



**To the LPS Parents and Citizens Association on August 13, 2015**  
**From: LPS Social Justice Convenor 2011 - ongoing, Nadja Leffler.**

### **Backgrounder: Why is Social Justice a Part of LPS P&C Activities?**

Social Justice sub-committee activities are incorporated into P&C activities, including in the newsletter, on the website, in the accounts and at various fundraising events, because we are a sub-committee of the P&C. By making our activities integral to school life, the goal is that our presence is a gentle, creative reminder that our kids have a caring school and great opportunities, but that the whole world is not like that. Our goal - and tagline - is empowering our kids to care.

All the sub-committees are an important part of the ethos of LPS as we help to support our school in providing a complete education for the whole child. As the kids learn swimming, music and chess in safe, leafy surroundings with easy access to uniforms and healthy food, social justice actions are integrated so that our kids are also learning that if we all do our bit to care for others, it helps to make the world a better place.

The Social Justice sub-committee was established in 2011. Our aims are:

- a) giving the kids who want to get involved a chance to do so (now achieved through the Kids SJ group)
- b) raise awareness of social justice causes and broaden the children's understanding of the world; and
- c) raise funds at these events to support the above causes. This is necessary so we can form on-going relationships with selected schools in need to help meet the above goals.

It was also decided that the purpose of any funds raised need to be clear so that people would know that this games/book stall etc was for external causes or charities and could choose whether to participate. However we were still to be integral to P&C events to send a positive message to students, parents and the community.

To clarify procedures, we have a commitment to deliver Social Justice Kids Group activities that provide ways for kids to get involved, but as this is a student group run at the school (like Envirobugs), these first need to be approved by the Deputy and supervising teacher. Therefore we liaise with the P&C convenor responsible for the event when we know what is possible.

The reason why we are integral is that there are two ways any institution (school, government, business, multinational) can make a commitment to social justice.

1. The institution, in this case LPS, could add social justice onto its agenda as a kind of after-thought - a gift-drive at Christmas, an annual gold-coin mufli day. This is called the "bolted on" approach. This is more common, but the P&C and school community in 2010 felt there was a better way.
2. The other way is the "In the blood" approach - which is what LPS decided to implement in 2011. This approach involves integrating the social justice agenda into as many aspects of the school life as possible so that the children are exposed to a socially responsible way of thinking from as young an age as possible and for as long as possible. This approach creates actual cultural change within a school community - it means that whenever children think of obtaining something for themselves, they also think of giving something to other people who are not as fortunate as themselves. It is a beautiful and loving approach and one that on a practical level means including social justice (either as in an informational or a fundraising capacity) at many events that the school holds.

Work on establishing a Social Justice sub-committee was started in 2010 after P&C VP and long-term P&C member Cath Shaw invited me to work with the P&C to develop the best way forward. I was approached because I was trying to collect for a charity garage sale and I had worked for an aid agency. Law lecturer and now ethics teacher Sonya Willis became involved shortly afterwards as well as nurse Angie Dali who had worked in developing nations and artist Kath Baker. We held a school survey and discussions with senior staff and long term P&C members before the structure was confirmed in 2011.

Occasionally there is some concern expressed that Social Justice fundraising might detract from fundraising for our school. There is an excellent study (I think it was done by McKinsey and published in the Harvard Business Review) that noted that people's philanthropic motivations are complex and do not always operate in a mutually exclusive way. People give to the school, because they love their children and they want the schooling experience to be terrific. Then they will consider giving any change to social justice causes. It is also likely that the reminder of what others don't have (desks/ water /toilets) will encourage people to realise they have a greater capacity to give to both our school and beyond. Some people like LPS teacher Kate Waters have risked their lives to volunteer in Uganda, but we can't all do that. We hope that the committees we integrate with also share the sense of satisfaction from doing something to improve the lives of kids in need.

So let us continue to work together to ensure we can support and educate the whole child at LPS and make it a positive experience for all the volunteers involved. #