

# Shine

February 2010 | Issue 01

Every  
child,  
every  
opportunity

## THE **SUMMER** ACHIEVEMENT GAP

What happens to learning  
over the holidays?

**Art and craft**  
in the early years

**Why arguing** can  
be good for kids

**4 HABITS**  
of emotionally  
intelligent teachers

**New rating  
system** for early  
childhood services

# A space odyssey for Sherbrooke

What happens when an astronaut vomits in outer space? Ask the students from Sherbrooke Community School.  
Story by **Eamon Evans**

STUDENTS FROM Sherbrooke Community School, 40 kilometres east of Melbourne, recently had the chance to talk shop with a crewmember from the International Space Station, 354 kilometres north of Earth.

Astronaut Robert Thirsk, the first Canadian to stay in space long-term, fielded questions as part of the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) program, which allows schools from across the globe to talk to astronauts. As an affiliate of the Wireless Institute of Australia, Sherbrooke's Community Radio Club was well placed to seize what teachers described as "the opportunity of a lifetime".

"It was an incredible experience for 11 young students ranging from Year 3 through to Year 12," recalls Sherbrooke teacher Judy O'Donnell. "The build-up was explosive: so much anticipation and excitement." Parents, friends and community members filled the school hall and, according to Ms O'Donnell, "everyone was excited to witness the fact that we had pulled off a great coup in speaking to the International Space Station."

Year 10 student Christopher Payne kicked off with the first question: How do you neutralise the static charge of a spacecraft when it docks with the ISS? And Year 4 students Jonny Grandin asked: What



happens when a person vomits in space? "The answer they gave on the spew question was funny," reported 11-year-old student, Emma. "It turns into a big ball and they have to be extremely careful because it can get into the equipment."

The students also asked questions on behalf of Sherbrooke's sister schools – the Jiaolun Middle School in China and the Early Learning Centre at Thimphu in Bhutan – making it not only an international experience via the airwaves in space but also one on the ground. **S**



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# Them's fighting words!



Playground arguments are more than just simple squabbles – they're valuable lessons in compromise, writes **Eamon Evans**

FOR MANY early childhood teachers, *Lord of the Flies* must read like a documentary. While tribal warfare and killing sprees thankfully remain uncommon in our kindergartens, the endless squabbles over toys and brutal fights between boys certainly bring home the moral of William Golding's novel: if you leave kids to resolve differences by themselves, chaos will generally result.

Or will it? According to new research from the University of Melbourne, there's actually method in the madness. "A lot of productive talk goes on between children," says Dr Amelia Church, who recently spent 12 weeks in two kindergartens monitoring interaction between four-year-olds. "We don't get to hear about the disputes that are effectively resolved but they are actually going on more often than not."

Even by the age of four, Dr Church found that children "have sufficient linguistic competence to manage most verbal negotiations." While some spats inevitably descend into stalemates, and need an adult to broker the peace, most arguments are actually resolved via reasoned argument or that quintessentially 'adult' method of compromise.



"It's really important to understand just how capable children are," Dr Church told *Shine*. "The thing to note about children's arguments is that they mostly argue with their friends. They're actually invested in working the issue out, because they want to keep playing the game."

Also worth noting is the range of negotiating strategies four-year-olds have at their disposal. "Rather than persisting with one tactic that wasn't working for them, the children were able to change their strategies a lot of the time in order to negotiate a successful outcome," she said.

## Trivia Challenge

General knowledge class quiz in teams

# Year 3 to Year 10

**trivia**  
CHALLENGE

For details contact Val Bates

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