

September 6, 2000 - Monster Mom Moment in Delft

Dear Friends:

Wednesday I had a big mothering day, which I will pepper with harriet attitude. I started it in a snit. It was seven o'clock, wakey time for harriet, and someone else, not terribly tall, with glasses and dark curly hair, was in MY shower. This confused my whole system. So much for being flexible.

After some anger at everybody, and off to school, and of course remembering too strongly that someone with dark curly hair does not love me, I retreated to the comfort of email. Then I dragged myself to my first International neighbors which I thought would be a social event with coffee. It was more like a sign up and get help session, still useful for me. I got some letters translated that I really needed to know what they said. But I made a social error that was a mom-moment because it made me feel protective.

I was encouraged to join a mom and toddler coffee group even though I don't have a toddler and I said I could bring my Welsh friend (almost) Marie who has a toddler. The leader sternly asked what Marie's husband does. I explained that he's a window fitter (construction). The leader explained in straight terms that Marie could not be included in International neighbor's because it was only for students, staff, and faculty of the university. It was both a child moment, being reprimanded, and a mom moment, feeling mad that Marie couldn't enjoy too. And Marie had hinted at the snobbiness of Delft towards her, now I quite understood her point.

There aren't many other moms here with five small boys, bright pink highlights in their long dark hair, and heavy black eye makeup. It's lucky for Marie that she's madly in love with her husband, and has her matching sister Karen living here with toddlers and a window fitter husband as well. That must be a comfort.

So back to the topic of mom mood. Well, Wednesday is half day and we had an appointment with Peter and Arthur's teachers at 12:15 to find out how Montessori works in the school, so we could reassure Peter that he's doing the right thing, or help him understand how to do the right thing. Teacher Annaloes explained and it all seemed to come clear. He's doing fine.

It was really helpful and it was a real mom moment. Then the teachers asked the boys to go play so they could just talk to me, Alex not having arrived for the 12:15 appointment yet. They very tactfully brought up that Arthur can't keep up enough with his group 3. His handwriting and math are too weak. They want to put him back a grade, which means new classmates and new recess and all new friends.

I thought it was great because then his teacher will be teaching all the class the things that Arthur needs to learn, like writing and addition and subtraction. But I

really felt the mom-thing, and especially when they voiced their concern that Arthur might have to do first grade over again when he gets back to the US. I told them I really don't THINK SO. I explained that it's just not academically the same and he was in the same place as other kids his age and even ahead some.

With that all settled, and smiles all around, we went back to discussing how Peter can do his big project correctly, since we've never done one and don't want to misunderstand the directions. At 1:12, Alex arrived for what he thought was a 1:15 appointment. Early and smiling. Too bad he missed the private explanation about putting Arthur back a grade.

We got the boys and all went downstairs together and met Arthur's new teacher, Roeti, and she was firm and nice. Arthur was upset that he has to make new friends, but we promised ice cream for after the first day.

So today was it, Arthur's first day in group 2 (group 0,1,2 together, ages 4-6), and he fit right in. Roeti seemed really surprised that he participated and made friends right away. I was pleased but not surprised, another mom-moment.

But the crowning accomplishment, that made Wednesday such a standout mom day, the most mom mode, was the first football (soccer) practice. Just getting them both there in the rain on bikes, me lugging Arthur in his comfy chair behind me and he crowing the whole way, "go faster Mom!" as I huffed along. It's about 6 kilometres to the football club. We were late due to the teacher meeting (at least we know our priorities). Thought about not going because of the hassle, the lateness, the rain, the embarrassment of first time when everyone else has been before, but went anyway, a true mom strength.

AND, got Peter to join the same group F as Arthur so they can go at the same exact times. There were four groups of F's, and Peter played with taller ones who had somewhat better skills than he but probably were 7 or 8 years old. Arthur played with short ones, probably age 5-6 that had matching skills. What a relief to have them both enjoy football in the rain, after the bike ride, and with the other dutch boys all speaking dutch, including the trainers, and being late, and **THEY BOTH LIKED IT!** You mom's know what I mean, a real mom positive moment.

The bike home was ok, I let us make our first trip to Dutch MacDonald's, it was disturbing but a treat to them. The whole day felt very Mom-full.

Just thought I'd share that with you.