

Guest Blogger Jenny: Puberty Already? How Mirman School Deals with the Hormones, the Moods, and Yes, the Smells.

Description



I know it's hard for parents of young children to believe, but soon enough your adorable squishy angels won't be quite as appealing anymore. My daughter, Anna, is now in Room 5 (5th grade) at Mirman, and change is in the air.

Change is in the air quite literally, apparently. One of the biggest topics of teacher concern on Mirman's Curriculum Night inside Room 5 was the air quality inside the room, particularly after lunch. "This is the year that, about halfway through, it all changes from smelly kid to gamey kid," Anna's teacher announced. "I just wish you guys could be in here for just one afternoon to experience it. The days of bathing two or three times a week are coming to an end."

Naturally, the Room 5 parents tittered with embarrassed amusement, many of them thinking: *Not my kid. Not yet.* But yes, puberty is striking the Room 5 population hard, and the teachers are thinking quite creatively to cut down on body odor and athlete's foot, while not shaming the kids into thinking they're really gross.

The very first study topic in Room 5 Science tackled this subject with remarkable humor. Understanding that kids are all fascinated by the truly disgusting, the teacher dreamed up Grossology, a topic exploring what the human body innocently produces all by itself unless blocked by a little proper hygiene. For instance, in Anna's class the kids took swab samples from one another's underarms and feet, and then grew out the samples in petri dishes.

This experiment turned out to be the great leveler. Sure, some samples grew out more bacteria than others, but everyone pretty much grew something (although Anna did mention that one boy had some pretty tough critters taking up residence in his armpit. I think he felt proud on some level). All the kids were, of course, fascinated by this experimentation.

This bloom of unwanted life then led to an opportunity to discuss prophylactic measures such as deodorant and washing one's feet and shoes. Kill the stench was the overall message, and the teacher had simple solutions like soap and water. Somehow, even though I'm sure all the parents had at least broached this subject with our kids, the message meant a lot more once they could see what they were destroying. After all, this was *science*, not bath time.

There were other gross topics discussed, like boogers and snot (Anna's explanation of hard vs. soft boogers should have been recorded and used as an advertisement for Kleenex). Flatulence, I won't even go there. And while all this potty humor might seem sophomoric to some, these are kids, and therefore are, by definition,

sophomoric. Grossology was a simply perfect way to clue them all in regarding their changing bodies, while accepting the changes without massive judgment and teasing.

All in all, if this is how Mirman handles the kids' entrance to pubescence, I'd say they're off to a pretty good start. By craftily incorporating health information into the hard sciences, the school demystifies the bodily changes the kids' experience. And hey, if it leads to cleaner hair and remembering the roll on every morning, I consider it a triumph.

Jenny Heitz has worked as a staff writer for Coast Weekly in Carmel, freelanced in the South Bay, and then switched to advertising copywriting. Her daughter started 4th grade at Mirman School this year. She previously attended 3rd St. Elementary School. Jenny has been published recently in the Daily News and on Mamapedia, The Well Mom, Sane Moms, Hybrid Mom, The Culture Mom and A Child Grows In Brooklyn. She now writes about gift ideas and products on her blog, [Find A Toad](#).

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