

Paul Kortenaar, Principal
OSC Science School
Ontario Science School
Don Mills Road,
Toronto, ON

January 21, 2011

Subject: Ontario Science Centre - Semester 57

Dear Paul,

We are the parents of Sangitha who is enrolled in Semester 57 at the Science School.

It was a great pleasure to meet you and your team at the Science School on the November 7th 2011 Parents' Day. Suchitra and I are providing our comments as additional feedback for comments we provided to you at parents day.

Please share this letter as you see appropriate with the sponsors/supporters and the rest of your team so that the program and the entire team including the teaching faculty can be given the accolades and recognition deserved.

Although in Sangitha's case getting to school involves a 3-hour commute and 8 transit connections each day, there is always a spring in her step as she heads off to OSC Science School. Based on our observations and feedback, we believe that you and your team are just as excited to be a part of the Science School. Our two younger daughters have been in awe at Sangitha's recap at dinner time and have already set their sights on OSC Science School when they get to grade 12.

Firstly, we would like to thank you Paul and your entire team starting with Laura Zrymiak, and the teaching faculty of Margaret DeJesus (Biology), Gillian Evans (Math), Maria Price (Physics) and Jen Wilson (Chemistry) for the wonderful experience you have brought to Sangitha and the other Semester 57 students. We would also like to thank the sponsors/supporters (Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Boards) for making this program possible and the guidance team of Yen Vi Tuong (Don Mills Collegiate Institute) and Frank Hickey (Senator O'Connor College School) for their supporting roles. We believe that other parents share our sentiments in singing praises for you and your team in the delivery of the OSC Science School program. This program is an exciting and groundbreaking teaching model which no doubt provides confirmation to the educators and the sponsors on the effectiveness of your teaching methods and learning enhancement techniques.

We feel compelled to convey our feedback as we have had the opportunity to meet many of the students in Semester 57 and this together with the continuous feedback from Sangitha tells us that you and your team are delivering a singularly unique program for the students who are fortunate to attend the Science School.

The program is an excellent preparation and transition to university for Sangitha and her colleagues. It provides a healthy blend of social and academic preparation. Sangitha and her colleagues are very much appreciative of the opportunity to attend Science School and are highly motivated to maximize their adventure and not allow any portion of it to be wasted.

This program provides an environment where students are excited to learn, express their ideas and explore new possibilities. The program emphasizes communication, teamwork and collaboration starting with the two day communication trip to Orillia. It pulled together teaching staff from different school boards and brought together an even wider diversity of students. The students come from both the public school and separate school systems, from Toronto as well as rural and urban Ontario including as far north as Timiskaming. This diversity in itself was celebrated and enriching for our daughter and each of her peers. Each student brought their own special talents and achievements and over the course of the semester they were able to integrate these attributes that flowed into the projects they undertook. One such project involved constructing a Rube Goldberg Machine to demonstrate 15 transfers of energy to perform a specific task. The emphasis on teambuilding was maintained throughout the semester and highlighted in activities such as the simulated space Challenger Mission where the students were given the opportunity to role play under crisis situations as astronauts and ground control crew.

The program venue in the internationally renowned Ontario Science Centre places the students in the midst of cutting edge developments in science, engineering and technology and therefore enhances the experience tremendously. With the program delivered from the OSC, students are able to access resources such as exhibits, I-MAX films, scientists, engineers and other educators. Sangitha and her peers found that another facet of their learning was in being trained as hosts to earn their coveted "Red Labcoats" and, subsequently as volunteers, having the opportunity to interact with visitors and share their excitement about science with guests at the Science Centre.

The faculty's methodical and purposeful teambuilding efforts were successful in creating enormously strong cohesive bonds among this group of students over a very short timeframe. The students have had "rotational parties" where one student hosted other students in their home. We were privileged to host 3 purely social and 3 group work get togethers at our home. We were pleased to observe the result of your faculty's teambuilding in the students' interactions. We expect that Sangitha and her peers will be very active alumni of the OSC Science School and will stay in contact with each other in university and beyond.

A major success for this program is the manner in which the curriculum for the 4 subject areas was integrated and delivered successfully by your teaching faculty. This prepares the students for success in real life multidiscipline applications and careers beyond university. This cross-curricular method was evident in the Grenoble Project and the Innovation Project which challenged the students to develop an exhibit that integrated music and the science behind music at a standard suitable for guests of the Ontario Science Centre. Your teaching faculty was especially effective in collaborating and facilitating the multidiscipline approach.

Well beyond the Ontario curriculum requirements, your teaching team was effective in having Sangitha and her peers integrate technology throughout their program. Some examples of this were the stop motion animation technology that was used to bring organic chemistry to life and their development of "glogs" to present online chemistry posters and video presentations. Sangitha and her peers also used technology to test crystal growing and for the youtube chemistry competition.

The teaching staff also supported and mentored the students in entering a number of external competitions, exhibitions and contests including countless math contests and the Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge. Four of the seven teams entered in the Bio Talent Challenge were selected by

external judges to proceed to the next level. At that level each team gets the opportunity to work with and be mentored by a prominent research scientist for their particular research proposal.

Again, well beyond the Ontario curriculum requirements, your teaching team organized a number of physical activity events, field trips and workshops such as lunchtime runs, ice skating at Toronto City Hall, field trips to the AGO, the Cadbury Factory, math activity "scavenger hunt" around the PATH in downtown Toronto, DNA printing workshop, Nanotechnology workshop and biotechnology lectures at University of Toronto.

It was no doubt a challenge to co-ordinate and facilitating delivery of this program and to optimize the use of time available and resources needed to support the OSC Science School Program. We would like to specifically thank Laura Zyrmiaak for her role in helping to make this such a successful program and to have it run seamlessly.

Congratulations to you and your team for how much you have managed to accomplish with Sangitha and her peers in just one Semester. This experience will forever change their lives for the better and will facilitate and determine the path they go well beyond Semester 57.

Sincerely,

Suchitra & Timothy