



ECHOES

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A world-class school!

Did you know Smithville Christian High School is a world-class school?

At first that might sound outrageous, but it's true.



Smithville Christian High School teachers Robert Gerrits, John van den Boogaard and Karen Greenham listen as a teacher from High Tech High explains how three of his students will use the wooden cut-out to make a museum-quality exhibit of their science projects.

Recently a team of six people from our school (two administrators and four educators) joined 25 other

This program in High Tech High's graduate school of education was designed to showcase the innovative practices and philosophies that are making High Tech High one of the most internationally renowned schools in the world. Participants in the winter residency program attended workshops and seminars, were led on guided tours, and were free to visit classrooms and talk to students and teachers.

To our surprise, we found that High Tech High is capitalizing on many of the things we already do well: a small school environment, caring teachers, hands-on learning, and lots of tools like digital cameras, woodworking tools, art supplies, musical instruments, computers or tablets at students' disposal.

Continued on page 2 ...

High Tech High was established in response to specific educational problems — in San Diego in particular and in California public schools in general — but the solutions it chose aren't that far removed from what Smithville Christian High School's teachers have been doing for some time.

In addition, High Tech High is using innovative practices such as team-teaching and block learning and it makes the most of its un-school-like architecture. It is located in a series of abandoned warehouses and it uses to its advantage the common learning spaces, modular furniture, open classrooms, and creative ways to display student work. It also puts a heavy emphasis on integrating

students with the adult world, giving students choice and voice, and giving students many opportunities to present their work to others. Students are engaged in their learning and proud of their work and of their school.

The result is students who are poised and confident, who present themselves well, who work well with others and who can solve problems with ingenuity and creativity. They get accepted to universities and do well in their lives beyond high school, because they have been well-prepared to function in the adult world. They can identify problems, apply critical analysis, come up with creative solutions, work well in team settings and use technology to get their work done.



Teacher John van den Boogaard turns the handle of a student project demonstrating friction at High Tech High, while Robert Gerrits looks on.

Members of the Smithville Christian High School team who travelled to San Diego were both inspired and encouraged by what they saw.

John van den Boogaard **(Math and Shop teacher)**

I was inspired to tune my projects to make them better and to do more of them when I can.

I was encouraged to see a school with such a caring and committed group of teachers trying to do the best they can, and by realizing it's not that different from our school; we also have that.



From left, Karen Greenham, Ted Harris, Will Lammers, John van den Boogaard and Robert Gerrits in the commons area of High Tech High Media Arts school.

Will Lammers
(Vice-principal and science teacher)

I was inspired by the amount of appreciation that students at High Tech High showed for what they experience at their school. Students I encounter at Smithville Christian also inspire me with their frequent words of appreciation for what their school represents to them.

I was encouraged that I saw much of the same kind of learning taking place at High Tech High that is already in evidence at Smithville Christian.

Robert Gerryts
(Technology teacher and tech support)

I was inspired by the open communication between students and teachers, and between teachers and teachers. Education wasn't something teachers were imposing on students, but rather everyone was doing education together.

I was encouraged by the fact that in some ways our staff and students model this same behaviour to varying degrees.

Karen Greenham
(Math teacher)

I was inspired by listening to a knowledgeable panel of students who discussed their education clearly, confidently, and graciously.

I was encouraged by observing the wide variety of students and the quality of their projects displayed on walls and ceilings, and recognizing that Smithville Christian High School students were producing projects of similar quality.

Marlene Bergsma
(Director of Communications)

I was inspired to help Smithville Christian students to give voice to their gratitude and appreciation for the great school they have.



While they were at High Tech High, teachers from Smithville Christian High School got a taste of their own medicine: they had to do a presentation of learning themselves! Here they present their project and artifact to the other teachers in the winter residency program.

I was encouraged by the ways in which Smithville Christian High School's students and teachers are already on the right track.

Ted Harris
(Administrator)

I was inspired by an educational program that had both students and teachers excited about learning. Our kids are already excited about their schooling at Smithville Christian High School, but there is so much more we can do to make learning authentic, relevant, and inspiring.

I was encouraged that many things we do and the many aspects of the school culture we strive for and enjoy are also being vigorously pursued by schools that are known as "schools of excellence" or "world-class schools". We already have much to celebrate and share with our community.

Students take literature high tech

BY JIM VANDERLINDE, ENGLISH TEACHER

So where do you find the technology to create an online newspaper with your class? These days the answer is simple: ask your students to check their front pockets. In a few moments, you will have a pile of handheld devices — most with touchscreens and already connected to your local Wi-Fi network. Students use these to text; we educators are starting to claim them as educational devices.

In our class — grade 11 English — we used our “educational devices” to help us create an online newspaper. Our first step was to collectively upgrade our in-class policy regarding the use of handheld devices. Aside from some

obvious rules regarding inappropriate content, students agreed that there should be no playing games, no texting anyone outside of class, and absolutely no manipulation of your smartphone when someone is talking to you. Students respected the policy they had created; a few gentle reminders were enough to maintain a high level of smartphone etiquette.

We then became familiar with Google Docs, a free suite of online programs that includes a word processor, spreadsheet and presentation software. The main advantage of Google Docs is that students create, store and share documents instantly online. This means

that multiple students can work on a document at the same time from any location, they can comment on or edit each other's work in real time and they are able to see who has made any changes to a document as well as the time at which those changes were made. Also, Google Docs automatically saves every change made to a document, all of which are accessible with a click of the revision history toolbar. Nothing can be “accidentally” deleted or eaten by the family pet.

Essentially Google Docs became our virtual newsroom. Students wrote their articles using their smartphones and tablets (a few traditionalists used



Mr. Jim Vanderlinde and the students of his Grade 11 English class -- the writers, photographers, editors and publishers of the school's online student newspaper. From left: Aaron Teeuwssen, Katie Horvath, Jonathan Attema, Ashley Buist, Joe Zantingh, Chantal Masselink, Mitchell Harris, Morgan Schilstra, Devin Lunshof, Samantha Bowman, Jaco van Rensburg, Kristen Antonides, Matthew Muysson, Caitlyn Duck, Nick Vermeer, Shae Vlaar-Philbrick, Owen Van Grieken, Cain Wu and Marcus Buist.

laptops) and our editors and proofreaders were able to instantly view, comment on and edit their work. Our photographers uploaded their photos to Google Docs; our Editor-In-Chief shared a spreadsheet on which students recorded their names and article titles and checked off due dates; and writers used the chat feature to collaborate on ideas. Since every student could view and, in a variety of ways, participate in the progress of his or her fellow classmates, there was a high degree of accountability. Students took ownership of completing their student newspaper.

A further component to our online newspaper project was creating a Facebook page. This was initiated by our student Editor-in-Chief and used solely by the students to post due date reminders and new ideas for the paper, which fellow students would comment on.

With tasks completed and our layout artists finally satisfied, one of our more tech-savvy students uploaded our finished student newspaper to Youblisher, a free PDF publishing site that turns your document into an online magazine complete with cool page turning effects.

Make sure to check out **"The Spark"**— Smithville Christian's first online newspaper created exclusively by students eager to use their latest educational devices. You can click on the link on the bulletin board of the school website at www.smithvillechristian.ca.



HERE'S WHAT STUDENTS HAD TO SAY ABOUT WORKING IN THE CLOUD:

"Easy to share with fellow classmates from different locations." – Chantal Masselink

"It streamlined the process of working with others; it was quite intuitive." – Jaco van Rensburg

"It's a simple program (if you're young); it's user friendly." – Kristen Antonides

"Any device can be used at any time from any place. It also maintains a consistent format." – Matthew Muysson

"Even if the teacher does not fully comprehend the program, the students can self-teach because of the program's accessibility." – Morgan Schilstra

"It keeps the students intrigued because it appeals to the younger generation." – Mitchell Harris

"It prevented technological mishaps from taking place because it automatically saves your work." – Samantha Bowman

Theatre class goes on the road

BY GORDON PARK, SPIRITUAL LIFE DIRECTOR AND ENGLISH TEACHER

"And, from now on, you know what I'm planning to do?

From now on, I'm going to protect them with you!"

So says the Big Kangaroo from Dr. Suess' classic children's story, Horton Hears a Who. It's a great story that teaches some pretty powerful messages. First, never judge a person by their appearances: just because they are different, or smaller than you, doesn't mean they are not valuable. Second, don't think all your power and importance and significance come from your own appearance or accomplishments. And thirdly, the reason we are all here is to respect one another, value one another and take care of one another.

This past November, my Grade 11 theatre class went on the road, going to Dunnville, John Knox, Covenant and Beacon Christian Schools, presenting a one-hour chapel at each location.

The idea for the travelling theatre class started early in the semester,

when I met as spiritual life director with administrator Ted Harris to discuss the prospect of having a team of students go to grade schools to lead in a chapel type of assembly. I thought the grade 11

students would be ideal for such an adventure. These students are creative, they are not afraid to work on and present a play, and they are pretty much willing to go along with whatever good ideas I



Caleb Abraham, Jodi Scholman, Sara Veenhof, Hayden Van Grieken, Nick VanRyn, Cara Needham, Aron Willms

You can watch most of the Grade 11 theatre class production
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al6PCDucOWg&>

throw at them. So, we took the story Horton Hears a Who, and the students turned it into a wonderful theatre presentation.

Their goal was to build a story aimed at an audience of children in Kindergarten to Grade 4, and then let the rest of the school simply enjoy the experience. It's similar to a children's lesson in many Sunday morning church services: we know it's for the children, but we all really enjoy the story, remember it days later, and usually get something very important from it.

It also turned out that this particular class had a large group of very talented musicians, so the students were also able to lead each of the schools in a time of praise and worship, with calisthenic action and exercise thrown in. After the singing came their original 'Story Theatre' rendition of Horton Hears a Who. After the play, I shared a few words about the lessons of the story, showing how the story of 'The Anointing of David' from 1 Samuel 16, truly reveals the heart of Dr. Suess' encouraging message.

The chapel was well-received at every school. The elementary school students, from Kindergarten to Grade 8, all enjoyed and joined in the singing. The play brought out a lot of laughter, and we know the talk hit home with many who were there, including those in our class.

It was an excellent project experience for the high school students. From musical rehearsals, to learning lines, to painting set pieces, to getting up early, to loading and unloading buses, to performing and finally reminiscing, it was an assignment they will not soon forget.



Front: Ben Dieleman, Chantal Masselink, Alex Voortman, Jonathan Attema.

Squatting: Sam Sonneveld, Nick VanRyn

Back: Caleb Abraham, Sara Veenhof, Hayden Van Grieken, Cara Needham, Matthew Muysson

of **Horton Hears a Who** on the school's YouTube channel at [feature=share&list=UUer_ERjfJOc4KuAwepwFRSw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=share&list=UUer_ERjfJOc4KuAwepwFRSw)

Our students are fantastic and they do great work!

Teachers at Smithville Christian High School know they have fantastic students, but don't take their word for it. Here's what some visitors to our school have had to say.

Rachelle Larocque, planner with the Township of West Lincoln, and Kathy Smith, Conservation Planner of Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, worked with the students of Gina VandenDool's Grade 9 geography class on an ambitious project to design a new creekside trail for the township. Here's her feedback on our students and their work:

Hi Gina,

I was so thrilled and amazed at what the students in your fall class produced! They truly were amazing! All of the projects were clearly something that they had put a lot of time and effort into thinking about what route they would like to take and making sure that they stayed out of the floodplain. I absolutely loved that they had all constructed the trail within budget, and maintained enough funds to provide a playground at the end, or benches along the trail. They far exceeded my expectations – and I have pretty high expectations!

I would love to come in and speak with the students about the next step – construction.

I would also love any pictures that you have, as well as the CAD drawings of their proposed trails.

Thank you so much for taking on these projects with your students. I'm incredibly grateful for the work that you and your students have done and the enormous contribution to the community that is being made through your work. I've enjoyed every minute that I've worked with you and your students and I hope to continue on more exciting projects!

*Rachelle Larocque, RPP, MCIP
Planner II*

Good Morning Gina,

Thank you for inviting me to the student presentations the morning of Jan. 15th. It was a pleasure to view the student work and hear their ideas for this trail.

I was very impressed with the work that the students produced in a very short period of time. Many of the concepts they tackled including digital mapping, learning map scale and legends and design theory, their wish lists, project budgeting, presentation, and trail planning were subjects years ago taught at the first year university level in landscape

architecture. Their enthusiasm and ideas for the trail will no doubt help the Town with the implementation of this trail for the community.

Please pass along my congratulations to the students for their achievements on this project. I wish you and your school much success with this project and working with the Town and Community in the future.

Well done!

Regards, Kathy

*Kathy Smith, OALA, CSLA
Conservation Planner
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority*



Rachelle Larocque, left, and Kathy Smith, speak with students of the Grade 9 Geography class.

Why project-based learning is good for students

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

This issue of Echoes gives a pretty clear sense that education is moving in a different direction – one which engages students in meaningful ways. Our intent as teachers is that our learning be authentic, relevant and engaging; and as often as possible we want it to spill beyond our school walls.

Any member of the English, Drama and Geography classes featured in this issue would tell you that this was true of the projects they were a part of. It is my hope, however, that any student in our school could tell you about meaningful projects being worked on in his or her classes at any time.

That was the idea behind our recent Presentations of Learning Evening. I hope you had a chance to visit our school on the evening of January 15, 2013. The evening pulled people of all

ages into conversation about the learning of our students. That's the way it needs to be; it's better for our students, and it's better for our community.

Now that you have been pulled into the conversation about project-based learning, here are a few thoughts about why we are spending so much time talking about this at Smithville Christian High School:

Project-based learning taps into the God given passions of our learners. Having more control of their learning enables them to blend these passions with course content.

Project-based learning has a lot to do with helping students work out the answer to the question "How now shall we live?" (as people of God in a beautiful but fallen world which shows many signs of brokenness but also yearns for glimpses of Christ's redemption).

Projects can be whole class (as seen in this issue), but they are often designed for small groups or individuals.

Projects need to be shared, discussed, critiqued and celebrated. We need our support community to be part of the learning process. For this reason, supporters of our school have a responsibility to show up when we are sharing projects and are presenting the learning of our students.

You will have to get used to hearing us tell you that you have a responsibility to be connected with the learning of our students. Stay tuned for your next opportunity, but keep in mind that our school is open to visits from anyone at any time.



Some of the hundreds of people who attended our January Presentations of Learning event. Be sure to watch for information about our next one.



Winter





Fun

Why we're glad to be an international school

BY MARLENE BERGSMA
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COORDINATOR

Over the past few years Smithville Christian High School has been blessed by the presence of a number of international students from around the globe. Many of these students are from China, a country of 1.3 billion people with a growing economy and a growing hunger for English-language education.

This international recruitment, especially from China, is a blessing for our school.

In a time of declining enrolment, when public schools in Niagara are closing, international recruitment means we can enroll more students, which improves the educational experience for everyone.

We are able to introduce people to Christ and to Christianity.

We are able to meet people from around the world.

As classmates, teachers and host families, we are able to share the gift of hospitality.

And we are not the only ones who see a global economy — in particular, strong connections with China — as an important part of our future. Business and government leaders across North America are paying attention to what happens in this massive and burgeoning economy.

Right now, both The Globe and Mail newspaper and Macleans magazine — national publications — are publishing regular news accounts about the politics, economy and culture of China. Macleans calls China “one of the world’s most important economies” and includes something about China in every issue. The Globe and Mail has invested heavily in its multi-part series, The China Diaries, by sending an award-winning correspondent and photographer on a three-week trek across the country, reporting on



Students in the Grade 12 Math class with Mrs. Greenham.

China’s new leader, Xi Jinping, and the challenges he faces. Both Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty recently made trade visits to China, and US President Barack Obama met the outgoing Chinese leader Wen Jiabao during an Asian summit in Cambodia late last year.

At Smithville Christian High School we are blessed by being able to welcome Chinese students right into our midst — into our homes, our classrooms and our sports teams. Of course there are language,

cultural and lifestyle divides between Chinese teenagers and Canadian teenagers, but as guidance counsellor, English teacher and host mother Linda Booy-Korvemaker says: “This is an incredible opportunity to see the diversity of God’s creation.”

Booy-Korvemaker said enrolling international students at our school and hosting them in our homes allows us to “have a variety of cultures in our midst and to see how we are all image-bearers of the Creator.



International students Frank Gu and Grace Zhang present their Grade 12 poetry project during a recent chapel. To view their interpretation of the poem "Ask Me No More" by Alfred Lord Tennyson, visit the school's YouTube channel, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMi7JQn46Hc&feature=share&list=UUer_ERjfJOc4KuAwepwFRSw

"We often go abroad to visit other cultures," she said, "but opening our doors to international students allows us collectively to minister to their needs in our schools, in our homes and in our churches."

This is a privilege and a two-way blessing, Booy-Korvemaker said. Because it is so difficult to get into a university in China, international students come to Canada and to Smithville Christian primarily to get a diploma that allows them to continue their post-secondary studies in North America, she said.

"What we all end up getting beyond the diploma is immeasurable for both the students and the community in which they live and study," she said.

Smithville Christian High School's policy caps international student enrolment to 10% of our total population, which means our current limit would be about 20 students.

If you are fortunate enough to be able to host an international student, to have one in your class or to be able to invite one to your home, you are being blessed with the gift of diversity. Instead of encountering only people who think like you, dress like you and eat the same foods you do, you are being given a chance to expand your horizons and see the richness of God's love for everyone.

Let's celebrate this gift together.

China fast fact

Feb. 10 is the Chinese New Year, which marks the end of the Year of the Dragon and the beginning of the Year of the Water Snake. To wish someone Happy New Year in Mandarin, say "Gong Xi Fa Cai!" pronounced Gong Hey Fat Choy.

How our international student program is improving

Effective the start of second semester, we are expanding our international student program to provide more supports to international students, host families and teachers.

Our ESL Coordinator, Mrs. Nicole Brouwer, is expanding her position to 67%, up from 33%. She is creating a dedicated ESL classroom and resource centre on the second floor, where she will be assessing students, teaching ESL, and teaching the Ontario Literacy Course.

"Students will be able to receive extended testing time, help with class assignments and other support," said Brouwer. "Teachers will be able to access resources as well as host families.

"It's my hope that the extension of the ESL program will be one that enriches our school community, and helps create a safe place for our international students to succeed during their time with us."

We have engaged the services of an experienced international homestay consultant, who will serve as the liaison between international students and host families.

We are also working with our agent in China to encourage students to enroll earlier. Up until now, the bulk of our applicants have sought to come to Canada for one year of high school before graduating and applying to university. We are finding that trying to adjust to a new culture, to a new school system and to a new language, while taking six university level courses and applying to universities is a lot to ask of a student, even a good one. This approach does not serve our international students well, and so starting in September 2013, we are giving preference to international students applying for Grades 10 and 11.

Interested in hosting an international student in your home?

Contact Marlene Bergsma at mbergsma@smithvillechristian.ca

Follow our Blog!

If you are not a regular visitor to our school blog, we have the answer for you. Sign up to receive automatic updates from the blog's feedburner. Here's what to do, in four easy steps:



- 1) Visit our school website at www.smithvillechristian.ca.
- 2) Click on the orange blogger icon on the bottom left of the school's homepage.
- 3) Fill in your email address in the dialogue box on the right hand side of the blog and click submit.
- 4) While you're there, browse the blog to read about the inspiring and exciting happenings at our school.

That's all there is to it. Whether you are a parent, a grandparent, a skeptic or a friend, you should know what's happening in Christian education these days, and the Smithville Christian High School blog is a great way to keep your finger on the pulse of the school.

Want more? Like us on Facebook for tons of pictures and daily happenings, or follow us on Twitter for sports updates. Better yet, come to chapel -- usually on Wednesday mornings. You will be blessed and your presence will be an encouragement to us.



New Year Greetings from the Board

BY CYNTHIA BUIST, BOARD SECRETARY

At the beginning of a new year filled with many hopes and plans let us take a few moments to reflect on God's goodness to us this past year. The board has had the privilege to meet monthly, to open with God's word and to enjoy discovering together what insight God was ready to share with us. We spent time in prayer and asked God for His blessing over the staff, students, our families and our plans.

The board had many opportunities to hear and see the exciting events that happened here at Smithville Christian High School. Spiritual emphasis week is ranked as one of the most influential and memorable events. Many students had a life-changing experience where God became "REAL" to them.

Many of the successes here at Smithville Christian are due to our loving and capable staff. It has been a blessing to hear of their eagerness to continue to learn as well. The weekly R&D sessions have been implemented, leading to exciting new learning opportunities. The blessing of harmony among board and staff was celebrated with a Christmas social. Good fellowship and an abundance of food were enjoyed by all. The board appreciates all that the Administrator and staff do and that they conduct themselves in such a Christ-like manner.

The year 2013 is now here: time to dream, make plans and envision how Smithville Christian High School will continue to grow. We are excited as board to work together as a team. We thank departing board members Pauline Smit and John Klompmaker for their

leadership skills over the past four years and wish them God's blessing in the future. We welcome Mike Crinson, Bernice Slappendel and Garrett Vanderwal and look forward to working with them.

It's important to set goals and strive towards meeting them. The board will continue to review all our policies, to familiarize ourselves with them and make sure they are up to date and applicable. We will continue to work closely with the Strategic Plan, appreciating accomplishments already made and looking forward to meeting new goals. We look forward to sharing the results and recommendations of the PAFSS report (Progressive Assessment Framework for Secondary Schools) and what it has to offer our school.

It's a privilege to be able to work on behalf of the Smithville Christian membership. We covet your prayers and support as we carry out the work God has set before us.

Teachers at one of the weekly research and development sessions.





FOUNDATION

for Niagara & Hamilton area Christian Schools

SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION*

Place: Smithville Christian High Fall Membership meeting – Monday, November 19, 2012

Plan: Accepting a Foundation fall disbursement cheque in excess of \$11,000 is School Board Chair, Al Elmers (left). Additional disbursements are also made at other strategic times during the school year.

Purpose: To publicly recognize our vision unfolding and to thank our heavenly Father who ultimately made this gift and all manners of current and future support possible.

Post-Script: In practical terms, the financial support generated for our school(s) that is derived from our Foundation is primarily due to prospect donors, whether more recently or many years ago, having followed through on their good intentions in planning a legacy or estate gift (Planned Giving). In that we all can benefit from a charitable giving plan, will it be your resolution in 2013 to also follow-through on your good intentions?



Board chair Al Elmers receives a cheque for more than \$11,000 from Henry Koornneef at the fall membership meeting.

To enhance your plan such that the Receiver General does not become your favorite charity/beneficiary, please forward your inquiries to our Executive Director, Henry J. Koornneef CFP, CPCA at (905) 957-8172, TF (877) 340-9555 or via email: office@schoolfoundation.ca

Please also visit our Foundation online at www.schoolfoundation.ca and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FNHCS

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