

PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL JEWISH EDUCATION COMES ALIVE IN THE HEART OF THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

November 18, 2008 – Gray Academy of Jewish Education is joining over 85 countries from around the globe to celebrate international education from November 17-21, 2008.

What makes this situation unique to Gray Academy is this international education experience is offered in the heart of the prairies in central Canada - where a thriving small Jewish community embraces not only the familiar but the excitement of the new and unknown. This JK-12 university preparatory school has quickly garnered an excellent reputation abroad for placing equal value on Jewish and General academic programs, and providing opportunities to nurture the emotional well-being and spiritual development of all students.

Since 1997, the diversification of the student population from across the globe who speak many different languages is reflected in the growth of the school's Admissions. Presently, the student body hails from Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ukraine, Russia, Israel, and the U.S. As a community day school, Gray Academy believes in accessibility to a Jewish education for all Jewish children, where the highest academic standards are delivered to develop future community leaders.

But the unique nature of enrolling international Jewish students who hail from South America is a phenomenon, as these young adults are placed in a homestay environment thousands of miles away from their family and friends for the duration of the school year. Presently enrolled in the school is a student from Chile who is a third family member to attend Gray Academy in as many years, as well there is a student from Brazil who is entering his second year as an international student.

According to the Province of Manitoba, International Education involves multi-faceted exchanges worldwide among students, teachers and researchers. All educational facilities and those involved in the education system benefit significantly from these exchanges. The purpose of **International Education Week** (IEW) is to raise awareness and understanding of international education, its significant benefits to Canada, to Canadian educational institutions and to all Canadians.

When asked to describe the impetus for breaking new ground as a Jewish community day school in Manitoba, Rory Paul, Head of School & CEO, stated that "one of the driving forces in developing an International Student Program at Gray Academy of Jewish Education is that it provides current students with an opportunity to be exposed to a wide variety of cultures and languages that enhance the education they presently receive."

The school's vision to provide an educational environment of academic excellence, strong Jewish values and proud citizenship is a perspective that welcomes cross-cultural learning.

Further, International Education Week is designed to showcase the significant contribution that international education makes in preparing Canadians for the global world and supports Canada's efforts to engage effectively on the international stage.

Second-year international student Josef from Brazil proudly affirms the feeling is mutual, "It is now my second year in Canada and it seems I am better adapted and accustomed with my new life. There were many challenges (language, weather, culture, new education system) that I had to initially face, and now I can say that I can't see my life without these experiences since I came to Canada. I am proud of seeing the whole cycle that I went through at Gray Academy."

According to the IEW website, **Promoting Global Citizenship** is the theme for Canada's 2008 International Education Week. International and intercultural knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes are increasingly important for students to develop in order to live and work in a complex but increasingly interdependent world. School boards, colleges, institutes and universities are providing a range of opportunities for students to develop these competencies through such programs as study abroad, internationalized curricula, and service learning.

Homestay parent Morrie Elfenbein agrees. "I do think it is a really great opportunity to be a part of the program. We love trying to learn a new language. We have an 8 year old and the three of us try to incorporate some of the words or sayings in every day use that our international student brings to us. She finds it fun to hear us try to learn Spanish. As well, I think it makes her feel special that we want to learn. We have had so much fun so far, and it has really taught us how it is to have a teenager in our home. It is quite different and has really been quite an adjustment to us. We do everything together and take her everywhere with us. We feel her family is now our family, and we have extended that family to Chile."

Tracy Kasner-Greaves also offers her perspective about being a homestay parent to a high school student from Brazil, "The International Program has been an amazing experience for our family. We are enjoying learning a new culture and helping a young adult grow and feel a part of our community."

On recent reflection, first-year international student Noemi from Chile explains, "It was hard at the beginning because I was not with family and friends but once you get used to the people, culture and city, everything that is different from my country – you enjoy it – this new experience – and it is a good one that you can learn many things from other people – like English and it is helpful. It's been excellent and I've made friends I will stay in touch with when I go home. The school in general has been good in terms of learning and being comfortable."

For the past five years, the provincial government and the Manitoba Council for International Education (MCIE) have celebrated International Education Week. Gray

Academy is proud to be a part of International Education Week this week as they celebrate their second year as a participating school in the heart of the prairies; proudly brandishing the moniker that is well known in the province – Friendly. Manitoba.

For further information on Gray Academy's International Student Program, please contact Lori Binder, Vice Principal at lbinder@grayacademy.ca or (204) 477-7485.

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Lisa Abram
Director of Advancement
Gray Academy of Jewish Education
(204) 477-7514
labram@grayacademy.ca