



Montessori Community Call to Action meeting Oct 17th, 2017

Origin of Prince Montessori Education Society (PGMES) in Prince George and SD57 partnership

Speaker: Karen Stahl- Vice Chair of PGMES

- Montessori education in PG was started by a group of dedicated parents who approached the SD57 about starting up a choice school. In the province at the time all Montessori schools were privatized and we wanted to offer Montessori to everyone in PG.
- SD57 was concerned about additional costs and the agreement was parents would help raise/provide these funds.
- SD57 supported us on policy adjustments, starting the high school program and relocation procedures after the Highglen fire.
- Survey of costs of private Montessori schools in BC demonstrates that the costs are between \$10,000 and \$16,000 per student per year...with coverage of teacher salaries being the biggest part of these fees at the private level.
- We ask more of our teachers as they are required to have Montessori credentials in addition to their BC training.
- PGMES agreed to support this when we made the agreement with SD57
- In the past parents fundraised for Montessori classroom materials at that time it cost \$25,000 per classroom.
- Materials will need to be replaced over time as they wear and classroom expansions occur.
- For the past 20+ years the PGMES budget has been between \$10,000-\$15,000 to support teachers training and purchasing of Montessori materials.
- Montessori Community is very strong in Prince George. We have preschool, elementary and high school programming which all work together to provide consistent Montessori

education and smooth transitioning. PGMES promotes interconnectedness in all programs.

Teachers Discussion on Montessori Programming

Speaker Jody Hoffman (Upper Elementary Teacher at Polaris Ages 9-13)

- Elements of the Montessori Classroom:
 - o Multi-age: provides an opportunity to get to know the child and their family. Usually 3 year cycles with the same teachers. Older students act as helpers and mentors.
 - o Spiral curriculum: Set concepts are revisited in more detail each year. Students will see the same topics throughout their school career, with each encounter increasing in complexity and reinforcing previous learning.
 - o Work time (2.5-3 hrs): giving individual or small group lessons at this time.
 - o Students are encouraged to work their own passions.
 - o Teacher observes the child and responds to what the child needs or wants to do. All children have a desire to learn.
 - o Material based learning. So the classrooms look very different. Materials are expensive and can be a burden to replace without resources.
 - o Animals are present in the classroom. They are part of our learning environment- biology, connection...not just pets.
 - o Education can change the world. Peace education is a very important part of the Montessori education.

Speaker: Joseph Jeffery (Learning commons PGSS- filling in for Mrs. Scott High School Teacher at PGSS)

- High school Program
- Two class and Am and PM group.
- Grade 7-9 (12-15 yrs).
- Unique in that they can enter high school at the grade 7 level if ready.
- Major subjects are with Mrs. Scoot: Math, English, Science and Social Studies.
- Everything is interwoven and it is a very cohesive program.
- Need a healthy level of grade 7's to keep the program going.
- Went from 1 to 2 classrooms this is an important expansion
- Grade 7's have more energy and keep the grade 9's motivated. They are the driving the learning. There are 20 grade 7's this year.
- Teacher will help you to decide if your child is ready to go to high school.

- Also need grade 7's at the elementary level as leaders.
- PGMES is a big support for the high school program in particular field trips and materials.
- Take city bus as much as possible to cut down on costs but it is still expensive
- The grade 9's do a three day year end field trip. Where they observe nature, focus on connectedness, community building and other skills. This is a huge closure to their Montessori experience and has some of the most memorable moments.
- Once a month each group goes to Polaris and receives leadership credits that go towards their graduation. They participate in literacy, sports and baking and so on.

Speaker: Shelley Bond- Program Manager at the Child Care and Early Learning Centres

- Infant/toddler and 3-5 yrs
- Also follow spiral curriculum
- Use the Montessori materials for these age groups
- Feed into and work with the elementary program at Polaris

Speakers: Janice Butchart- (Lower elementary teacher at Polaris ages 5-8 yrs) and Jody Hoffman, Montessori Training

- Training costs can cost up to \$14,000
- They are not recognized by any teaching bodies so there extra credentials or increase in pay
- Community of teachers is important.
- Have to understand child development and learning from 3 to 13 years because it is important to understand where the child came from in order to support their current learning.
- Children have 'Intrinsic Motivation' behaviour and learning is driven by internal rewards.
- Need to have the Montessori training so one can know how to prepare the learning environment (the classroom)...the why behind it.
- 4.5 yrs ago after the fire parents of the Montessori community helped remake the golden beads which are a very important part of Montessori math materials.
- More money has gone into teacher training recently than ever before. Jody and I have completed our training and are now mentors. Kathleen and Steve are almost complete. Lots of community support and passing the torch.

PGMES Resources and Funding Requirements

Speaker: Karen Stahl

- PGMES has fewer and fewer volunteers in the past several years.
- We use to consistently raise \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year. Last year we raised \$7500.
- We also run a preschool and out of school care program.
- We need new people to come on board and help us.
- Need someone to organize volunteers and liaison with the board. Also people to help with social media and communications.
- We are asking for three things tonight:
 - o Resources: volunteers
 - o Money: fundraising or donations
 - o Communication: promotions
- We will work with people and make sure you are well supported in your volunteer roles.
- Expenses in perspective:
 - o Animals: ~\$3000.00 per year
 - o High school program: society work ~\$3000 per yr
 - o Professional development : Montessori training ~\$2500/yr/teacher
 - o Replenishing Materials: \$2500.00
 - o Thus total per year: ~15,000 to \$20,000
- It is becoming increasing difficult to raise money. We use to raise the funds we needed at the Gala but this has been decreasing every year. Not everyone is interested in attending a gala and there are a lot of competing events. So we are looking for ideas on a different approach.
- Donation/Membership Drive. We have ~200 children in our programs. If every family donated \$10.00 per month per year that would give us \$20,000 and we would not have to fundraise.
- We are thinking about everyone needs as this might not be feasible for some families. What are your thoughts? Looking for feedback from you the parents.
- There is lots of other fundraising occurring as well outside of PGMES which specially supports needs at Polaris such as playgrounds, class trips etc... We have a great group of parents running the POLARIS PAC who love supporting the school. There is also fundraising within the classroom via students and teachers.

