

# Kids excited as exchange program nears

By KATE GILDERDALE  
Students from Ecole Louvois in Strasbourg, France, can be sure of one thing when they arrive in here May 7 — a warm welcome from their enthusiastic hosts at

Dickson's Hill. The French students have been corresponding with the Grade 6 class at Dickson's Hill since 1987. It marks the first time such a trip has been organized in the region

and perhaps all of Canada, states staff teacher Michael O'Reilly. "Everyone's very excited. It's a big event," he notes. Twenty-one students and five teachers will live in the area from May 7 to 28. The hosts are anxious to meet their pen pals. Comments: student Kelly

Ward: "We're always excited when their letters arrive. Sometimes we receive more than a letter. They often send small gifts, postcards and Francs. One time they sent us a magazine and we had an article written about us in their newspaper." Kelly's looking forward to see-

ing how the visitors adapt to the Canadian way of life, what they'll think of portables, school buses and Canadian money. Parents of children at the school have helped with fundraising towards the cost of trips planned for their guests, Kelly states. Every other Friday they hold a raffle, selling tickets for 50 cents. They're planning a school garage sale April 22 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and a car wash on April 29.

Missy Sousa writes about skiing, Canada's Wonderland, the trains and "all the fun stuff we have here." French students don't celebrate Halloween, explains Kelly. They also have different traditions for occasions like Easter.

The students receive letters every two or three weeks, explains Muhammed Ismail. "We've written about 15 letters to them." "Every time we receive letters, the class is jumping all over the desk," observes Graham. Jill Greenwood's correspondent "wrote to me about his trip to Italy last summer. He talked about spaghetti coming out his ears."

"Their school is on the border of France and Germany," says Graham. "They can see Germany if they look across the river." Strasbourg students attend school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and a half-day Saturday.

Jill says her class appreciates the Canadian system, especially since French children are in school from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Whitechurch-Stouffville Mayor Fran Sainsbury and Markham Mayor Tony Roman will meet the students here. Federal MP Bill Aitwell will greet them in Ottawa.

Little wonder the Grade 6 boys and girls at Dickson's Hill are counting the days to May 7.

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