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Panaga School Newsletter

Issue Seven April 2009



*Message from the
Principal*

Dear All,

Amazingly, we now see the start of Term 3. Time certainly does fly! Looking back, the school has already made great progress.

Last term saw the introduction of a rigorous new school monitoring cycle designed to further enhance the quality of learning for the children. This has involved focused classroom visits in all age groups, a review of the work in the children's books, an audit of teacher planning and an examination of assessment data. All these strategies have helped identify strengths and areas for development across the school. Professional discussion has ensued with improvements already taking hold. Over the recent vacation, Miss Helen and Miss Gina - our Literacy and Numeracy Leaders for Learning respectively - attended training in the UK on the latest developments in these core areas. Miss Liza, our IPC Leader for Learning, has delivered staff training sessions in IPC, assisted by the recent visit of IPC founder, Mr David Playfoot. Alongside the creation of new policies, systems and day-to-day procedures, these initiatives - and the many others planned - will ensure that Panaga is indeed the flagship of the Shell school fleet.

Two terms completed and I feel at home in Panaga. The school is a wonderful example of international education: children from 33 nationalities working, playing and enjoying their time together, guided and encouraged by a professional team of teachers and a community of supportive parents. The monthly colour newsletters serve to illustrate the rich range of learning experiences happening at Panaga.

So, let's look forward to Term 3 and all that it promises to hold!

With kind regards,

Richard White
Principal

Inside this month's issue:

- Morris Gleitzman visits Panaga
- Dinosaur Discovery
- Welcome Miss Clare
- P2 and P3 IPC Entry Points
- Book Week on Parade!
- Tiger 'Tayles'

Aussie Author Inspires Budding Panaga Writers

On Wednesday, 22 April 2009, acclaimed Australian children's author, Morris Gleitzman, visited Panaga School as a part of his book tour of Brunei.



His arrival was greeted with high expectation as the library shelves became empty of his novels and teachers across both sites began reading extracts of his works as their class book. There was even a bookstand set up in the middle of the Teraja playground selling his much loved stories. Hundreds of signed copies sold in a couple of days; the most popular being his 2003 novel, "Boy Overboard". Little wonder as children were captivated by his explanation of the novel's themes and plot during his Milepost seminars.



"Boy Overboard" is set in Afghanistan and centres around two siblings, Jamal and Bibi. Bibi, not concerned it is illegal for Afghan girls to play football, is a very talented player - more so than her elder brother. They love to play football, even if the terrain is rough and dangerous. However, as Mr Gleitzman explained, "This day was not a typical day for football. There were no explosions, no nerve gas. Things were eerily quiet."

Mr Gleitzman added, "Further in the field though was the ever-presence of landmines. Bibi kicked a ball and chased after it, only to step on one herself."

This is where the shrewd author of 28 books stopped and left his captive audience gasping with anticipation of what may happen to her. Mr Gleitzman sympathised with their plight. "When reading, it's good to put yourself in the position of the author to try to figure out what will happen next."

"When we, like Bibi, are facing big

problems, that's when we discover things about ourselves. Problems are great learning experiences," he continued. It is here he paused, then told the children he was going to reveal one of his greatest 'secrets' of how to write a good story.

"You ask your character questions and you know there is one thing you must discover - the most important thing of all - *their problems*. The question I ask each new character is, 'What is the biggest problem in your life; the greatest need to do something about?'"

"We are not very interested in a story that does not contain a problem. Let's imagine a girl with a problem-free life. 'The happiest girl in the world' we will call her - a guaranteed problem-free story. To sum up, her life would be 'Happy, happy, happy.' Her spirits would always be soaring. Everything she eats tastes fantastic." This sent the room into a giggle. "All is revealed about her in the first two and a half pages and there is still 420 to go! Therefore, you have already learned her situation and you don't want to read the rest." Unanimously, all children nodded in agreement.

"The moment a character has a problem, the moment there could be more than one possible ending: either 'Happy, happy, happy' or 'Dead, dead, dead', is the moment we keep turning the pages. This is the single most important idea I have had to writing a story. As soon as you think of your characters' problems, you can start writing the story."



Mr Gleitzman continued speaking about the closeness he has to the characters he devises. "When I have to get to know my characters, I think of it just like getting to know a new friend." This communication with his new 'friends' fuels his other passion in life: *daydreaming*. He explained, "Sometimes I daydream so much I leave a puddle of dribble on my desk."

Later, Mr Gleitzman revealed he only began writing books when he was 32. Just before that he wrote and still writes for TV. And earlier in his job life, he worked as a paperboy, a shelf-

stacker, a frozen chicken de-froster and as an assistant to a fashion designer.

His first novel, "The Other Facts of Life", was transformed from a television script he had written for the award-winning film of the same name. "While the film was being made, a publisher gave me the chance to convert the script into a book. I was terrified. What did I know about writing a book?" he said on his website, www.morrisgleitzman.com. "People seemed to like it. I certainly liked writing it. That's when I fell in love with writing books. Since then I've written another 27."

Mr Gleitzman says he does not have a favourite book of his, but the ones he likes a lot are the "Toad" series. "I enjoyed writing from the toads' point of view - a non-human perspective. They are so ugly and unusual!"



His favourite author when a child was Richmal Crompton. However nowadays, he prefers to read non-fiction or recipe books instead, so he does not confuse his characters with other authors'.

In his spare time, Mr Gleitzman likes to read, go for walks in forests, see friends and do some cooking and tidying up. "I love tidying up. A lot of bookstore owners frown on me when I am in their store as I begin to straighten up their bookshelves."



After speaking to the school, Mr Gleitzman generously signed every book that came into his path.

Huge praise should be given to Miss Helen for organising Mr Gleitzman's visit - certainly the major highlight of Panaga School's 2009 Book Week.

By Damian Brady

"When we are facing big problems, that's when we discover things about ourselves." - Morris Gleitzman



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Thank you Morris!

Dear Mr. Gleitzman,
Thank you for visiting Panaga School and giving me some tips on how to write a good story. Now I know how to start an interesting idea and when to bring up the problem. I have also learnt a lot of other things about writing stories from your talk to our class.

When you were talking about 'Boy Overboard', I felt like I was in Afghanistan myself and I could feel how Bibi felt when she stepped on a landmine. I really want to read the next part of the story now.

When you talked to us about a character who was always, 'Happy, happy, happy', it made me realise that a book like that would be extremely boring. I am in the middle of reading the book, 'Give Peas a Chance and Other Funny Stories'. Already, I can see that the characters are certainly not without problems.

I am thinking of a story to write now myself and what will help me are the secrets you shared with us. Every future author has to be inspired by someone. You have inspired me with your amazing writing talents.

Kind regards,
Meghana Bharadwaj
IP6DB, Panaga School, Brunei

Dear Mr. Gleitzman,
Thank you for coming to our school and talking to us and giving excellent pieces of advice. Now everyone probably knows how to write a story without being stuck at the beginning. And thanks for signing everybody's books. I'm sure they will be very happy with an autograph of yours hung upon their wall inside a photo frame. Everyone is probably reading all your books now.

Thank you for helping us with writing stories. Now I know you have to have a problem or the story will be boring and no one will want to read it. I think you have inspired me to write more stories.

I very much enjoyed it when you talked about 'Boy Overboard'. Now I might even get the book myself. Without even reading it yet, I already feel sorry for Bibi and Jamal.

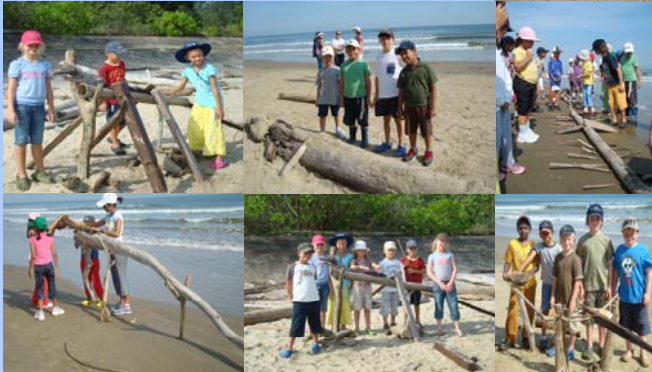
Thanks for giving us every tiny detail of your life. I never thought an author would give away that much information. Now I know a lot about your life and books. Thanks again for coming!

From Charlotte Bestwick
IP6DB, Panaga School, Brunei.

Dinosaur Discovery on Panaga Beach

Last Friday morning, Primary 4 children discovered a series of dinosaur remains on Panaga Beach. It appears that a recent storm at sea disturbed a previously hidden collection of dinosaur skeletons and washed them ashore. Mr Frits, Miss Sandy, Mr Paul M and Miss Clare (local Panaga Paleontologists) were astounded by such a wide range of previously unidentified species of dinosaur. The children were wowed by the sheer size of these magnificent creatures. The authorities have now been alerted to the discovery and we are expecting a visit next week from international experts.

By Miss Clare



A Warm Welcome to Miss Clare



Though already a familiar face around Panaga School through many days of supply teaching and countless hours of extra reading with children, we officially welcome Miss Clare White to P4.

Miss Clare takes over from Miss Jane, who left last term. Miss Clare has already settled in very well and is popular with all children and staff.

We hope she has a very enjoyable and rewarding term!

By Damian Brady

P2 IPC Entry Point:

Flowers and Insects

Primary 2 enjoyed exploring Anduki Park for different plants and bugs, for the Entry Point to their new IPC topic: *Flowers and Insects*.

By Miss Perminder



P3 IPC

Entry Point: Jobs

Primary 3 had great fun role-playing different jobs from around the world for the Entry Point to their new IPC topic: *Jobs*.

By Miss Imogen



Book Week - Parade

IP2P had fun dressing up as their favourite characters during Book Week.

By Miss Perminder



Finally in sport:

'Tiger' Taylor Holes It In One!

Yesterday, P7 teacher, Mr Robert Taylor, achieved what many Panaga Golf Club punters hope to achieve in a lifetime - a hole in one! Simply brushing off his achievement when questioned, Mr Robert said, "Oh, does everyone know about that already?" Well, they do now. Congratulations! **By Damian Brady**

