deep thinkers who know themselves and what they need to succeed. In fact, one parent aptly summarized their experience at our school, by saying:

“Mabin is a warm, nurturing, child-focused environment that takes a holistic approach to each child's needs. The focus is as much on academics as it is on nurturing relationships, and ensuring our kids are good humans.”

— Mabin parent, Parent Satisfaction Survey 2023-24

Based on the feedback, both shared in the survey and through our own day-to-day interactions with the Mabin community, it is no surprise that The Mabin School is often described as magical. There are exciting times ahead for us, as we drive towards our mission to create the next generation of original thinkers, adaptive leaders and caring citizens. This year, for

example, we will undergo the accreditation process with CAIS (Canadian Accredited Independent Schools). Through this rigorous process, we will receive precise, detailed feedback about the strengths of our school from an external organization whose goal is to support Canadian independent schools in the process of continual improvement, leading to better outcomes for students. This feedback will be the foundation for our targeted work to ensure that The Mabin School continues to evolve, and that we are effective in living our mission, vision and values, rooted in the success and well-being of all of our students. We look forward to this collaborative process that will undoubtedly inspire our team to further enhance opportunities for students that are dynamic, comprehensive and strive to prepare them to be productive contributing members of society today and well into the future. This process will ensure we are focusing on whole school improvement and is an important component of our long term strength as a school. Our learning will not stop with the CAIS process. This year, we are pleased to have begun a partnership with



Junlei Li, co-chair of the Human Development and Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Junlei's work focuses on “Simple Interactions,” an approach which identifies what ordinary people do extraordinarily well with children in day-to-day moments that promotes positive relationships. At The Mabin School, we know that positive relationships are the foundation of academic achievement and student success. This exciting collaboration with Junlei promises to enhance our practices with an emphasis on some key principles:

1. Young people's relationships with teachers and other caring adults at school are vitally important — affecting motivation, academic performance, and overall well-being
2. A focus on friendships, relationships, and a sense of belonging is not “extra” or optional. It is essential
3. You can model empathy and care for others — and show young people how to be a good friend.
4. We should avoid a “false choice” between learning and connec-

tions. It's not one or another — it's both. Learning occurs in relationships

At The Mabin School, we have always fostered and valued strong relationships. We are eager to delve deeper into this learning in order to best serve our students and to ensure that our simple interactions are those that position our students and staff to do their best learning.

This is an exciting time to be taking The Mabin School into the future as we plan to deepen our understanding of how best we can ensure our students thrive in an environment that values, and is inspired by, learning. Our work will centre on how we can use our learning to promote change in our school, in our community and in the world.

Imagine where we can go from here!

Simone Gravesande became principal of The Mabin School in July 2024, following Nancy Stenhauer's retirement. Simone is an experienced principal, an award-winning leader and an avid learner who is currently working towards her PhD in Change Management at OISE. We are thrilled to welcome this original thinker, adaptive leader and caring citizen to the Mabin community!



Meet Simone!

By Michelle Barchuk

Michelle Barchuk is The Mabin School's Director of Admissions & Communications. Over the summer, Michelle had the opportunity to ask our new principal, Simone Gravesande, a few questions about herself to help our community get to know her better. Read on to learn about why she became a principal 17 years ago, what motivates and inspires her, where she would like to travel next and more!



What inspired you to become a principal?

I had an amazing principal when I was in elementary school. Mr. Johnson was a lot of fun and was always doing fun things for us like coaching and running the choir and playing with us at recess. He was also understanding about it if you had to see him in his office (which may or may not have happened to me...). I really admired him, and it made me want to be a principal.

If you weren't a principal, what career path would you have chosen?

At one point, I wanted to be a pilot. It sounded like fun to be able to fly a plane around the world to all kinds of different destinations and see the world from above, but also experience different customs, traditions and scenery. I reconsidered when I got a glimpse of the number of buttons in the cockpit and just how complicated it looks to manage such a massive machine!



What motivates you the most in your role?

I am inspired by watching the growth and learning that happens among students over time. It's really exciting to have a front row seat to the learning process and to be a cheerleader for students and create the conditions for them to meet their full potential.

What's one experience from your own elementary school days that still influences your approach to education today?

In Grade 4, I won a poetry contest in our class. It felt really good, and I still remember the poem all these years later. I read the poem on the stage in front of the entire school and everyone clapped for me. It reminds me how important encouragement is in the learning process. I also remember having so much fun writing the poem, reminding me that it is important to make school enjoyable!

Who has been the biggest influence in your life, and how have they shaped your values and beliefs?

My mom has been the biggest influence in my life. She has always encouraged me and pushed me to do my best. She made sure that my sister and I had lots of experiences and learned about the world. She taught me how important it is to have a strong work ethic and to live a life of purpose. When I was growing up, she always used to say, "Be a leader, not a follower." That has stuck with me my whole life, even now. She always made sure we understood the importance of family.

If you could visit any place in the world, where would you go and why?

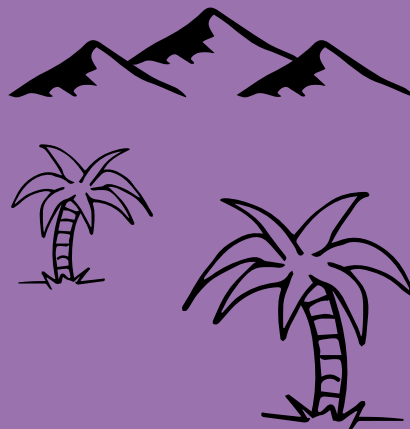
I had two places on my bucket list, Iceland and Hawaii. I was lucky to check Iceland off my list last year. It was so beautiful, and I really enjoyed hiking up all the mountains and experiencing the powerful waterfalls. I was also intrigued by how it was daylight for almost 23 hours every day. I'm hoping to get to Hawaii next. I've wanted to go ever since The Brady Bunch had a special where the whole family went on vacation (I think I just dated myself!).

If you could instantly master one skill, what would it be and why?

I'd love to instantly be able to play the violin or the cello. I tried to learn the violin once, but didn't get very far because I sounded so awful. It was taking such a long time to be able to play something beautiful.

How do you like to unwind after a busy day? What are some of your hobbies?

I am addicted to Orangetheory. I love to go and do a class at the end of a day. It is an hour I get all to myself, and it makes me feel energized. I am also into photography. I started learning on a DSLR many years ago, but I am learning that you can take comparable photos on your phone with some simple techniques. That's what I have been trying to learn lately.



What's your favourite children's book and why do you love it?

My favourite children's book is "The Day the Crayons Quit" by Drew Daywalt. It is a story about some crayons that end up fighting because they are jealous of which ones get used more. It causes a problem when the little boy Duncan wants to colour and the crayons are not cooperating. Duncan has to solve the problem. I love the book because it shows what can happen when you get frustrated in a funny way. It always reminds me to keep things in perspective.

What are some of your favourite songs/musical artists?

I LOVE music—I could give you quite a list—Maroon 5, Darius Rucker, Adele, Amanda Marshall, Lauryn Hill, Whitney Houston, The Script, Lewis Capaldi...and so many more!

What's the most adventurous thing you've ever done?

Nothing lately, aside from climbing some massive mountains in Iceland, but one day, I plan to do the Edge-Walk where you stand outside the CN Tower. I just have to find the courage first...

What's an unusual talent you have that would surprise others?

I can carry lots of books on my head and walk...on a good day up or down stairs...true!

What was your favourite summer job?

I worked as the lifeguard at a wading pool during a particularly hot summer. Everyone was so happy to have a place to cool off, especially the kids. I was also able to cool off when I needed to!

You can only choose ONE from each pair below:

Beach or mountains? Beach.

Coffee or tea? Coffee...lots of coffee!

Morning person or night owl? Morning Owl...that's a mix of both!

Cats or dogs? Dogs.

Books or movies? Movies, especially in a movie theatre.

Pizza or burgers? Do I really have to choose?

Summer or winter? Summer.

Sweet or savory? Sweet—chocolate chip cookies and butter tarts are my faves!



A Magical Evening

By Michelle Barchuk & Erika Bolliger

When Nancy Steinhauer (principal at The Mabin School from 2016/17 through 2023/24) announced her retirement just over a year ago, we knew that a very special celebration would be in order. As The Mabin School's principal for the past 8 years, and an educator for the past 30, there was no question that Nancy deserved a proper send-off. Nothing else would do!

With the support of a dedicated committee of current parents and Mabin Board members (including Bianca Auciello, Jamie Campbell ('91), Lauren Granatstein and Elin Raun Royer), we met on Zoom to brainstorm over the course of several months.

With a guest list as long as Nancy's list of accomplishments (read her article on page 10 to learn more), we would need a large, yet cozy, accessible space, where people from all parts of Nancy's life could gather to celebrate. We were thrilled to find the perfect venue in Creeds Coffee Bar, owned by Jonah Creed ('88). Jonah and his team hosted a fabulous event, complete with delicious snacks, yummy drinks and outstanding service throughout.

Jamie Campbell ('91), current Mabin parent and Mabin Board Chair, was our entertaining MC as several people spoke in honour of Nancy that evening. First off, Penpa, The Mabin School's beloved custodian, presented Nancy with a special scarf for good luck on behalf of the staff. Next, Gerry Mabin regaled us with tales of how she first met Nancy and congratulated her on her many accomplishments over

the past 8 years. Following Gerry, former Mabin Board Chair and past parent Jeremy Creed ('86) spoke and, in true Mabin style, he took a responsible risk and shared a poem he had written for Nancy upon her retirement. Michelle Barchuk, our Director of Admissions & Communications, who has known Nancy since high school, gave some insight into Nancy as a changemaker in her teenage years. We were also treated to a spontaneous speech by The Mabin School's direct neighbour to the south on Poplar Plains Road, Eric, who shared his thoughts. Finally, Nancy addressed her guests, speaking about her journey over the years leading up to her time at The Mabin School and thanking everyone for their support.

We were very pleased with the turnout for Nancy's retirement extravaganza. It was a full house! In addition to current Mabin families, we were thrilled to welcome many alumni parents and grandparents along with former staff members. Party guests also included a wide range of people from all aspects of Nancy's 30+ years in education, as well as friends, colleagues and family members. Even her Grade 9 Latin teacher, Ian Waldron, was there!

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this magical evening in June. It was certainly a memorable celebration for Nancy and our entire community. Please join us in wishing Nancy all the best as she embarks on this next chapter. We can't wait to see what this original thinker, adaptive leader and caring citizen does next!



In her final year as Principal, Nancy Steinhauer established The Inclusion Fund to secure and grow The Mabin School's financial aid, with bursaries that support greater socioeconomic diversity and scholarships that attract, invite, and include families from underrepresented communities. Nancy generously gifted the first \$10,000 herself.

Effective changemaking depends on people from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds leading, collaborating, and problem-solving together in a context of empathy, inclusion, and action. A gift to The Inclusion Fund today helps grow towards Mabin's first endowment that could provide financial aid in *perpetuity* for amazing young learners. Please consider joining Nancy in her legacy of impact by visiting mabin.com/support-mabin or contacting campaign@mabin.com for more information.

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Michelle Barchuk is The Mabin School's Director of Admissions & Communications. Together with Erika Bolliger, our Director of Advancement & Alumni Relations, she helped coordinate a memorable farewell party for retiring principal, Nancy Steinhauer, at the end of the 2023/24 school year.

Ode to a Changemaker

By Michelle Barchuk

As I look around this room, I see people from all parts of Nancy's life: family members; school friends, current and former colleagues, Mabin families past and present, mentors, former students — even one of Nancy's high school teachers — are all here this evening.

Whether you've known Nancy for decades or you've only been recently introduced to her, there's no question — there's just something about Nancy. We often talk about the Mabin magic at our school and I would argue that Nancy has always had her very own brand of magic.

As someone who has known Nancy for over 40 years now, I'm sometimes asked: has Nancy always been a changemaker? Were there signs back then that she would go on to become the original thinker, adaptive leader and caring citizen we are celebrating today? Oh — I can assure you — there were most definitely signs.

Michelle Barchuk is Director of Admissions and Communications at The Mabin School. She has known Nancy since high school and had the privilege of working alongside Nancy since Michelle joined Mabin in 2017. Michelle was honoured to be one of the speakers at Nancy's retirement celebration in June when she shared the following remarks.

Nancy and I met during our first days of high school at North Toronto Collegiate Institute in the early '80s. We didn't meet on the playing field or in the art studio or even in the math wing. We met in Grade 9 Latin class. I will never forget that first class — we found our seats tentatively as our teacher, Mr. Waldron (who is here with us tonight) energetically approached the podium. Grasping it firmly with both hands, he leaned forward and shouted dramatically: "ECCE ROMANI! Look, Romans!" And with that, we were off — he held us spellbound as we launched into an immersive experience learning — what some would call — a dead language. Well — whoever said THAT never had Ian Waldron or Jane Kennedy as their teachers.

It will come as no surprise to you that Nancy distinguished herself academically in Latin class and beyond. Every year at our school's annual commencement ceremony, Nancy would walk away with awards and honours, including excellence in music, character, scholarship and leadership. Nancy was clearly a force to be reckoned with! But there were also signs, early on, that Nancy was a changemaker.

As you may know, Nancy has a particular fondness for musicals — perhaps stemming from the fact that her parents Paul & Estelle met doing a high school musical together — or from her time in productions at Camp Tamakwa in the summers. Well — Imagine Nancy's surprise to discover that — despite being known throughout the city for its outstanding music program — North Toronto Collegiate Institute hadn't produced a student musical production for many years. And there were no indications that would change any time soon. Not, that is, until Nancy came along. And she had an idea.

Now — most of us here, have been in a room with Nancy at one time or another, when she gets that tell-tale twinkle in her eye — you know the one I'm talking about — and you know exactly what's coming next: four words said with enthusiasm, energy and delight: "I have an idea!" And then, you just need to strap yourself in to hear what comes next. Those four little words: I have an idea — have sparked everything from successful capital campaigns to spontaneous weekend trips to New York and everything in between. So there she was — this spunky, passionate, creative teenager with an



idea. And she was absolutely committed to figuring out how to get the adults around her to listen and to support her vision. And she did it! Nancy convinced her teachers to set aside their differences and work together for the first time in years on a production of the musical: 'Babes in Arms'. The show, which Nancy also co-directed, integrated students from all grades as actors, dancers, singers, musicians and stage crew. It brought together a cross-section of high school students who otherwise likely would never have met. Performing in that musical remains one of my favourite memories of our time together at NT.

How did she do it? In the same way Nancy has approached any challenge or obstacle in work or life as long as I've known her: by listening with empathy, thinking creatively, persisting and building relationships every step of the way. With Nancy it's not about being in the spotlight herself. She thrives on seeing others shine — often in ways they never thought possible. Her endless positivity and boundless energy have had an impact on

so many of us here tonight. Nancy's typical response to any request is an enthusiastic "yes!" quickly followed by "how can I help?" And she makes it look so easy. Especially when it's NOT. That's the Nancy magic.

As I ponder what it will be like without Nancy at The Mabin School next year — I remind myself how much she has taught me. How much she has taught us.

Nancy, I have known you as a friend, a leader, a mentor and a colleague. And — for the past 7 years — all of those at once. How lucky am I? I have learned so much from you. Your ability to bring out the best in those around you — kids and adults alike — is second to none. It's been such a privilege to watch you in action at Mabin. While I will miss seeing you every day at school, I know you're not done yet. The best is yet to come and I can't wait to hear all about it! Happy Retirement, dear friend.



Reflecting on Retirement

By Nancy Steinhauer

Eighteen years is a long time to be a principal. Eighteen is also a lucky number, if you're Jewish (which I am). In Hebrew, every number corresponds to a letter, and eighteen spells the word for "life." I've had a lifetime as a principal, and after a wonderful eight years at The Mabin School, I am ready to move on to the next chapter of my life, one that may involve teaching, but will not involve the complexities and challenges of running a school.

It feels like yesterday that I was a young teacher, falling in love with my first class. I had decided to become a teacher mostly because I did not know what else to do with a degree in Ancient Greek Studies and Literary Studies, and besides, having worked at camps directing shows and playing the piano, I knew I loved working with children. So I became a teacher for what I thought would be a short time, and 31 years later, here I am, a seasoned educator.

I was lucky enough to have inspirational, forward-thinking teachers myself. Teachers who encouraged me to ask questions, to follow my interests, and to make connections across disciplines. My teachers made me feel loved, and I loved them. Our relationships were deep, and some of them persist to this day. Even though I did not attend The Mabin School as a child, I was lucky enough to have a Mabin experience: learning rooted in relationship, inquiry, and creativity.

So when I started my career at Branksome Hall, it took me about 2 minutes to realize I loved my class. I thought about them morning, noon, and night. I thought about how to make the learning meaningful to them, how to engage them, how to challenge them to accomplish things they didn't even know were possible.

A few years into Branksome Hall, the opportunity arose to go on exchange at a boys' school, Royal St. George's College. Always up for an adventure, I moved across town to teach 160 boys from Grades 3-6, among other things, HEALTH! Soon I was running the Junior School collaboratively with others, and I was mentored by the best, Headmaster Hal Hannaford, who taught me most of all to value people's strengths and build a team with complementary skills. Again, I loved those boys, and they taught me so much about teaching and learning. The things I had thought were true after my experience at Branksome Hall turned out to be only part of the truth. I had to broaden my repertoire if I was going to meet the needs of all my students.

A few years later, I moved to Montcrest School, where I was Assistant Principal of Academics. Once again, I was lucky to be surrounded by committed teachers who had a passion for teaching and learning, and delightful students who had been taught carefully to negotiate conflict. At the time, the special education program was second to none, and I learned a tremendous amount about learning disabilities and how to adapt instruction for a variety of learners. Most of all, it was a warm, caring community that really valued inclusion.

In 2004, I decided to take a real adventure. I made the leap into becoming a public school educator. I started in the York Region District School Board as a Vice-Principal at an amazing K-8 school in southeast Markham. There I learned so much from Principal Jackie Young, who later became the Director of the Near North District School Board. Jackie was a champion for justice, and a master at building a team of teachers that were learning together for the sake of their students. Jackie, like Hal, was a mentor who empowered me to take responsible risks, and made me feel the impact of my work.

And suddenly, I was an inner-city Principal, first at Topcliff P.S. at Jane and Finch, and shortly after at a Model School for Inner Cities, George Webster Elementary School. The inner-city was full of adventure and appreciation. The skills I had learned in independent schools served me well to create a warm and welcoming environment for parents and students and to create a learning community among

the teachers. During my time in the inner-city, Gerry Mabin, whom I had always admired, collaborated with me on a few meaningful projects. We both served on an advisory board for Right to Play, Gerry organized some Mabin parents to volunteer at my schools, and Gerry brought her small not-for-profit, Friendship in Action, to my schools to support relationship-building among students.

After George Webster, I took a year off to explore the world and to teach Principals, and, as I was doing that, a job at the Ministry of Education came up. That led to a 2 year stint at the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, where I worked with about 100 schools in the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board supporting teachers, principals, and superintendents.

During my time at the Ministry, I received a call from Gerry. The Mabin School was looking for a new principal. Would I consider applying? I thought not. After all, I was having a great time where I was, and having an impact on public education, which was my dream. But Gerry persisted — and she is persuasive — and invited me for a coffee. Two or three coffee dates later, I had submitted my application, only to be won over by Jeremy Creed ('86), Henry Perren ('91), Emily Burnett ('94), Lesley Shore, and other members of the selection committee. I knew I had one more school in me, and The Mabin School was going to be it.

So all of that led me here, to The Mabin School, where I was able to take everything that I had learned along the way and integrate it into



this 8 year journey. The Mabin School's amazing teachers, the opportunity to be Canada's first independent Ashoka Changemaker School, the delightful and creative students and their warm and caring parents all made the decision easy. This place was the school I would have created myself, if Gerry Mabin hadn't done it first.

What have we accomplished together? So much. With students leading the way, we created a shared vision of excellence in progressive education, a common understanding of what it means to be original thinkers, adaptive leaders, and caring citizens, and we became change-makers in education.

Over these 8 years, we:

- Completed Mabin's first significant Capital Campaign and raised \$4 million
- Completed our first major building project, erecting the Community Learning Lab which includes a new Kindergarten space, a learning commons, and a beautiful art studio
- Moved successfully off-site and back on-site, allowing for construction and safer learning during COVID
- Hosted international delegations, educator conferences, parent conferences, and visiting days for local educators who wanted to learn about what we were doing
- Opened a parent-child drop-in program, Saturday Morning Choosing Time, to serve the local community, our own families, and our alumni





- Initiated Intergenerational Programs for the mutual benefit of our students and our older friends of Mabin, creating a learning community for people from 0-99
- Built leadership at all levels of our school

We all know the world needs more Mabin – so I am going to go out into the world and take a little bit of Mabin with me. My first gig is a 4 week stint in Brazil in October/November, where I hope to keep spreading the Mabin magic and making sure that more children get the kind of experience that Mabin students are lucky enough to experience.

I leave The Mabin School in full confidence that the school is in excellent hands. Simone Gravesande is an exceptional leader with an exceptional team. The Mabin School will continue to break new ground, innovate, and create while staying rooted in relationship and student-led learning, ensuring that this special place that is for kids, and is co-created with kids, continues to be magical and continues to share that magic with the rest of the world, too.



I am grateful to The Mabin School's Board of Directors for its continuous support during my time at the school. That has allowed me to take responsible risks. The Board is made up of a very talented group of individuals, including Mabin alumni, who care deeply about the school, and I have learned so much from each and every Board member. Most especially, I have enjoyed working closely with the two alumni who have chaired the Board during my tenure: Jeremy Creed ('86) and Jamie Campbell ('91). The Mabin School produces good people and great leaders! I am also grateful for our new principal Simone for taking the responsible risk of joining The Mabin School. She believes in us and what we do – and it's what she has done in her previous schools – leading and learning through relationships. I promised I would not leave until there was somebody spectacular to take my place, and Mabin found just the right person. Simone is truly spectacular.

Thank you to everyone at The Mabin School for your kindness and support, and for teaching me so much. The Mabin School has been an important part of my journey, and I dare say I am now "fully baked." It's true what they say about the eight year journey! Eight years did the trick.

Nancy Steinhauer became principal at The Mabin School in 2016. After 8 years at the helm, she retired at the end of the 2023/24 school year.

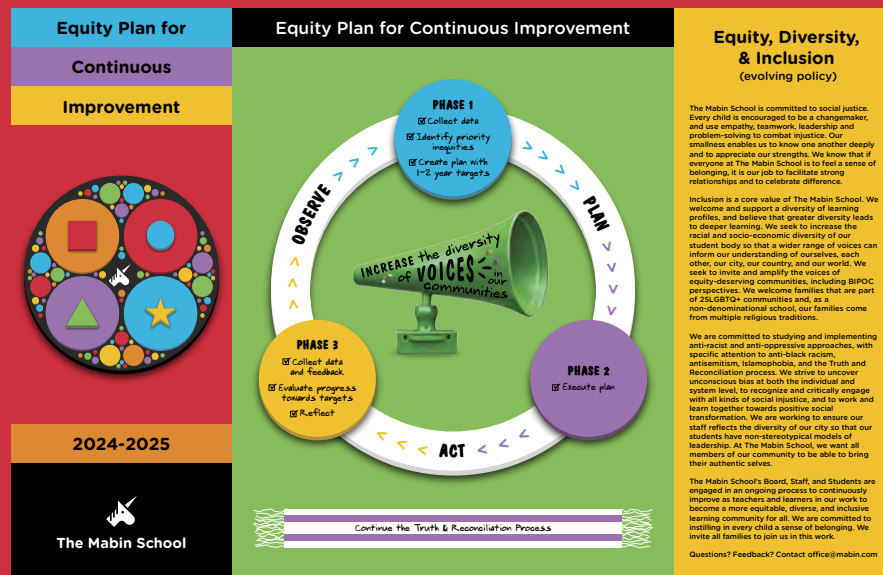


Towards a More Equitable Mabin

By Ben Peebles

The Mabin School is continuing on its journey to become a place of greater equity, belonging and inclusion for all. This is not the work of one year, or one person, but rather a years-long commitment to not only being a community in which everyone can be their authentic selves, but also a community which is accessible to ever more children and families. Many Mabin staff and community members have been engaged and dedicated to this work for years, and we should be deeply proud of the warm and welcoming community that we have created together.

That said, in 2023/24, we took considerable steps to accelerate and deepen our efforts towards equity with the creation of The Mabin School's Equity Plan for Continuous Improvement. Through a data-based and collaborative process, we took a deep look at where we are as a school, and set priorities and targets for where we want to go. The Equity Plan is meant to take us beyond talk and commitments and towards concrete action that will move us forward as a community. We embedded this plan in our Strategic Plan Extension, furthering our goal to *Increase the Diversity and Inclusion of Voices in Our Community*. With the full support of our Board of Directors, we now have an exciting path forward to creating an even more inclusive Mabin!



What went into the creation of this plan?

Creating the Equity Plan was really all about listening to the community, and about trying to capture how our community thinks we can do better. We collected quantitative data, we looked at survey responses, and many times we sat across a table and just talked about a family's experience here at Mabin. From there, we worked together to draw out the big themes and make substantive plans. We considered all input, including:

- Detailed data collection focused on all sectors of our community
- The Mabin Student Census
- Our Parent Satisfaction Survey, Staff Equity Audits, and other targeted surveys
- Listening sessions and in-depth conversations with community members
- Collaboration and feedback sessions with staff, the Board Strategy & Equity Committee, and the Mabin Board of Directors

What does The Mabin School's Equity Plan look like?

The Equity Plan gives us direction as a school in two ways: first, it puts us on a cycle of listening, acting, and reflecting on how we did, a cycle that we can repeat over and over again — after all, our work to become a more equitable school is never done! And second, the Equity Plan gives us key priority areas for us to focus on right now, based on what we have heard from the community to this point. In other words, the Equity Plan:

- Creates 3-year cycles of data collection, action and reflection so that we are always making progress
- Sets out 4 priority areas for us to address right away
- Provides measurable targets to reach and clear plans for how to get there

Phase 1: Priority Inequities

Staff & Student Belonging

We will create a highly diverse student body that experiences a high level of belonging. Structures are in place to address staff experiences of bias, discrimination, or exclusion.



Student Body Racial Diversity

We will create a school where the racial and ethnic diversity of the student body will mirror that of the City of Toronto.



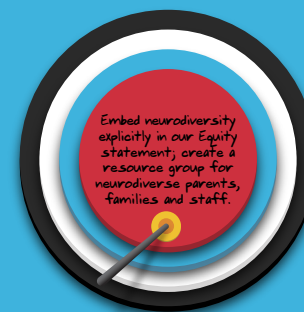
Socioeconomic Inclusion

We will create a school where all feel meaningful belonging regardless of their socioeconomic status, with a plan for steadily increasing economic diversity.



Neurodiversity

We will create a school that intentionally includes a diversity of learners, celebrates neurodiversity, and continues to ensure all students have the supports needed to be successful.



The graphic above shows our four priorities, articulated as long-term aspirations, along with just a few of the short term targets that we will be working towards in the first cycle of the Equity Plan. The full Equity Plan also includes myriad tactics, proposals, policies and plans that we will use to get ever closer to the kind of school we want to be.

How can you contribute to this work?

We have already heard loud and clear the enthusiasm and energy that our community has for equity and inclusion. We are already one of the most radically inclusive and welcoming independent schools, but there is wide agreement that we can all do more. Our community — staff, teachers, parents, and students alike — are our greatest strength and resource in this process of growth.

There is a role for everyone to play in making the goals of our Equity Plan come to fruition, including:

- Taking part in the learning opportunities, workshops and guest speakers we will be bringing forward
- Adding your voice and sharing your lived experience by participating in surveys, focus groups and by reaching out to any member of the Mabin leadership team, anytime. We would love to have a chat!
- Engaging with the equity-based learning happening in your child's classroom, and throughout the school
- Helping us better understand and share your culture and heritage and experience at the school, and helping us reach out to members of your community who are not yet at Mabin

Creating a more equitable, diverse, and just Mabin is all of our collective work, and we now have a clear road map for how we can move forward together.

Ben Peebles is our VP Strategy, Equity, and Learning. After completing his Master of Arts in Child Study and Education, Ben began his teaching career at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School at the University of Toronto. Ben has mentored countless teacher candidates and collaborated with pre-eminent researchers, co-designing studies and interventions in the classroom, often with an emphasis on inquiry, science, technology, and collaborative learning. Ben has presented on innovative projects at national conferences across North America, and developed connections with educators in Italy, China, and Singapore. He has extensive experience in outdoor education, inquiry-based teaching, and developing equity initiatives at the classroom and school level.

Equity Work in 2023-2024

By Ben Peebles

At the same time as we worked to create a fulsome Equity Plan to guide us into a more equitable future, in 2023-2024 we also made equity an immediate and consistent focus for our staff, teachers and students. At The Mabin School, we don't view equity, diversity and inclusion as special topics to be discussed every once in a while, but rather as key elements of our teaching and learning work together, fully interwoven into the life of the school. On any given day now, and in the future, this community of learners and leaders will be engaging deeply with what it means to live and work together in a pluralist school and society.

Here are just a few examples of how we brought equity, diversity and inclusion into The Mabin School this past year:

- In September, we observed **Treaties Week and Truth and Reconciliation Day**, with extensive preparatory work done in every classroom around Indigenous history and contributions, as well as on our collective responsibility as treaty people. To mark our commitment and to prompt change in the broader community, we engaged in the **Moccasin Identifier Project**. Grade 5 and 6 students deepened their learning with trips to the Harbourfront Centre for Truth and Reconciliation workshops
- More than a dozen staff members took part in **The Four Seasons of Indigenous Learning** professional development course, to better understand Indigenous perspectives, histories and relationships
- Our Board of Directors worked with **j Wallace Skelton**, Professor of Queer Studies at the University of Regina, on the Ontario Human Rights Code and the sense of justice and belonging that we can create as an institution. Our staff had

small-group sessions with j on bringing ever deeper social justice and equity engagement into our teaching practices; and, every student in the school had a chance to participate in a workshop with j focused on children as experts in their own rights and inclusion

- We observed **Holocaust Remembrance Week** with multiple opportunities for children to learn in age-appropriate ways, culminating in moving visits from Holocaust survivors Hedy Bohm and Myrna Riback for our oldest students
- Led by an amazing group of parents, our whole school had a joyous **Spring Festival** celebration, learning about Chinese and Asian heritage, language, culture and history
- Our partners at **Making Art Making Change** led the Grade 4 students and grandparents on an eight-week **intergenerational art project**, with the goal of exploring and illustrating our Equity Statement. The resultant installation combines a self-portrait from every

member of our community, and permanently enshrines our commitment to equity on the walls of the school. (Read a more detailed account of this incredible project on page 18)

- Staff had the chance to learn from **Marilyn Maychak**, Inuit Educator, Activist and Facilitator, and to deepen our collective understanding of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis ways of being and knowing
- Our Staff Equity Committee did large- and small-group training and learning with Kike Ojo-Thompson of **KOJO Institute**, with a focus on institutional change for equity
- We hosted an extraordinary **Parent2Parent Conference**, on the theme of parenting towards social justice. We had speakers and workshops on gender identity, body image, multiracial families, combating hate and so much more
- Every student got to learn from **Dr. Kofi Gbolonyo**, our artist-in-residence in the music room, who taught all students (and staff!) African drumming,

music, singing and dance, culminating in an extraordinary Spring Concert performance. (Read more about Dr. Kofi on page 50)

There are many more examples, far too many to list here! On any given day, in every classroom, students are not only tackling questions of equity, but also joyfully opening windows into the experiences of others and seeing their own experiences and backgrounds mirrored in their learning. We are so proud of the work we have done together so far and, with our Equity Plan for Continuous Improvement in place, we know there will be even more to celebrate in the school years to come.

Ben is VP Strategy, Equity and Learning at The Mabin School.



This Is Who We Are: An Intergenerational Project

Unpacking Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at The Mabin School

By Vanessa Barnett & Elena Soní

Vanessa Barnett (grandparent to James ('29) and Bianca ('30)) and Elena Soní (former Mabin art teacher and parent to Sofia ('02) and Jorge ('05)) are the Artistic Directors of Making Art Making Change. Their non-profit charity is committed to giving voice to communities through the use of visual arts, and storytelling across the GTA in Toronto's underserved communities. In May 2024, Vanessa and Elena were recognized by the City of Toronto and United Way's Toronto Community Champion Award presented by Mayor Olivia Chow in recognition of their work across Toronto Communities.

Former principal Nancy Steinhauer had a vision for an art installation that would greet all visitors, staff, parents, and students each day at The Mabin School, creating a welcoming statement about the Mabin community right at the main entrance. A project about ideas presented creatively.

Making Art Making Change (MAMC) Artistic Directors Elena Soní and Vanessa Barnett are delighted to have visioned and facilitated "This is Who We Are" with The Mabin School.

Together with MAMC, Sue Ball's Grade 4 students, grandparents, and senior volunteers engaged in a conversation identifying examples of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the school and their lives outside of school. The work aimed to discover how much we understand equity-informed practices and aimed to dispel any misconceptions.

Over 2-hour sessions each week for eight weeks, the adults and students worked alongside one another to visually depict how Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion find expression in The Mabin School and its community. The interaction between adults and students was structured in phases, where all participants gradually built upon skills and experiences, resulting in a deeper level of bonding and mutual understanding.

What We Learned

Through this interaction, we became community builders. The students interacted with their grandparents and volunteers, and thoughtful conversations happened. These conversations taught us that equity is giving everyone what they need to succeed. It's different from equality which dictates that everyone should be treated the same regardless of their differences.

Every staff member and student at The Mabin School is an artist represented by their self-portrait in this collaborative piece. The mural reflects the school's interaction as an equitable, diverse, and inclusive community.

All participants brought personal lenses and experiences to the collaboration.

Teachers know that art can make complex learning visible.



Students learned drawing and painting skills and bonded intergenerationally with volunteers and grandparents through conversations that rarely happen.

Elena Soní (a past Mabin parent herself, and well-loved visual arts teacher at The Mabin School for many years) saw the intergenerational collaborative work she pioneered taken to new heights.



Vanessa Barnett, a current grandparent at the school, saw the emphasis The Mabin School places on divergent approaches to teaching and learning and how valuable this is for creating an inclusive learning environment.



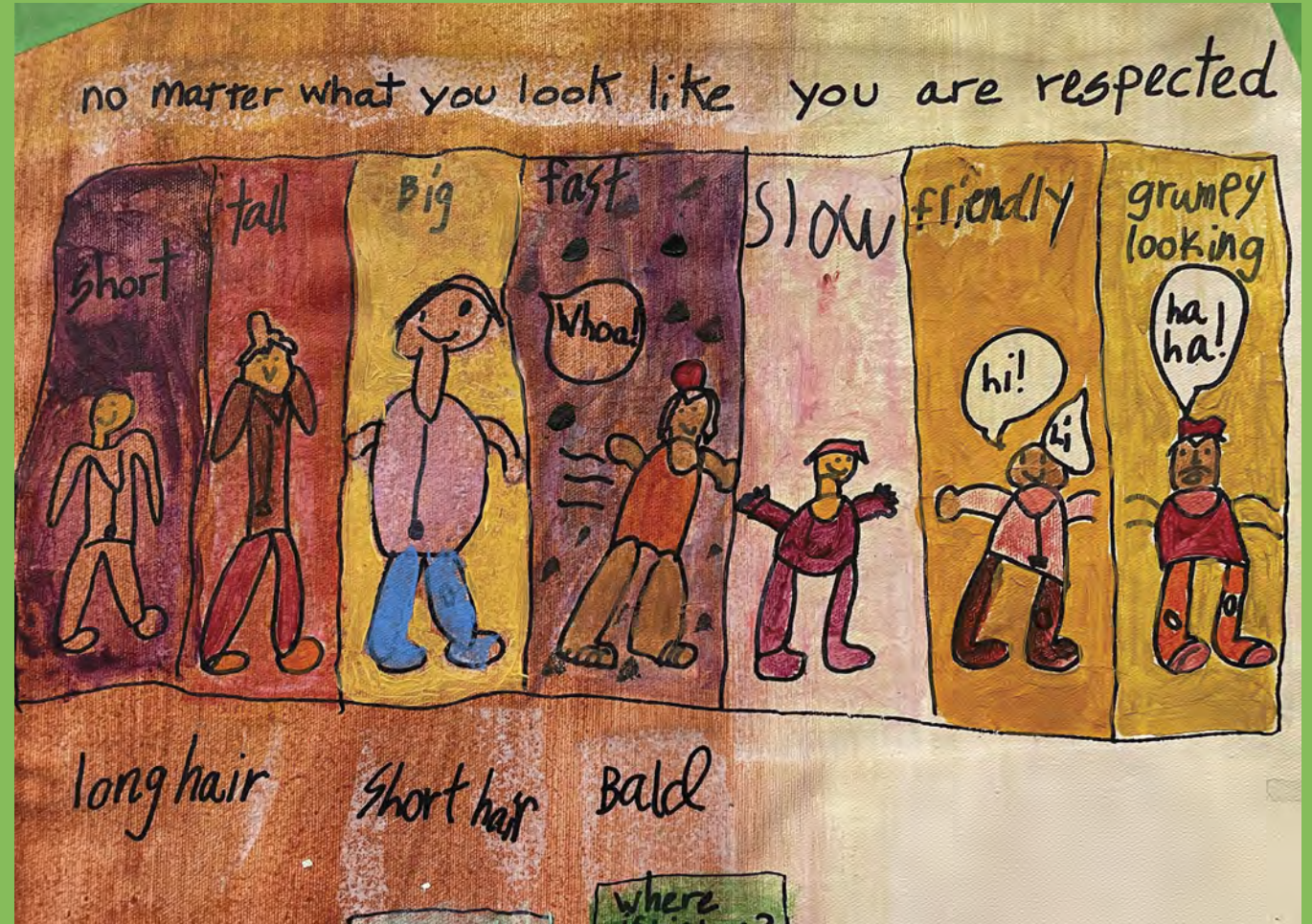
Nancy Steinhauer saw her dynamic vision for this inclusive statement of what EDI looks like at The Mabin School come to life! Now, every visitor to the school is greeted by this collaborative mural which clearly illustrates exactly who we are. This is who we are. And we couldn't be more proud.





Familiar alumni faces who helped bring "This is Who We Are" to life included: Gerry Mabin (Founder and former principal of The Mabin School), Chris Wright (former Mabin teacher), Kelly Meighen (alumni parent of Ted ('92) and Max ('01), and current grandparent of Henry ('26), Zoe ('30), Izzy ('31)).

Thanks to a generous gift from the Jarislowsky Foundation, The Mabin School has run intergenerational art programs for the past 2 years that bring together students, grandparents, and elders in our community to collaborate. During the 2023/24 school year, in partnership with Making Art Making Change, our Grade 4 students (Class of 2026) created a beautiful mural that represents Mabin's diversity, equity, and inclusion statement. It takes pride of place at the main entrance to our building. Every visitor is immediately struck by this incredible art installation as they enter The Mabin School.





Visiting Days

Teachers at The Mabin School are incredibly fortunate to have access to high quality, current professional development. We are encouraged to ask questions and to dive deep into knowledge building – in the same ways that we promote our students’ learning! It has been in this spirit that all Classroom Teachers and Learning Strategies Teachers have worked together over the past few years to collectively update and extend our understanding of the best practices around literacy instruction. As a whole school, we have embraced structured literacy instruction. Structured literacy is direct and systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, as well as written expression. There is certainly a science to literacy instruction! And it is actually rocket science to teach in this research and evidence-based way all while keeping it fun, engaging and exciting for kids.

As our colleagues at other schools started to hear about how we had so effectively made shifts to our instruction at Mabin, more and more teachers asked to visit, meet with us, and observe our teachers do what they do. We were met with two interesting situations: scheduling many separate visits just wasn’t making sense any more, and maybe we were ready to share our learning

in a more formal way! Our teachers really embody the Habits of Mind “Taking Responsible Risks” and “Collaborating (and Thinking Flexibly)” so we scheduled two official Visiting Days for educators from other schools to spend time at The Mabin School observing and reflecting with us.

It became our goal to amplify our learning by sharing it as much as we could. We wanted to include teachers from other independent schools in the GTA, but also public school colleagues since professional development can be much harder to come by in the public school boards. Attendance was free for public school educators, in an effort to make it more accessible for all. Our first Visiting Day took place in November, and we welcomed just under 30 educators. The response was so overwhelmingly positive that we scheduled a second Visiting Day in April and we made space for 45 educators to join. We hosted colleagues from Branksome Hall, Upper Canada College, Bayview Glen, Bishop Strachan School, and many schools across the Toronto District School Board.

The days were structured with time for observations and reflection. Visiting teachers were able to sit in and observe two different lessons from grades that they were most interested in. We had time to debrief and share our experiences

By Lauren McGuire



over lunch and then a more formal question panel with the participating Mabin teachers responding to questions about resources, program planning, assessment, and more. Mabin teachers tend to be extremely humble, but it was hard not to feel excited and affirmed by the atmosphere on those days! It was an amazing opportunity to share our successes as a staff, but also our ongoing challenges and questions as we all strive to continue our learning. Based on the success of these two events, we hope to offer more Visiting Days in the future!

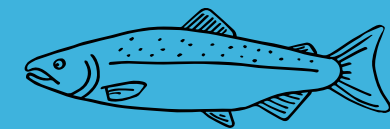


Lauren McGuire is a key member of our Learning Strategies Team, supporting students and teachers, and has been at The Mabin School since 2010. Lauren has a specialist in Special Education and a passion for teaching and learning. She has a Master’s degree in Literature from Boston University and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto (OISE). Lauren has additional qualifications in Reading as well as Librarianship. She loves to figure out exactly how kids learn, and support them to understand themselves as learners. Lauren collaborated closely with Jillian Green (our Teaching, Learning & Curriculum Coach, and Librarian) to coordinate and host two popular Visiting Days for educators from other schools during the 2023/24 school year.

Atlantic Salmon in JK:

A Journey of Discovery and Stewardship

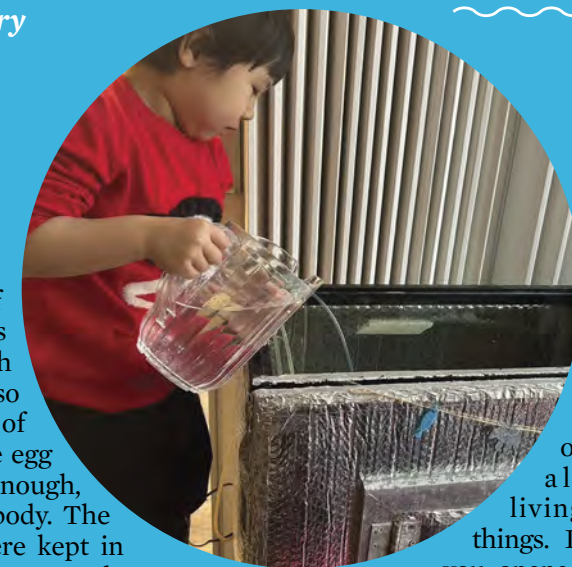
By Carolyn Cybulski



The Junior Kindergarten class embarked on a wondrous journey of inquiry by raising Atlantic salmon this past year. The adventure began in January by preparing a large, odd-looking tank. Imagine how exciting it was to have this tank appear, covered in shiny insulating foil with several doors or windows to open so that anyone who wanted could peek inside, but yet, no one knew what creature was coming to live in the Kindergarten classroom! Children worked together to fill it, counting and charting every jug of water required. It took patience from our youngest students to fill more than 100 containers into the aquarium! The tank included a chiller which is a piece of equipment with metal tubing that once put into the water, helps to maintain a cool 4 C. Brrrr.

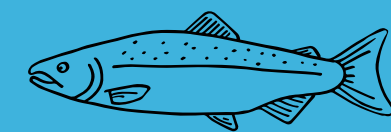
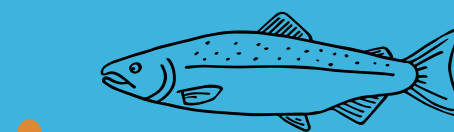
Everyone was in awe of the strange-looking eggs that were delivered. Peach coloured yet translucent so that you could spy the eye of a baby salmon still in the egg and if you looked close enough, you could even see the body. The Atlantic Salmon eggs were kept in a special container inside our tank. We could watch and observe them, but once they hatched and were freed into the tank, we looked regularly, but they were hard to spot. Kindergarteners learned the stage after they hatch is called “alevin”, and as interesting as these little creatures who carry a yolk sac and don’t need to be fed are, they hide for fear of predators. We rarely saw them and wondered... were they really there, or were we caring for an empty tank?

Still, we cared for our tiny salmon even though we could rarely spot them and learned about the Indigenous perspective on salmon. We discovered that local communities relied on salmon for food as a vital part of their ecosystem. This perspective emphasized the importance of caring for the earth and taking only what is needed. It brought to the forefront a respect for nature and the interconnectedness



of all living things. If you opened the window to the tank, and if you were fortunate enough to spot one, it was thrilling to see a salmon as they grew from the alevin stage to the fry stage. All Junior Kindergarten students added “Not a french fry!” We had to begin feeding them. Caring for living creatures, along with the importance of helping to “bring back the salmon” was a profound experience for our young students. Beyond curiosity, students developed a sense of responsibility and empathy as they nurtured the salmon from eggs to fry.

While caring for the salmon and maintaining the tank, both Junior and Senior kindergarten students had numerous opportunities to hear speakers from The Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Project which is where our students learned that Atlantic Salmon have been extirpated from Lake Ontario for more than 100 years. Working





together, students began to understand how the salmon's disappearance was due to overfishing, habitat destruction, and pollution. Understanding this was a big part of our learning as it highlighted the importance of environmental stewardship. Students discovered that by helping to reintroduce salmon to Lake Ontario, they were playing a role in restoring the natural balance and becoming stewards of the earth. This thread lived in Kindergarten throughout the year, beginning with our land acknowledgment, agreeing to take only what we need during our weekly visits to the ravine, to our visits with Dr. Hopi and Indigenous land-based learning, along with a fascination with life cycles as we collected and sprouted seeds from nearby

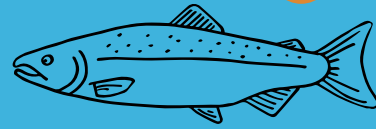
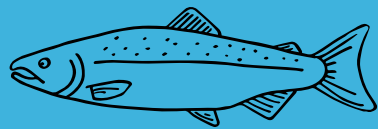
Honey Locust trees. We also nurtured pumpkin plants when they sprouted, planted seeds in science class, and ventured into learning about the role of bees and other pollinators thanks to our friends in Grade 3 who shared their learning with us. (Read more about the Grade 3 inquiry on page 42)

We released our salmon in Duffina Creek and when they grow up they will swim in Lake Ontario.
- Beau

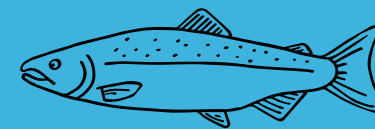
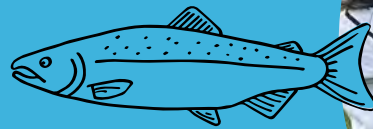
The excitement culminated with a bus ride to a conservation area where our little salmon were released towards the end of the school year. Sadly, they didn't all survive, but we had enough salmon fry for each student to name and release one. This year, we were given a special strain of Atlantic salmon and they were more mature than usual at the stage of release. This meant that our salmon were swimming and beginning to leap. Take a moment and imagine each child with a cup carrying a salmon fry that seemed to look and interact with them, some even jumped, creating very memorable moments!

Throughout this experience, children explored the importance of caring for living things. They learned about the life cycle of Atlantic salmon and, at the same time, grew their respect for nature and the importance of environmental stewardship. Students raised Atlantic salmon while embracing the values of empathy, responsibility, and care for the earth.

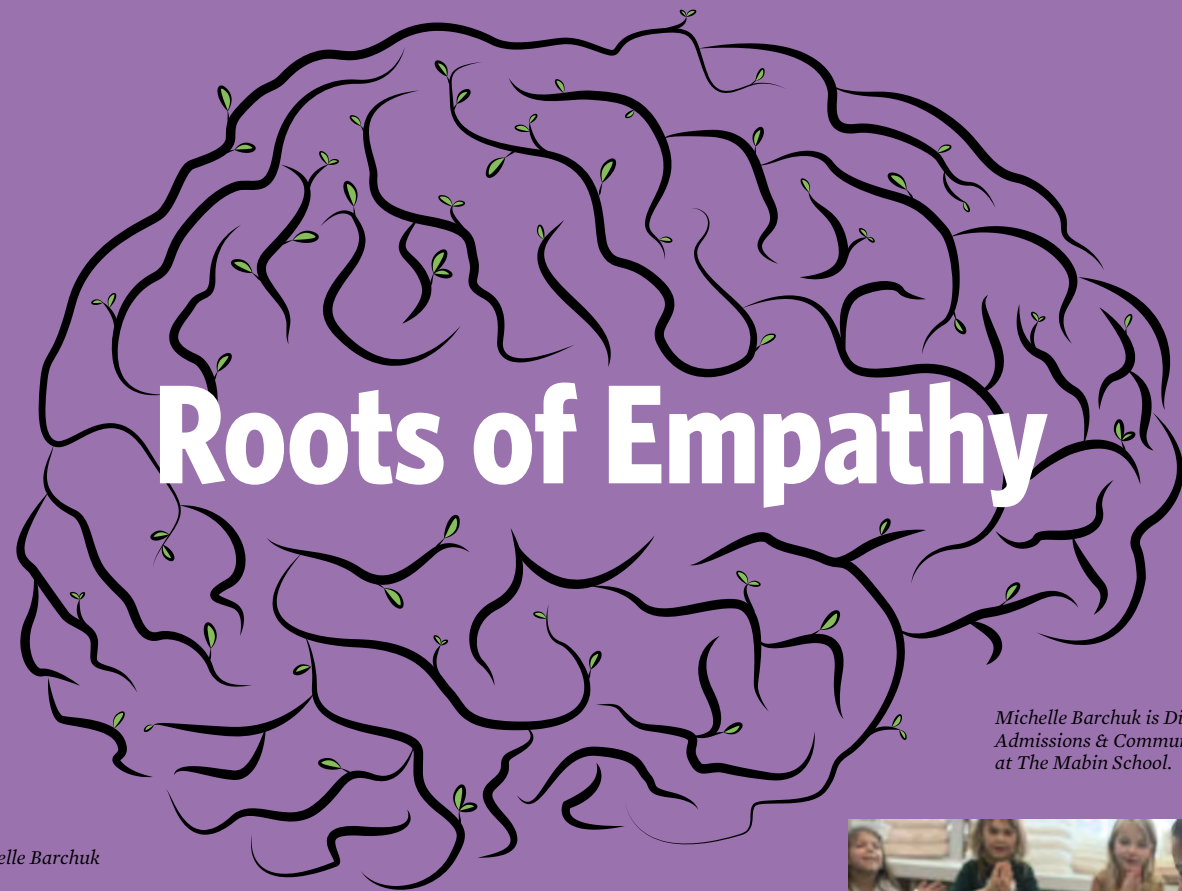
Learning these values at such a young age is another way The Mabin School is able to nurture original thinkers, adaptive leaders and caring citizens right from the start of their 8 year journey with us.



A lot of wetlands are gone. One thing is pollution. The salmon can end up eating the garbage. We need to collect the garbage before the salmon eat it.
- Sophia



Carolyne Cybulski teaches Junior Kindergarten at The Mabin School. She is a dedicated educator with more than 30 years of classroom experience. Carolyne was the founder and principal of e.p.i.c. School and her passions include literacy development and the complex relationship of movement in learning. She is a committed ambassador for change, life-long learning, collaboration and innovation.



Roots of Empathy

By Michelle Barchuk

Over the years, our very own Nancy Hohenkerk, Early Childhood Specialist, has facilitated a fantastic program called Roots of Empathy with our Senior Kindergarten students. The focus of the program is to teach children about feelings: their own and those of others. For more than 25 years now, across Canada and internationally, over 1,000,000 children have been learning to respect and care for one another with the lessons started through their Roots of Empathy baby.

Once every three weeks, over the course of the school year, a baby and their parent(s) visit the classroom. A trained Roots of Empathy instructor, (Nance) gathers the children in the classroom around a green blanket, and together they watch the baby grow over time. The children predict and cheer when their Roots of Empathy baby reaches the developmental milestones of the first year: “She can roll over!”, “He got his first tooth!”, “He can sit up!”, “She can crawl!”

The Roots of Empathy instructor also coaches the children in observ-

ing and reading the cues the baby gives as to how the baby is feeling: “Is the baby happy or sad?” “How can you tell?” This discussion is used as a lever for the children to talk about their own emotions and to understand how their classmates feel: “Do you smile when you are happy?” “How can you tell if your friend is happy?” Being able to understand how other people are feeling is called empathy and it is one of 10 foundational Habits of Mind we focus on at The Mabin School during a child’s 8-year journey with us.

The Roots of Empathy instructor also visits the classroom the week before and after each family visit to prepare and reinforce teachings using a specialized lesson plan each time.

This year, we were thrilled to welcome back Emma Leese, former Mabin teacher, and her daughter Mila as part of the Roots of Empathy program. Read Emma’s note about her experience on the opposite page 27.

Michelle Barchuk is Director of Admissions & Communications at The Mabin School.



With Love from Emma & Mila

By Emma Leese

The Mabin School is like Mary Poppins’ Bag. If you are familiar with the story, you know that she has a small bag that is equipped with any item or tool that you could imagine you might need for the day to come and the future ahead. Mabin is a small school, but it sure is mighty! When I walked through the doors for the first time (before the spectacular renovation!), I was amazed by how many tools this small house was equipped with for student learning. I witnessed the never-ending possibilities and opportunities offered in order to thrive in whatever adventure kids might choose. The staff, students, and families at Mabin are some of the most interesting, creative, and forward-thinking people I have ever met. The teachers are crucial players behind making the magic and I feel grateful to have been taken in by a group of such talented people. I am even more grateful that my daughter Mila was invited to share these experiences! In my time as an educator at The Mabin School, my creative boundaries were pushed to a place that I didn’t think was possible. When I left Mabin I was gifted



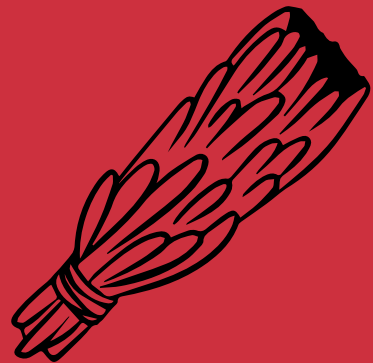
with my own Mary Poppins-like bag. I carry this “bag” with me in all of my teaching endeavors. I am constantly implementing “Mabin-isms” in my classrooms.

This past year, I had the absolute pleasure of joining my daughter Mila in Kindie (one of my favourite places on the planet!), as she was the “teacher” for the Roots of Empathy program. It was pure joy watching the students interact and bond with her. The display of enthusiasm demonstrated by the Kindies was so heartwarming. They made the classroom a safe space for Mila to be herself and together we celebrated her new skills and milestones. From week to week, I witnessed their connection deepen and their empathy grow. They are truly a special bunch, beaming with curiosity and respect. Thank you to Nance and The Mabin School for inviting me back with Mila and welcoming us with open arms! I am so happy that Mila had the opportunity to experience the magic that is Mabin.



Emma taught both Kindergarten and Grade 2 at The Mabin School from 2018-2019. She has most recently been teaching Kindergarten to Grade 3 in the TDSB. It was wonderful to have her back in the building with her daughter Mila as part of the Roots of Empathy program last year in Senior Kindergarten.





Nanaboozhoo!

By Alex Morley



During the 2023/24 school year, our Kindergarten classes were involved in learning Anishnawbe ceremony, teachings, songs, and stories with Dr. Hopi Martin. Dr. Hopi joined us each month in our local ravine to teach us. We learned that the greeting, “Nanaboozhoo,” means greetings in the name of our first teacher, and what am I going to learn from you today? It can be said to anyone and anything. It reminds us that we can learn from all of creation, in different ways.

Dr. Hopi Lovell Martin, Oshkaabewis (Sacred Helper, Messenger, Fire Keeper, Lodge Caretaker) taught us with the Memory teaching bundle. He taught us that when we arrive at the edge of a new place, we can stop and light a fire and see who comes to it, and act with kindness as we build relationships with the beings and places around us. You can learn more about his work at www.edgeofthebush.ca.

Dr. Hopi starts by accepting our gift of *asemaa* (sacred tobacco). We are learning the *Asamaa Nitam* protocols (sacred tobacco first): to

always offer tobacco first when we want to ask a question, ask for parts of a tree or plant, light a fire or ask for guidance. It reminds us to be full of gratitude, and to always give, not only take. We would then put *giizhik* (Cedar) in the abalone shell. With the shell protected by the cedar, we could burn our sage. When we smudge with the sage smoke, we remind ourselves to think good thoughts, see and smell beautiful things, speak kind words and carry love and kindness in our hearts and bodies. We share the smoke with all of creation. We take time to thank everything, from the directions and the animals, to ourselves and our ancestors, for all the teachings.

Following these teachings, we sing songs with *Zhiishuigwan* (shakers), listen to stories and teachings passed down to Dr. Hopi, and then on to us, through the strong oral tradition of the Anishnawbe, from his auntie, Dr. Jacque Lavallée. We could hear and repeat words in Anishinaabemowin, learn about the history of the universe, the thunderbird, the earth, the history of colonization, and how



we can all do our part in reconciliation, starting with being open to the sacred medicines, indigenous languages, and the powerful and important teachings shared with us. We always had a lot of time to play at the edge of the bush, to explore and observe. As we passed through the cycle of the seasons this past year, we held space for our learning in all weathers and saw the ravine change over time. We were joined by many grandparents who brought their own teachings to the class. We continued learning in the classroom and in the ravine each week, heading out to offer *asemaa*, give thanks, and play as the seasons changed.



Each time we met Dr. Hopi, our students ran up to him shouting, “Nanaboozhoo! Greetings! What are we going to learn today?” And they left giving a great big thank you, “*Gichi Miigwech!*” We are so grateful for our special partnership with Dr. Hopi Martin and we look forward to continuing to learn together in the future. *Gichi Miigwech!*

We want to remember to hear beautiful things, on your eyes, to see beautiful things, on your nose to smell beautiful things, on your mouth to say beautiful things, on your heart to feel beautiful things.

-Bianca



We play in the park. We play with shakers and we sing. I like the fire with Dr. Hopi. It was hot and it makes everybody warm. Sweetgrass smells nice. We use cedar to protect the shell. We pick it in the park. We put the smoke of the sage all over. We put tobacco on the ground when we go to play in the park. I like when Dr. Hopi comes!

-Piper

We made a fire with Dr. Hopi. I liked it! We shake the shakers and we sing songs. We use tobacco first to make the fire or we put it on the ground, we say “Nanaboozhoo!” We make fire with the sage, we put the smoke on us. I like the smell of it. We played in the park and picked jewelweed. We touched the plant and then it exploded!

-Ethan

I liked it when we climbed the hill. I got all muddy! I like to shake the shakers. We sing the song. I liked the thunderbird song the most. We use sweetgrass for burning the fire and then go play! We play with friends and we actually play at the sewer to make it stop shooting bad air.

-Adeline

I liked when Dr. Hopi made the sacred fire. This comes from the thunderbird. We put the sacred tobacco on the ground or in the fire to say hello and [ask if we] can we play here. We look at all the directions, East, West, North, and South. I liked planting the seeds from trees that fell off. I think they are going to grow in the summer. I like going to the park because I like to run around and play with seeds, and plant them!

-Daniel

He [Dr. Hopi] teaches us words that we don't know. He teaches us in an indigenous language, Ojibwe. He makes us fire and we get to shake shakers. We burn sweetgrass. We put the sage smoke over our selves to think good thoughts, to see good things, to speak good things. I like trying to build pretend fires and talk to my friends in our secret languages.

-Mira

An Inquiry Takes Flight

By Sandra Giampapa

What do an interest in the history of the English language and an enthusiasm for ornithology have in common? They both inspired our Grade 1 inquiry last year! The following is a narrative map of the migratory path our inquiry took, punctuated by key questions we landed on before moving on.

Surprisingly, our initial curiosity was sparked during literacy classes. As we learned about the evolution of the English language, we explored questions like: What is its history? How did the spoken and written systems evolve? The Grade 1s enjoyed deciphering old, middle, and modern English (beginning with Shakespeare's time) through recordings. They discovered that words can have histories tracing back to languages of the Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, Jutes), Norse warriors from Denmark, or the Norman invaders and William the Conqueror!

Broadening our scope of interest, we looked at Greek, Russian, Chinese, Jewish, Turkish, Arabic, and Indigenous alphabets. The students excitedly made personal connections to languages spoken at home, igniting their curiosity and understanding of linguistic diversity. As our exploration expanded beyond Europe, we pondered how English journeyed to North America. We read tales of British explorers forging communication with Indigenous peoples, where words like "skunk" and "moose" found a place in English vocabulary. As British colonies thrived, so did English, spreading across continents and incorporating new influences from diverse cultures.

The investigation during Truth and Reconciliation Week led us to learn about several Indigenous

traditions, prompting us to reflect on the suppression of native languages among Indigenous children. Orange Shirt Day deepened our understanding, anchored by Phyllis Webstad's poignant story of losing her treasured orange shirt at a residential school. The class learned that not only was Phyllis' orange shirt taken, but she and her classmates were not allowed to speak their native languages. Students grappled with the impact of language suppression on Indigenous communities, sparking discussions about the value of cultural heritage and the richness of linguistic diversity. We had a thoughtful conversation about the different languages we speak at home, what those different languages allow us to do and asked, "How might you feel if you were denied the right to speak your languages?"

Serendipity has often played a guiding role in our inquiries, and this year was no exception. During a casual exchange at the Mabin BBQ, a Grade 1 parent mentioned having a Bird Buddy — a bird feeder equipped with a smart camera that alerts you to feathered visitors via an iPad app. Intrigued by the idea, and recognizing its potential to enrich our daily routines, we enthusiastically accepted the parent's offer to donate it to our classroom. With (IT Director) Krishna Sukhai and (Custodian) Penpa Tsering's help, we mounted the Bird Buddy in plain view of the classroom, and the students eagerly filled it with bird seed. Soon, our Learning Strategies Teacher Dilek and I heard a clamour of excitement and squeals of delight! The children were pressed against the window, enthusiastically shouting that they could see a bird at

the feeder! Excited by our feathered visitors, aviary artifacts started streaming in, and the students' interests took flight! At this point, the teachers knew the next question to untangle was, "How could these two seemingly disparate interests be interwoven into one overarching inquiry?"

Meanwhile, we continued to investigate the diverse languages spoken in our Grade 1 cohort. The children were encouraged to bring in multilingual books. It was truly heartwarming to witness the pride and excitement the Grade 1s exuded while sharing their special books from home. While flipping through a Turkish book of poems, Dilek was delighted to find one about a crow, or karga, and she read it aloud. Following her lead, Mayer decided to take a responsible risk by reading a Russian bird-themed poem aloud to his excited classmates. We poured over an increasing number of poems and stories from various cultures and diverse perspectives, and then another question naturally evolved, "How do you say <bird> in different languages?"

Blending our linguistic exploration with the wonders of the natural world, our students learned the word for bird in 22 different languages and carefully illustrated information cards featuring the language they had randomly selected, resulting in an avian and linguistic display of diversity on our classroom walls. Keen to share their exploration of languages with the Mabin Community, the Grade 1 class created language portraits designed to help them understand and shape their linguistic identities.



They included a line drawing self-portrait and reflections on these prompts:

- The languages I use to speak to my family...
- The languages I use to speak to my friends...
- The languages I am learning to speak, or would like to learn...
- The languages I listen to music in...

Upon completion, the creations were proudly displayed in the main hallway just outside the classroom for all to see.

On our return from the winter holidays, our Bird Buddy feeder became a bustling hub of activity, drawing excited Grade 1 students to observe the latest visitors. Among them were house sparrows, striking cardinals, and even a few playful squirrels. We began to learn more about the diverse avian species that graced our feeder and inhabited our local environment, discovering fun facts about their senses, diets, habitats, and behaviours. As we marvelled at these feathered

guests, conversations turned to the different bird sounds students had begun to notice on their way to school in the morning. This sparked a curiosity about how bird sounds differ across languages. The children delighted in learning "bird words" in different languages. For example, Japanese birds don't "tweet," they say "Chui, chui," Spanish birds exclaim "Pio, pio," and Italian birds simply "Chip!"

At this point, the path of our inquiry migrated into the specialist subjects. Embracing the class' interests in birds, Science specialist Michelle Li began guiding our young

learners through the portal of scientific discovery. The first step in their journey began with the question, "What makes a bird a bird?" and continued with comprehensive investigations into bird diversity, anatomy, evolution, and various structural and behavioural adaptations. Through various hands-on experiments, games, and interactive digital experiences, the children delighted in learning about the challenges of migration, fascinating mating rituals, and predatory behaviours.

They explored both positive and negative interactions between humans and birds, and the students were particularly saddened to learn about the alarming number of birds injured by flying into tall city buildings.

Inspired by our read-aloud of *The Most Amazing Bird* by Inuk author Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak, which follows a young girl's discovery of nature with the help of ravens, we asked the students, "If you could imagine creating a new and unique bird, what would it look like?" Excited by their whimsical drawings, we shared them with Megan, our visual arts specialist, who then started an engaging art project with the children. The Grade 1s went on to create vibrant watercolour paintings and detailed three-dimensional models of their imaginative birds, skilfully incorporating their growing knowledge of bird adaptations into their designs.

Resuming our initial exploration of language in the classroom after March Break, we posed a fresh set of guiding questions: "Do birds communicate? Do they have their own lan-

guage? If so, how and what are they communicating?" We continued our discussions by reflecting on the different ways we can understand the word "communication." We explored how communication occurs both verbally and non-verbally.

Relying on beautiful videos from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Grade 1s watched and listened carefully as a Yellow Warbler sang while perched on a branch. Our first question was simply, "What do you notice?"

Ethan: *The bird was trying to communicate!*

Evie: *The pattern was like tut tut tut do do tut!*

Rafa: *It's making the same sounds a bunch of times.*

Marlo: *My dad is a bird watcher and I notice the bird is yellow and I think it sounds like a bird I hear every morning outside my window, like tweet tweet tweet.*

Maeve: *There were different birds in the video in the background that would talk back to the one in the video!*

Chloe B: *The head of the bird was moving in between the calls.*

Jayden: *The bird might be moving his head to hear if anyone was calling back and what direction it was coming from.*

Maeve: *Maybe there is a nest nearby and it's giving a warning to the birds in the nest.*

Marlo: *The reason it's calling so fast is because there is a predator, a warning.*



Next, we asked, “What words would you use to describe the sound of the song?”

Kenzie: *Bumpy.*

Ethan: *It's talking and talking back and trying to say something.*

Cleo: *Tweet tweet tweet... if a human was going to say it.*

James: *It sounds like whistling.*

Chloe C: *It sounds like cheep cheep cheep.*

These simple questions evoked thoughtful and rich responses as we continued onto the next leg of our inquiry journey. In the weeks that followed, the Grade 1s delved into the world of songbirds and explored their complex system of communication, which includes songs and varied calls, each serving distinct purposes. Listening to recordings, the young students began to learn how to identify birds by their songs and to distinguish between the different types of bird communication. They were becoming familiar with bird language!

Integrating their developing writing skills with thematic content, the children learned to craft expanded sentences for their non-fiction texts. Inspired by the story of Cher Ami, a carrier pigeon who served as a vital means of communication for American troops during the First World War, the children learned letter-writing techniques and sent their letters to Grade 1 students attending a small selection of international elementary schools randomly chosen by wind-up pigeons traveling on a flat world map! They constructed word searches and collaboratively worked on bird-themed haikus. Applying their avian knowledge, the children created an informational fact sheet detailing the unique abili-



ties, habitat, and size of the amazing birds they designed in art. Using their auditory imagination, they visually represented their bird's song in a spectrogram, using colour to indicate volume and line shape to indicate pitch over time. In math, the Grade 1s honed their measurement skills to understand the dimensions of backyard birds, and they excitedly helped to collect data by tracking their bird sightings on our class chart on a daily basis!

Taking advantage of the migratory season in May, we ventured into the nearby Roycroft Ravine with Megan, our resident bird enthusiast and experienced birder. Eager eyes and attentive ears were our tools as Megan guided us through the ravine, helping us identify various bird species we had studied in class. Excitement filled the air as we spotted blue jays, vibrant American goldfinch and heard the familiar 'laser gun' sounds of the cardinals' songs, the tap, tap of the downy woodpeckers and even the warbling of the white throated sparrow. Our journey back was punctuated by a unique activity—a sound map. Pausing at a serene sit spot, we centred ourselves and drew an “x” on blank sheets to mark our location. With heightened senses, we mapped out the soundscape around us, plotting where each bird song and call resonated in relation to our position. This interactive exercise not only sharpened our auditory awareness but also deepened our connection to the natural symphony enveloping us.

Supplementing our nature-based learning, the students enjoyed a fascinating bird walk led by the wonderful local bird expert, Pete Moss. Upon arrival at Evergreen Brick Works, we were welcomed by countless sparrows, woodpeckers, and even a nest of baby birds. Pete shared his extensive knowledge of local songbirds and their captivating calls. With his guidance, we identified various bird species

by their unique sounds and behaviours. Our hike through the scenic trails was filled with sightings of orioles, goldfinches, barn swallows, and even the endangered purple martin! Each encounter left us in awe of these beautiful creatures and deepened our understanding of the ways in which birds connect and communicate in nature.

The second stroke of serendipity occurred on May 14th, during a regular literacy class when the young students had an unexpected visitor. Nav, partner of Mabin teacher Sue Ball, arrived with a bird gently cupped in his hand. While walking downtown that morning, Nav noticed a seemingly injured bird on the sidewalk and decided the kids at The Mabin School would know how to help. Sue informed Nav that the Grade 1s were studying birds, so he visited our classroom. The students were thrilled when they saw the vibrant crimson bird with black wings and tail. Using her bird identification app, Sue identified it as a scarlet tanager. We contacted the Toronto Wildlife Centre, which advised us to keep the bird in a quiet, dark place without food or water. Together with the Grade 1s, we filled out an intake form on the SMART Board, and Theo's mom, Rana, kindly drove the bird to the Wildlife Centre

for care. Aware that the Centre was busy caring for many injured birds, particularly during the migration season, we anxiously awaited news, hoping for a positive outcome for our scarlet tanager. Right before the end of the school year, we received a message explaining that our bird had sustained bruising around his ears and left flank, and developed subcutaneous emphysema (an air pocket trapped under the skin), likely as a result of trauma such as hitting his head. Happily, the tanager had fully recovered from his injuries and was released after 15 days in their care! The voicemail ended with this quote from Nadia, “Thank you for taking the time to help this animal. You

were the reason that he received a second chance at life in the wild.”

The students were incredibly relieved and tremendously grateful. As a result, Grade 1s were motivated to increase awareness by creating informational posters and adding a fundraising element to support the Toronto Wildlife Centre efforts to help injured wildlife in the GTA as part of their inquiry.

In June, our students proudly shared their integrated learning journey with their families. As part of this culminating celebration, the Grade 1s, donning their stunning bird costumes, performed an avian-inspired sound scape and dance that they collaboratively created with Bruce in music. Blending linguistic exploration, with the wonders of the natural world, resulted in a deeply enriching educational journey for the Grade 1 class this year, exemplifying The Mabin School tradition of integrated inquiry and reflection as a way of creating the next generation of original thinkers, adaptive leaders and caring citizens.

Sandra Giampapa joined The Mabin School in 2008 and has been teaching Grade 1 since 2009. Sandra holds a Music Diploma and an Extended Studies Certificate from Humber College with a major in vocals and arranging. She also completed two years towards a BA (Hons.) in Jazz Performance at the University of Toronto. She has a BA (Hons.) in Philosophy and she has completed her Master of Arts in Child Study and Education from the University of Toronto. Sandra is a passionate teacher who brings her keen interest and knowledge of early literacy acquisition skills and mathematical education to her teaching. Sandra inspires her students to follow their wonderings and deepen their learning through engaging and multi-faceted inquiries.



Accessibility Inquiry in Grade 2

By Carly Ginsberg Weiman

Our Grade 2 students expressed interest in learning more about accessibility and inclusion, and becoming advocates for accessible spaces. Our study grew from the students' love for building, and their curiosities about how to make buildings more accessible and inclusive for all people.

Our inquiry began with an exploration of accessible playgrounds and spaces after reading the book, *We Move Together* by Kelly Fritsch, Anne McGuire and Eduardo Trejos, and investigating what the words "accessibility" and "inclusion" mean. The students began to think about how they could make spaces more accessible for people with disabilities, and who would be responsible for making those decisions.

We welcomed in many guest speakers to help guide our learning, including Luke Anderson, Executive Director of the StopGap Foundation, architect (and Mabin grandfather!) Larry Glazer, inspirational speaker Ingrid Palmer, and activist Shira Wolch. These experts spoke about the many barriers that exist for people with disabilities, and the students began brainstorming solutions. They were inspired to design and build 3D models of their own accessible playgrounds. The students engaged in a reflection by comparing different playgrounds and rating their accessibility when thinking about the people with mobility devices, low vision, and sensory needs. Our students also showed interest in learning about Braille and sign language, and have included Braille labels in their designs!

In January, we visited the Bloorview School to learn about their playground and gym activities for children with disabilities. In February, we visited Variety Village, where we learned how to make games and sports accessible for everyone. It was such an incredible exercise in empathy, as the students participated in games and activities offered to children with disabilities. We learned about the differences between paralympics and Special Olympics, played wheelchair basketball, seated volleyball, and adapted floor hockey and bowling. It was such a great way for us to think about how we can make our playgrounds and physical

activities more accessible for all.

As the spring weather came, our curiosity turned to water, thinking about who has access to clean and safe water. We began to explore water advocates and protectors, and began to learn about how our community at Mabin accesses water compared to other communities who do not have equal access. We wanted to firm up our knowledge about how we access water in Toronto, which led us to studying the water cycle, understanding Lake Ontario as a water source, and learning about pumping stations and filtration. We learned about the RC Harris Treatment Plant, and how water

Meet the Experts!

Luke Anderson, Executive Director of the StopGap Foundation, shared his personal experiences about living with a disability. He spoke about how he requires help to do basic things like brushing his teeth, getting dressed, getting out of his chair, and more. Two students volunteered to brush each other's teeth so they could experience what it felt like to not be able to use their hands for something they do every day. It was an amazing exercise in cultivating empathy.

Shira Wolch, an accessibility advocate, spoke with the Grade 2 class about making their accessible playgrounds even more accessible, encouraging them to think about the surface of the ground (i.e. rubber or cement are preferable for wheelchairs, not wood chips or sand). She also spoke about the importance of wide walkways and having play items low to the ground. We also learned about how to make playgrounds more accessible for children with low vision, thinking about having high contrast on stairs or ramps, touch cues (bump or texture), and bars up top so kids don't fall on structures.



Ingrid Palmer is an inspirational speaker who has retinitis pigmentosa, a rare eye disease that affects the retina. She spoke with the students about what it was like growing up with low vision, and shared the many tools that have helped her access the world, including her cane, iPhone apps (one especially cool app called "Be My Eyes") and handy voice-to-text features. She also spoke about the importance of walls and floors being painted in contrasting colours. Most importantly, we learned that blind people can do anything! We learned that blind people are business leaders and Olympians! The students left feeling so inspired, with many new ideas about how to make spaces more accessible to those with low vision or blindness. The students also wrote a thank you card to Ingrid in Braille!

Larry Glazer (grandfather to Noah ('28) & Ethan ('30)) is an architect with a focus on accessibility. He spoke with the students about including Braille, designing ramps properly, making sure smoke detectors have both light and sound, and much more.

travels from Lake Ontario through the pipes to get treated with chlorine and other chemicals to get rid of any pollutants. The students drew their own maps of the process each week, outlining how water gets from Lake Ontario all the way to the tap at Mabin. It was so exciting to see their understanding of the process evolve as they deepened their knowledge.

We are also so lucky to have a pumping station right across the street from The Mabin School! We walked over one afternoon to learn all about the water pumping process. We got a tour of the station, learning that the pumps need to add lots of pressure to the water so it can

travel to our homes and schools! The pressure is extra important because the City of Toronto is built on a hill, so the water needs to move upward. We also got to see some older pumps that used steam instead of electricity, and even got to take a peek inside the control room! This was such an enriching learning opportunity to help the class really visualize what happens to water once it leaves the treatment plant.

Once we had a solid understanding of how we access water, we thought about the inequalities that exist in many communities in Canada and around the world that have unequal access to water. We learned

about the effects of contaminated water, and that clean drinking water isn't available to many First Nations communities, and we learned about boil advisories.

We also learned about water access in Burkina Faso, and how many girls must walk for miles each day to collect water. We read the book, *The Water Princess* by Susan Verde which tells the story of Georgie Badiel's childhood in Burkina Faso, and how she and the other girls in her village had to walk for miles each day to collect water. This book sheds light on a struggle that continues all over the world today for access to clean water. Georgie has created the Georgie Badiel Foundation, an organization that works in partnership with [Ryan's Well](#), another foundation, to bring clean water to Burkina Faso and beyond by building water wells. Our Teacher Librarian, Jillian Green, also read us the book *Africa is Not a Country* by Margy Burns Knight and Mark Melnicove, which celebrates the diversity of the 53 nations that make up the continent.

We brainstormed the ways in which life would change for people in Burkina Faso and other parts of the world when young girls wouldn't need to walk for miles and miles to get water. We were stunned by the opportunities that opened up — access to more sleep, to school, to food, to health, and so much more!

We learned about The Yellow Fish Road Project, which teaches Canadians that storm drains are the doorways to our rivers, lakes and streams, and anything other than rainwater can harm life in and around the



water. Inspired by the organization, we painted yellow fish symbols with the words 'Rain Only' by storm drains in the neighbourhood.

To consolidate their learning, the Grade 2 students wrote their own "All About Water" books, created a PSA video about water accessibility, and designed their own water filters! During their final expo for their families, students performed a rain song using percussion instruments. Then, they led their families through a series of different stations, taking them through their water books, playing a quiz game they created about water access, showcasing their accessible playgrounds, and sharing how their water filters worked! They also went through the many stages of their water "maps," showing the progression of their learning about how water makes its way to The Mabin School. We also displayed the many books we read about water access in Indigenous communities and in Burkina Faso. We finished it off by showing the world premiere of our water video PSA. (Editor's note: The class water video was beautifully created and edited by Carly's husband, Jon!)

The progression of our inquiry felt so natural, following our students' interests as they emerged. While I've guided many inquiry units, this was my first one at The Mabin School, and it felt especially enriched with Mabin magic. I was constantly amazed by the students' uninhibited curiosity and by the ways in which they took such ownership throughout their learning. I look forward to seeing where this learning takes our young changemakers!



Accessibility Update!

Did you know that the very first time our friend Luke Anderson, from the StopGap Foundation, visited students at The Mabin School was back in 2016? He worked with the Class of 2023 when they expressed interest in accessibility in Kindergarten. (You can see their video "Fairness from Five Year Olds" on our website!) At the time, The Mabin School was not accessible so Luke actually had to meet the class outside whenever he visited (see photo above from 2016). Flash forward to 2024 when Luke came to work with our Grade 2 class, he was able to enter the building using our ramps and accessibility lift which were added during our recent major renovation. Thanks to these accessibility enhancements to our school, we are now able to welcome and include many more people in our space!



Carly Ginsberg Weiman taught Grade 2 at The Mabin School during the 2023/24 school year. She has a BA in English with a concentration in Theatre and Creative Writing from Barnard College of Columbia University, and a Masters of Arts in Education from Antioch University in Los Angeles. She is also completing a Certificate in Educational Therapy. Carly taught Grade 2 at Mirman School for Gifted Children in Los Angeles, as well as at the Citizens of the World Charter School.



Journey into AI: Grade 4 Inquiry Ventures into Uncharted Learning

By Sue Ball

Sue Ball has spent most of her career at The Mabin School, most recently teaching Grade 4. Trained at the Institute of Child Study at OISE at the University of Toronto, Sue spent several years teaching in Japan before arriving here, and brings that experience into her classroom. Sue has a passion for geography and social justice, and a knack for finding just the right resource for the topic at hand. She is a technological innovator, and a passionate believer in the importance of teaching empathy.

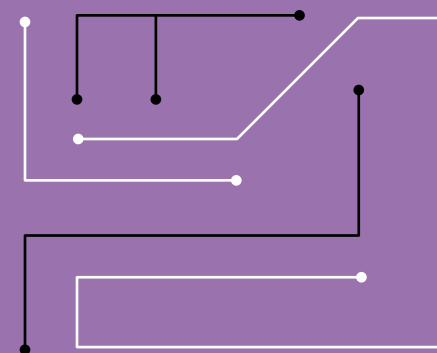
Artificial Intelligence was something I can say with confidence I knew almost nothing about and this makes for a perfect beginning to what would soon become last year's Grade 4 inquiry. When we can learn along with our students, without nudging an inquiry in any particular direction, it truly is student-led.

December is computer science month which coincides with the Hour of Code. As such, our science specialist, Michelle Li, offers all classes a variety of coding activities. Many of the tutorials had an AI spin and naturally that led to a discussion of 'What is AI?' This generated a resonating buzz of curiosity, debate and quite truthfully, noise. When there is this type of noise — especially at an inquiry-based school like Mabin — as teachers, we pay attention.



The very first activity students tried was AI for Oceans in code.org where the challenge was to get AI to recognize what is — or is not — a fish. Though simple-sounding, it progressed to students teaching AI a trait, such as 'fierce', 'cute', 'delicious' which really got students talking about how one would determine these traits and how implicit bias impacts the outcome. Then, the Grade 4s tried coding their own face filters (think unicorn horns and bunny ears) using a [Tynker program](https://www.tynker.com). While programming their filters to align with different facial features, any misalignment sparked insightful discussions about the uniqueness of every face and how AI strives to approximate them. After just a few experiences with AI in science class, it was clear that the enthusiasm shared by the Grade 4 class was more than just excitement for some cool new technology. The teacher brainstorm began so that we could follow their lead and keep the momentum going.

In January, we began to formally define AI (a program made by people that makes computers do things that seem intelligent in the same way that humans are intelligent), discussing what we think is or isn't AI and what it can or cannot do. We used this to help us decipher some forms of technology from AI. After



we had an understanding of the basics, it was time to explore and play with all the really fun AI games and applications, such as [Quick, Draw!](https://www.quickdraw.withgoogle.com), [Magic Sketchpad](https://www.magic-sketchpad.com), [Tic Tac Toe vs AI](https://www.tictac-toe.com), [Semi-Conductor](https://www.semi-conductor.com) and more.

From all this exploring, some thoughtful observations emerged. With 'Quick, Draw!' (a guessing game by Google that challenges players to draw something and then uses AI to guess what the drawings represent), a student drew his shovel upside down and the program did not recognize the doodle. We realized that most of us draw a shovel the other way. The AI learns from each drawing, improving its ability to guess correctly in the future. When playing Tic Tac Toe against AI, some students found a 'cheat' to beat this almost impossible site by double clicking two moves quickly. This made students feel incredibly pleased with themselves!



When playing with the AI image generators, two students prompted it with something like ‘beautiful girl’ which offered us a chance to discuss beauty standards. Later, this connected cross-curricularly in the library when Jillian Green and Lauren Saunders showed our class Dove’s beauty campaign to challenge traditional notions of beauty. We talked about beauty standards as a social construct that can vary widely across cultures, historical periods and individual preferences. With a better understanding of the diversity of beauty standards we promote a more inclusive and accepting view of beauty.

Playing with their own ideas using image generators was an important part of the agency students needed to understand how these applications work. One student astutely noted, ‘It won’t let you do anything inappropriate’. At the end of each class, we always came together to discuss what students had noticed and teachers were able to support any misconceptions or fill in any gaps.

Digging Deeper

At this point, we started looking to experts to support our inquiry. Skype a Scientist matched us with Alex Meiburg from the Perimeter Institute. As the inquiry progressed, we drew upon available resources and adapted them for our class including Day of AI and Timely Topic Lessons. One important part of seeing AI in action was using videos that highlighted its sophistication in a way you had to see it to believe it. One such video was Sophia the first humanoid robot.

Somewhere along the journey, science specialist, Michelle Li, and I realized we needed more teacher training and so we looked for professional development opportunities. Both Michelle and I took a course through Global Online Academy that provided us with more resources and understanding to help guide the Grade 4 interests.

After several months, we began to explore more issues related to AI use. We looked at whether or not students should use AI for school work or homework. We looked at a few extreme tech-free schools in Silicon Valley and then the opposite with super AI-integrated schools in China where students’ brain activity were tracked for productivity as they went about their day.

The next logical step was to have stu-



dents write persuasive paragraphs and then debate one side of the issue. When we began to research, we had to work really hard to find any articles in support or against AI use in school or homework. The conversations weren’t being had just yet, and this reinforced how significant it was that the Grade 4s were taking on such an emerging topic. We set our debate within a traditional format including a formal introduction, examples with supporting details, in the moment rebuttals, and a conclusion.

From this point, we consulted experts within the Mabin community, and a diverse group of skilled volunteers participated in our fasci-



nating panel discussion. This brought out different perspectives and the Grade 4s developed the questions, structured the format and moderated. It was a deeply engaging way to showcase another type of structured discourse and students had a chance to confirm, challenge or expand their current understanding.

Around this time, news articles about AI were hot. Things like deep fakes, cyberbullying with AI in schools, and grandparent scams got people talking. Grade 4s participated in a series of challenges trying to distinguish between real or AI generated images, text, voice and video. You probably aren’t shocked to hear that it can be very difficult to discern the difference. We emphasized the importance of thinking critically and acting responsibly when engaging with all types of media. Through media literacy we learned how to Break the Fake to tell if something is true online.

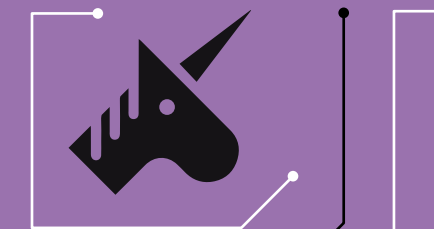
Specialist teachers connected to our inquiry in different ways. In art class, students created robots that used AI. In physical education class, students invented games using their knowledge of AI and, in library, students were supported with their research and writing skills with their persuasive writing and debate prep.



Two culminating activities brought our inquiry to a close. In science, students learned about data sets, algorithms and how AI is trained. To this end, the Grade 4s trained their own machine learning models.

The second thing we did was write an AI policy for use at The Mabin School. We began by reading examples from other schools. Not surprisingly, there were few elementary school examples to draw upon. Students selected statements that could be applicable to Mabin from existing policies and then wrote their own statements using their experience of Mabin. They combined these into a cohesive document and presented it to our school leadership team for approval. With some minor adjustments, it got the go ahead for implementation in 2024/25.

We celebrated the end of our AI inquiry by inviting the Grade 4 parents in to share in their children’s deep study and to see what all the hype was about. Parents were impressed with the depth of our students’ knowledge and their excitement towards their learning. Once again, our emergent curriculum model led us down a fascinating path we could never have predicted in September. And that’s the beauty of it!



Hello, Hippo!

By Erika Bolliger

The Mabin School has been a place where animals have roamed the halls since its founding. Alumni fondly remember Roo, our founder Gerry Mabin's cat, and the beagle, Danny Jarvis, as they roamed the halls! Former teacher and Mabin archivist, Joanne Fleming, had Duck Tolling Retrievers who were staples in her classroom. Ducks, rats, lizards, butterflies, salmon, chickens and more have been raised right here at The Mabin School.

Former principal Nancy Steinhauer had Jada, a sweet Legatto Romagnolo dog, preceded by Katie the West Highland White Terrier. With Nancy's (and Jada's) retirement on the horizon, many wondered if there would be a similarly smooth transition for Jada — as there had been with Nancy and Simone. In fact, there had been one in the works.

Meet Hippo, my English Cream Golden Retriever puppy! Hippo was introduced to the Mabin community at the sweet age of 10 weeks. She is training to one day become certified as a therapy dog so that she may

bring comfort and joy to children in schools, elders in retirement homes, and folks in hospitals.

Hippo was welcomed into Mabin with much enthusiasm and interest in her therapy dog journey. The kids at Mabin quickly became invested in the skills she was learning, helping to reinforce the “four-paws on the ground” rule (so she learns not to jump up on people), how to sit and lie down on command, and how to be gentle with hands (they are **not** toys!).

Hippo made visits to classrooms and had scheduled drop-in time with individual students if they needed a bit of extra support on a given day. Hippo has learned to be comfortable with kids of all ages thanks to the gentleness and respect Mabin students from JK through Grade 6 have shown her. This early socialization has been great preparation for her eventual certification.

Hippo's journey into therapy work also caught the attention of our Grade 5 class last year. Led by Nigel Goodfellow and Stef Spencer, the students became deeply curious about working animals, especially Service Dogs and Therapy Dogs. Hippo was glad to be fitted with custom vests designed by the stu-



dents that can communicate to people things like “I'm in training” and “Please ask before petting”.

The highlight of the year was the Grade 5 PupRaiser, a fabulous fundraising event put on by the class that featured live music performed by students, karaoke, bake sales, art sales, and meet-and-greets with the therapy and service dogs they worked with throughout the year. It was also a great opportunity for Hippo to practice staying calm in large crowds, because they had an amazing turnout! The class raised \$3,723.48 for National Service Dogs, Alliance Service Dogs, and Sunshine Therapy Dogs. You can read more about the PupRaiser in Nigel Goodfellow's article on the opposite page 41.

Hippo will continue to be a presence in the school and, as she practices her skills, she hopes to remain a “happiness delivery vehicle” for Mabin students and adults alike.



Erika Bolliger, The Mabin School's Director of Advancement & Alumni Relations, is a change-maker in her own right! She is raising her puppy, Hippo, to become a certified therapy dog, following in the “paw” steps of a range of animals who have spent time at 50 Poplar Plains Road over the years.

Mabin's First PupRaiser

By Nigel Goodfellow

Every year, the Grade 5 and 6 students at The Mabin School participate in our LEAD program, which focuses on leadership, entrepreneurship, and adaptive design. This year, our essential question was: “How can we be changemakers in the local community?”

Our journey began by exploring pressing local issues, such as: food security, housing, racism and discrimination, and accessibility. We had the privilege of learning from local experts, including representatives from the St. James Town Community Cooperative. Our students delved into these topics through extensive reading and research, uncovering the core equity issues in our community and realizing that everyone has the power to make a difference.

The spark that ignited their latest endeavor came from an unexpected source — Erika's therapy dog in training, Hippo. With her irresistible charm and heartwarming



presence, Hippo quickly became a favourite among students and staff alike. Intrigued by the impact of therapy and service animals, the Grade 5 class embarked on a quest to learn more. They invited experts from Sunshine Therapy Dogs, Alliance of Therapy Dogs, and National Service Dogs to share their insights and experiences, shedding light on how these animals change lives. This inspired us to dedicate the remainder of our year to improving access to service and therapy dogs in our community.

While we considered many ways we could take action, our class decided to host a fundraiser called the “PupRaiser”. A presentation from Adam Saperia of National Service Dogs energized us to set a goal. If we were able to raise \$1500 for National Service Dogs, we would be able to name one of their puppies in the next litter. Challenge accepted!

The students split into four groups, each responsible for a different aspect of the event. One group organized a bake sale, meticulously ensuring that all dietary needs and allergies were accommodated. Another group held an art sale, where students showcased and sold their original artwork. A third group orchestrated a concert

and karaoke show, featuring singing and live music. The final group focused on marketing and communication, creating a website and promotional materials to spread the word. As their teachers, Stef and I were always in awe of the maturity and level of sophistication our students brought to the organization of this fundraiser.

The PupRaiser, held at the end of May, was a resounding success, raising \$3,723 for the three organizations that supported us throughout our project. Our students' dedication and hard work paid off, demonstrating their ability to be true changemakers in our community.

As we reflect on this incredible journey, we are filled with pride and gratitude. Our Grade 5 students have shown that, even at a young age, they can be leaders, entrepreneurs, and advocates for change.

Nigel Goodfellow is one of our talented teachers who has worked at the International School Bangkok, St. John's-Kilmarnock School and The York School. He is particularly passionate about Universal Design for Learning, structured word inquiry, social-emotional learning, technology integration, executive functioning, and agency. Nigel is also a published musician and music producer with an interest in technology and geography.

COME JOIN US FOR A PUPRAISER!

Where: The Mabin School

When: Thursday May 30

Time: 2:00-3:00pm

WE ARE HAVING A FUNDRAISER! TO RAISE MONEY AND AWARENESS FOR NATIONAL SERVICE DOGS

AT THE PUPRAISER WE ARE HAVING AN ART SALE A BAKE SALE AND A CONCERT.








What's the Buzz?

By Randall Brown



In November, Jasmine, the older sister of Andy (26), came in to give my Grade 3 class a presentation on pollinators. The children loved learning about different pollinators and their important role in our ecosystems. After this presentation, the class wanted to keep learning more. At first, we learned through reading stories, doing non-fiction research and by asking questions!

To learn more about pollination, we spent time learning about the anatomy of a flower. We began by drawing and writing about "How we think a flower looks and functions." Afterwards, the class learned about the scientific anatomy of flowers, and how they reproduce with the help of pollinators.

During our inquiry, we read so many great books about bees. They taught us a lot, and we used them to practice our literacy skills, like summarizing and combining sentences. These were great activities to support our literacy goals while we continued to learn about pollinators. In December, the class went to Norval Outdoor School and got to tour their apiaries and extract honey from honeycombs. It was a lot of fun and continued to ignite the students' passion about pollinators, and yearning to learn more.

Starting in February, we had a special guest, Audrey, visit our class. Audrey is an environmental educator who specializes in pollination. She started coming in to share her expertise with us every other week. She did so many great activities with us, like

plant experiments, taught us about honeybees in different seasons, about the different types of native solitary bees in Canada, and so much more! Audrey helped us to design our pollinator gardens. We had to take into account the width and height of the perennials, as well as their flowering season, to make sure that pollinators are being fed during all three seasons that they are active.

The Grade 3s also learned about bees in science and in our classroom. They learned that bees are fascinating creatures with clearly defined roles and highly organized social structures. Sadly, they also learned that worldwide bee populations are declining, and the Grade 3s participated in a scavenger hunt to look for clues as to why this might be.

Learning about how bees are at risk, and knowing their vital roles in healthy ecosystems, the Grade 3s became eager to help bee populations. They designed beautiful posters to highlight the importance

of bees, rolled seed balls full of wild-flower seeds, and created insect hotels. The class wrote and placed ads in our weekly community newsletter, *Choosing Times*, educating our community about the importance of bees, and offering free insect hotels and seed balls to Mabin families. They presented during assembly to educate other classes about pollinators, and led the school in distributing seed balls on Earth Day.

The Grade 3s purchased and created bee hotels for the Mabin yard, so that solitary bees might lay eggs in them. Soon, they noticed mud caps forming on some of the insect hotels that we made, and knew that bees had started to nest in them. Hopefully, the bees like all of the native plants that the Grade 3s have been planting around the Mabin property!

In addition to all of this wonderful activism, the Grade 3s learned about the negative effects of pesticides on bee populations, and took the initiative to write letters to our local MP



EcoSchools

Did you know that The Mabin School is now a certified Eco-School? In our first year of participating in the national EcoSchools program, we achieved Gold level certification. That is thanks to the amazing environmental efforts that are always taking place around our school! This year, our school also contributed to Canada's climate-resilient future by completing three, or more, Project 2050 actions through the EcoSchools program. Thank you to all of the students, staff, teachers and families at The Mabin School who helped us make this achievement a reality. We look forward to continuing our efforts in support of a healthy planet and are counting on your support. Next year, we will aim for Platinum status!



about pesticide use, suggesting that certain pesticides be banned. At the end of the school year, the class was still asking amazing questions, and wanted to continue to learn about bees and other pollinators.



Randall Brown joined the Mabin community in 2013 where she has been a classroom teacher and librarian. Prior to joining The Mabin School, Randall worked at a national non-governmental organization in the field of environmental and sustainability education. Randall has a special interest in environmental and social justice education and is passionate about teaching empathy and empowering students to positively contribute to their communities. Randall holds a B.A. from Queen's University, a B.Ed. from OISE and has completed her Masters Degree in Environmental Studies at York University.

The Landsby Learning Gardens

Luma Sarracini ('26)



Now in Grade 5 at The Mabin School, Luma Sarracini ('26) is a keen changemaker. She was part of the original Grade 3 forest ecology inquiry during the 2022/23 school year that inspired the eventual creation of the Landsby Learning Gardens. The Sarracini family is highly engaged as a current and alumni family. This year, a major gift from Landsby and the Sarracini family enhanced The Mabin School's gardens as learning spaces for students and our community, gratefully named the 'Landsby Learning Gardens'. This gift also supports additional materials, expertise, and maintenance needed to ensure classes can learn without limits. Luma shares below how her family got involved in green initiatives at Mabin, what's happening in the Learning Gardens, including an interview with two Grade 3 students. This is an excellent example of how learning and changemaking are deeply integrated at The Mabin School.



The Landsby Learning Gardens is going to be a wonderful place, and I would like to tell you all about it.



What inspired the Sarracini family to get involved in Mabin's green initiatives?

The Grade 3 inquiry in 2022-23 focused on forest ecology and conservation. The class raised money to plant seedlings with Canada's Forest Trust. The inquiry inspired my dad, Jason Sarracini, the founder of Landsby and a current and alumni parent at Mabin. He had an urge to get Landsby involved with Canada's Forest Trust. The presentation that the Grade 3 class did inspired him even more from how engaging it was and pushed him further into the idea of planting trees, protecting nature, and more. The summer of 2023 was, on record, Canada's worst wildfires which just made it even more important to protect natural resources. Because of all that, Landsby and the Sarracini family have committed to growing a Smart Forest, in addition to supporting The Mabin School's gardening and green programs. They decided to work together with The Mabin School to create the Landsby Learning Gardens.

"We are enormously grateful to The Mabin School for nurturing kindness, curiosity and a sense of community in our children. We hope that the Landsby Learning Gardens will provide opportunities for students to come together to explore, discover and contribute to the community and beyond."

— Jason and Athena Sarracini



What is Landsby?

Landsby is a Canadian travel company that aims to empower travellers to explore Canada responsibly and create deeper connections to the country's culture, land and community. The Learning Gardens align with their values by contributing positively to the regeneration of natural environments, showing respect for local cultures, traditions and the natural world, and welcoming and valuing diversity and communities.

How will we use the Landsby Learning Gardens?

The Landsby Learning Gardens can be used for many things. It can teach classes, it can just be a beautiful garden to walk by, or it can be an activity to learn with. For example, if a class is learning about planting food, that is where they could go. We can all learn so much from the Landsby Learning Gardens. Places like these can always be such a beautiful resource to school communities. It will teach the students and engage the community in different themes.

What class used the Landsby Learning Gardens first?

The Grade 3 class of 2023-2024's inquiry was pollination, so The Mabin School decided that they could be the first ones to start planting in the Landsby Learning Gardens.

I interviewed two Grade 3 students to ask them about what they have learned so far:



What's something interesting you learned about pollinators?

"Bees have pollen sacs that they use to collect pollen and carry it back to the hive to make honey. And they have two stomachs, one for food and one for storage." — Lolo ('27)

Why is it important to help pollinators?

"One third of our food is pollinated by pollinators. They also pollinate cotton, which is used to make clothes!" — Max ('27)

How will the plants that you are growing in the Landsby Learning Gardens help pollinators?

"Pollinators need the nectar in plants to survive. And the plants actually need the pollen that bees accidentally carry from flower to flower. They put pollen in their pollen sacs, but they don't care that there's pollen getting on them. Bees are furry, so pollen sticks to them and then they go to the next flower and it goes onto the pistil of that flower." — Max ('27)

"Yesterday me and Randall [last year's Grade 3 Teacher] went to check on our bee hotel near the rainbow gardens and we saw a mud cap and a bee flying in and making one and we got a video of a bee coming in and out! That means that new bees are being made and growing up!" — Lolo ('27)

They learn so much day-to-day that this was the perfect opportunity to start the Landsby Learning Gardens. We can't wait to see how the gardens grow with each new year!

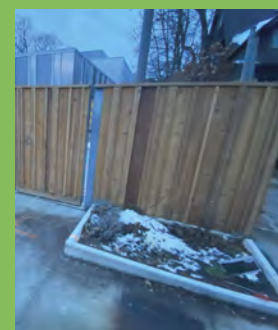
What are the Landsby Learning Gardens going to look like in the future?

The Landsby Learning Gardens can be a year-round place for Mabin students, staff, and the wider community to connect and learn about the natural world. Hopefully, it can become a destination for people to stop by, learn, and be curious about what is planted.

Editor's Note: This article was written in May. In the final week of school in June, the Grade 3 class transferred the plants and flowers they had grown from seeds into the Landsby Learning Gardens, replacing the placeholder ornamental florals with native, Ontario wildflowers that support local pollinators. The Gardens boast a variety of plants, with clear labels so community members can learn about what has been planted.



Bee hotel supporting Toronto's solitary nesting bees.



North-east garden, before and after enhancement.



Students starting their seeds inside in preparation for spring planting in warmer weather.

Changemaking in Grade 6

By Lisa Grassa & Gina Brintnell



Lisa Grassa joined The Mabin School in 2009 and has been both a classroom teacher and learning strategies teacher over the years. She holds a teaching degree from The University of Edinburgh and is a Reading and Special Education Specialist. Lisa has traveled extensively and has had the opportunity to teach in Scotland, Ghana and Mexico. In her role as Grade 6 teacher last year, she had the opportunity to teach some of the same students she had previously taught in Junior Kindergarten!

Gina Brintnell first joined the Mabin teaching team in 2020 and has been a classroom teacher, learning strategies teacher as well as a visual arts specialist teacher. Gina has a Master of Arts in Child Study and Education and a Master of Arts in Theatre from the University of Toronto. She also has an art practice of her own, and has served on a local executive of the Council for Exceptional Children. Gina was the Grade 6 learning strategies teacher last year.

Lisa and Gina shared the following remarks with Grade 6 parents at their expo (aka the Business Stakeholder Breakfast) in our Community Learning Lab at the end of May. It was an opportunity for students to showcase their small businesses and share their learning with their families.

We are so excited to have you here! Before we dive into the awesome business presentations our students have prepared, we wanted to share a few thoughts with you.

Our students have been on this great journey, exploring the big question: “How can we be changemakers in our local community?” They’ve been learning all about what it means to be active citizens, how to make a positive impact, and the importance of things like leadership and fairness. They’ve figured out that every little thing they do can make a difference, and they got excited about it. We’ve been learning about the importance of working together and understanding that not everyone has the same opportunities in our community.

The Grade 6 class has been digging into some serious topics. From food insecurity to the Toronto housing crisis, income inequality in the midst of inflation and climate change, encampments in our city, as well as related challenges such as the cycle of poverty, the stigma, barriers and associated issues of those who are homeless and the discrimination and inequity that perpetuates unfairly in overrepresented communities. We’ve tried to answer the question: why do peo-

ple in my community have varying access to opportunities? The students have talked about the impact of discrimination and started to question why it is that particular communities face these challenges more readily and are more represented than others such as: Indigenous communities, newcomers to Canada, BIPOC folks, women as well as the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

The Grade 6s have learned from various leaders and entrepreneurs in our city who came to share with them about both business and social change. In particular, we’d like to thank Mabin alumna, Serena Nudel (‘91), from the Neighbourhood Group who taught us about Community Development and has been a guide for Grade 6 businesses while accepting donations. We also learned about what it means to be an entrepreneur and, specifically, a social entrepreneur. We’ve tried to brainstorm together how we can begin to change social structures that keep people in poverty and how we can better interrupt bias. The class has also been working on their communication skills and thinking more critically through this lens and using their collaboration skills to solve problems together.

They’ve grown so much over the past few months! They’ve really



come to know their community better, they’re starting to see things from other people’s perspectives, and they’re feeling confident and passionate about making a difference. But you know what? They’re not just learning about these problems — they’re also coming up with some innovative solutions. Learning about problems in our community, faced not just by us, but by all, helps us become better citizens who can make our communities better. They’ve used empathy, along with their leadership skills, to provide service beyond just mere ‘help’ without intention or continual action. They’ve come to recognize their own strengths and privileges and how they can make big impacts as future leaders and changemakers.

Once our students understood the issues, and how to think like an entrepreneur, they answered the question, “How can we help?” They put their heads together and came up with some awesome ideas. They decided to focus on housing issues and helping people experiencing homelessness and inequality. Many students wanted to work together to build care packages for those who need them. Their ideas ranged from selling buttons, lemonade, cookies, stuffies, art, keychains and fundraising for sandwich ingredients. As they built their businesses, we learned about pricing, marketing, budgeting, loan agreements, interest, logistics and deadlines.

We are excited to share that our students raised \$2490.80 gross (\$2151.55 net), which they’re going to use to buy items for care packages. We are so proud of them!

Following these remarks, parents and family members had the opportunity to check out their own child’s business presentation, and then visited at least two more student business presentations. Through their presentations, students showcased their incredible ideas brought to life through their social entrepreneurship projects.

Editor’s note: Before graduating in June, our Class of 2024 worked together to assemble care packages for those experiencing homelessness, an endeavor they tackled with remarkable teamwork, which resulted in the completion and delivery of 80 packages! Each student also took home two packages with the intention of distributing them as needed, with parent supervision. The Grade 6s are grateful for the Mabin community’s support of their initiative this past year!



Mabin Alumni Experts!

Beyond our board and committees, we often look to our alumni network when expertise is required as classes explore their inquiries. Our Grade 5 and 6 students enjoyed hearing from a number of Mabin alumni this past year. **Sara Austin (‘84)** is one of the first Mabin students ever! She shared her experiences as a Mabin student and how it shaped her founding of Children’s First Canada. **Serena Nudel (‘91)** presented about Toronto housing and accessibility in her role as Director of Community Programs at The Neighbourhood Group. **Luke Connell (‘97)** spoke about social entrepreneurship with experience as Founder and CEO of CarbonRun. We are so grateful to Sara, Serena and Luke for giving their time so generously in support of our students!



Catching up with Caitlin

By Michelle Barchuk



Michelle Barchuk, our Director of Admissions & Communications, had a chance to connect with current Mabin parent and proud alumna, Caitlin Walsh ('96), over the summer. Caitlin reflected back on her time at The Mabin School as a student, and what it's like now to be a current parent to two Mabin students. (Her third child was born on Mabin Day in 2021 – Now THAT's school spirit!) Caitlin also shared an important changemaking initiative she is involved with that is especially close to her heart.

What do you remember most about your time at The Mabin School as a student?

The warm home-like environment where you were always welcome to hang out in the kitchen or in Gerry Mabin's office if you were having an off day. Bringing my lunch box to the gym roof on sunny days or the gym floor on cooler days. The art room, which was covered in paint, where Paola shared her passion for art. The music room in the basement where Carole would sing and play the piano. The older kids being kind and friendly vs big and scary. But most of all – being accepted and encouraged to be myself. To find my passion (which was definitely not reading) and go for it.



What was your journey after leaving Mabin?

After Mabin, I attended Branksome Hall and then Western University, where I received a degree in Economics. After a few years of working in finance in Toronto, I decided to pursue an MBA in London, UK. After graduating, I wanted to stay and work in London, but knew one day I would want to return to Toronto to raise a family. So, I set my sights on working for a Canadian Bank with offices in London. The stars aligned and I have been working at National Bank Financial for over 12 years now on the Institutional Equity Sales desk.



Now that your children are old enough to attend the same elementary school you did, what have you noticed so far about the impact The Mabin School is having on your daughters?

As soon as I had my first of three daughters, I knew I wanted them to go to Mabin. Working on Bay Street you are often the only woman at a table full of men, which has never bothered me. I've always credited Mabin for instilling in me that I can do anything – we are all equal – and why not shine/stick out while doing it? Two of my daughters are currently at Mabin and they love it. They can't wait to get to school in the morning, they don't want to leave and constantly ask to stay for aftercare. Mabin feels like an extension of our home to them and they have flourished.

The two of them have very different personalities – one being a little more introverted like my husband and the other far more extroverted (perhaps like me). Mabin [teachers] noticed this right away and worked with them: one to feel more comfortable being more visible and confident, and the other one to learn how to hone her energy/personality into being productive and advantageous. This is Mabin, they see you for you and make you the best version of yourself. Both girls have learned that they can achieve a goal if they persist and are not afraid to ask for help along the way. They share in each other's achievements as well. They are 6 and 4 [years old] so recent achievements include riding a bike without training wheels (with countless bruises), the perfect cartwheel and snapping [fingers].

What is The Teddy Bear Adventure? How did you come to be involved with this initiative?

The Teddy Bear Adventure is a month-long Bay Street-wide initiative in support of the Children's Aid Foundation, which focuses on raising funds for children in government care. The funds collected go directly to the needs of children in Toronto who need a champion. I was one of those kids. My birth mother was 15 years old when she became pregnant and made the selfless decision to put me up for adoption. I spent a few months in government care and was adopted by my mother and father, Sharon and Pat (alumni grandparents!). I could not have chosen better parents for myself. It wasn't until I had my three daughters that I fully appreciated how my life could have been so different, so I wanted to get involved.

I feel very lucky and grateful to be where I am today. I would not be here without a lot of strangers rooting for me. We all need a champion at some point in our lives and it's important to pay it forward. My kids understand this in an age-appropriate way. We recently participated in a neighborhood food drive – an initiative that started with them asking about people lined up at a food bank on their way home from school. They worked hard and felt very proud.

On the back cover of this issue, you'll see the words: "Many of our students are here today because you were here yesterday." We are honoured by the number of our alumni who choose to send their own children to The Mabin School. Caitlin ('96) is joined by the following alumni who are also current Mabin parents: Devin ('93), Jamie ('91), Ted ('92), Zach ('99), Emily ('94), and Kate ('94).



Dr. Kofi Visits Mabin

By Bruce Grant

This past April, The Mabin School had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Kofi J.S. Gbolonyo as our resident visiting guest artist. Kofi is a music educator and scholar who holds a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the University of Pittsburgh. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in Ethnomusicology, African Music and African Studies at the University of British Columbia and Capilano College in Vancouver. His primary expertise is in West African music and dance, Ewe indigenous knowledge and multicultural music education, and he is also a highly skilled composer, percussionist, trombonist and dancer.

While Kofi was at The Mabin School last spring, he taught students (and staff!) a variety of Ghanaian songs and dances. This culminated in our wonderful Spring Celebration concert when we shared what we learned in song, dance, drumming and instrument playing. Every class, from JK through Grade 6, had the opportunity to perform in this rich celebration which was shared with our entire community.

For many of us, Kofi's visit and the spring concert were the highlight of the year. But did you know that Kofi is also a changemaker in addition to being a gifted musician and teacher?

When Kofi was studying in Pittsburgh, he started collecting used wind instruments from garage sales, fixing them and then sending them

back to the village where he grew up in Eastern Ghana where there were very few wind instruments. In February of 2011, Kofi and his brother Prosper, also a music educator, started the Nunya Academy with 21 students. The aim of the Academy was to teach music, and the related performing arts, to the children of the village who had no access to arts education. The students learned how to play the wind instruments Kofi had sent from Pittsburgh in addition to drumming and traditional dances. The first classes were taught in his mother's living room. The Music Academy has now grown to approximately 95 students, ranging in age from 6 to 20 years old. Ten of the alumni assist with teaching and supporting the students. All the instruction for the students is provided free of charge.

In 2015, Kofi realized the school was outgrowing his mother's house and began planning to build a school. Since then he has raised over \$500,000, purchased land and built a twelve room school with kitchen and dining facilities. Staff, students, and members of the community all participated in the build alongside the construction workers. The school building was completed in 2023 and now hosts a day school for Kindergarten through Grade 4 as well as a daycare for younger children.



Bruce Grant teaches music at The Mabin School with a focus on the Orff approach. Bruce is an Orff specialist twice over known as "The Orff Doctor" in North American music educator circles. For many years, he was the number one resource for elementary music teachers who needed advice about instruments, resources and repairs. Bruce's music room is a safe and inspiring space where students creatively explore the elements of music through improvisation, composition, and storytelling.



There are over 100 children, ages 2 to 12 years old, who attend the Nunya Academy. One of the school's goals is to add one more grade each year until the school has students completing Grade 12. This will require continued fundraising to finance the build of another school building.

Kofi also invites teachers from all over the world to spend a few weeks teaching and learning at the Nunya Academy. International teachers teach math, French, science, music, and other subjects, while learning about Ghanaian culture. The Nunya Academy also hosts professional learning opportunities such as Orff Afrique, a masterclass for elementary music teachers.

Thank you, Dr. Kofi Gbolonyo, for sharing the music and dance of your culture with us. Dancing, singing and playing with you was a joy. Now that we know more about what you have done, and continue to do, for your community, you inspire us as well. Kofi, you are a true changemaker!



For more information about the Nunya Academy visit <https://www.nunyaacademy.com/>

If you'd like to support the Nunya Academy, visit: <https://www.realhumanitarian.com/nunya>.

Coaching at Mabin: A Pilot Program

By Lauren Saunders

Lauren Saunders joined The Mabin School in 2016 and has taught French, and drama over the years. She is currently one of our learning strategies teachers. Lauren holds her MA from the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, and she is a professional actor who still devotes a considerable amount of her time to performing and teaching drama. Lauren recently completed the Teacher as Coach training program through the International Coaching Federation (ICF), along with our music specialist, Bruce Grant, and retired principal Nancy Steinhauer. Lauren was drawn to this program because it offered active training in cultivating specific social and emotional competencies which aligned with her existing core values as a teacher: curiosity and connection. The Teacher as Coach program included 125 hours of training and mentoring over 30 weeks. Additionally, Lauren completed over 100 practice coaching hours and passed the ICF credentialing exam in order to become an Associate Certified Coach (ACC). Coaching has empowered and inspired her with even more tools to support Mabin students' flexibility and resilience.

The Mabin School's mission is to create the next generation of original thinkers, adaptive leaders and caring citizens. Our model is flexible and relationship-based, which allows teachers to adapt their programs based on a deep knowledge of each student. Last year, The Mabin School launched a pilot program to even further support kids in their personal development through individual and/or small group coaching.

Why coaching?

In our post-pandemic world, children's mental health has been declared a national crisis. The introduction of a coaching program was initially geared towards building greater resilience and self-regulation, while developing a growth mindset in the face of unpredictability. Coaching would offer students an opportunity for personal growth, while feeling seen and heard by a caring adult. Each session would create space for intentional self-reflection and problem solving around specific obstacles or difficulties encountered at school. Our hope was that with regular coaching — coupled with Mabin's existing relationship-based approach to learning — we would see a noticeable improvement in our student participants' mental health, flexibility and overall well-being.

Student participants said:

"I like having a place to talk."

"People might come to me to solve problems now."

"It feels helpful to know that I have a lot of strategies."

"I'm proud of how all my relationships are getting better."

"Coaching helps me work through my problems and arguments."

"I can't make things perfect for everyone else, but I can make myself feel good and do better."

Parents & Teachers noticed:

"I can see so much development of [their] social skills."

"We see [them] getting over disappointment so much sooner."

"There's a lightness with [their] friends. [They have] more confidence and seem more at ease in the class."

"I'm seeing continued growth in persistence and grit in math. Less shut downs when compared to the start of the year."

Who were our coaching candidates?

Each month, teachers were invited to recommend students in Grades 4-6 who they felt would most benefit from this pilot coaching program. Great coaching candidates:

- Want to change, grow, or develop and are open to trying a new approach
- Are capable of at least a moderate level of self-awareness
- Can remain engaged for a 30-minute conversation
- Are capable of envisioning future success
- Would benefit from support in building resilience and flexible thinking

The model

While the general coaching model is quite flexible, we created a framework that would best integrate with our existing program and members of our community. Sessions were either one-to-one or in small groups, and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Parents and teachers were contacted ahead of time to share their own observations, concerns, and objectives. Kids receiving private coaching participated in anywhere between 4 and 10 sessions. During coaching, students were supported in reflecting around a specific area of difficulty, then selected an objective for the session. Over the course of the conversation, we would explore existing mindset, limiting beliefs, and new possibilities. At the end of each session, students left with a specific, measurable goal, along with a plan for initial steps towards that goal.

The impact

Over the course of the year, themes of coaching conversations encompassed: building confidence, managing big emotions, cultivating trust, establishing healthy friendships, open-mindedness, clear communication, and more. Students who participated in over 6 weeks of coaching were able to identify their strengths and areas of need with far greater accuracy. Kids took accountability and generated multiple solutions with greater ease. Throughout ongoing opportunities for reflection, teachers, parents, and students reported noticeable development in conflict resolution and overall confidence at school. So... is this type of coaching effective? Our evidence showed us that the answer was a clear YES!

We were pleased with the outcome of this pilot project and are looking at ways to continue to incorporate individual and small group coaching in this way going forward.

Familiar Faces at Camp Unicorn

By Erika Bolliger

Erika Bolliger is The Mabin School's Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations; a role not previously in existence until last year. Erika's focus for the upcoming year is on how to best connect and engage with Mabin's amazing alumni community. Send Erika a note at alumni@mabin.com or fill out our Alumni Survey! She would love to hear about your Mabin experience and explore ways to better engage with our alumni.

Many Mabin alumni have fond memories of their time at summer camp right here at The Mabin School! Traditionally held during the final two weeks of June, after classes have ended, Camp Unicorn allows Mabin students across grades to start the summer in style by playing together and having fun at our very own day camp.

Some of our alumni have even had the opportunity to return as camp counsellors after graduation. We always enjoy having our former students come back home to help out!

This summer, campers were thrilled to have alumni camp counsellors: Iole ('21), Izzy ('21), Talia ('21) and Antimo ('23). In addition to working with the kids to create the best camp experience, the alumni were often asked to share stories about their years at Mabin. "There aren't a lot of camps that hire people my age so it's really nice they let us do this," said Talia, when chatting with Erika Bolliger, Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations. "I tell the kids what Mabin was like when I was there and they seem really interested."



"It's really fun [to be a camp counsellor]," says Antimo, "because after you've graduated you get to see some old kids you know, or might not remember but you get to know them again, and some of the new kids and you get to see their personalities and some of them are really cute!"

Iole ('21) explained the best part about coming back to be a counsellor, "I remember being here and it feels so special, like everyone gets to enjoy their time here. At my school, I don't know half the people in older grades. At Mabin, everyone is integrating with each other, it doesn't matter what age or gender you are, nothing!"

Izzy ('21) especially enjoyed helping at Mabin Camp in June and bonding with the younger kids. Working in the summer also helped build her independence. Since leaving The Mabin School, Izzy has also noticed that the values instilled in her here, like empathy and responsible risk-taking, have stayed with her.

When asked how they all plan to stay connected to Mabin in the future, Antimo said, "I made a lot of friends through Mabin that I'll carry for a long time, not just in my grade but in other grades. Mabin also has 3-4 events throughout the year where you can come, even 60-year old alumni can come! I make an effort to come to the Mabin BBQ and Mabin Day and the Gingerbread Build — there's so many games and food and everyone is there."

"I'll stay connected because of all the events they hold so it's really easy to come back and rejoin with people you knew before." Iole expands, "Those are special because you went every single year when you're young, so it doesn't matter if it's a big event or if there's games, it's special because you went every year. Of course the camp and other opportunities I've been able to do through the school too."

Izzy also said she looks forward to staying connected to Mabin by

attending events like Mabin Day and the BBQ with her sister Zoe ('25) and her family.

"I still hang out with a lot of my Mabin friends, the close ones, and sometimes I see other classmates at Mabin Day", said Talia, and added, "My entire class [of 2021] would come to see what's in the time capsule in 2040 — they've been guessing what's inside for years. It was there before we got here. We guessed it would be something about aliens. Personally I think it's full of toys. Unicorn toys."

As our alumni enter the world "fully baked", we hope they will continue to stay connected and engaged with Mabin. As Antimo says, "I think it's an important thing. A lot of people spend their childhood here, JK to Gr 6, eight years at this school. Just to let that go to waste, not to come back here — I wouldn't want to do that! I would want to come back."



Alumni Make Mabin More Magical!

There are lots of opportunities for alumni to stay connected to Mabin. Here are some examples from this past year:

- Earning volunteer hours in after school extended care like Ronan ('16).
- Working Mabin camps and internships (see page 58 for an article by Lily Goodman ('15)).
- Offering advice and expertise on Mabin's Board of Directors (like Jamie ('91), Nii-Apa ('91), Ted ('92), and Alan ('96)).
- Sharing time and perspectives on a Board committee like Will ('21), Olivia ('15), Nolan ('13), Caitlin ('96), and Susan (parent of Bianca ('85), Henry ('91), grandparent of Felix ('22)).
- Presenting as a guest expert to enrich student inquiries like Sara ('84), Serena ('91), and Luke ('97).
- Attending reunions, events like the Fall BBQ, Mabin Day, and the Gingerbread Build like the classes of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 who attended in full force!
- Preserving Mabin's history on our Archives Committee like Joanne Fleming (former founding teacher), Joanne Chmara (parent of alumni Matthew ('02) and Laura ('07)), and Shawna (parent of alumni McCrea ('23) and Emily ('23) with guidance from Jonathan ('94)).
- Continuing to help transform Mabin's spaces like the McCallum family (alumni John ('85), Will ('20), Matt ('19)) or supporting talented young changemakers with scholarships and bursaries through The Inclusion Fund like Nancy Steinhauer (Principal 2016-2024).
- Bringing their kids to Mabin's free community drop-in for 0-5, Saturday Morning Choosing Time like Lucy ('93).
- Sending their own kids to The Mabin School like Caitlin ('96), Devin ('93), Jamie ('91), Ted ('92), Zach ('99), Emily ('94), and Kate ('94)!
- Or just coming by for a visit to see the new and old spaces (like Murray, parent of Ariel ('99), Jack ('17), Lia ('13), Christina ('93), Oliver ('94), and David ('87))!



Staying Connected with The Mabin School

By Lily Goodman ('15)

“Without Mabin I wouldn’t have become the confident person I am today.”

From encouraging curiosity to embracing differences, The Mabin School played a key role in my understanding of who I am and the person I want to be. I attended Mabin from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6, graduating in 2015. After Mabin, I spent my years at Greenwood College School and am currently going into my fourth year studying communications at Concordia University. When I saw an opportunity to continue my Mabin experience as an intern this summer, I knew I needed to apply. It was important to me to help support the school that helped me grow into the confident person I am today.

The Mabin School did and continues to put students in environments where they’re free to grow and learn in the way they want to. Throughout our years at Mabin, students learn Habits of Mind as tools and to understand the world better. As young as four years old, I was learning about empathy, persistence and the importance of taking responsible risks.

A Mabin experience that shaped me and became unforgettable is from Grade 1 when my class was taking care of caterpillars, watching as they cocooned and turned into butterflies. We then released them into the sky as a class. This task, in Grade 1, taught me to further understand empathy because I was taking care of another being. I remember feeling worried about the butterflies, scared something would happen to them when they flew away. Releasing the butterflies as a class helped us all come together to understand how things grow and change.

Another very influential experience I had was in Grade 5 when my class entered a robotics competition and I learned how to collaborate with my peers better. We learned to program the robots and we practiced for a few months prior to the competition, where we had to control our robots to complete tasks before our opponents did. While I felt I wasn’t very good at robotics, I was able to contribute by motivating my peers, thinking outside the box, and being positive. I still think of that day as one of my favourites. The Mabin School never made competition about winning; it was about learning from new experiences. This is just one example of how Mabin pushed me out of my comfort zone and made me more confident in what my unique abilities can offer.

Now, being a Mabin alumni means that although I have left the school as a student, I continue to use the tools I learned to treat everyone kindly, take responsible risks and collaborate productively. When talking to Audrey Korngold ('15), one of my classmates, about her thoughts on keeping her connection with the school, she said:

“Staying engaged with The Mabin School is crucial to me because it’s where I built my confidence and developed a strong academic foundation. I cherish the memories created there and believe in giving back to the community that supported my growth, ensuring future students have the same positive experiences.”

As alumni, it’s important to support The Mabin School as it has and continues to support us. A strong Mabin alumni community can help former students connect and network with each other, possibly meeting other Mabin alumni in the same field or with the same interests. I think it is extremely important for alumni to stay connected with The Mabin School, not only because it

was a huge part of our childhood, but because there were many connections we made with other students and staff. When discussing the importance of staying connected to Mabin with Daniel Lu ('16), who was also an intern at the school this past summer, he explained:

“The Mabin magic” wouldn’t be possible without dedicated students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff. Mabin wouldn’t be Mabin without YOU. Our active, caring community is what makes Mabin a truly special place. Stay in touch to learn about its growth and success and help shape its future.”

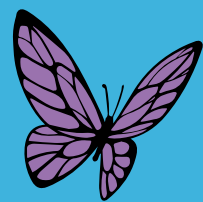
By staying connected to Mabin you get to hear all about new developments in the school, event opportunities and ways to connect with other alumni.



There are many events for Mabin alumni to come help with and/or participate in, such as: our Fall BBQ, our annual Habitat for Humanity Gingerbread Build, Mabin Day, and class reunions. Some ways you can immerse yourself back into the community are becoming an alumni Class Rep to help everyone reconnect to their Mabin roots. You can become a mentor or mentee to connect with other alumni and help careers blossom. The Mabin School continues to put a smile on students’ faces by creating unique ways of learning and also carrying our traditions.

My Mabin experience didn’t end when I graduated and I hope it never does. I will continue to connect with fellow alumni, current students and staff. I hope you’ll do the same! To stay connected to The Mabin School, make sure your contact information is updated, follow Mabin on social media, and stop by events and reunions! As we add new opportunities for alumni, we want your thoughts and feedback! Connect with alumni@mabin.com to fill out a quick survey and tell us how The Mabin School can best support you in your latest chapter of your life.

Lily Goodman ('15) is a proud Mabin grad who returned to the school as an intern this past summer working with our Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations, Erika Bolliger. Lily, working with another Mabin alumni intern, Daniel Lu ('16), joined Erika in the summer of 2024 to support the development of Mabin's first dedicated alumni engagement program. Who better to help us develop an Alumni Relations program than two outstanding alumni themselves?



Author Visits



By Jillian Green

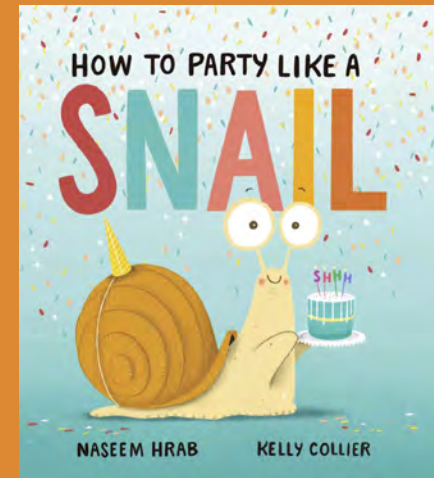
This year, Mabin students participated in the Forest of Reading, Canada’s largest recreational reading program. The program celebrates Canadian books, publishers, authors and illustrators by inviting students to read from a nominated list of books and then vote on their favourite in the spring. At The Mabin School, we were delighted to host a variety of guest authors, especially from the Forest of Reading Program, and amplify diverse voices and stories in our new Learning Commons space. Our authors shared stories about inclusion, equity, perseverance, kindness and empathy. A common theme amongst all of our celebrated authors was the Habit of Mind, Persistence. “How many tries do you think it took to turn my story into a book?” asked author Naseem Hrab. An audible gasp broke out amongst the children when she shared a quick slideshow of over seventy-five versions of her book *How to Party Like a Snail*. Meeting their favourite authors and illustrators in person and learning about the journey and process behind the story is inspiring for students from JK all the way up to Grade 6. Many of our guests recounted that they often struggled with writing, spelling or drawing in school, now part of their professional craft. The only way they were able to get their books published was not by being the “best” but by willing to push through feedback from their publishers and never give up! We love hosting guest authors at Mabin and will continue this meaningful practice in the upcoming school year.



Sarabeth Holden’s book, *Benny the Bananasaurus Rex*, is imaginative and silly! Benny loves bananas so much that he wants to become one. Sarabeth is Inuit from the community of Pangnirtung, Nunavut, and is a co-founder of the Toronto Inuit Association. She taught our students a variety of Inuit words. Did you know that there is no Inuit word for banana as bananas don’t grow in the arctic?! Sarah did not disappoint, showing up for her author visit dressed as a dinosaur!



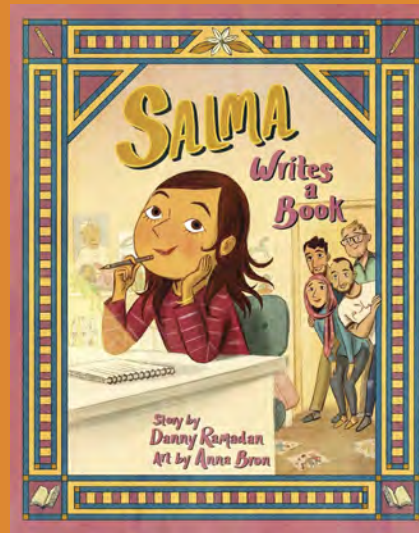
Valene Campbell is a Toronto author who is simply a dynamic powerhouse. In her book, *The Amazing Zoe, a Queen Like Me*, she shares the importance of including Black history in children’s media. We learned about historical and contemporary African queens and princesses!



Naseem Hrab shared her Forest of Reading nominated book, *How to Party Like a Snail* with JK-3 students. If you are an introvert who likes to party, this book is for you. Naseem explained that it took her 75 drafts before her book was published!



Kevin Sylvester has written and illustrated over thirty books for children, spanning all different genres! His visit was highly engaging and filled with fun. Kevin took the time to sign each of the Grade 6s personal copy of his award-winning mystery novel, *Apartment 713*, another novel study hit! Kevin even returned a few weeks later to mentor our Grade 6s on their student businesses. He brought along his co-author, economist Michael Hlinka. Together they have written two books about financial literacy for kids.



Danny Ramadan was only in Toronto for a few days and he made time to visit us! Danny is a Syrian-Canadian award winning author, public speaker, and advocate for LGBTQ+ refugees who shared his middle grade *Salma* series with us. There are more *Salma* books to explore, and our Grade 3s enjoyed reading *Salma Makes a Home* for their novel study.



Sometimes we are lucky to celebrate authors from our very own Mabin community! Sage (25) and Lee (27) were eager to invite their uncle, Jodie Saperia, author of *The Hot Chocolate Swimming Pool*. What a treat!



Mabin Day 2024

By Michelle Barchuk

Since 2018, every Thursday right before the May long weekend, we have celebrated Mabin Day. It's an annual homecoming for Mabin community members past and present as we gather to celebrate all things Mabin at 50 Poplar Plains.

This year's festivities kicked off with a full school assembly outside on our beautiful SportCourt. Led by members of our Class of 2024, highlights included: a rousing rendition of our school song "All In"; some wise (and entertaining!) words from our founder Gerry Mabin; a memorable acrobatic performance by Roxy ('29) and, of course, the winner of the Ian Hawkins Spirit Award was also announced.

Following assembly, JK through Grade 2 students enjoyed a visit with author and storyteller Rukshana Khan in the Community Learning Lab. Students in Grades 3 through 6 were treated to a performance of The ADHD Project with Carlyn Rhamey in the gym.

After Integration, it was time for our annual Mabin Day parade! Community members celebrating birthdays on Mabin Day were invited to lead the parade. (Bobby ('24), Oliver ('26), Dante ('31) and our Board Chair — and Mabin alum — Jamie Campbell ('91) all celebrated birthdays on Mabin Day in 2024!) Decked out in Mabin gear, unicorn SWAG and rainbow colours, we set out around the block. There was a sea of "Nancys" in the neighbourhood as we paid tribute to retiring principal Nancy Steinhauer.

Following the parade, our marvelous Mabin Parents' Association hosted a party for all! Celebrations included games hosted by our Grade 5 and 6 leaders, an epic talent show on the Steinhauer Stage, yummy snacks, including an ice cream truck, face painting and more!



At this year's festivities, we spotted the following alumni: McCrea ('23), Maddy ('24), Izzy ('21), Samantha ('21), Jaspar ('20), Zack ('99), Cait ('96), Jamie ('91), Kate ('94), Emily ('94), and Devin ('93).

Next year, Mabin Day takes place on **Thursday, May 15, 2025**. Mark your calendars now and plan on joining us!

Michelle Barchuk joined The Mabin School as Director of Admissions & Communications in 2017. She is a big fan of Mabin Day, especially when it happens to fall on her birthday every few years!



SAVE THE DATE!

Mabin Day 2025



Ian Hawkins Spirit Award

By Michelle Barchuk

Photo credit: @barrygreenphotography



The 2024 Ian Hawkins Spirit Award goes to.....former Mabin principal Nancy Steinbauer! At Mabin Day in the spring, Ian Hawkins himself was on hand – along with last year’s recipient Penpa Tsering, our custodian – to present Nancy with this very special award prior to her retirement.

Over the past 8 years, as The Mabin School’s principal, Nancy has been our school’s biggest cheerleader. She started Mabin Day when she first joined the school and created an annual tradition to celebrate all things Mabin. She shows up at all events – big and small – to lend her support and a helping hand. From sitting in the dunk tank at the Mabin BBQ to playing keyboard at assembly to jumping into a staff/student basketball game... Nancy’s answer is always YES! She has worked so hard behind – and in front of – the scenes to champion our small but mighty little school during her time here.

Nancy models empathy in everything she does and always makes time to listen and support others. She is always up for trying something new and taking responsible risks while championing the mission and values of The Mabin School every step of the way. Please join us in congratulating Nancy on this well-deserved award!

“Nancy understands people. When children need help and encouragement, she is always there for them.”

“She makes time for everyone: students, staff, teachers, parents, grandparents, alumni....the list goes on! She models empathy in everything she does, every single day. She checks in on people regularly and offers her support.”

“Nancy is always up to try new things! When our club came together, she allowed us to be creative and do something that we don’t think others have done before. She supported our vision.”



“Nancy understands the value of laughter, and how it brings the community together in such a positive way.”

“Nancy deserves this award! The kindness, supportiveness and community spirit that she demonstrated...she brings these qualities to all that she does at Mabin. And she does a lot!”



The **Ian Hawkins Spirit Award** is an annual award which honours the contributions of Ian Hawkins, beloved music and French teacher at The Mabin School, from 1993-2018. Each year, it recognizes member(s) of the Mabin community who embody the spirit of what Ian brought to our school: kindness, supportiveness and community spirit. The award can recognize an individual or a group. Staff, teachers, students, parents, other Mabin community members, or a group composed of members from multiple areas are all eligible for consideration. Past recipients since its inception in 2018 have included: EcoWarriors, Andy Lavia, Rachel Northup, Chris Russell, the Grade 5 & 6 students, and Penpa Tsering. Nominations open each spring and are welcome from all members of the Mabin community. Interested in learning more? Contact pa@mabin.com.

Michelle Barchuk is our Director of Admissions & Communications. One of her favourite parts of Mabin Day each year is when the Ian Hawkins Spirit Award winner is announced!





Our commitment to student-led inquiry: the child is leading us which instills agency, leadership, collaboration and problem solving at a young age.

Our identity as a play-based, relationship-based laboratory of learning where empathy is nurtured and modelled.

Our status as a changemaker school provides a social justice lens and authentic opportunities for our children to engage in the world with a sense of personal and collective power.

Our unapologetic "smallness" enables us to create intimacy and a sense of family.

Our approach with families: to partner with parents in service of their children's full development.

Our Mission

To create the next generation of original thinkers, adaptive leaders and caring citizens.



Our Vision



To model excellence in progressive elementary education.

Our Aspirations

Build the foundation that will enable us to achieve the next level as changemakers and influencers in the field of education and children's mental health.

Be in high-demand by a greater diversity of communities.

Amplify student voices in learning, decision-making, and changemaking.



Sustain standards of EXCELLENCE in teaching & learning ~ to create ~ CARING global citizens.

Develop EXCEPTIONAL teachers who INNOVATE & take RESPONSIBLE risks.

ENGAGE in relevant local EDUCATION research & training

Strategic Priority 2 : Nurture healthy relationships

Promote WELL-BEING & MENTAL HEALTH of our children, staff & families by FOSTERING healthy relationships.

Capture & communicate RELATIONSHIP-BASED learning in ACTION.

Check out our new Equity Plan for Continuous Improvement!

INCREASE diversity & inclusion of VOICES in our communities.

Strategic Priority 3 : Amplify learning

Use our INNOVATIVE learning spaces to AMPLIFY STUDENT VOICES.

Partner with families to ensure children feel STABLE, SECURE & SAFE.

GROW the "MABIN MAGIC" through play, creativity & connection.



Join us Saturday Mornings!

The Mabin School's free **Saturday Morning Choosing Time** sessions are possible as a result of a generous donation from former Mabin student Lawrence Ho ('88). We are grateful for the opportunity to host this program which allows us to open our doors to the wider community. On any given Saturday, you may see Mabin alumni, staff members, neighbours and friends of The Mabin School with their children, enjoying their time together.

Parents/caregivers with children 0-5 years old are invited to drop in for our free **Saturday Morning Choosing Time**, a Lawrence Ho community program, in our Kindergarten space. It runs between **10:00 am** and **12:00 pm** on a series of dates throughout the school year. No sign up. All are welcome to stop by and play. Join us and bring a friend!

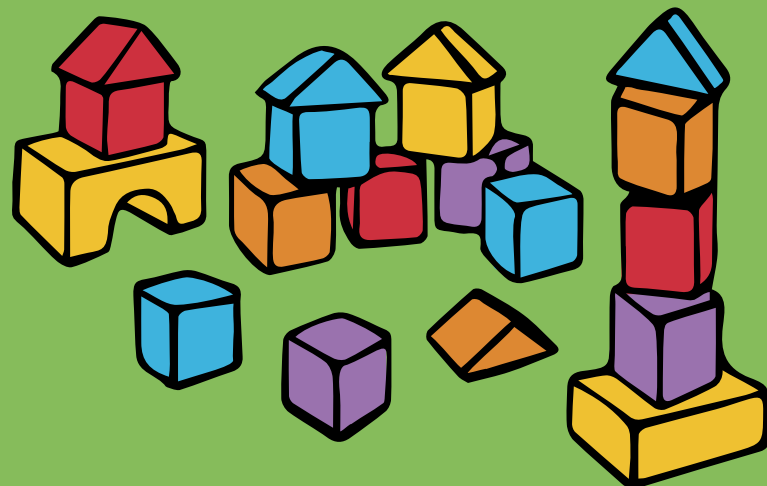
Access our online school calendar to check these dates at mabin.com any time.

Questions about this program? Contact admissions@mabin.com.

Fall 2024
October 19, 26
Nov 2, 16, 23, 30
Dec 7, 14

Winter 2025
Jan 11, 18, 25
Feb 1, 8, 22
Mar 1, 29

Spring 2025
April 5, 12, 26
May 3, 10, 24, 31
June 7



We Want to Hear from You!

In each issue, we aim to feature a variety of voices from the Mabin community. We welcome contributions from students, staff members, parents, alumni and friends of The Mabin School. If you have an idea for an article, please contact Michelle Barchuk, Director of Admissions and Communications, at michellebarchuk@mabin.com or 416-964-9594 ext. 247.

Changing Times - Fall 2024

The Changing Times is published each year by The Mabin School to highlight stories from school life and to share news about our alumni and alumni families.

The Mabin School is an Ashoka Changemaker School, a member of the Conference of Independent Schools of Ontario and a member of the International Association of Laboratory Schools.

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Many of our students are here today because you were here yesterday.

We feel privileged to be teaching the children of our alumni. We are thrilled each year when we realize that almost 100% of our applicants come to us through word of mouth.

We appreciate when you share your happy memories of your time at Mabin. Thanks for encouraging other wonderful families to visit us and learn what The Mabin School is all about.

While Junior Kindergarten is our main entry year, we occasionally have spots in other grades. For more information, and to find out if we have a spot for a student in your life, please contact Michelle Barchuk, Director of Admissions and Communications, at michellebarchuk@mabin.com or at 416-964-9594 x247.



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