



An apple for the teacher in Canada.

# Back to school around the world

Diverse elementary traditions

By Lisa Evans

experience for children who are leaving the safety of their parents' home for the first time. To remind children that learning is sweet, in Germany, parents make a *schultüten*, also called a *zuckertüte*, or candy cone, for their first graders. The cone is made of cardboard and is filled with candy, small toys and school supplies. The tradition dates back to the early 1800s and marks students' entry into formal education.

"That's what Grade 1 was all about," says Bettina von Lieres, who remembers walking up onstage to receive her cone, adorned with brightly coloured tissue paper and her name written in bright bold letters across the top. "It was magical," she says, recalling the excitement that led up to the special day.

"Kids were scared, crying on the first day of school, but then

they got this fantastic present," says von Lieres, who made a *schultüten* for her son when he started the first grade in Canada, trying to keep up the tradition in her new country. "He liked the candies," she shrugs, admitting he wasn't as excited about receiving it as she remembers being as a little girl.

Sergey Lapytski remembers his first day of school in his homeland of Russia as being full of excitement. Called "the Day of Knowledge," the first day of school usually falls on Sept. 1, and is celebrated with blaring patriotic music, decorative banners and an assembly of students dressed in their finest clothes, each carrying a beautiful bouquet of flowers for their teachers.

"I still remember my first knowledge day participation, where students from all grades were involved. My first teacher,

the flowers I gave her, the school uniform I used to wear and my first school book called *Azbuka*, from which you learn the alphabet," says Lapytski, whose eldest son participated in his own knowledge day in Russia and whose daughter, 6, started school in Canada. "As a parent you start to prepare your kids for this big event long before. We bought him a nice suit, new shoes, [and asked his opinion] about flowers for [his] first teacher," says



Handing out candy cones is a school tradition in Germany.

Lapytski.

Children give flowers to the teacher to express respect for the teacher's job. "There are no rules what particular flowers should be given. Some give roses, others something else," says Lapytski.

In Canada, an apple is the traditional present given to teachers at the start of the school year. While some believe the practice originated as a gift of food for poorly paid teachers, others say the good health associated with apples ("an apple a day keeps the doctor away"), made the present meaningful. Whatever its origin, stores stock up on apple-related gifts in preparation for the start of the school year, although people rarely give an actual apple anymore.

In Canada, the more common tradition is back-to-school shopping, where parents take their kids shopping for school supplies and new clothes for fall. Although keep in mind that the first day of school may still feel like summer weather, so keep the jeans and sweaters for colder weather. 🍂

**B**ack to school customs and traditions differ from country to country. While in Kazakhstan, each student brings a flower for their new teacher, Israeli children start first grade entering the building through an archway formed by the school's older students.

Starting school can be a scary

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