



Open House Physical Tour Replacement Information About Our School

January 2021

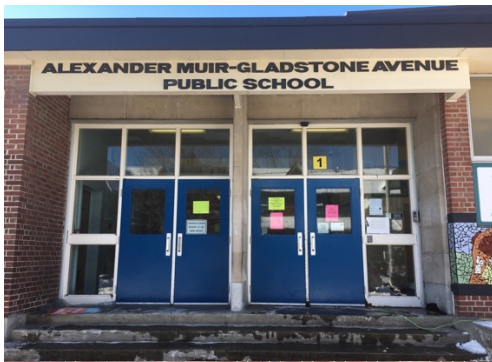
Because Covid-19 prevents us, like the other alternative schools in the TDSB, from hosting a physical open house. This information has been prepared by for prospective families ('future families') who are applying to our 2021 admissions lottery. We have tried to include as much as would be covered in our traditional open house / school tour highlights. We are sorry to not be able to meet you in person, but please see our website for more information: <http://thegrovecommunityschool.ca/>

Our school



The Grove Community School opened in 2009 and currently has around 127 students, from JK to Grade Six. We are on the third floor of Alexander Muir / Gladstone (AMG) Avenue Junior and Senior Public School. Our two schools share the use of an extensive library and computer lab, gymnasium, auditorium, school yard, garden and outdoor classroom. We also share a Principal (Sudeep Sanyal) and Vice-Principal (Catherine Munro). The entrance used by the Grove is on the west (Dufferin) side of the school, accessed from the playground.

Gladstone entrance



All doors to our school are locked during the school day. The only way to enter our building is to ring the bell at the 108 Gladstone Ave. entrance and be buzzed in. This entrance has steps. Every person entering the building through this entrance during the school day is required to sign in at the main floor [AMG] office (just inside the Gladstone doors).



Our school day (pre-Covid)

The school day begins with morning circle at 8:55am and dismissal is at 3:15pm.

We ask that all families arrive at school on time to minimize disruptions to classroom learning. If you arrive late for school (e.g., you arrive after morning circle) you will need to enter our building through the Gladstone entrance and walk up to the third floor to get a late note before dropping your child in their classroom.

Morning circle



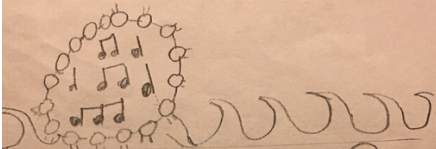
Each school day begins with morning circle. This is an important symbol of our community spirit and brings us all together. Parents, friends and caregivers are encouraged to stay if they can. Information is shared, announcements are made, classes present their work, and the anthem is either heard or sung after an acknowledgement of the Indigenous lands that we stand on.

For families that have before care (available only through the YMCA), YMCA staff will bring children to morning circle and leave them with a Grove staff (teacher or ECE)

If we are unable to hold morning circle on the school field (due to poor weather), we will instead meet in the basement lunchroom for morning circle.

Our version of the national anthem is a little different. It was written by our Grade 2 class. Our Land Acknowledgment was written by our community, specifically with input from Indigenous families at the school. The current versions of both are below:

We Love our Grove
COMMUNITY

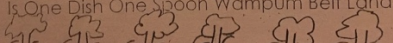


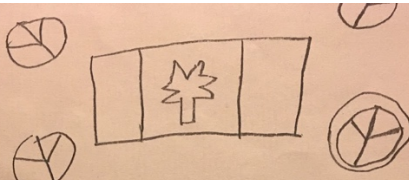
Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge we are situated on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat.

We also recognise the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

As we sing, we will reflect,
We honour this truth with respect,
On this ground where we all stand,
Is One Dish One Spoon Wampum Belt Land.





O Canada!

O Canada!
Our home on Indigenous land!
True peace and love in all of us command.
Let's join our hearts, protect the land
And keep our country clean!
From far and wide,
O Canada, we stand together for peace.
Please share our land and honour the treaties!
O Canada, we stand on ground for trees.
O Canada, we stand up tall for peace.

Written by the Grade 2 students in Room 31
2019

The third floor



The Grove has the entire third floor. Here you will find:

- Two JK/SK classrooms
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4 / 5
- Grade 5 / 6
- Resource / French / Science room

We have one classroom on the 2nd floor:

- Art / Health Education

The third floor also has our Grove administration office (staffed mornings only) with our office administrator Sharon.

Our 3rd floor space is decorated with school projects and murals. We also have shoe bins and cubbies for the kindergarteners, and a small Grove library. The highlight is our floor to ceiling Grove Graduation Tree, with messages from our alumni:



The first floor

We have numerous shared spaces with AMG on the 1st floor:

- AMG office with our principal (Sudeep) and vice-principal (Catherine)
- Library and computer lab
- Outdoor learning areas (courtyard/outdoor classroom and garden)
- Auditorium and Gymnasium



The first floor also has our Grove parent lounge with meeting space, snack prep, school event storage, and the parent lending library.

The YMCA, Dovercourt Boys & Girls Club afterschool program, and EarlyON centre are all located on our first floor.

Kindergarten at the Grove



A few things to note about our kindergarten rooms

- Both classrooms are junior kindergarten & senior kindergarten splits
- Our kinders have their own washroom/sink area
- Children have snacks and lunch in their classroom.
- Our larger kinder classroom has 24 children and one ECE
- Our smaller kinder classroom has 16 children

Here's a sample schedule of a typical day in the (pre-Covid times) life of a Grove kinder (note: during this Covid school year, this schedule was modified to include the majority of the day being spent outdoors):

- 8:55 - 9:15 Arrival and outdoor Morning Circle, followed by school entry.
- 9:15 - 9:30 Cubby Routine: Children are encouraged to independently remove and store outdoor clothing, gather their backpacks and shoes, and prepare for the transition to indoors.
- 9:30 - 9:45 Independent Reading: Books are selected and students read quietly, then return books to shelves. JK student focus is on building a love of reading. SK student focus is on early reading skills (letter recognition, visual cues).
- 9:45 - 10 Circle/Carpet Time: This whole group activity may include a variety of components. Examples are Read-aloud, math and language activities, dramatization, song and sharing.
- 10 - 11 Activity Time: Children select an area of interest, for example the sensory centre, snack station, math and literacy centres, dramatic play, building or arts centres. Teachers and ECEs rotate through the centres to encourage learners in deepening their exploration.
- 11 - 11:15 Tidy up and sharing experiences.
- 11:15 - 11:30 Cubby Routine. Again, students are encouraged to transition independently to outdoor play. (*Transfer of care to TDSB lunchtime supervisors*)
- 11:30 - 12:10 Outdoor lunchtime play
- 12:10 - 12:45pm Lunch is eaten in classrooms. (*Transfer of care back to teachers*)
- 12:45 - 1:45pm Activity Time: Children select an area of interest, for example the sensory centre, snack station, math and literacy centres, dramatic play, building or arts centres. Teaching staff circulates to enrich play. Some students may be asked to break off into small groups to work on specific learning outcomes.
- 1:45 - 2 Tidy up.
- 2 - 2:15 Circle/Carpet Time: Whole group activity, as in the morning.
- 2:15 - 3 Physical education or library.
- 3 - 3:15 Cubby Routine and school exit. Transfer of care to families, caregivers and extended care [YMCA] staff.

Food at our school

The Grove and AMG are NUT FREE schools. We ask that families send children to school with a reusable bottle of water, lunch and two snacks for the first part of the year. Once our snack program begins, children only need lunch and one snack. We ask all parents to talk with their children about food allergies and the importance of not sharing their food with other children. Both The Grove and AMG are proud to be certified Platinum EcoSchools. Please help us reduce the amount of garbage we generate as a community by keeping any packaging in school lunches and snacks to a minimum and using reusable containers.

The Grove provides a healthy afternoon snack to students through a snack program that is partially subsidized by a grant, with the remainder paid for through our school fundraising. Here is one of our recent snack menus to give you a sense of the program:

M Feb 3: Pineapple + GF Popcorn

T Feb 4: Cucumbers + GF Apple Chips + Cheese

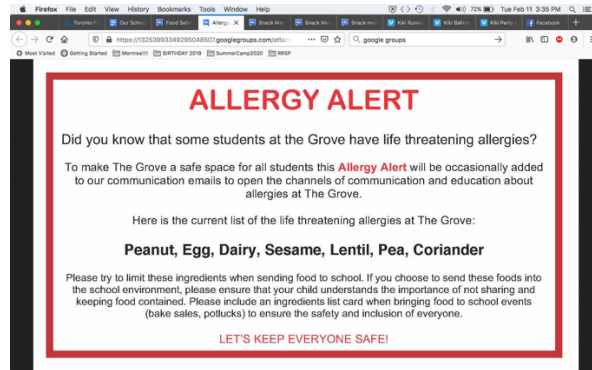
W Feb 5: Strawberries + Whole Grain Bread (or GF Rice Cakes) + Cheese

R Feb 6: Cucumbers + GF Black Bean Chips

F Feb 7: Cantaloupe + GF Crispy Lentils

GF = gluten free

We have a number of school wide events throughout the year that involve food. Many of our evening events (e.g., Wild Rumpus, School Play/Concert, End of year farewell) involve potlucks or bake sales. We ask that all food is labelled with ingredients as there are children with anaphylactic allergies at the school.



Our three pillars

Ecological Sustainability and Environmental Justice

The Grove is founded on the belief that the quality of children's learning is intimately related to the health and wellness of their interconnected ecological and social environments. As a result, we see sustainability and social justice education as inextricably linked. We challenge ourselves to think about the impact of our actions on the natural world and how that connects to a sustainable environment and society. Our school garden is the setting for many lessons:



We think a lot about our consumption and children learn the importance of reusing through our ReGift Market in December. Families purge their homes of gently used items (books, games, mugs, pictures, DVDs, jewellery, etc) and parent volunteers organize and lay everything out in our lunchroom for our market where children “shop” for their loved ones at no cost.



Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice

We do our best to recognize and reflect on the ways in which oppression, privilege, and opportunities impact our own lives and the lives of those around us. We recognize that our country is founded on colonialist policies and those of us who are non-Indigenous settlers on this land are complicit in, and have benefited from, historical and contemporary systems of oppression. We believe that Black Lives Matter. We celebrate gender diversity and work to create safe spaces for LGBTQ2+ students and families. Students are encouraged to recognize connections between their individual experiences and the social contexts in which they occur. This helps our school community recognize and critically engage with all forms of social injustice, and to learn and work together towards democratic transformation and positive social change. In 2019 we held a successful benefit concert for the Wet'suwet'en land protectors featuring kid and parent performers.



Our annual prep. for Orange Shirt Day:



Community Engagement and Activism

The Grove's community-centred education prepares students by moving them beyond memorizing facts to evaluating the social and environmental significance of what they are learning. At The Grove, the whole community is our classroom and a space where new knowledge, grounded in the experiences of students and teachers (as well as families and other community members), is produced through meaningful dialogue. Student learning focuses on real, authentic problems and solutions that encourage collaboration and cooperation because students will experience the reality that real-life problems often are too complex for one person to solve alone and that we need to work together to confront the many challenges of our world. Here are some recent examples of our community activism:



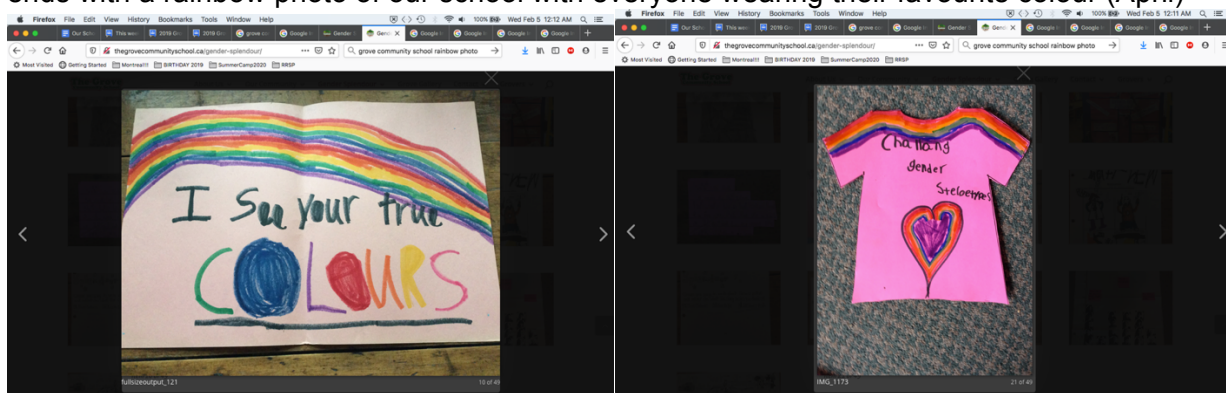


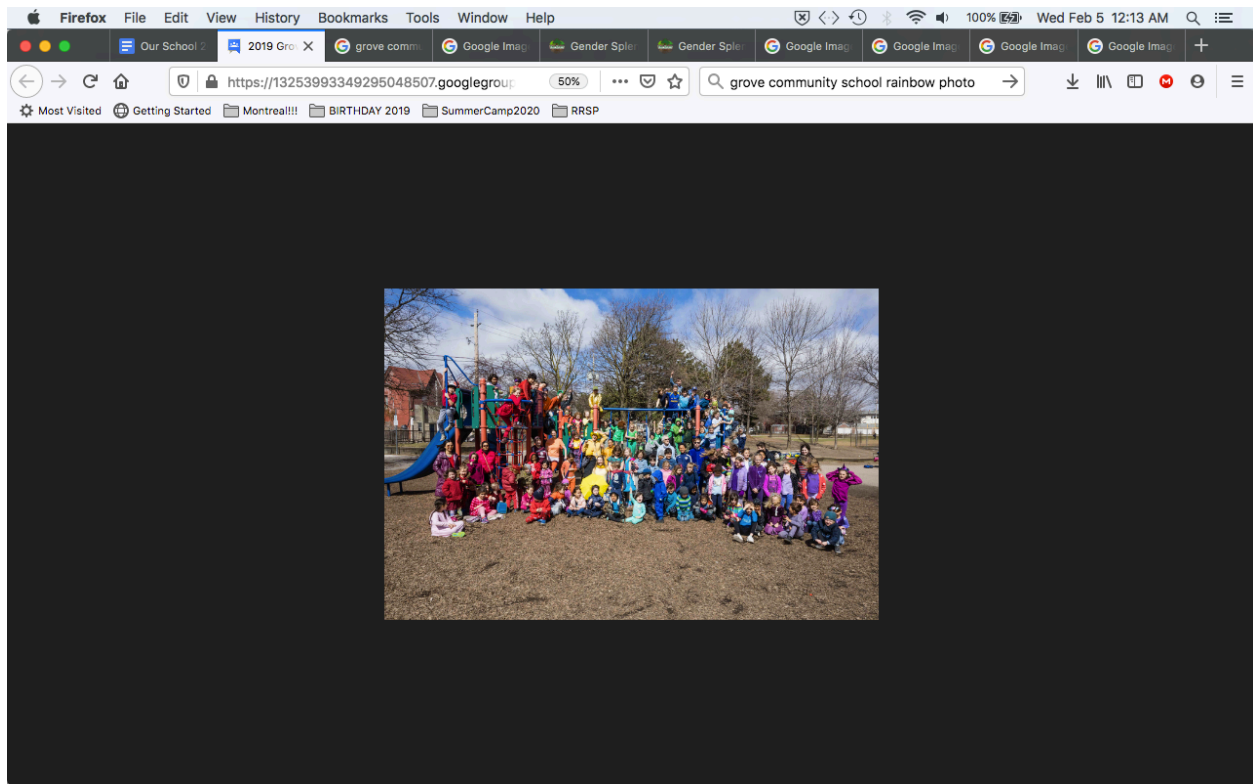
Volunteer opportunities!

Events and celebrations are an important part of community building at our school. They provide opportunities to affirm the schools mandate for social justice, environmental activism and community engagement. They also require lots of help from parents!

Examples include:

- **Gender Splendour:** Students are given the opportunity to closely examine gender and to challenge gender stereotypes through games and activities. Links between gender stereotypes and homophobia are also discussed. Resources and activities are specific to the age and grades of learners. The week ends with a rainbow photo of our school with everyone wearing their favourite colour (April)





- **Indigenous Peoples Day:** Parents and caregivers, teachers and students from The Grove and AMG gather at morning circle for a round dance that fills the field. Special programming by Indigenous educators and/or parents varies from year to year (June 21st)



- **Grove Gatherings:** Students assemble in multi-age groupings to explore themes that are being presented in the curriculum and build community (i.e. Wild Rumpus potluck to welcome new families in September, Wildflower stomp with kindergarten classes to “stomp” seeds in the fall, solstice celebrations in the garden, etc.)
- **Peace Week:** Students engage in a variety of activities, projects and presentations exploring issues of community, peaceful conflict resolution and social justice (Sept)
-

- **Skating Party:** Parents and caregivers are always invited to join the whole school at McCormick rink for our skating party! This is a great way for older students to exercise kindness in helping the younger skaters, and to build resilience, strengthen our community, and celebrate winter together (Jan/Feb)
- **School Shows:** The Grove typically puts on a big show once a year (sometimes a winter concert, sometimes a play in the spring). It is a chance for students to showcase the learning they have done in drama, dance or music, and is often tied to major themes from the curriculum during the year. Parents play a major role in helping to direct and produce the shows, helping with choreography, music, costumes, sets, lights and sound. The timing and nature of the show varies each year, and in the past has included "The Lorax", "Free2b", "Cabin Fever Reliever", "Imagine a World (a Beatles Tribute)" and last year, a play the students (all grades) wrote using consensus decision making!
- **Earth Festival at Dufferin Grove Park:** a variety of activity stations are used to explore and celebrate curriculum related themes and to highlight the importance of eco-stewardship (May)
- **Black Excellence Month:** as well as special programming in the classrooms, parents and students contribute at morning circle to acknowledge and honour the achievements of Black innovators (February)

Our 2018 Black Liberation Month curriculum enrichment included an Art Show!

The gallery is available here: <https://www.marginoferasgallery.ca/blog/2018/3/1/reflections-got-your-back-with-the-grove-community-school> and a selection of artwork from our children is included below:



I Got your Back Allyship & Resistance to Anti-Black Racism

The Grove Community School
2018 Student Art Show
in Conversation with
BlackLivesMatter
Toronto Freedom School

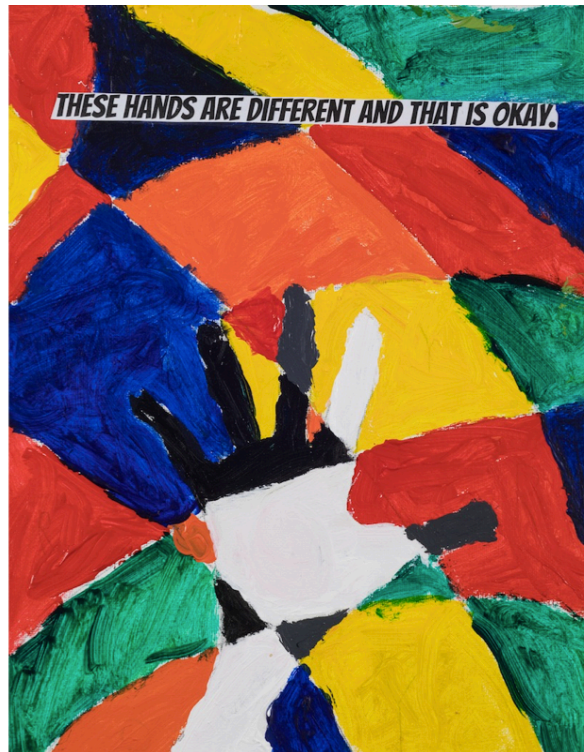


@themoeg
1684 Queen St. W.
(E of Roncesvalles Ave.)
February 26
(1pm to 8 pm)
opening party: 5-8
and Feb. 27
(11am to 5 pm)



Music from DJ Dirty Dabz
and Our Youngest Freedom Fighters
Tokens available to families who need them
Snacks and beverages will be served

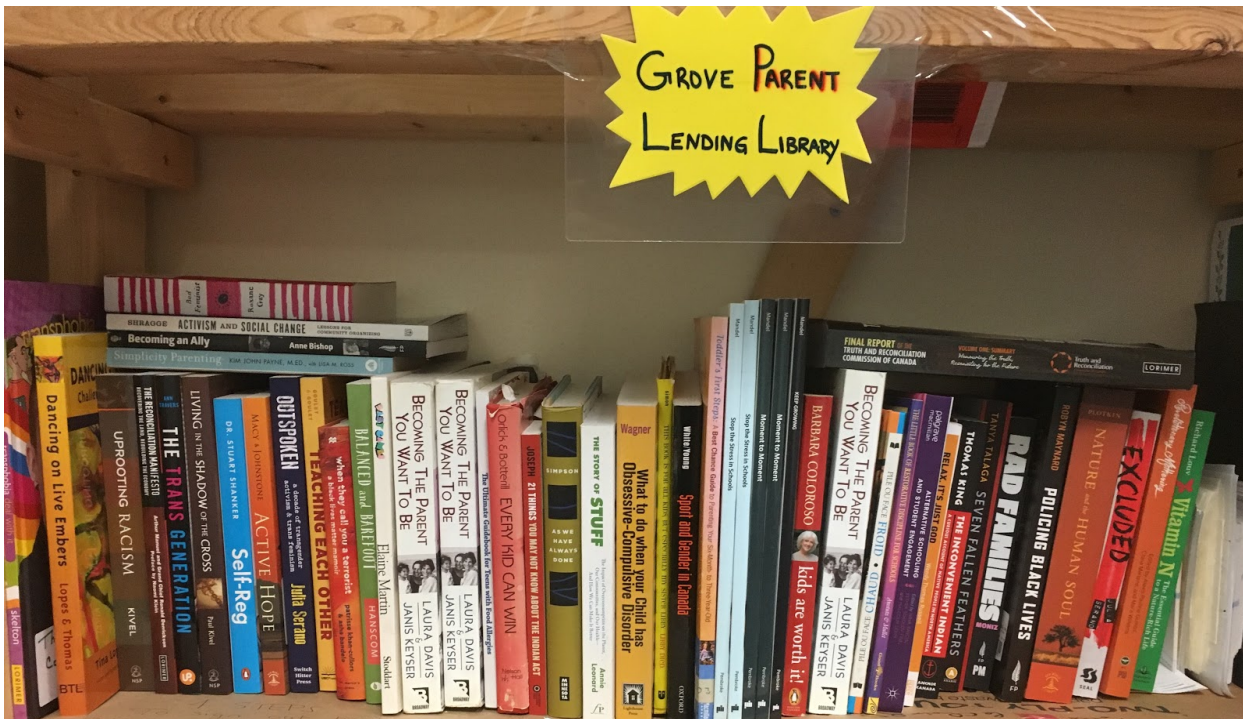
Art by Nigel, grade 6



Parent Learning

This school community and all of our commitment to the core values are a work in progress. We are all on a journey of learning as a community of students, teachers and parents.

Families who join our school will have many opportunities for learning (e.g., workshops, parent lending library):



PARENT EDUCATION WEEK Grove Community School May 8-12

Tuesday May 9, 7-9 pm

1st Floor Library

Stop the Hate!

Being an Anti-Racism Ally

with Indy Bath and Laura Severinac, Equity Facilitators
Join us at this highly interactive workshop to understand how to shift from awareness to action in the fight against racism.

Wednesday May 10, 6-8 p.m.

1st Floor Library

Raising Sexually Healthy Children

with Marina MacDougall, Nurse & Sexual Health Educator
Learn about the new Ontario sexual health curriculum while sharing ideas and experiences on how to raise sexually healthy children.

FREE childcare for both events

*childcare will be provided in Indra's room (first floor, across from library)

* pot luck snacks *

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

Funding provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education through a Parents Reaching Out Grant

School Condition

A large number of TDSB schools have repairs that are waiting for funding, sometimes referred to as the 'repair backlog*'. The building our school is housed in, like most older schools in the downtown core, has an extensive backlog of repairs. We continue to advocate for these repairs to our school and others.

*<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/News/Article-Details/ArtMID/474/ArticleID/1368/35-Billion--Growing-TDSB-Releases-Current-Repair-Backlog#:~:text=The%20Toronto%20District%20School%20Board,hit%20%245.2%20billion%20by%202023.>

Here are some recent improvements to our school:

- Our school roof was replaced 2 years ago

- Our outdoor track was replaced 1 year ago
- Our basement lunchroom (used by grades 1-6) has traditionally been quite loud and is currently undergoing soundproofing

Parent feedback for future families

January 2021

This document has been prepared for prospective families ('future families') who are thinking about applying to The Grove. It is our hope that these quotes will help you decide if The Grove is the right school for your family.

What do you love the most about being at The Grove?

- *The community! Knowing everyone including kids, teachers and families; Being very involved in what's happening in my kid's classroom. The 3 pillars (of social justice, environment, community action)! I love sending my kids to school knowing that they are learning progressive, inclusive, social justice based curriculum.*
- *There is a real sense of community here, largely due to the level of parental involvement.*
- *As a non-heteronormative family, I so appreciate the presence of--and celebration of--differently constructed families at the Grove. I also appreciate, as a parent to a racialized kid, the deep support from the Grove teachers and admin for creative and radical anti-racist curriculum, as well as their commitment to Indigenous curriculum.*
- *Even in times of duress, like the current work action, teachers are very supportive of parents, and parents are very supportive of teachers (who are **exceptional!**) As a family with Indigenous children, we also are grateful that they have teachers committed to encouraging awareness and critical thinking regarding our country's history and current issues*
- *The 3 pillars (of social justice, environment, community action) and how they are seamlessly woven into the curriculum. All the local and national community activism the teacher undertake with the students. The way the teachers collaborate with each other and how classes often work together and share their learning. Full school activities multi grade groupings and Dufferin Grove park!*
- *It is a close knit community, like a family. There is a lot of whole school activities and collaboration between grades, so your child gets to know all of the kids and teachers at the school. Parents add amazing opportunities for learning and get involved in the activities at the school, which allows the school to take on massive projects like collaboratively written school plays, concerts, Gender splendour week, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, art shows.... This adds so much to the school experience. The focus on social justice, environment, community action informs our kids about crucial issues, reinforces empathy and empowers them to step up and get involved. Also the Grove is VERY inclusive and supportive. I am confident that my transgender child is safe and fully supported by the whole school community.*
- *The sense of belonging despite the diverse backgrounds of our families.*
- *The culture of caring that begins in the classroom and extends out into the parent community and the environment. Also the access we have to each other and teachers, which lets us address any issues that arise in a holistic way. Lastly, the diversity of cultures that our children learn about and the community activism they learn.*
- *I love the community feeling. I also really like the 3 pillars that are considered when planning all events and school programming by the parents and teachers, respectively.*
- *I love that we (parents, students, and staff) strive to listen to each other and learn*

from each other. I love the thoughtful special programming and everyday learning that occurs.

- *The teachers care so much. Love all the amazing and creative and thoughtful activities the kids are involved in.*
- *1. The quality of instruction and 2. feeling of community, especially felt at morning circle and end of day*
- *Getting to know other families, it's such a great group of people.*
- *The community - knowing so many of the families and having teachers who are so accessible. I actually can't choose one thing - I love all the "Grove" aspects of the curriculum, the teacher's abilities to find each child's strengths and help them succeed and the nurture and thought that goes into all of their interactions with the kids.*
- *It's hard to share only one thing as there is a lot to love. Our family really loves the amazing curriculum with the arts and eco influence. The curriculum really goes above and beyond!*
- *The community. The welcome, the level of interest in the school, the level of parent engagement. That my child, who identifies their gender as both/neither feels safe and welcomed. Kids really feel like they get to direct their learning and make choices about what happens in their classrooms. The commitment to justice.*
- *The teachers and their dedication to the kids and the three pillars. And the three pillars and how they help kids think outside the box.*
- *It's an inclusive and welcoming community. Kids learn that difference and diversity should be celebrated and explored. I also love that education about indigenous peoples is built into curriculum. Gender splendour week is also very significant for my family.*
- *The feeling that it is a safe environment in which you can be who you really are.*
- *Knowing that my child feels accepted and heard, even on his 'tough' days.*

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- *The Teachers! The community! My child is learning and growing into a caring community member.*
- *Great community feel, teachers who are passionate.*
- *The inclusion of families. It feels amazing to know that the doors are always open.*
- *Being part of a thoughtful community that works together to reach goals.*
- *The Grove is a work in progress, advocacy has been done to increase the diversity of the school, through initiatives such as the Equity Admissions program, but we are continually working to improve on this and other areas*
- *Morning circle, focus on Indigenous perspectives, community openness to inclusion and thinking about others*
- *The sense of community - that everyone knows everyone, and the parents and teachers are part of a village. Also, the fact that I'll never have to worry about what my kid is learning in school!*
- *The most important things that our kids learned were not exclusively taught in the classroom. The Grove teaches you to stand up for those that cannot speak out for themselves and gives kids the confidence to be whoever they want to be in the world.*
- *It's a beautiful thing to see your child grow into a person who thinks critically about everything they see and hear.*
- *It is a really intimate school where your child can learn real confidence.*
- *There is a wealth of talent among teachers and parents in the grove and many really go the extra mile to share their gifts whether it's playing music for concerts and events or making homemade soup and bread on Tuesdays. There is also a stigma free approach to fundraising and a policy that makes extras like field trips*

free for students (paid for by parent council)

- *Being able to send my child to such an inclusive school that's not afraid to teach kids about social justice concepts has made my child extra thoughtful and it leads to such beautiful discussions at home.*
- *Our school aims to be an inclusive and supportive environment for the development of our children. We can work together with our teachers and Grove families in many ways to bring out the best in our students. We are role models for all the children at the school.*
- *Our daughter transitioned to the Grove in grade 1 and it has been wonderful! She is really flourishing!! It's been a wonderful experience, so many wonderful teachers and families at the Grove.*
- *It is a wonderful school especially for inclusivity with passionate award winning teachers. The three pillars of the school (Environmentalism , Community Activism and Social Justice) are always present and run through the heart of everything the school does.*
- *Teacher feedback: I love working with Grove families because they are generous, smart, kind, supportive and active. I love that we have a strong mandate to implement the core values of our school.*

What is the most important thing that incoming families should know about The Grove?

- *New families should know that an important variable that makes the school work is parent involvement, ideally about 2 hours per month per household.*
- *If you want your child to have an education enriched with our three pillars, you have to be willing to put in some time. It's unrealistic to expect teachers to fulfill all the Ontario curriculum requirements and then devote extra time and effort enriching that curriculum without any support from our community.*
- *As a small alternative school, the Grove is under resourced for helping children with challenges - learning or otherwise. There's a lot of patience and love, but your practical needs may be better met elsewhere.*
- *If you feel like you want to prepare your kids to fight back against injustice, and have an accurate, well rounded education, this is the place for you!*

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- *It is still a school, and, like other schools, it occasionally has problems with things like bullying. But the children are given tools that enable them to 1. recognise injustice and 2. stand up for themselves and others*
- *It's not just our children who learn. At The Grove, we parents work together to learn from other parents, our children, and our teachers to challenge ourselves, acknowledge our privilege and commit to positive change in our smaller and larger community*
- *You can get involved on your own terms. Many parents are afraid that they can't give enough of their time or skills. But you can give as much or as little, there's no pressure and the truth is, you want to pitch in. The feeling of we're all in this together is wonderful.*
- *That the teachers are incredible award winning educators who really care about their students and their school. They are invested in making it the best place for learning and growing. They are engaged in the world and foster empathy and care for the planet and its people. The Grove is a school for future leaders.*
- *Our small school depends on the support and volunteering of the families who make up our community.*
- *It's on the third floor and there is no elevator!*
- *What we lack in resources and space we make up for in the heart and community.*

Also, there are a LOT of stairs.

- *The Grove has many split grades, especially in the older grades. There is only a half Resource teacher assignment, so if your child needs academic support, this is more limited at a school of this size.*
- *This is not a private school. As a smaller school, we do not have access to the same resources as a mainstream school, including a full-time Special Education teacher or Music teacher.*
- *The outcome for your child is well worth the commitments undertaken by parents.*
- *There is a real connection among the families, I feel part of a greater community.*
- *Most activities are strongly informed by the three pillars -- these are the guiding principles by which we operate as a community.*
- *The Grove works best when families get involved! Think about what / how you would like to contribute to this community.*
- *Parent involvement is everything, it's what makes the school run! You gotta step up early and often.*
- *That the parent community needs to give time and energy as a part of going to the school. That we are proactively working to create an inclusive environment for all students too.*
- *That many people/parents help out a lot.*
- *The time commitment. It is not workable for everyone, and it should not keep someone away (I believe in "pay what you can" in hours, just as in dollars), but it's something to be aware of*
- *That because it is a small school everyone has to pitch in to make it work. Volunteering is part of the deal. Additionally it does not have some of the extended extra curricular activities available at larger schools.*
- *That participation is expected and respected. It's a key part of the Grove. If you don't plan to come to circle (when you can) or otherwise get involved (parent council, helping with events or clubs, etc.), maybe it's not the school for you. It doesn't have to mean hours every week, just the intention and some action on being involved.*
- *Caring for one another socially is one of the biggest things our children learn at this school.*
- *While we rely on parent involvement, there are many different ways that people can contribute to the school.*
- *We are trying our best to improve the areas where we are lacking (diversity); that we are passionate about change; that we are an open and loving place for families to come; we have a strong sense of community*
- *the work involved will pay itself back many times over in your child's rich learning experience and your connection to a vibrant, evolving community*
- *Parental involvement is expected/needed/ what makes the school special*
- *parental involvement is critical to maintaining close knit community.*
- *We are a school environment committed to social justice!*

Teacher feedback: We acknowledge that our teaching staff is not as diverse as it could be. This is a systemic problem. As a staff, we are committed to teaching anti-bias curriculum that is inclusive of diverse identities. We often reach out to community members and families to extend and enrich our curriculum.