

**Tawny Richard** continues to live in our hearts and minds as an important member of our class.

**Amy Shore** (now Platt) is living and working in Toronto. She is married to Aaron Platt and they have a nine-month-old son, Avery Bernard. She is working on a PhD at ICS and teaches teachers at OISE and Ryerson. She is also a classroom teacher and has taught Grade 1 through Grade 8. Amy loves to scrapbook and would love to put something together to celebrate our time at ICS. Send old pictures!!

**Alexander Slater** currently lives in New York City with his girlfriend, Naomi, where he is clerking for a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Since graduating university, he has lived in Oxford, UK, New York City, Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass., with shorter stints in London, UK, Ottawa, Arusha, Tanzania, and Toronto. He returns to Toronto often to spend time with family and friends and is looking forward to becoming an uncle for the first time in May.

**Marnie Sohn** is involved in a variety of creative projects and can regularly be found designing for local theatre. She lives with her husband, Alex, in an old house in downtown Toronto, where they plot and execute their various mad schemes.

**Amanda Tatham** went to South Korea to teach English after completing her studies at McGill. She worked in PR in Australia for a couple of years, then returned to Toronto to work in advertising. Now she and her husband, Bill, are in Qatar, and their next stop is undecided. No kids tagging along; hands are full with Bill and the cats (of course, there are cats).

**Kimberly Way** worked in publishing and editing before spending four years writing, performing and recording original children's music. She recently graduated from ICS (for the second time!), and now holds an MA in Child Study and Education and is currently teaching a Grade 5/6 Gifted program in Toronto.

## WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

WE WELCOME UPDATES, INQUIRIES & COMMENTS. TO CONTACT US,  
OR GET ON OUR MAILING LIST,  
EMAIL THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AT: [ICSALUMNI@OISE.UTORONTO.CA](mailto:ICSALUMNI@OISE.UTORONTO.CA)  
VISIT US AT: [WWW.OISE.UTORONTO.CA/ICS](http://WWW.OISE.UTORONTO.CA/ICS)

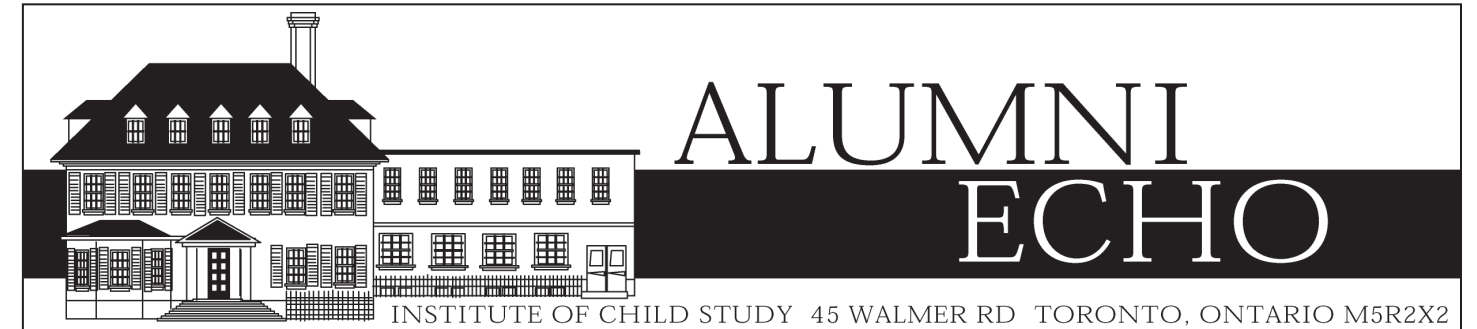
ICS parent and renowned artist/photographer Edward Burtynsky, along with an anonymous donor and the Norman & Marian Robertson Charitable Foundation, have made it possible for the Lab School to fully fund the two-year ICS Environmental Education Initiative. ICS has recently hired a full-time environmental teacher to begin creating a new resource, for disseminating a workable model of the Lab School's inquiry-based approach that deepens environmental understanding and appreciation.

The Ontario government has a new policy document, "Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow," for Ontario schools, so this initiative is timely for new and practicing teachers across Ontario and elsewhere. An exceptional graduate of the ICS MA program, and special education teacher Lorraine Chiarotto, will provide leadership for this excellent initiative, bringing ICS expertise to many more classrooms. The Institute is exploring partnership opportunities with the Ontario Ministry of Education.



*Envisioning the new Spadina Entrance and Wing at a renewed and expanded Institute of Child Study To date, \$2.8 million has been raised towards a new gymnasium/auditorium, improved classroom space, and more. For information on the ICS Building Campaign please contact Robin Farb, at 416-934-4515; rfarb@oise.utoronto.ca*

**The Institute of Child Study and the Lab School are the subject of a terrific feature that appears in the spring issue of U of T Magazine --"HEAD OF THE CLASS"-- [www.magazine.utoronto.ca](http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca).**



SPRING 2009

ICS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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## TeaChing

By Peter Steen

Over Baffin Island and the North Pole, across Siberia and the Gobi Desert, SK teacher Carol Stephenson travelled to China in March--the first ICS teacher invited to enhance and deepen the Institute's new relationships within the ancient Middle Kingdom.

During the three-week trip, Carol taught and learned at two of the country's most prestigious centres for early childhood development, where she found "children treated with extraordinary kindness and warmth, and teachers interested in creating an environment where children felt secure in themselves and their learning."

After a 15-hour Toronto-to-Shanghai flight, Carol--with one husband (me) and daughters Emma (ICS '06) and Charlotte (ICS '09) in tow--was greeted by Vivian Hu Ying, principal at one of the five branch schools that comprise the Affiliated Kindergartens (established in 1957 and part of Zhejiang University, one of China's oldest and most revered). Accompanying Hu were the invaluable driver, Xiao Yu, and translator Jade Zhao.

In no time, we were all travelling two hours down the highway to Hangzhou. Twice the size of Toronto and considered a small city, Hangzhou is the home of Zhejiang and the AK. For ten days, we lived in residence apartments on campus and, as the only *lao wai* (foreigners) around, were met with genuine curiosity and friendliness wherever we went. Marco Polo claims to have visited, but Hangzhou sees far



*ICS teacher-researcher Carol Stephenson is in the Senior Kindergarten at the First Affiliated Kindergarten, University of Zhejiang, in Hangzhou*

fewer outsiders than big-sister Shanghai (though it's been a Chinese tourist destination for 1,000 years, due to the beautiful and mythological West Lake and bountiful tea fields).

Carol was received with open arms by Wang Fang, headmaster of the AK and considered an outstanding educator by her peers, to present and share insights with teachers and principals at the International, First Affiliated and Rainbow City branches. (Current ICS students may remember AK teachers Linda and Susanna, who visited this past February.) It proved to be an educational and personal bond-making experience, and set the groundwork for a promising and significant relationship of respect and understanding.

As well as opening up their schools and classrooms, Wang Fang and her colleagues welcomed us into their homes and homeland. There were meals in schools and restaurants, in Vivian's apartment and in the countryside (celebrating International Women's Day at a tea plantation and adjacent bamboo forest). Our entire family was able to explore the region from Shanghai to Shaoxing--thanks to others handling the driving and the Mandarin.

After Hangzhou, we spent four nights in Beijing, taking in as much as possible--the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, Tiananmen Square, the Cow Street Mosque, the Temple of Heaven, Jade Island, Wangfujin Street and the Fayuan Temple--yet we still missed most of what the giant, sprawling, surprisingly musical city had to offer.

From there, we flew to Hong Kong for six nights, which involved a visit to the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) and, specifically, the HSBC Early Childhood Learning Centre. We took the subway to the New Territories and a taxi to the Learning Centre--a tropical location of hills and valleys near Tai Po, a spot where people have lived for more than 1,000 years--and were greeted by the principal, Edith Leung Yuk Lan.

We toured the bright and engaging facility inside and out, where butterflies the size of small birds passed by. Carol then gave a presentation to Leung's teachers and other educators at the HKIED (whose component colleges have produced more than 80 percent of Hong Kong's kindergarten and primary-school teachers). That was followed by a stimulating

dinner with Margaret Wong Ngai Chun (HKIED professor and supervisor of the Learning Centre), Doris Cheng Pui Wah (HKIED professor) and Leung. After a few more days exploring Hong Kong, Kowloon and the outlying islands, we returned to Toronto and our own beds.

While the Chinese people may exist in a "one country, two systems" dichotomy between Hong Kong and the mainland, there are teachers and principals on both sides of the divide who are as committed to their young ones as ICS is. Our students, parents



Peter, Emma, Carol and Charlotte in a tea field outside Hangzhou

and alumni are familiar with the annual sojourns by Japanese and Dutch educational delegations (not to mention all the less regular global visitors), who recognize our school's achievements. Now, thanks to the significant connections made by Carol with early childhood educators in Hangzhou and Hong Kong, more of those visiting voices will be Chinese. ☺



## Where are they now?

## THE CLASS OF '89

by Kimberly Way and Sloane Hechter  
edited by Anne Tough

**Back:** Marnie Sohn, Paul Shar, Jordi Fogel, Ali Slater, Jason Kobrick. **Third row:** Amy Shore, Tawny Richard, Kimberly Way, Marco Moniz, Andre Ethier. **Second row:** Erika Camus, Brendan Haynes, Julian Zlotkin, Peter Seminovs, Ted Hunter. **Front row:** Pirie MacDonald, Sloane Hechter, Brooke Mann, Perri Camisso (Fr. teacher), Amanda Tatham, Sophie Patoka



photo: Ted Hunter

Some members of this class have been keeping in touch through emails and Facebook. Please let us know if you know anything about those missing. The Alumni Office has up-to-date addresses and phone numbers for many of you so let us know if you are looking for someone.

### Stay in touch with ICS alumni on Facebook.

The biggest group can be found at "Isn't ICS the school where they study you?" though several smaller and year-specific groups also exist. Search Institute of Child Study and ICS on Facebook to find them.

**Andre Ethier** works as an artist and musician. His most recent show of paintings opened in New York City at Derek Eller Gallery. Andre lives happily in Toronto with his wife, Kai, and new son, Louis.

**Jordan Fogle** is the co-proprietor of Mint Inc. and the CEO of the Mint Agency. Jordan has been a sensation in the Canadian events and production business for over ten years as an event and field marketing producer. He is also a founding partner and event director of Lobby restaurant and lounge in the heart of Yorkville. Jordan is recently married and has a dog named Kaya.

**Brendan Haynes** attended McGill University, where he obtained a double major in Sociology and Philosophy. He then earned his LLB from the University of Ottawa. He works as a civil litigator in downtown Toronto.

**Sloane Hechter** (now Freeman) graduated from McMaster medical school in 2003 and completed training in pediatric medicine at the University of Toronto in 2008. She lives in Toronto with her husband and two sons.

**Jason Kobrick** lives with his wife in Maple, ON. He is a chiropractor with a background in sports therapy in Oakville and works with amateur and professional athletes from a variety of sports disciplines.

**Pirie MacDonald** currently lives in Vancouver and is employed as a special needs worker with elementary school-aged children. She is working on a BA in Geography with a minor in Psychology at Simon Fraser University and in her spare time enjoys the mountains and ocean, as well as various crafts, costuming, gardening, and cooking.

**Brooke Mann** (now Bombier) graduated with a BA in Sociology from the University of Western Ontario and continued there at the faculty of Education. She has been teaching Grade 1/2 on Toronto Island for eight years. She was married in 2008 at her cottage and lives with her husband in Toronto.

**Sophie Patoka** (now Pether) and her husband, Jesse, live in Toronto with their two dogs, Doug the Pug and Ernie. She volunteers at the Daily Bread Food Bank in the advocacy office and also works closely with Haitian and Franco-African newcomers and refugees needing assistance. She has applied to be admitted to the Immigration and Settlement Studies MA at Ryerson in the fall. Sophie and Jesse hope to adopt their first child in the very near future.

## Focusing on the Early Years

By Sharon Bird

Tucked away on the third floor of ICS, behind a small gabled window and a cascade of green ferns, is the headquarters of one of North America's leading experts on early childhood education and family literacy.



Janette Pelletier, professor of Human Development and Applied Psychology, sits surrounded by books and papers in her cozy office. Recipient of numerous awards and accolades for her teaching and research, Jan is also an important contributor to early childhood education policy in Ontario. "All the things I do are highly integrated," she says. "My work teaching teachers, my research with children, parents and caregivers--I bring that understanding to provincial committees. And of course what informs all this work is ICS's philosophy of teaching."

Jan's career in early childhood education began in the 1980s as a public school teacher for the Peel School Board. There, while teaching kindergarten and Grade 1, she earned her PhD in cognitive psychology. In the mid 1990s, she went on to complete a three-year post-doctorate at ICS. Based on research she did in partnership with her husband, Professor Carl Corter, ICS launched its full-time Junior Kindergarten program, and Jan has been associated with the school ever since. "A huge piece of my work has been here at ICS," says Jan. "In the early days I conducted research in the classrooms. These days I teach masters courses in child development and the qualities of good teaching. Many of my students are interns in the ICS classrooms." Each year she supervises up to twenty masters and PhD students, several of whom work on aspects of her research projects for their theses.

"What's special about Jan," says ICS principal Elizabeth Morley, "is her extremely deep commitment to young children and the scholarship around young children's learning." Through her research, Jan has built an impressive canon of work exploring what children need to transition smoothly from the kindergarten years to Grade 1. One particularly successful project is Toronto First Duty, in which teachers, child

care workers and parents in five Toronto elementary schools combined their talents, under the guidance of Jan and Carl, to implement full-day programs for four- and five-year-olds. "There are real benefits to integrating kindergarten teaching, child care and parenting," says Jan. "When the school is the hub for all these resources the children's day is seamless. All their activities are coordinated and meaningful to them." Not only have these hubs proven to be an excellent learning environment for children, but for their parents as well. "A huge piece is having the parents there," says Jan. "They help out, share ideas with other parents, and learn skills that support their children's literacy development at home."

Toronto First Duty has drawn the attention of the Ontario government, which has committed to implementing full-day kindergartens in public schools by 2010. Jan has been on a number of committees and working groups, contributing her expertise and knowledge to the question of who, what and how full-day learning programs should be implemented. These include contributing to the Best Start Expert Panel, under the auspices of the Ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services, as well as to Premier Dalton McGuinty's early learning advisor, Professor Charles Pascal, who is slated to submit his much-anticipated recommendations next month. Most recently, Jan was appointed to the governing council of the newly formed College of Early Childhood Educators, formed to ensure a consistent and high level of performance standards among early childhood educators.

With such a full and busy work life can there be room for anything else? Jan laughs. "Well, family is huge, although now that all the children have left home I really do tend to work 24/7 during the winter." She's looking forward to the summer in Muskoka, where she and Carl will reunite with their five children, two grandchildren, "and one more on the way," all of whom will no doubt benefit greatly from their grandmother's tremendous contribution to education for the young. ✎

*Sharon Bird is the mother of Alec (ICS '08), John (ICS '10) and Will King (ICS '12)*



## Getting Perspective

### How storytelling reveals and influences children's social awareness

By Suzanne Schwenger

ICS Nursery teacher Julie Comay is interested in how kids think--especially how they think about the thoughts of others.

Her awareness of "theories of mind" started in her early twenties as a graduate student in philosophy, and continued when she became a teacher. She became fascinated with children's abilities to understand that someone else thinks differently than they do, and how this understanding changes as they grow older. "There is a very big shift in young children between ages three and four in their awareness of other states of mind--that someone might think differently than they do," she explains. "For example, if you give three-year-olds a box that has crayons on the outside, but actually has marbles inside it, and ask them, 'What would your friend think was in the box?,' they say 'marbles.' They can't identify other kids' perspectives. By age four, they can. Of course, some kids get to this stage earlier, especially those with lots of siblings."

Julie noticed that children's understanding of others was somehow linked to their ability to tell and understand stories. She found that children who were very engaged storytellers were often also highly engaged socially. For example, while teaching Grade 2, Julie recalls two students who were wonderful storytellers. "Those two kids were above average in terms of their narrative skills," she says. "It also turned out that they were central to the social life of that classroom--the social life revolved around them."

In 2003, when it came time to focus her doctoral research, Julie wanted to establish whether there was a relationship between the way kids tell stories and their ability to see other perspectives. The research involved five meetings with each of the children in the JK, SK and Grade 1 classrooms. The children met with Julie to tell stories and take a series of tests related to vocabulary, memory and perspective-taking. Julie was looking for relationships between their test scores and the type of stories they were telling--whether they managed to portray the mental states of characters and whether they took into account the perspective of the audience. "At first, I was a bit worried that the kids might not want to tell me a story on the spot," she recalls. "But it was actually very easy. They told me amazing, wonderful stories, and I wrote them all down."

What Julie found was that the children who scored higher on the perspective-taking tests did have a greater awareness of perspective in their storytelling. As she explains, "Over and above having more



vocabulary, it seems that the specific ability to understand perspectives does make a difference to narrative adeptness. These children are more tuned into other people and more aware of others." Surprisingly, this relationship had not yet been consistently established in the literature, possibly because the kinds of narrative tasks commonly used failed to tap into these differences in understanding.

Applications of Julie's work in teaching are already emerging through another project that puts her research

in reverse order and begins with the stories themselves. For the past three years Julie has assisted her friend Mary Thelander on a project working in schools in northwest Etobicoke. These are high-needs communities where most children do not have English as their first language and perform below expectation on standard markers for language and social understanding. In this study, Julie and Mary asked teachers from SK to Grade 2 to read to their classes a carefully selected series of stories that were rich in structure and language, use lots of rhymes in class and encourage

# Whatever It Takes

## A book by Paul Tough

By Gillian Graham

Six years ago, New York-based writer and editor Paul Tough (ICS '79) took the subway up to Harlem to interview Geoffrey Canada, a charismatic anti-poverty activist who wanted nothing less than to reform education from the ground up. What began as an interview quickly became a full-time obsession with the visionary project called the Harlem Children's Zone. The "conveyor belt" initiative--so-called because it aims to support children in a series of interlinked programs from the cradle through to college--is the subject of Paul's acclaimed book *Whatever It Takes*, published in September, 2008 .



With a new administration in Washington committed to improving public education and hungry for fresh approaches to seemingly intractable social problems, the book is particularly timely. Paul finds he is still giving half a dozen or more speeches and radio interviews a month (some available on his lively and informative website, *paultough.com*). Barack Obama had promised during his campaign to replicate the Harlem Children's Zone in twenty cities across the United States, a pledge recently renewed by his secretary of education, Arne Duncan. "It does feel like a hopeful time," says Paul.

A seasoned journalist and an editor at the *New York Times Magazine* since 2001, Paul speaks with the caution of one who has seen many promising educational ventures fizzle. A common weakness has been a dependence on one gifted teacher or principal. By contrast, he notes, the Harlem Children's Zone is a reproducible system. Although still in its infancy (the inaugural class of students is now in Grade 4), it has already generated measurable results that have impressed educators, politicians and social commentators across the United States.

Paul Tough did not set out to become an education writer. "It felt accidental, though when I

look at my parents it seems totally inevitable," he says. His father, Allen, was a professor of adult education at OISE and his mother, Anne, was a well-loved teacher at ICS for many years (see box). Paul worked as an editor at *Harper's Magazine* for eight years and served for a year and a half as the editor of the now-defunct *Saturday Night* magazine in Toronto. He has written for the *New York Times Magazine* on education, poverty and politics, including a cover story on the post-Katrina school system in New Orleans. He is also a reporter and producer for the public-radio program "This American Life," where he reported, most recently, on the parents enrolled in the Harlem Children Zone's Baby College.



Paul set out to write about poverty, but his extensive reporting and research in connection with the Harlem Children's Zone convinced him of the potential of education to break the cycle. Although he writes candidly in the book about the program's missteps and growing pains, he is clearly a convert to Geoffrey Canada's ambitious vision of what is needed to close the so-called achievement gap between black and white children in America. The title, "Whatever It Takes," sums up Canada's willingness to challenge liberal orthodoxy--for example, working through charter schools instead of public--in the drive to bring student test scores up to national standards. In the ongoing debate over the achievement gap, some educators have argued against standardized test scores based on the theory that black children develop differently or learn more creatively. "When poor black kids did badly in school, there were a number of excuses for that failure. In fact, they were not being taught properly," said Paul.

The focus on testing could not be further from his own experiences at ICS. He has positive memories of writing songs with Gerry Mabin in kindergarten and exploring nature first-hand through the live swamp in Russell Fleming's classroom. "I learned more about science in that year than I ever did after that." The creativity and lack of structure worked well for him. "I learned how to learn and educate myself. As a journalist, you have to be self-directed, and to understand how to take a vague interest and turn it into knowledge."

By contrast, there is less time for creativity in the Harlem Children's Zone. "A loosely structured education is probably not the right option for kids who have fallen behind. It may not be fair, but they need to focus on the basics in order to succeed," he said. Observing children coming in early in the morning to

prepare for a test, he was struck by their level of self-discipline. "They were so much more hard-working than I had been. I had a safety net." ✎

*Gillian Graham is the mother of Sam Bailey '98, James Graham '01 and Mimi Graham '03. She is co-founder with Anne Tough of the ICS Alumni Echo.*



*Anne Tough visiting with children in The Gambia*

Anne Tough officially retired as a teacher in 1996. Fortunately for ICS, she couldn't stay away for long. Drawn back into the school's orbit to plan for the 75th anniversary celebration in 2001, she has been crucial in establishing the ICS Alumni Association and in giving it heart and integrity. Anne's links with ICS go back to her days as a student at Victoria College when she took an undergraduate psychology course with Dr. William Blatz. She earned her teacher's degree at the Ontario College of Education (now OISE) in 1960, then returned to ICS several years later as the mother of Susan (ICS '76) and Paul (ICS '79). After a year of part-time work at ICS, she began teaching Grade 1 in 1978--her preferred age group because of the strong emotional bonds with the children.

If Anne had not remembered every student she ever taught--and their families--the school would have been hard-pressed to draw up an alumni mailing list for the 75th anniversary. Constructing a current list from the school's patchy and out-of-date records, then getting it onto a computer, was the first of many accomplishments. As an early co-editor of the *Alumni Echo*, she pioneered the popular "Where Are They Now" feature. She goes to extraordinary lengths to track down former students, and when she succeeds she acts as if she has won the lottery.

Former students tend to return her affection. When I spoke to Jonathan Ruby (ICS '86) a few years ago about becoming a class representative--another alumni initiative in which Anne played a major role--he asked, "Will I get to talk to Anne Tough?" When I replied in the affirmative, he said, "Great! I'll do it!"

--G.G.

*Julie Comay continued from page 3*

oral storytelling. At first, some teachers were reluctant, arguing that the children's language skills were too low. Julie and Mary encouraged them to try it. "We told them not to stop and explain each unfamiliar word, but to allow children to become engrossed in the story as a whole and to use open ended questions," she explains. They later tested the children for changes in their language development and ability to understand perspective. "The leaps in vocabulary and social understanding are quite amazing," says Julie, who is clearly excited by the implications of this research. The classroom teachers are now thrilled to report that their classrooms are completely transformed: students

who used to be quiet and reserved are enthusiastic, engaged and full of ideas.

Dr. Julie Comay was awarded her doctoral degree last fall and has presented her research at several international conferences. Recently, her Ph.D. was recognized as the best thesis of the year by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. When asked about her next research project, Julie pauses for a moment, then smiles. "I think I might actually like to try something brand new," she says. ✎

*Suzanne Schwenger teaches Primary Music at ICS. She graduated from ICS in 1969. Her daughter, Maddy Bondy, graduated in 2005.*