

May 30th, 2007

Office of the System Superintendent
Alternative Schools and Programs
Toronto District School Board
5050 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON
M2N 5N8

Sent via email

Dear Ms. Quan,

I am writing to inform you of our intent to start a new school within the Toronto District School Board. The school will be called Whole Child School and our desire is to establish the school in TDSB Ward 15, under the supervision of Superintendent Jill Worthy in SW4.

The primary contact for TDSB administrative purposes is as follows:

Deborah Adelman
[address redacted for web site]

The group of founding parents and educators who are submitting the proposal includes:

1. Deborah Adelman
2. Kelly Drennan
3. Anthony Gonsalves
4. Stephen Davies
5. Winston Neutel
6. Alusha Morris
7. April Nicolle
8. Robyn Matamoros
9. Louise Zimanyi
10. Tamara Brodey
11. Hope MacLeod
12. Nick Radia

Values

At this school we care about children. We care about their academic work and we want them to see the unity of knowledge. In other words, we want to let students see how subjects relate to one another and to the students themselves. In relating subjects we find that the arts, or more generally the artistic sense, can facilitate these connections. We care about how children think, and, in particular,

we want to encourage a balance between creative and critical thinking. We want students to be able to solve problems and use both analytical and intuitive thinking in their process.

We care about the physical development of the children and we devote part of the curriculum to activities that foster healthy bodies and positive self-image. We intend to strengthen the connection between the students' bodies and minds so that they feel "at home" with themselves.

We care about how students relate to others and to the community at large. We focus on communication skills, and as the students develop we encourage them to use these skills in a variety of community settings. At the same time, we encourage the community to come into the school, particularly artists and musicians who can inspire the students' aesthetic sense.

Most of all we care about the students. We realize that the most significant contribution they make to our society and this planet will be from the deepest part of their being and not just from the skills we teach them. We will try to foster the spiritual growth of the student by working on ourselves as teachers to become more conscious and caring. By working on ourselves, we hope to foster in our students a deep sense of connectedness within themselves and to other beings on the planet.

Definition of Holistic Education

Ron Miller, founder of the journal *Holistic Education Review*, and among the best-known interpreters of the holistic education movement, defines Holistic Education as follows:

Holistic education is based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace. Holistic education aims to call forth from people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning. This is done, not through an academic "curriculum" that condenses the world into instructional packages, but through direct engagement with the environment. Holistic education nurtures a sense of wonder. The art of holistic education lies in its responsiveness to the diverse learning styles and needs of evolving human beings.

Guiding Philosophy

"Everything we teach children should be so alive it can grow with them. Waldorf schools consider it their job to prepare people for the great school of life, which

will itself ultimately bring them to maturity. In fact, schools shouldn't focus on providing perfectly accomplished educations; they should prepare children to take possession of their lives."

-- Rudolf Steiner

"In linking their curriculum and schooling to the children's developmental stages, Waldorf schools seem to have a unique sense of what children are ready for.... [They] promote creativity and critical thinking in an exemplary fashion.... exactly the direction public education needs to move."

-- Jack Miller, professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

The philosophy of Whole Child School was inspired by the values and philosophies of Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf education, as well as Jack Miller, Professor and Head of the Centre for Teacher Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

At its core, the philosophy is to create a teaching and learning environment that inspires, educates and delivers a complete, holistic environment for children and teachers to thrive and grow. To truly educate a child, not only must the mind be engaged, but also the heart and the will.

Mission

Our mission is to develop healthy, responsible and creative human beings who realize the fullness of their potential in terms of creative expression and active participation in our civil society.

To educate the whole child we believe that:

- Learning occurs on many levels (physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual).
- Learning occurs in many ways.
- Effort, play and wonder are all part of learning.
- Learning is inspiring and engaging when the arts are integrated throughout the curriculum.
- Learning is brought to life by active participation in hands-on learning experiences.
- Learning is more meaningful when it is related to real-life contexts.
- Learning is facilitated in safe, nurturing, positive, and respectful learning environments.

Benefits to Students

We believe that holistic education has many benefits. The following list of benefits to students are just some of the benefits that have been identified through extensive research into the power of the holistic education when it is embodied by teachers who understand the multi-dimensionality required to address the learning needs and styles that exist in every classroom.

- Students develop a deep sense of wellness as all aspects of the self are respected and honoured: intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social;
- Greater sense of connection with and appreciation for the natural environment
- Students develop a sense of social awareness and responsibility as they work on community service projects;
- Children have a better understanding of the rhythm and the structure of the world around them
- Improved sense of identity and self-worth
- Improved listening and awareness of other's needs as they solve problems together both at school meetings and in learning activities;
- Students see the practical application of the things they are learning - learning is more real and meaningful
- Students have a deeper and richer aesthetic sense as a result of the arts-integrated approach

Our goal is to teach the whole child: the head, the heart and the hands. Children will develop to the best of their ability if they have a positive, nurturing, secure developmental environment that promotes physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth.

We are committed to creating and developing an excellent curriculum that will continue to grow and evolve through ongoing research and practical application.

Curriculum Principles

Whole Child School will implement a holistic curriculum that incorporates the best practices available in holistic education, drawn from several leading holistic pedagogies including Waldorf education. This unique curriculum will meet all guidelines and requirements as determined by the Ontario Ministry of Education. We have outlined 10 key teaching and learning principles that are central to our holistic approach:

Arts-Integrated Education: Artistic, hands-on projects will be integrated into academic subjects in a way that engages the whole child - head, heart and hands - all at once rather than independently. Research shows children learn best through a combination of artistic and aesthetic education.

Experiential Education: Hands-on activities will also be an important part of learning new academic material. The children will be able to engage in new material through open-ended hands-on activities that will guide them towards understanding and discovering the concept on their own.

Community Learning and Teaching: Whole Child School will use the "class teacher" model, in which one teacher stays with the same group of children for two or three years. This structure helps create continuity and gradual transition from home to school community. Whole Child School will also work outside the classroom to build our larger pupil/parent/teacher community through regular seasonal festivals.

Thematic and Deep Learning: Teachers will present new academic material during the "main lesson", a two-hour period of time at the beginning of the day. The same subject will be taught for three to four weeks during this time. The teaching and learning of the academic material is built from one day to the next, and the understanding of the subject gradually deepens over the course of the lesson block.

Teaching through Narrative: Throughout all the grades, stories are told to the children in a storytelling format. Using narrative gives pupils a conceptual framework within which they can orientate themselves and understand their experiences. Teachers will primarily share content in oral form, especially in the earlier grades. Teachers will inspire pupils to identify with historical characters in stories and develop oral communication and listening skills.

The Use of Imagery: Using imagery ("mental pictures") is an essential element of the Whole Child approach. When presenting facts teachers will strive to present information with both pictorial and emotional elements. Our goal is to present learning to children in a way that fills them with wonder and enthusiasm.

A "Living" Classroom: Teachers and students, together, will develop the main lesson books from a variety of sources. Teachers will use a wide variety of materials and resources, including prepared worksheets, texts, vocabulary lists, maps, diagrams, and multimedia. Pupils will use blank journals to write and illustrate what they have learned and observed. Outdoor activities and hands-on experience will be key to teaching and learning experiences.

Ecological/Environmental Learning: Beyond the basics of merely adopting environmental practices, each student will be educated to view him or herself as living within the context of a whole world ecology. Specific aspects of ecology will be consistently woven into our approach, our building site and our world-view to impart students with the understanding of the individual and collective relationship that every person has with the planet.

Community Service: Our education will meaningfully connect students to the community, laying the groundwork for them to envision and create a peaceful world as adults. Through extensive community service, students develop a sense of compassion and understanding for others, as well as a desire and will to help.

Social Inclusion: Our social inclusion approach will endeavour to teach children the necessary social skills to problem solve and gain independence in solving social problems as they arise. To this end, classroom meetings and other classroom and school-wide activities will be regularly held to provide a safe forum for children to discuss and solve social issues as they arise.

Best regards,

Stephen Davies,
Co-chair,
Whole Child School Committee