

OBSERVED

Fundraiser is sweet for all

The kids at Queen Elizabeth Senior Public School in Mississauga are hoping to raise a little money — and some consciousness — this week and next.

Instead of the usual chocolate bar sales that have become the bane of parents' wallets and waistlines every fall, the Grades 7 and 8 students at QE will be selling only fair trade chocolate in this year's fundraiser, launched last week.

"It was a very easy decision to make," says school council co-chair Erika David, whose son is in Grade 8 at QE. "And the chocolate tastes great."

QE is working with Oxfam Fair Trade, which sells chocolate under the Equita brand name. The large chocolate bars are \$2.50 each,

though the kids are encouraged to sell two for the round number of \$5. Each of the 420 kids at the school is expected to sell one case.

David says the program will make the students more aware of the impact of their actions.

"We're hoping that they realize that by buying a chocolate bar in Mississauga, they are affecting the lives of farmers in West Africa."

The move to fair trade began last spring when a parent on school council made a presentation about the issues surrounding chocolate production. The industry, as has been well-documented in studies and media reports, relies on a network of plantations in developing countries with questionable records on human rights and child labour. Fair trade ensures a better life for those growing the cocoa beans.

But leave it to a child to best explain what's at stake.

"Those kids have a right to go to school, too, not slave away in cocoa plantations," says Grade 8 student Lucas Petersen.