

DEVELOPING A MINDFUL HEART

QISS

QINGDAO NO.1 INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF SHANDONG PROVINCE

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Upcoming COLLEGE VISITS TO QISS

Drexel University
Visits us on Thursday,
October 21st



Ms. Cynthia Fernandes, working with Pre-K students

LITTLE MISS CYNTHIA & THE BIG IDEAS

By Cynthia Fernandes, Pre-Kindergarten Teacher

It's that time of the year again, when kids seem to grow more than an inch a day and all of a sudden there they are, larger than life!

Was it only a few weeks back that I saw you off on the last day of school, and now here you are, taller and smarter than ever before? Poor kids, they've heard this way too many times. But it's true, isn't it? Anyway, the sparkle of delight in their eyes is worth the chance of sounding repetitive. It's true, isn't it?

And now, we begin our journey together. I am fortunate to have some returning preschool kids each year who sort of remember who I am and the fact that they survived in my class. You know what I mean. They look at me rather woefully when they see me...

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DATES TO REMEMBER

- OCTOBER 1-8: National Day Holiday: No Classes
- OCTOBER 9: SAT test
- OCTOBER 13: PSAT Grades 10 - 11 Students
- OCTOBER 27: Students Half Day, Dismissed at 1:00



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Grade Five at Zhan Shan Temple

On Kindness & Respect:

Fifth Grade Excursion to Zhanshan Temple

By Brooke Bertholét, Fifth Grade Teacher

As far as active, or inactive, Buddhist monasteries in China go, the Zhanshan Temple is perhaps the youngest of them all. Zhanshan Temple was built as recently as 1945 and is currently undergoing a renovation to preserve the sacred individual shrines to Buddha. As part of the conclusion of the Fifth Grade Unit of Inquiry on Belief Systems, students visited Zhanshan on a recent lovely autumn day to glean some direct insight into Buddhism as both an approach to the world and as a religion.

Buddhism, in terms of the number of its followers, ranks the fourth largest religion in the world, just behind Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Not everyone in the Fifth Grade is a practicing Buddhist and the class went as investigators simply in search of understanding. The wonderful thing was that the Fifth Grade was

received at the temple in that spirit and we were all dutifully treated with great respect.

UPON ENTERING THE TEMPLE GROUNDS

We were greeted by a young monk who was to be our guide. We were first shown the Buddha of Mercy and told that the shrine was very sacred. Our guide offered us the chance to go through the ritual of prayer if we so desired. Those students, who found it appropriate for them to do so, lit incense with the help of Mr. Bertholét and saw how it is the rising smoke that is the conduit of prayer to the Buddha. Mr. Bertholét placed the incense inside of the large ritual burner for each student once each was finished.

WHAT BECAME QUICKLY EVIDENT, at the Heavenly King Hall (tianwang dian; 天王殿), was that the Fifth Grade students were being treated

with a great deal of kindness. The compassion, almost love, that radiated from the face of each monk, when approaching the children, was simply unmistakable. There was so much care, that our guide approached Mr. Bertholét many times to be assured that the students were all right and enjoying the experience. It was nice to see such concern coming from such a young man, someone who was simply, and naturally, practicing what he believes. The level of comfort that the students did indeed have at the temple proved that they knew they were in a place where their well-being truly mattered.

An integral part of Buddhist ritual is to leaving an offering of a sweet food at the altar of the Buddha. Followers bring apples, which are a staple, candies, and delicious fruits such as melons. It is believed that the Buddha eats these, and when the

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Open House & International Day

By The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)

The PAC would like to thank everyone for participating in the Open House/ International Day. Without your help, the International lunch would not have been such a success. We are working on ways to improve the event for next year and welcome any feedback you might have. If you have any comments or suggestions for improvement, please e-mail your ideas to any of the PAC members.

The next after school session will begin in late November, and we are looking for people who will voluntarily teach an organized activity. If you have any skills or talent that you are willing to share, please contact Mr. Alberto Gutierrez at amdgutierrez@yahoo.com by November 1st. We hope to provide a wider variety of activities for students during the next 9 week session. Let's get together and showcase our talent!

To ensure that we are maintaining the highest standard of quality and service during lunchtime, we are asking for your feedback. Please contact Marcela Lickova at Marcela.Lickova@gmail.com with any input you may have regarding school lunches. Your opinion is important to us.

We invite everyone to attend the next PAC meeting on Wednesday, October 20th at 1:00 pm in room 504. We look forward to seeing you there!

QISS: A DYNAMIC AND FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

By Alberto Gutierrez, Lower School Principal



Alberto Gutierrez in the Pre-K classroom

On behalf of all QISS staff members, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents and friends of QISS students who participated in our International Day/ Open House on Saturday, September 18th. Your presence and generosity with your ethnic cuisines added much warmth to this event. Families, students & staff came together in our first school-wide event of this academic year. Your kindness in helping serve our school community was greatly appreciated.

As I walked to each table in the cafeteria, I witnessed a lot of friendly discussions and the sharing of laughter among members at each table. It was a wonderful feel to the day to see so many interactions for the benefit of our students. I hope you too had the opportunity to meet new families.

I cannot thank you enough for all of your help to make our International Day a success. I look forward to seeing you at our next school-wide event.

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

By Jessy Yin, Chinese Teacher

September 22, 2010 is Mid-Autumn Festival, a Chinese traditional festival that falls on August 15 of the Chinese lunar calendar.

During the Mid-Autumn Festival, family reunion dinners happen all over China and we share special food called moon cakes. Members who cannot return home for the holidays connect by looking at the moon, sending messages, or making phone calls. I'd like to introduce some Mid-Autumn Festival legends to you.

ITS ORIGINS

The festival probably began as a harvest festival. It was later given a mythological flavour with legends of Chang-E, the beautiful lady in the moon. According to Chinese mythology, the earth once had 10 suns circling around it. One day, all 10 suns appeared together, scorching the earth with their heat. The earth was saved when a strong archer, Hou Yi, succeeded in shooting down 9 of the suns. Yi got the elixir of life, but his wife, Chang-E drank it and her body became light as air and flew to the moon. This started the legend of the lady in the moon to whom Chinese people would pray on the Mid-Autumn Festival night.

NEW SIGNIFICANCE

In the 14th century, the eating of moon cakes at the Mid-Autumn Festival was given a new significance. The story goes that when Zhu Yuan Zhang was plotting to overthrow the Yuan dynasty, started by the Mongolians, the rebels hid their messages in the Mid-Autumn moon cakes. The festival is hence also a commemoration of the overthrow of the Mongolians by the Han people.

AT QISS

Every year the Chinese teachers at QISS will give students related culture studies, and instruct students to do some activities, such as role play, poster making, speech making, etc. This year we choose to teach students how to make moon cakes. This was the first time they made moon cakes themselves. The students participated actively and were so excited to eat their own "fruit" moon cakes. I believe everyone's moon cake tasted delicious!



Students making moon cakes

Continued from page 1: **Little Miss Cynthia and the Big Ideas** By Cynthia Fernandez, Pre-K Teacher



trying to comfort the beginners. We sort of connect at that point and they give me this understanding look, "Poor Little Miss Cynthia." Oh, and lots of little hugs and adoring glances. It makes me want to go buy a princess dress or a superhero outfit.

Sometimes I just wish so hard that I could have a magic wand that works. The one I have right now doesn't even make the much talked about mysterious tail I am supposed to have appear when I need it to. I have to sort of stick a yarn in my trousers to make them believe me. Now they know that my tail doesn't even move in the direction I want it to. I vote that all preschool teachers be entitled to a magic wand each. Perhaps if I use the principles of *The Secret* and wish for it with enough desire, it will appear. But then, so could my tail. Now, I have to reflect on that one.

Speaking of which, I find myself reflecting in my classroom a lot. Let me enlighten you. The most recent reflection occurred when some of my students gave me the following responses to some questions based on our unit of inquiry "Who We

...In each of these children there is a mine full of gems waiting to be uncovered, discovered, admired and cherished.

Are." What is vitality? Noah said, "Vitality is go potty." And I thought, yeah, that is quite right; imagine doing something as mundane as that with vitality! Way to go,

Noah! What is courage, Ida? "That you are happy, that you play carefully and take care of everybody." I couldn't help but wonder about the amount of courage it takes to be happy because being happy means that you are

at peace with yourself and others, and to me that requires a certain amount of truthfulness and honesty with yourself and in relationships, which in turn requires courage. I could probably wrap my tail around people to show I care, if only I had the courage to ask the universe for one. But that's another story. Bill, what is courage? "Good job." Now compare this to the abridged definition of courage as interpreted at QISS: "strengthening confidence." Yeah, good job that is! And



then, there are those moments that make it all worth it. Who are we, Rylan? "I am Tom and Jerry. Spiderman me, my mom spider girl." See what I mean when I say I want to have a superhero outfit? Who are we, Noah? "We are people. We call us people." Duh. Little Miss Cynthia, you should know that!

Observing students at work opens up a whole new dimension of reflections and triggers thought processes that enable me to gain a deeper understanding of my role as a teacher and their partner in success in life. I suddenly begin to feel small, to feel little in comparison to the largeness of life-forms I see unfolding. I truly believe that in each of these children there is a mine full of gems waiting to be uncovered, discovered, admired and cherished. I am just a fellow digger, perhaps someone with a little bit of experience at polishing these gems so that they shine with their true colors and brilliance. They have such innate wisdom, capacities and virtues; the discoveries of which never fail to astound me each day I spend with them.

Over time, I have come to accept that humility and the ability to continue learning can take us a long way, because in the end it's not just one aspect of the entire spectrum of the human race that counts, but being human. Being a teacher isn't my profession alone, it isn't something I do just for a living, but it defines who I am and what I stand for. It's the little hands and little feet with their large hearts that help me wrap my tail around these big ideas.

Continued from page 2: On Kindness and Respect By Brooke Bertholét, Fifth Grade Teacher

monks collect the offerings they eat them with the belief that by doing so good things will be granted to them. Ingesting the food of the Buddha becomes a spiritual act, sustaining both mind and body. Once a person starts to eat the food, the treat must be completed in full and never thrown away. If not finished, the food must be given to another person to complete. In our Unit of Inquiry, we learned the importance of sacred foods in all religions and many other belief systems.

ON OUR WAY TO THE HALL OF THE RECUMBENT BUDDHA (WO FO DIAN; 卧佛殿)

The Fifth Grade was approached by a monk who seemed to come from nowhere. He had a large bag filled with moon cakes. The Mid-Autumn Festival having been the same week as our visit, the monks had collected a great many moon cakes from the many altars. Once again, in a clear gesture of kindness, the monk explained the importance of food left on the Buddha altars and offered a moon cake to everyone. The clear message was that he wanted all to be well and to thrive. The cakes were much appreciated, yet some of them can be rather large and hard for a fifth grader to eat in entirety. We shared our cakes around and placed any remains in our backpacks to take home.

HALL OF SAKYAMUNI

At the Hall of Sakyamuni (大雄宝殿), the Buddha often referred to as Siddhartha, the Fifth Grade found the monks in busy preparation for a meeting of prayer and chant. This

is the central hall of the temple, honoring Sakyamuni as the founder of Buddhism. Though many fifth grade students who are themselves practicing Buddhists and find the symbol natural, what a Westerner immediately perceives is the large swastika on the chest of the Buddha. The symbol has been badly perverted in Western twentieth century history with the rise of Nazism in Europe. The symbol is at least three thousand years old in its usage in the East and has a Sanskrit origin. Not in the least being associated with hate and anti-Semitism, in Buddhism the swastika represents "auspiciousness," the footprints of the Buddha, and the infinite goodness of the Buddha's heart. The way the monk serving as



unfortunate transformation of the symbol, and learned how such things can happen. Mr. Bertholét, putting aside his Western prejudices, came to



our guide explained it was that it was the symbol of "the good" and the vastness of being which guides our life. The class spoke about the

see things in a new way that actually put his perspective on Western history in a new light.

Contemporary Western philosophers, such as Jacques Derrida from France and Fernando Savater from Spain, have argued for the moral imperative that each one of us has to extended hospitality to the other. Buddhism, however, with its Four Great Immeasurables, has argued that, and so much more, for thousands of years: equanimity, compassion, loving kindness, and sympathetic joy. The kindness and compassion that the fifth graders were shown is enough for any us to ask ourselves whether or not we do well by the same in our own personal belief systems. Though

we all may not be Buddhists, we learn to reflect further about what we are about with regard to belief through firsthand, and a perhaps novel, experience. That is a lot to leave with a ten or eleven year old.

Ms. Jade, and the Fifth Grade Classroom Parents, deepened the kindness and joy through their help with explanations, translations, a marvelous lunch, and their camaraderie. As a class, the conclusion we have reached after this unit is that even though all religions are belief systems, not all belief

systems are religions. What we have taken away from our visit to Zhanshan Temple, however, is that no matter whom you are, or what your beliefs, you are deserving of our respect and kindness. That is a tall order, yet the fifth grade students are extraordinary. If there is anyone who can avoid being blindsided by misconceptions and prefabricated misunderstandings, it is our seventeen scholars who know how valuable good judgment can be. That is the nicest reward of inquiry and there are many other areas to which it can extend. ❖

INTERNATIONAL DAY - CHALKWALK

Groups Deserving Special Recognition



- » First Grade- Liam Krenzian, Johnny Wang
- » Second Grade-Celia Bunte, Shannon Ji, Larissa Schneiter
- » Third Grade-Barbie Son, Anna Li, Larissa Ramage Paz
- » Fourth Grade-Justine King, Mirai Masaki, Eva He, Nao Shiotani
- » Fifth Grade-Juliana Wang, Amy Oh, Sara Wang, Alicia Lee
- » Fifth Grade-Juno Kim, Coby Park, Brady Kim, Richard Chen
- » Sixth Grade-Jakub Licko, Julia Lee, Winnie Guo, Egi Brako
- » Seventh Grade-Cindy Park, Amy Choi, Tracy Chang, Daniella Noh
- » Seventh Grade-Lora Lee, Sally Hwang, Alice Lee, Tae Yoon Kim
- » Eighth Grade-Queenie Jeong, Lynne Kim, Angela Kang, Lily Cho
- » Eighth Grade-Sanaa Khan, Helen Yan, Sisse Folkersen
- » 9-12th Grade-Bailee Kim, Sarah Kim, Ted Kim
- » 9-12th Grade- Carel Liu, Saskia Bunte, Line Folkersen, Sara Lamb
- » 9-12th grade- Ema Halikova, Frida Nordstrom
- » 9-12th Grade- Mary Choi, Hyun Park, Hee Jun Hwang, Sophia Ha, Kevin Carmichael, Marc Fulterer, Jack Choi