

ALUMNI ECHO NEWS

JICS LABORATORY SCHOOL

ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL

WINDY RIDGE

Spring 2026 Issue

Centennial Edition



While it may be unusual for adults to want to remain connected to their elementary school, JICS alumni often speak of their years at 45 Walmer Road with deep affection and gratitude. The friendships formed here have a remarkable way of lasting a lifetime, rooted in shared experiences, creativity, curiosity, and a strong sense of belonging that continues long after graduation.

The Alumni Echo News is one way for our extended community to stay connected to the inspiring people and developments that continue to shape the JICS Lab School. In this 20th edition, we are delighted to share updates, reflections, and stories that celebrate the enduring spirit of our school and the many paths our alumni have taken.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition.

Past editions can be viewed here:

www.oise.utoronto.ca/jics/families-alumni/alumni

You can also reconnect and reminisce with fellow graduates and their families through the ICSCnects database at www.icsconnects.ca.

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Next centennial event:
**JICS Centennial
Golf Championship!**

FRIDAY
OCT 2
2026

GET THE DETAILS
AND REGISTER AT:
uoft.me/jics-golf



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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



YEARS OF
EXPLORING
WHAT IS POSSIBLE

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Knowing Children, Understanding Learning

Richard Messina, Principal

In 2009, cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham published the influential book *Why Don't Students Like School?* In it, he reminds educators that while children are naturally curious, they are not naturally good thinkers. Thinking is effortful. Learning depends upon prior knowledge, meaningful context, memory, practice, and engagement. He writes, "To ensure that your students follow you, you must keep them interested; to ensure their interest, you must anticipate their reactions; and to anticipate their reactions, you must know them."

At the heart of this work is a challenge that continues to guide educators: how do we move from understanding how children learn to designing schools in which they genuinely love learning?

At the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Lab School, this question resonates deeply with our work as educators, researchers, and learners. For 100 years, JICS has sought not only to teach children, but to know children, to understand how they think, how they grow, what sparks their curiosity, and what conditions allow them to flourish intellectually, socially, emotionally, and creatively.

As we enter our second century, we continue this work with renewed purpose. In dialogue with contemporary research in cognitive science, the learning sciences, and child development, our own longitudinal study (see the JICS BRIDGE study article) seeks to better understand why children enjoy school, why they thrive as learners, and how educational experiences shape lives over time. We are asking questions that matter deeply to education: How does curiosity develop? What role do relationships play in learning? How do joy, belonging, challenge, creativity, and intellectual rigor interact in the classroom? What does research of the mind mean for teaching practice?

Through this longitudinal study, we will be tracking the development of children's reading, mathematics, science, and socioemotional learning over time. By carefully studying how children grow and learn across these domains, we hope to gain deeper insights that will help us continually refine and tailor our educational approaches to better support our students. Equally important, as a laboratory school with a public purpose, we are committed to sharing what we learn with the broader educational community and public school system so that the

knowledge generated through this work can contribute to improving learning experiences and outcomes for children beyond JICS itself.

This edition of the Alumni Echo reflects these questions and celebrates the many ways the JICS community continues to learn together. Within these pages, you will read about 100 years of parent education at JICS, our new STEAM Night initiative that brought together mathematics and the arts, the many unique ways each classroom celebrated our centennial year, the Endowment Fund Gala in May 2025, the Homecoming celebration in October 2025, and the joyful 100th birthday celebration created by and for the children of the Lab School.

You will also read about the remarkable panel discussion on artificial intelligence and education featuring Geoffrey Hinton, Carol Stephenson, and other distinguished voices who challenged us to think carefully about the future of learning in a rapidly changing world.

Together, these articles tell a larger story, one about a school community that honours its history while remaining deeply committed to inquiry, innovation, relationships, and research. They remind us that education is not simply about transmitting information. It is about understanding minds, nurturing human potential, building community, and creating environments where children can think deeply, wonder freely, and discover who they might become.

As JICS begins its next 100 years, we do so with the same spirit that has guided the school since 1925: a belief that careful observation, thoughtful research, and profound respect for children can help us imagine, and create, what is possible in education.

Richard

P.S. We hope to see many of you at the JICS Centennial Golf Championship Fore the Future on Friday, October 2, 2026 at Angus Glen Golf Club. Full details and registration information can be found in this edition.

NEW RENOVATIONS

The Book Nook Piazza

Audrey Madsen, Grade 4/5 Teacher

During the summer of 2025, the Junior Wing of JICS was upgraded with a redesigned communal Piazza. This shared space between the Grade 4/5 and Grade 6 classrooms is well loved by both students and staff. At the heart of the design is an inviting library area that showcases a large collection of books for Grades 4 to 6. Students enjoy browsing the wide-ranging selection of fiction and frequently recommend titles to their classmates, helping to expand one another's reading repertoire. Open shelving makes the collection easy to organize and access, supporting the varied interests of a dynamic student community.

The renovation also introduced built-in couch seating with colourful cushions along the windows, as well as cubby inserts, creating cozy spaces where students can settle in with a good book. It is especially rewarding to see how the physical environment supports the strong culture of reading cultivated at JICS.

Another key feature of the Piazza is the large, boardroom-style table, which provides an ideal setting for small-group work. Students use this space for collaborative projects, differentiated tasks, or quiet work time. Teachers also gather small groups here for targeted instruction in areas such as spelling and math facts.

Overall, the renovated Piazza has created new opportunities for enriched learning in the Junior Wing, offering a welcoming and flexible space that fosters both a love of reading and meaningful small-group learning.



Leave a lasting mark on the JICS Lab School community. We are pleased to offer a historic naming opportunity for the beloved Book Nook and Piazza, valued at \$250,000.

To learn more about this special opportunity and to explore the possibilities for naming gifts, please contact our Senior Development Officer, Reesa Barkhouse, at reesa.barkhouse@utoronto.ca or 705-978-3610.



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STUDENT PROJECTS

Student Centennial Projects

Compiled by Michael Martins, Gr 3 Teacher

The Centennial Year of JICS was celebrated in creative, fun, and exciting ways that aimed to commemorate the past, celebrate the present, and inspire the future. In keeping with the student-centred experience we aim to cultivate at JICS, no celebration would be complete without the voices of the children. Each child from Nursery to Grade 6 contributed to a class project with their peers. The classes worked to create pieces which explored the concept of time, the number 100, a component of our school, and many other related elements in order to mark this special occasion in meaningful ways.

Nursery

In the Nursery, the children explored the concept of a 'year.' Through bringing in photos of themselves as a newborn baby, at one year of age, and at two years of age, the children could see how much can change in one year! The photos were a wonderful opportunity for the children to connect to the length of a year and relate it to their own lives. It was delightful to see the children's faces light up as they got to compare themselves through the years and begin to see the similarities and differences between themselves and their peers. Examining seasonal changes, celebrations, and milestones were crucial parts to our journey. Documenting this learning on a collaborative "Centennial blanket" helped lay the foundational knowledge of the concept of a year, and allowed opportunities to begin to broach just how much can change over 100 years!



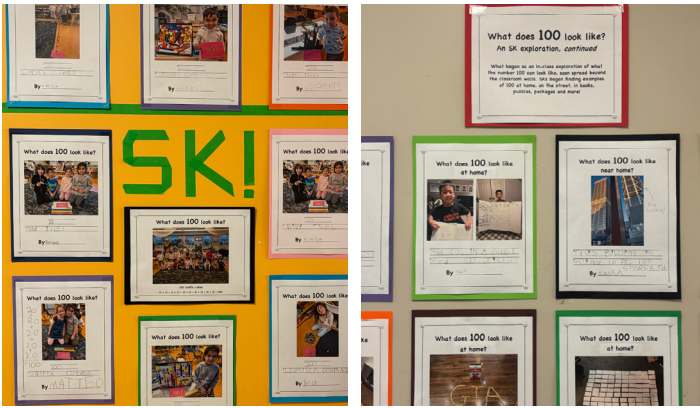
JK (Junior Kindergarten)

To celebrate JICS' Centennial year, the JK class took a look at the number 100! The JKs explored creative ways to build and represent the numeral using a variety of loose parts. Students worked collaboratively and independently, selecting from materials such as buttons, scissors, wooden blocks, tiles and counters. They carefully arranged their chosen pieces to form the shapes of '1', '0', and '0', experimenting with size, colour, and texture. As they worked, the JKs engaged in meaningful math talk-counting, comparing quantities and discussing how the pieces fit together to form the numeral. This hands-on activity not only supported number recognition and fine motor skills but also encouraged creativity, problem solving, and collaboration.

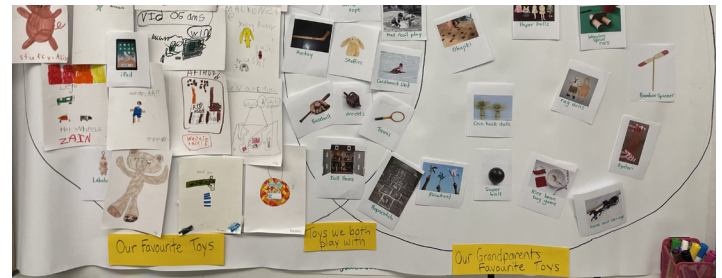


SK (Senior Kindergarten)

Celebrating a centennial year demands a deep dive into the magnitude of the number 100. Lucky for us, the SK class was up for the challenge. As the children in SK begin to extend their numeracy understanding, this three-digit number seemed like the perfect stretch to support student learning about our base-ten number system. The prompt offered to the children was, "What does 100 look like?" The SK class leveraged their expertise and joy in play to choose a material, at school or at home, which they could use to represent the number 100. The creations and conceptions of 100 incredibly demonstrated the children's ability to estimate, count, plan, organize, and reason spatially with the materials. By carefully considering how each item relates to the others, the children showed both individual and holistic thinking, which helped them create beautiful representations of 100.



community to learn more, namely, their grandparents! This provided wonderful opportunities to compare play by identifying the types of games, design, materials, and volume of toys which were available then versus now. These experiences inspired children to learn ‘new’ games and revive old ways of playing. Examples of Tiddlywinks, Ayatori string games, corn husk dolls, and hand-made race cars filled the Grade 2 class and beautifully illustrated play from 100 years ago.



Grade 1

45 Walmer Road has been host to innumerable memories. The Grade 1 class has given the community so much to reminisce about through their investigation into the history of the building which is home to our beloved JICS. The class examined archival photos of the school building and noticed how the different spaces have changed over time. The class discussed how the purpose of the building has evolved from being a single-family home into the thriving educational hub that exists today. Children then selected specific rooms and recreated what those spaces might have looked like 100 years ago. Using a variety of visual art tools, the children drafted images to represent their conceptions of the space as it may have existed many years ago. Through written reflections, the children expressed their perspectives and why they decided to imagine the space in the way that they did.

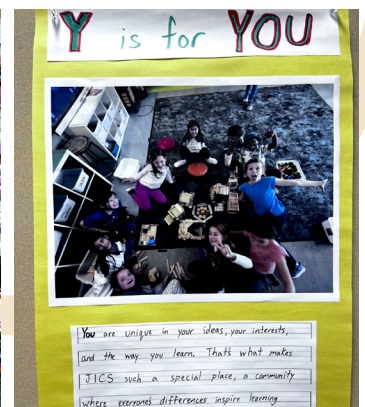
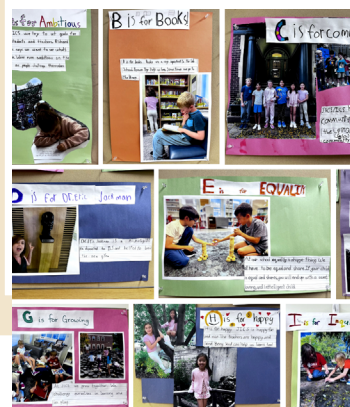


Grade 3

The Grade 3 class took on a project which allowed the students (and teachers!) to reflect on what JICS means to them. Drawing inspiration from a story read by the class, the children brainstormed as many words as they could think of which connected to our treasured JICS. The children thought of words which began with each letter of the alphabet. Once the list was large enough, each child was assigned to a letter to curate. The task was to use their word to inspire a few sentences about how the word represents JICS. Additionally, the children had to plan a photo to illustrate their ideas. This was a wonderful task which culminated in a beautiful collection of words and photos that reflect some important ideas related to our school such as community, united, fun, questions, learning, respect, and more.

Grade 2

The Grade 2 class seamlessly tied this year’s Centennial celebration with their classroom learning. As the class began their investigations into simple machines, an opportune moment arose to investigate what childhood, and play, looked like 100 years ago. After sharing initial thoughts about what pastimes were popular for children a century ago, the children leaned into members of their



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Grade 4/5 A

In Grade 4/5A, the children were tasked with thinking metacognitively about our centennial celebrations by pondering what an event such as this means, and how we can mark it as a community. The class explored the meaning of a centennial by examining historical celebrations and conducting in-depth research into the past 100 years. After visiting the Toronto Archives and studying artifacts, students chose topics of interest such as school history, architecture, sports, and cultural changes. They created research projects, sketches, and models, including representations of the original school building and its evolution. Their work emphasized historical inquiry, personal connection, and the importance of preserving and understanding the school's legacy.



Grade 4/5 R

The Grade 4/5R class created a large-scale, collaborative timeline representing the school's 100-year history, visually mapping each decade from 1925 to 2025. Students applied math skills to design the display and conducted research on both school-specific and broader historical events in Toronto. Through writing, artwork, and collaboration, they built a detailed and evolving artifact of the history of JICS and its community. The children's learning was enriched by expert visits and a field trip to a rare books library, each of which brought new knowledge to fill in the gaps of JICS' journey to present day. This project is a beautiful and comprehensive tribute to the school's history.

Grade 6

Grade 6 students examined how childhood has changed over the past century by researching trends in fashion,

hobbies, and daily life. Each student focused on a specific decade, dressing in period-appropriate clothing and contributing written reflections about children's experiences at JICS during that time. This task brought nostalgia for the fads of the 1900's while stretching our imaginations to consider what the future of fashion may hold! The final project combined photography, research, and performance to create a visual and narrative timeline of childhood, and the Grade 6 experience of JICS across 100 years. Their work brought history to life and highlighted both the differences and connections in growing up over the past century.

These thoughtful projects offered yet another opportunity for the school to build community through the shared goal of celebrating 100 years of JICS. The information researched, ideas shared, and artifacts created are a testament to the dedication and passion that students of JICS bring to their learning each and every day.



CALL FOR ALUMNI

Calling All 2000 to 2010 Grads!

Send us your updates to be a part of the "Where Are They Now" section in the next Alumni Echo.

Alumni Profiles

Graduates of the Institute are always doing spectacular things and we want to hear about them! Whether you graduated from the Lab School or a graduate program, in the 1930s, the 2020s, or anywhere inbetween, we'd love to feature you in an upcoming Alumni Echo newsletter.

Send your updates to JICS Communications Officer, Victoria Sandic:

victoria.sandic@utoronto.ca

DON'T MISS OUR NEXT BIG CENTENNIAL EVENT!



TICKETS & SPONSORSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE

Reserve Your Foursome Today

Friday, October 2, 2026

ANGUS GLEN GOLF CLUB

10080 KENNEDY ROAD, MARKHAM, ON



Join us as we celebrate 100 years of the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study shaping not just individual lives, but the entire landscape of education. From pioneering research influencing classrooms across Canada to generations of graduates leading change nationwide, JICS has redefined how we think about learning.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TOURNAMENT

- Play at the renowned South Course of Angus Glen, host of the Canadian Open
- Curated gourmet food stations, premium open beverages, and on-course activations
- In-game contests
- Raffle and auction featuring exclusive sports memorabilia
- Premium prizes, welcome gifts, club rentals, and digital scoring
- Top three teams advance to a playoff at the 18th hole, with a cocktail viewing gallery
- Winning team receives an engraved trophy displayed at JICS and custom championship jackets
- Private cocktail hour with high-caliber networking
- Elegant evening reception, awards presentation, and celebratory close

All skills welcome! Whether you're a seasoned golfer or picking up clubs for the first time, this day is about coming together, alumni, educators, researchers, and supporters, for a memorable experience in support of a great cause. Come soak up the sun, try something new, and be part of an unforgettable day.



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REGISTER AT
uoft.me/jics-golf

‘It brought our village together’: JICS 100 Centennial Gala and Auction makes its mark

Perry King, Development Communications Officer, OISE

“The Gala was magic.”

Richard Messina, principal of the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study (JICS) encapsulated what was a transformative, tide-changing evening of laughter, passion and philanthropic giving. The May 13 2025 Centennial Gala & Auction brought together families, alumni and friends to the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) to celebrate 100 years of innovation, education, and community at the JICS Lab School.

“It brought our entire village together,” added Messina, “alumni, current parents, friends, donors, teachers and staff. We didn’t just celebrate our past; we built relationships, created joy, and raised over \$200,000 to deepen economic diversity at JICS.”

With a lively auction lead by Stephen Ranger, recognized as one Canada’s leading charitable auctioneers, the gala’s auction raised \$202,000, which includes \$53,000 coming from the pledge drive alone. It proved to be a night of spirited philanthropic giving.



“It was a night where community, purpose, and generosity came together. We doubled our fundraising goal and sparked transformational giving—all while having an unforgettable time,” said Sim Kapoor, director of OISE’s Office of Advancement, Communications, and External Relations.

“The pledge had a fresh energy that encouraged others to give within a trusting, engaged community.

The proceeds from this gala will support the JICS Lab



School Endowment Fund, ensuring that children from diverse economic backgrounds can access a JICS education—one that is grounded in research, play-based learning, and progressive pedagogy. The support will help the JICS Lab School continue to fulfill their public purpose and foster innovation, inclusion, and educational excellence for generations to come.

“On behalf of the University of Toronto, I extend my deepest appreciation to the parents and JICS community for making this event a remarkable success,” said **Professor Erica N. Walker, Dean of OISE**. “Thank you so much for navigating such an immense event, which successfully showcased our collective selflessness and generosity. The memory of that amazing gala will stay with me because we have a chance to change the educational opportunities for so many. The power of education will change lives.”

For the JICS Parents Committee, who helped shape the execution of this gala, this was a rewarding experience. “Seeing the incredible generosity at the gala was both humbling and inspiring,” said **Samantha Molyneux**, who co-chairs the committee with **Ken Montague** and **Lucia Remedios**. “Every donation, large or small, was a vote of confidence in the value of economic diversity at JICS.”



This generosity, says Molyneux, means that JICS is building a school community that reflects a broader range of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences—something that enriches learning for every child. “Looking

ahead, it sets a strong foundation for continued growth and inclusion. It shows that we're not just talking about equity—we're investing in it," she said.

For **Ken Montague**, who is a prominent art collector, this particular event resonated with him — having this held in his world. "I felt that my contribution might be to organize the gala in the space that I've shown my personal collection — and where I felt that leading with art in terms of the environment for the gala would obviously be a motivating factor for having an art auction."

And, for Montague, it is so much more. "It was very personal for our family, being a family of colour," he said. "My partner is South Asian, I'm African Canadian and our kids definitely stand out as BIPOC kids. We really want them to feel that there are other kids that look like them [here]."



"I took on the mission, really keeping that eye on the prize, hoping that there would be some families of means that would see the light and say, 'Hey, you know, we give to hospitals, we give to the AGO, we give to the ROM; we should really give to this place that is enriching the lives of our kids.'"

At the end of the day, Molyneux — a mother of two sons at JICS — wants the visiting audience to remember something crucial.

"It was a reminder that when a community comes together with a shared vision, real and meaningful change is possible," she says. "For JICS, this generosity means we can take real steps toward broadening access to the Lab School, while strengthening our ability to support research that reflects the diversity of the world around us."

Every gift to the endowment fund is an investment in the future of an exemplary and transformative learning community and supports the JICS Lab School's public purpose.

Invest in the future of education:
www.jicsfamily.com/donate



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Full circle: JICS students, faculty, enjoy one-of-kind centennial homecoming

Perry King Development Communications Officer, OISE



Elizabeth Morley remembers fondly her very first day as a student teacher at the Jackman Institute for Child Study (JICS) — in September 1980.

"I was a newlywed, actually," says Morley, who would go on to an incredible four-decade-long career at JICS, culminating as principal.

After the standard introductions and a tour of the building — which was just a mansion at 45 Walmer Road — there was a luncheon that Morley will never forget. "I was struck immediately by the fact that all the laboratory school teachers were there, and all the professors were there along with the new students, and they all wanted to get to know us," she said. "They were modeling right from the beginning that all of the staff members were equally connected to each of the programs, and that filled my heart with joy."

"I was going to get to know a school, a group of teacher educators and a group of researchers on a personal level, and that exists today as well."

Morley felt at home, and on Oct. 18, many alumni, staff, friends, and community members also had a chance to experience this. The Centennial ICS Alumni Homecoming is the latest occasion marking JICS's 100th year. Founded in 1925, the institution has played a key role in shaping the future of education, research, and child development.



Alumni, staff, friends, and community members were invited to celebrate its rich history – but also check out how the facility has changed over time. “This homecoming, I think it represented the chance for people to come back through the doors that they recall so fondly,” says Morley.

“This homecoming reunion was a tremendous opportunity to engage with a community moulded by a special institution,” says Professor **Erica N. Walker**, dean of OISE. “By connecting research, practice, and community, JICS equips its students for the world at large – and deeply binds generations together, reflecting JICS’ incredible success over a century of education and leadership.

“It was my pleasure to welcome and witness generations of JICS alumni, students, faculty and friends reconnecting at their alma mater once again.”

“Homecoming is an excellent opportunity to create a stronger bond between the generations of members that call the Jackman Institute for Child Study their home,” added Richard Messina, who has served as JICS’ principal since 2015. “As principal, I’m proud of the institution we have fostered for our students, faculty, and alumni.

“We value a deeply interconnected, inclusive community – in which all members feel known, respected, and supported as active participants. At homecoming, we showcased that, and more.”

The celebration intended to guide the community into its second century of learning. These values are practiced across all rooms in the building.

In the senior kindergarten (SK) class, led by educator Carol Stephenson, children are getting familiar with the occasion by connecting it with the number 100.

“The idea of ‘100 years’ is rather abstract for young children – the concept of last week and 100 years ago can get conflated,” said Stephenson, who has taught at JICS for over 30 years. “Rather than thinking about 100 years, I would invite the kids to think about the number 100.”

She challenged the SK children to work together to find 100 Unifix cubes by creating ten columns of ten cubes each. The children were so excited by the activity, many went on to create their own manifestations of 100, using Unifix cubes as well as many other materials available in the class. Stephenson managed to photograph all of the creations and posted a growing collage on a corridor wall.

“I think that speaks to exactly what we do here,” she says. “We want the learning to be relevant to the kids, engaging

and exciting. When you inspire kids and then just let them go, amazing things happen.

“I love that the kids in my class love coming to school every day.”



The homecoming was also a chance for the community to reflect on the present and create a cohesive future that fosters all of JICS’ values.

For Stephenson, that includes encouraging genuine human connection. “I am really hoping that in the future, the deeply caring way that we position relationship as the absolute foundation of everything that’s happening here, remains a constant. Underlying all of our institutional values is this bedrock humanistic belief in the importance and necessity of human connection,” she says.

“And I hope that our deep grounding in pedagogy, inquiry and security allows children to continue to be children – to continue to play amongst their peers, to learn amongst their peers, with, from and around each other.”

For Morley, in her 45-year relationship to the institution, this also means claiming and understanding “our potential for the future, and what’s possible in our future.”

“In my own family, our sons went through the laboratory school – now we have six grandchildren, and our sons have taken up the idea of the homecoming in just the same way that hundreds of other people have. They have fond memories,” she says.

“The going back is now possible because it’s the 100th year. So, we say you can’t go home again, but suddenly you can.”

Find photos from this event and reconnect with the entire JICS community by registering on ICS Connects:

www.icsconnects.ca



JICS at the Movies: January & March 2026

Clement Virgo's 'Steal Away'

Perry King, Development Communications Officer, OISE

Editor's note: This story was published in advance of the 2026 JICS at the Movies event on Jan. 12.

The new year has just arrived, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute for Child Study (JICS) are putting the finishing touches on their highly anticipated movie night fundraiser.

The latest JICS at the Movies screening on Jan. 12 features the film *Steal Away*, the latest full-length feature film from Canadian filmmaker **Clement Virgo** – whose prior film, *Brother*, was also featured at a previous JICS at the Movies fundraiser.

The event brings the community together with critically acclaimed films, and all ticket proceeds support economic diversity and early childhood education at JICS – ensuring that future generations of students continue to benefit from the innovative, inclusive education and research that defines the Lab School.

A collaboration between Virgo, screenwriter **Tamara Faith Berger**, and producer **Damon D'Oliveira**, the film stars Angourie Rice as Fanny, a naive teenager in a purposely ambiguous country, who has her illusions about the world shattered when she forms an intense bond with Cécile (Mallori Johnson), a refugee taken in by her family. The film was adapted from a novel by Karolyn Smardz Frost and also stars Lauren Lee Smith, Idrissa Sanogo, Arnold Pinnock, Hilde Van Mieghem, Nola Elvis Kemper, Denise M'Baye, Gloria Mampuya and Isabelle Menal in supporting roles.

JICS at the Movies brings the film front and centre and will feature a post-film conversation with the filmmaking trio – which will be moderated by Massey College Senior Fellow and U of T faculty, **David Chariandy**. Before they sit down with the JICS audience, to share insights into their creative process, the trio offered a small taste in the following exchange.

Your ticket purchase will have a profound impact on supporting economic diversity, helping ensure that students from all financial backgrounds have equal access to JICS – Canada's #1 independent Lab School with a public mission.

What an extraordinary film! As you bring this to the JICS audience, what do you hope the audience will take away from the film *Steal Away*?

The audience can take away a lot from the film, and of course anything that they want, but hopefully by the end, a feeling of resolution that justice can be done, that young women can and do escape dangerous situations, and that abusive and dangerous cycles, like white supremacy, can end.

This story is fearlessly explores themes of racism, sexism, and friendship. As your creative partnership grows, how do you continue to find ways to explore, confront and distill these challenging topics?

We like to provoke, each in our own way, and push the boundaries within stories, and so working on *Steal Away* together was exciting: to be able to push each other at the same time as pushing the film to sometimes uncomfortable or dangerous places. Also, the real life story of *Steal Away* which is about the relationship between a privileged white teenager and an enslaved black teenager is difficult and uncomfortable and ultimately that part was important for us to retain and represent, albeit in a new or refracted way.

On that note, how has the creative partnership between Virgo and D'Oliveira evolved over time? Do you find yourselves finishing each other's sentences?

We met at the Canadian Film Centre in 1991 and made *RUDE*, our first feature film together in 1994. Blessed to have Norman Jewison (U of T Grad!) as our mentor, his seminal work that dealt with social issues in the US was inspiration for us. We also share a perspective as immigrant kids who came to Canada from the Caribbean in the late 70's. That experience of migrating here at a young age has specifically shaped our interest in telling stories of "outsiders" and privileging "maverick" POV's in the work that we've created. Literary adaptations have also been a thrilling challenge for us as filmmakers. Starting with Tamara's acclaimed feminist novella, *LIE WITH ME* in 2005 and then following up with *THE BOOK OF NEGROES* in 2015 and *BROTHER* in 2022. We are currently crafting an adaptation of Esi Edugyan's Booker Prize-nominated, *HALF-BLOOD BLUES* as our next feature film. Our work together has also stretched into television and Conquering Lion Pictures is now mentoring and developing material with the next generation of racialized storytellers in Canada. So while we sometimes finish each other's sentences, we share a vision for the work we make and that has kept our partnership alive over 25+ years!



Let me ask you about adaptation. With a non-fiction piece inspiring this story, how did you balance honouring the original text while putting your own stamp on the story?

The original text, *Steal Away Home* by Karolyn Smardz-Frost, is an absolute treasure trove of history, notably the sections about travel from Kentucky to Niagara Falls in the 1860s, the Underground Railroad, and the booming metropolitan African Canadian community in Toronto. We wanted, as creators, to make the film its own unique entity, incorporating anachronistic visual elements and Afrofuturism, so there was a ton of narrowing down (choosing what we wanted for this story) and of course riffing and inventing in the world itself. The deep history of this text influenced our desire to talk about the present and to speculate about the future, thinking about what has lingered and endured in young women's lives. So this kind of dovetails into the following question about a sequel. I think a sequel to *Steal Away* would delve into the second half of the book, which is based upon a stack of letters that exist between Fanny Thruston and Cecilia Reynolds after Cecilia escaped to Canada. Cecilia Reynolds had a fascinating life full of travel so it would be fun to remix that and meld it with our Cécile who we see escape to the mythical North and to imagine her communication with Fanny who stays behind to dismantle the wrath of the family into which she was born.



The Making of a Japanese film screening and fundraiser

Perry King, Development Communications Officer, OISE

It was a full house at Innis Town Hall for the latest JICS at the Movies event on March 2, 2026.

The event featured a screening of the acclaimed documentary "The Making of a Japanese," followed by an in-depth Q&A with the filmmaker Ema Ryan Yamazaki with JICS Principal Emerita Elizabeth Morley and Rie Kijima, an Assistant Professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto. She is also the Director of Initiative for Education Policy and

Innovation.

All proceeds from this latest JICS Centennial event supported the JICS Endowment Fund, ensuring that future generations of students continue to benefit from the innovative, inclusive education and research that defines the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute for Child Study Lab School.

This screening reflects the Lab School's commitment to research, innovation, and the public purpose of education. *The Making of a Japanese* resonates with the Lab School's work in early childhood learning by offering a thoughtful, observational look at how environments, relationships, and daily practices shape children's experiences of belonging, responsibility, and community.

Below are some photos highlighting the post-film conversation. All photos by Sharmeen Somani.

About the Film

The Making of a Japanese is a warm, intimate documentary that takes viewers inside a Tokyo public elementary school to explore how early childhood education shapes culture, values, and community in Japan. Filmed over the course of a year, the film follows first- and sixth-grade students as they learn responsibility, cooperation, and respect alongside their academic studies.

Directed by Academy Award®-nominated documentary filmmaker Ema Ryan Yamazaki, the film offers a moving portrait of childhood and the everyday school rituals that reveal larger truths about belonging and identity. Praised by *The New York Times* as a "nuanced portrait that tries to explain why Japan is the way it is — a highly structured society built from the elementary level," the film invites reflection long after the credits roll.



Dr. Geoffrey Hinton joins Centennial conversation on the future of education: How AI can support children's learning

Perry King, Development Communications Officer and Reesa Barkhouse, Senior Development Officer, OISE

As the crowded auditorium came down to a simmer and introductions were made, **University Professor Emeritus Dr. Geoffrey Hinton** rose from his seat on the stage, raised his hands, and prepared to respond to the first question posed.

He was asked, "In 10 minutes, can you explain how the brain works?" to a sold out audience at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study (JICS) Laboratory School.

"I'm up for a challenge."

The exchange set the tone for an evening defined by intellectual curiosity, candour, and urgency. As part of JICS' Centennial celebrations, the panel brought together one of the world's leading thinkers in artificial intelligence with education researchers and classroom practitioners to examine how children learn and how education must evolve in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

Hinton, recipient of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics and widely regarded as the "Godfather of AI," was joined by **Carol Stephenson**, Senior Kindergarten Teacher at the JICS Lab School; **Dr. Eunice Jang**, Professor at OISE; and **Dr. Steven Katz**, Professor at OISE. The conversation was moderated by **Steve Paikin**, one of Canada's most respected journalists and the longtime host of TVO's flagship current affairs program, The Agenda.

The full Centennial panel conversation, moderated by Steve Paikin, is available to watch on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/wDMMvxTnreQ>

For nearly a century, JICS has served as a globally recognized laboratory school, integrating research, teaching, and practice to shape how children learn and to influence education far beyond its own classrooms.

In her opening remarks, **Professor Erica N. Walker**, Dean of OISE, reflected on the significance of gathering such a diverse community in one room.

"Looking around this room fills me with tremendous hope for the future of education," she said. "There are early childhood educators shaping young minds every day, researchers and innovators pushing the boundaries of

what's possible, long time supporters who have believed in education and human development for decades, and new voices ready to shape education's next chapter."

She emphasized that JICS has long been a place where breakthrough research meets passionate practice, sustained by a multigenerational community of educators, researchers, students, children, and families.

The classroom perspective: where AI meets early learning

Early in the discussion, Paikin posed what would become one of the evening's defining questions: had education figured out where artificial intelligence belongs in the classroom, and where learning must remain resolutely human?

For Carol Stephenson, the answer was refreshingly candid.

"No, I don't think anyone has," she said. "That's the short and honest answer."

Stephenson noted that AI is evolving so quickly that educators are often trying to keep pace rather than stay ahead. The most important questions, she suggested, are not about prediction, but intention: how can we make AI as safe as possible, purposeful, and beneficial?

Even then, she acknowledged, education may still find itself reacting rather than leading.

"I think we're actually behind the eight ball."

That uncertainty was echoed by Dr. Eunice Jang, who noted that across Canada, education systems are still grappling with the absence of clear policy frameworks to guide the intentional use of AI in classrooms.

Stephenson's reflections grounded the conversation in classroom reality, particularly in the early years.

"Learning is a relational endeavor," she said. "The inspiration that happens when humans learn from other humans is vital."

"Children learn from other children," she added. "It's glorious."

Building on those insights, Dr. Geoffrey Hinton offered a scientific perspective on why the human dimension of learning cannot be engineered away.



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“When you’re learning stuff, you’re changing these billions of connection strengths,” he explained. “You’re not implanting facts into kids’ heads.”

Learning, Hinton argued, is not the transmission of information from teacher to student, but the gradual reshaping of understanding through experience.

He also pointed to AI’s potential to support learning when used thoughtfully.

“If you’ve got an intelligence that can focus on that child, understand what that child’s thinking, and give an appropriate response,” he said, “that can expand their thinking.”

Reflecting on learner engagement, Hinton added, “When I’m interested in something, I ask the chatbot a question and it tells me the answer.”

At the same time, he cautioned against complacency as technologies evolve.

“We are creating these alien beings,” he said, “and we don’t know if we’re going to be able to control them.”

A century of leadership and a responsibility to the future

As JICS marks its Centennial year, the panel reflected more than a moment of reflection. It signalled responsibility.

For nearly 100 years, JICS has helped shape public education, advancing understanding of child development and modelling what evidence-informed learning can look like in practice. This work reflects a long-standing commitment to ensuring that educational innovation remains accountable to evidence, ethics, and the needs of children and families.

Today, as artificial intelligence reshapes how knowledge is created and shared, institutions like JICS, grounded in research, equity, and a commitment to children and communities, are uniquely positioned not only to lead, but uniquely positioned to serve the public good as education enters a period of profound change.

Convening leaders in research, practice, and public discourse is central to how JICS advances education in service of the public good.

As JICS enters its second century, its role is clear: not simply to respond to change, but to shape it, ensuring that innovation and policy influence education well beyond its own classrooms.



*Left to right: Dr. Steven Katz, educator Carol Stephenson, Dr. Geoffrey Hinton, Dr. Eunice Jang, and Steve Paikin.
Photo by Jenna Muirhead.*

JICS Celebrates 100th birthday on 100th school day of the year

OISE Staff



JICS Principal Richard Messina (left), Mrs. Sara Jackman (centre right), and Vice Principal Chriss Bogert (right) with entertainer Hugh Phillips on the JICS’ 100th birthday party. Perry King/OISE

On Feb. 6, 2026, the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute for Child Study Laboratory School (JICS) marked its centennial birthday with celebrations with students, faculty, and staff during the 100th school day of the year.

The festivities included a lively morning show with musician and puppeteer Hugh Phillips of the Fiarytale Puppet Theatre, a performance from the Singing for Fun student group, arts and crafts with students, celebratory cupcakes, and a soca dance party with City Dance Corp.

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JICS STEAM Night 2026

Nick Song, STEM & I.Ed. Teacher

This year marked the first annual STEAM Night at JICS – the latest opportunity for the school community to come together in celebration of learning.

The evening event in February of this year was conceptualized in the same spirit as other annual JICS events like music night, book night, and art night – this time, celebrating the innovation, problem solving, designing, and critical thinking explored in STEAM education.

The focus of STEAM Night 2026 was on the A and M parts: Art and Math. After the success of the event this year, we expect many more STEAM Nights to come, with future themes centered around other aspects for variety and interest.

Showcasing Art

The event began with a gallery walk, where art from each student in every grade was proudly displayed with thoughtful explanations from our LTO Art teacher, Zarfshan. Student work done in collaboration with the following special guests was also on display:



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Street photography with Zion One, a Toronto based photographer, visual artist, and creative

Zion taught students to seek out images that excited them, challenged them to explore creative instincts, and encouraged them to use their imagination to connect deeply with their local community.

Print work with Leah Gold, a Toronto based multidisciplinary in drawing, printmaking, and ceramics

Leah was our Artist in Residence this year and worked with all our students to tell their personal stories through the craft of printmaking.

Showcasing Math

When we imagined the concept for STEAM Night, we wanted to create an engaging experience that captured our community's dedication and love for problem solving, designing, and critical thinking. To achieve this, each classroom teacher set up a hands-on creative station in the gym, designed to show case JICS's approach to math. Students received an activity passport that they could fill out by collecting completion stamps from each station. A wide range of topics and activities were showcased, adaptable to any grade level.



Here is a peek at two of our stations:

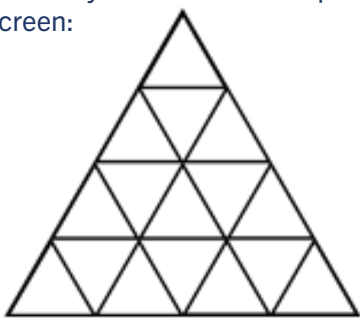
At the grade 3 station, students explored the relationship between area and perimeter. Using the same 10 tiles, they created different shapes that shared the same area and quickly discovered that many different perimeters were possible. Students were challenged to create shapes that had not already been made, and experienced shared surprise at the amount of variety they could come up with! Many beautiful creations were made and enjoyed by students and their parents.

The grade 4 and 5 station explored fractions, decimals, and percentages through physical visualization: teachers created a number line across the gym from 0 to 1, and students used clothespins to mark the placement of different fractions, decimals, and percentages. It was exciting to see students consider where they thought clothespins should be placed, sometimes moving their clothespins after discussing with peers to come to a consensus.

The evening was buzzing with positive energy, “aha” moments, and shared joy of Art and Math. It was inspiring hearing math conversations between parents and their children, and interesting to see children from different grades engage with the same activities and come to conclusions. Having the opportunity to chat with the parent community, interns, and teachers on topics I am personally so passionate about was the cherry on top of a terrific event!

Our only disappointment was that it was over so soon. The night ended with an exciting draw, awarding three lucky students with fun math-based games to play at home. We hope to see you at STEAM Night 2027!

Some visitors may have noticed this puzzle on display on the gym screen:



The answer to the triangle is 27

16 small triangles (1 unit ea.)

7 medium triangles (4 units ea. - 1 upside down)

3 large triangles (9 units ea.)

1 full triangle (all units) 27 total.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EU3FIKj-3M> – if you’re interested in the math behind it!



Grade 3 – Measurement



Grades 4,5 – Fractions/Decimals/Percentages

PARENT EDUCATION

One Hundred Years of Parent Education at JICS

Chriss Bogert, Vice-Principal

Educating parents about best practices to support children’s healthy development has long been a priority for the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study. In its early decades, when it was known as the St. George’s School for Child Study, parent education wasn’t an “add-on”, it was built into the fabric of the child study approach. This grew from the belief that to truly understand and support children, it also important to work with their families and communities. Alongside the Nursery School and the research program, parent education supported the mission of the new centre. In fact, in order to have a child enrolled in the St. George’s School, parents were required to attend parent education courses.

The “Dr. Spock” of Canada

The first Director for the Institute, Dr. William E. Blatz, was a pediatrician and psychologist who made significant contributions to knowledge about raising and educating children and became known as the “Dr. Spock of Canada” (Volpe, 2010). Under his leadership, parent education was deeply connected to his theory of security and emotional development. The goal wasn’t just to teach parenting tips, but to help parents understand children’s emotional needs, develop insight into family relationships, and apply principles thoughtfully rather than rigidly. But Dr. Blatz did not act alone in this endeavor. The Institute’s efforts in parent education were supported by many individuals on the team, including the first Director of the Parent Education Division, Helen Bott.

“What is parent education? Parent education is the term applied to a plan for presenting the principles of mental hygiene to adults with the hope that they may utilize them in regulating their own lives and also apply them to the task of bringing up their children.”
- Staff of the St. George’s School for Child Study from
Outlines for Parent Education Groups: Pre-school Learning, 1935, p. 7.

Honouring One of the Many Women Behind the Institute’s Success: Helen McMurchie Bott

It is Helen McMurchie Bott who should be credited at least in part with laying the foundation for parent education as a critical component of the institute’s work. Helen Bott’s husband was Edward Bott, professor and head of the new Department of Psychology at the University of Toronto, who established the St George’s School for Child Study in 1925. Professor Bott hired Dr. William Blatz to be the first Director of the school, a role he held until his passing in 1964. While Blatz focussed primarily on running the Nursery School and the research program, Helen Bott worked alongside Blatz as the Director of the Parent Education Division from 1925 to 1938. During these years Blatz and H. Bott together co-authored two books (*Parents and the Pre-School Child*, 1928; *The Management of Young Children*, 1930). H. Bott had earned an MA in Psychology at the University of Toronto in 1923 and authored her own publications in the field (*Method in Social Studies of Young Children*, 1933; *Personality Development in Young Children*, 1934; *Adult Attitudes to Children’s Misdemeanours*, 1937). H. Bott’s 1933 and 1934 books were the first and second published in the

Child Development Series of the University of Toronto. Her research and writing focused on practical guidance for parents, emphasizing the psychological and social aspects of early childhood.

Integration of Research and Practice for Parents

During H. Bott’s tenure as head of the Parent Education Division, the program developed a systematic approach to supporting families. Parent education centred on discussion groups, lectures, and printed guidance materials, all of which drew directly on observational studies conducted in the Nursery School. H. Bott played a central role in interpreting these observations for parents, linking everyday child rearing practices with emerging psychological concepts, particularly those related to personality development, behaviour, and adult responses to children’s actions. Her work helped strengthen the connection between the Institute’s research staff and its educators, ensuring that findings from child study investigations informed the practical advice offered to families.

Parent Study Courses at the St Georges School for Child Study

An examination of documents from the Institute’s archives revealed interesting facts about parent education in the Institute’s early days.

Parent groups met in conference rooms within the school’s building dedicated for that purpose. Classrooms were equipped with observation windows to facilitate the teaching of adults including parents. A circulating library for parents in the study groups was maintained.

“Good parent education is not a series of straightforward answers to problems, but the development of a point of view which should enable the parents to solve their daily problems with children. Most parents need help in developing a point of view and a set of attitudes which will enable them to be at the same time friendly, warm, and human as well as objective and consistent. . . Bringing up children today in our complex society is not an easy task. Most of the traditional ideas of parental authority are not acceptable and many parents feel lost and confused. These parents want and need the help that this course can give.”

- Karl Bernhardt from *Outlines for Parent Education Groups: Discipline Learning, 1939, p.5*



In a prospectus of the St. George's School for Child Study for the 1932-33 school year, eight study courses were offered for parents as well as for University of Toronto graduate students in child study. Each course was comprised of ten 1.5-hour meetings, held every two weeks, from October until April. Parents were required to initially take Course I and II, as well as VII and VIII. The latter were meant to bridge theory and practice with a series of curated observations of Nursery School practices, followed by discussion periods.

In 1932, the fees for each parent study course were \$5, and \$7.50 for both parents. The required courses were covered by the tuition fee for their child, which for the Nursery school in 1932-33 was \$60 for the year.

1932-1933 Parent Education Course Examples:

Course I: Habit Training (Preschool Age)

Topics: 1. Why study children? 2. The appetites and habit formation. 3. Habits of eating. 4. Habits of sleeping. 5. Habits of the toilet. 6. Health habits and early sex training. 7. Play. 8. The nature of emotions. 9. Fears. 10. Tantrums.

Course II: Management of Young Children (Preschool Age)

Topics: 1. The nature of control. 2. Discipline and freedom. 3. Opportunities for activity. 4. Constructive and destructive tendencies. 5. Danger situations. 6. Adult influences – unwitting. 7. Adult influences – witting. 8. Relations among children. 9. Rewards and punishments. 10. Success and failure.

Other developmentally oriented courses for school-age children and adolescents, as well as supporting the functioning of family relations were also offered.

For decades the Institute produced a regular publication called *The Bulletin* which presented a philosophy of home and family life in relation to the present-day world, and as a vehicle to share the results of research that could be of use for families.

Parent Education Today

Nowadays, the JICS Lab School's Parent Education program offers families a rich, research informed series of talks, workshops, and community conversations designed to deepen understanding of child development, learning, and wellbeing. Throughout the year, parents have opportunities to engage with educators, psychologists, and leading researchers about a range of topics addressing current realities. The parent education program reflects the school's commitment to building

strong partnerships with families and to helping parents support their children with confidence and insight.

While the issues and topics of parenting have changed over time, the principle of aligning parent education with what is currently known about supporting children's optimal development remains. While parent education is no longer required, parents are still encouraged to attend workshops and lectures, read about parenting from recommended sources, and become informed about best parenting practices that align with the approach of the laboratory school. An annual research night shares highlights of research taking place in the Lab School. As we begin to chart our path for the next 100 years at JICS, this year the focus was on introducing the Institute's new longitudinal BRIDGE study, which is explained further in this issue.

"Parent education has, from the first, been an integral part of the plan of the Institute of Child Study. From the beginning it has been assumed that only with intelligent parent co-operation can optimum results in child training be achieved. When the programme began, parent education was a new field in Canada, lacking both content and leadership."

- Frances L. Johnson, from *Twenty-Five Years of Child Study*, 1951, p.39.

2025-2026 Parent Education Topics:

- **Caregiving in the Era of Smartphones and Social Media**
Presentation by Dr. Zia Lakdawalla, Director of Foundations for Emotional Wellness, and co-founder for the Toronto's chapter of Unplugged Canada, Rebecca Snow.
- **Understanding Anxiety in Children: The Value of Leaning into Discomfort**
- **Cognitive Flexibility & Stretching our Brains!**
Presentations by JICS's school psychologist, Dr. Trina Epstein.
- **JICS Parent Research Night: How brain science helps us understand children's development and learning.**
Dr. Kaja Jasińska presented on her work in educational neuroscience and introduced the BRIDGE study.
- **Firm & Friendly Parenting: Raising Cooperative Children Without Power Struggles**
Presentation by renowned parenting expert Dr. Alyson Schafer

Recordings and slides from the parent education sessions are available on the school's family website.
<https://www.jicsfamily.com/parent-ed>

The Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School has continued to include parent education as part of its broader mission. As we enter our second century, the Institute remains committed to evolving its parent education program in response to new research and the changing needs of families. Supporting parents is one of the most powerful ways we support children. Parent education is a cornerstone of the Lab School's mission, ensuring that families feel informed, supported, and connected as their children learn and grow.

"The aim of the Institute in its parent education programme has been, and still is, to help parents gain insight through knowledge and understanding into their relationship with their children and with the family as a whole, and to use this insight in the practical field of guidance. The programme endeavours to lead parents to think objectively and adapt principles to the child's experience so that the child may emerge a responsible adult."

- Frances L. Johnson, *Twenty-Five Years of Child Study*, 1951, p.43

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NEW RESEARCH

The JICS Classroom: Building a BRIDGE to the Future of Learning

Dr. Si Jia Wu, Laidlaw Research Alum & MA CSE Lecturer

The magic within the JICS Lab School is built upon a century of systematic inquiry designed to help children feel safe as they develop and learn. Our empathetic teacher-researchers make this possible by using scientific evidence from developmental psychology and education to inform their daily practice. As we step into our next century, we are advancing this legacy through the BRIDGE (Building Research on Inquiry, Development, and Growth in Education) study. This longitudinal project powerfully unites the three pillars of JICS: the Lab School, the Laidlaw Research Centre, and our Child Study and Education (CSE) teaching program. Supported by the Laidlaw Endowment Fund, the study is led by JICS Director Dr. Jennifer Jenkins and Laidlaw Research Centre Director Dr. Kaja Jasińska. This study aims to better understand and create the conditions for children to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.



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Over the last three years, Laidlaw academic faculty and researchers, Lab School teacher-researchers, and the CSE teacher candidates they mentor have collaborated to lay the groundwork for this study. Together, we co-created fundamental research questions to serve the children of JICS and the future of education: How do we nurture children's curiosity, creativity, and imagination? What encourages children to persist through the natural discomfort of learning? How does the brain change when children learn? How can human interactions drive academic growth? What teaching practices help children communicate, connect, and cooperate?

To explore these questions, we track children's reading, math, science, and socioemotional skills as they progress through each grade. Lab School teacher-researchers capture real-time learning during everyday classroom activities, while Laidlaw researchers guide children through game-like laboratory tasks. For example, children wear a brain-imaging device while reading and solving math problems on a computer. We showcased this technology to Grade 4/5 students during their human body inquiry unit and shared it with parents at the JICS Parent Research Night. The excitement was palpable, and many children enthusiastically participated in these laboratory tasks this Spring!

Next, BRIDGE researchers will analyze this initial data and share early findings with the JICS community. We will discuss these insights with participating students, particularly those entering Grade 6 in the Fall to offer them a unique learning opportunity about scientific inquiry based on their role. Parents can learn about the findings as part of our future Parent Education program, while teacher-researchers and Laidlaw researchers collaborate to translate the data into teaching practice.

Ultimately, we will share our findings globally through academic conferences and publications, while directly integrating them into the learning experiences of our CSE teacher candidates. We hope this collaborative effort builds a strong foundation for future educators. By carrying these evidence-based practices forward into our next 100 years, we can ensure children in classrooms everywhere feel safe to inquire, develop, and grow into kind members of their communities.



Celebrating Three Remarkable Educators

Richard Messina, Principal

Robin Shaw

Robin was an integral part of the JICS community for an extraordinary 31 years. A graduate of the ICS Diploma in Child Study Program, she began her journey at JICS immediately after completing her studies, first as a Special Education teacher and later across a range of classrooms from Grades 1 through 5, most recently in the combined Grade 4/5 class. Her influence spans generations of students.



A passionate advocate for deep, meaningful learning, Robin was especially committed to bringing Indigenous histories and perspectives into the classroom. After completing the Indigenous Worldviews course at OISE, she ensured students engaged with this knowledge in authentic and respectful ways. Her contributions to the Natural Curiosity Teacher Resource publications reflect her dedication to inquiry-based learning and to connecting students with the world around them.

Robin was also a lifelong learner, continually expanding her expertise in special education, particularly in ADHD and executive functioning. Her thoughtful and nuanced approach to assessment helped identify and nurture each child's unique strengths. She brought a deep knowledge of children's literature into her teaching, fostering in her students both a love of reading and an appreciation for diverse voices.

Among her many innovations, Robin developed the beloved "OLOGY" creative writing project, empowering students to explore their voices across genres. She later shared this work internationally, presenting at the Edith Bowen Laboratory School in Utah.

2025 RETIREES

*Celebrating Robin, Zoe, and Suzanne
as they begin an exciting new chapter*

Her impact extended far beyond her own classroom. Robin was a generous mentor to teacher candidates and a frequent contributor to the MA CSE program, helping to shape the next generation of educators. She also brought wonder and curiosity into her classroom through the care and study of animals—from ducks and chicks to reptiles and amphibians—creating unforgettable learning experiences for her students.

Zoe Donohue

Zoe was a cherished member of the JICS community for 22 years. Also a graduate of the ICS Diploma in Child Study Program, she began her career with the Etobicoke Board of Education (now the Toronto District School Board), teaching from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 5, before returning to OISE to complete her Master's degree.

A teacher-researcher at heart, Zoe brought a deep commitment to inquiry and innovation to her work. She was widely published in educational journals and presented her research nationally and internationally. Initially seconded to JICS as a Grade 2 teacher, she went on to teach across the grades, most recently in the combined Grade 4/5 class, always centering strong relationships with students and families.

At JICS, Zoe collaborated with leading scholars to advance Knowledge Building pedagogy and presented at conferences such as AERA, IALS, and NCTM. Her work reached beyond the school, including presentations to the Ministry of Education and a demonstration “Tomorrow’s Innovators” classroom that brought together students from JICS and the TDSB.

Zoe was deeply committed to professional collaboration, actively engaging in Japanese Lesson Study and frequently opening her classroom as a demonstration site. She mentored countless teacher candidates



and contributed significantly to both JICS and TDSB professional learning communities.

Her passion for mathematics education led to the development of the Primary Daily Math Discussion, a structured and engaging approach to exploring key concepts. This work was published in Teaching Children Mathematics and became a highlight for visiting educators. She later extended this work to the junior grades and contributed to the Robertson Program for Inquiry-Based Teaching in Mathematics and Science.

Beyond JICS, Zoe partnered with the Rainy River District School Board and First Nations communities, and long before it became common practice, she was leading students into the ravine for seasonal, land-based learning.

Suzanne Schwenger

Suzanne has been a beloved member of the JICS community for more than 25 years. A former Lab School student herself, she returned in 1997 to teach music, beginning her tenure as her daughter entered the Nursery program.

Throughout her career, Suzanne continuously deepened her expertise in early childhood music education through professional learning with the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Ontario Music Educators Association, and the Orff professional learning community. She also served as a teacher and curriculum mentor for the Smart Start program at the Oscar Peterson School of Music.

Never one to shy away from new challenges, Suzanne embraced learning with the same enthusiasm she inspired in her students, most recently studying jazz piano during the pandemic and attending a jazz camp in Louisville, Kentucky.

At JICS, Suzanne created a music program that was thoughtful, sequential, inclusive, and joyful. She brought the community together through memorable events such as Halloween assemblies, the annual spring Music Night (including its virtual “Zoombilee” during COVID), and the beloved Festival of Lights celebration.



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For a Century, This School Has Put Children First How U of T's Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study continues to rethink what education is for

Scott Anderson, Editor, UofT Magazine

When the Institute of Child Study opened its doors in 1925, the idea that young children might learn best through play, observation, and carefully structured freedom was radical. Nursery schools were controversial. The notion that children could be entrusted to trained educators – rather than remaining solely in the care of their mothers – was, to some, almost immoral.

What distinguished the Institute of Child Study from the start was its experimental orientation. Everything that happened in its classrooms was meant to be studied, understood and improved. That ethos carried the institute forward as it expanded beyond a nursery school, eventually becoming a full elementary lab school, a centre for teacher education and one of Canada's most influential voices in early childhood research.

Nearly a century later, the questions facing educators are different – artificial intelligence, children's mental health, their exposure to technology – but the institute's leaders say the underlying challenge remains the same: understanding what children need, right now, to learn and thrive.

"What's core is defining what we mean by quality education," says Richard Messina, the principal of the institute's lab school. "A quality education is defined by what we value."

For much of the past century, Messina argues, education systems have valued grades, test scores and efficiency – often at the expense of curiosity, play and deep understanding. In an era where information is everywhere, he says, the role of the teacher must shift.

"[Educational philosopher and reformer] John Dewey was arguing pre-internet that we must teach the whole child," he says. "Curiosity, questioning, understanding. We still haven't done that in the large system of education."



At the Institute of Child Study – founded in 1925 – young students take part in a program designed to advance research in early childhood education.



The institute's lab school treated outdoor play as a vital part of learning and development.



Inside the school, students often learned through music and movement – an early example of the institute's research-driven approach to how children learn best. All photos courtesy of the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study.

That philosophy shapes how the institute approaches technology – including AI. At the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, children in the early years – nursery through senior kindergarten – do not use digital

devices at all. “We want them playing with beautiful material that they experience hands-on,” Messina says. Devices are introduced gradually, beginning in the primary grades, with an emphasis on digital literacy and critical thinking.

“We can’t deny that technology is part of our lives,” Messina says. “But we have a responsibility to introduce it in a way where children see both its benefits and its limitations.”

Chriss Bogert, the school’s vice-principal, frames this as an extension of long-standing commitments to digital citizenship. “It’s not about preventing the children from going on the internet,” she says. “We need to teach them how to go on it critically, thoughtfully, to be responsible, to be ethical.”

That work has taken on new urgency with the arrival of AI-generated content. When AI summaries began appearing in students’ Google searches, Bogert says, it became “a new point for us to teach the kids: how do you deal with that? How do you know that it’s a reliable source?”

Used carefully, technology can also deepen learning in ways that would otherwise be impossible. Bogert points to Knowledge Forum, a networked database developed through a long-standing research partnership with OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) scholars Marlene Scardamalia and Carl Bereiter. Students post theories, questions, and new information, building a visible web of ideas that allows the entire class to reflect on how knowledge develops collectively.

“It makes the knowledge growth of the community visible to everybody,” Bogert says – learning how to learn, together.

At the heart of the institute’s approach is a belief that learning is social, relational and deeply human. “Children need to feel secure in order to share what they’re thinking,” she says. “They need to feel known and valued, and to see themselves as contributors.”

That emphasis extends beyond the lab school. The institute also educates future teachers, supports parents, and houses the Laidlaw Research Centre, where scholars collaborate with educators and students to study how children learn – and how education systems can do better.

Rick Volpe, a professor of applied psychology in the institute’s teacher education program (which offers a

Master of Arts in child study and education), sees this integration as central to the institute’s mission.

“We’re educating children, educating educators, and generating research in one place,” he says. “That’s a superb asset – not just for OISE, or the university, but for Canada.”

Evidence of the institute’s impact, he adds, often appears years later: in confident graduates, in universities eager to admit them and in adults who continue to love learning and advocate for others.

Bogert points to Dewey’s enduring wisdom: “The role of education is the continuing capacity for education. And that’s what we see in our graduates. They’re learning because they love learning. There’s a joyfulness in it.”

As the school marks its centennial, that joyfulness – and the security that enables it – remains the foundation. In an age when technology promises to revolutionize education yet again, the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study’s message is clear: children’s well-being comes first. The rest follows.

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