

## Montessori school extends its education

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Humberside Montessori School is implementing an adolescent program for students in Grade 7 and 8, one of the first of its kind in Canada.

"It's the first one with a trained adolescent Montessori teacher to my knowledge," said adolescent program teacher Matthew Smith, in a recent interview at the Kennedy Avenue school. Montessori schools to-date have only offered education up to Grade 6.

The newly hired Smith, a native of Toronto, was on a brief two-week break from his Montessori training in Italy. He chose to study in Europe because it is the birthplace of the Montessori method. Dr. Maria Montessori, the Italian physician, humanitarian and educator determined that "education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences upon the environment."



**Montessori school extends its education.** The first adolescent program for Grade 7 and 8 students at a Montessori school is coming to Humberside Montessori School later this year. *Stock image*

Which means that students enrolled in Humberside Montessori School's Grade 7 and 8 curriculum will have "a dynamic and engaging hands-on learning experience," said Smith.

"We're not in the classroom all that much," he said. "We'll be interacting with the community."

For example, if the class is researching the history of Toronto, it'll head over to Annette Street Public Library where the Junction Historical Society archives are located, Smith cited as an example.

"The study of history or science can come alive and be hands-on," he said.

It will, however, adhere to the Ministry of Education's guidelines for curriculum, but will also offer students an opportunity to continue their Montessori education. At the core of Montessori's philosophy for an adolescent's education is independence.

"... Adolescence is the time when the child enters the state of manhood and becomes a member of society. If puberty is on the physical side, a transition from an infantile to an adult state, there is also, on the psychological side, a transition from the child who has to live in a family, to the man who has to live in society," she once said.

Similar programs do exist, but most are often rural based. Humberside's adolescent program will provide an urban model, specific to the city.

The adolescent is a very different person than the one between the ages of six and 12, which Montessori called childhood. For the person between the age of 12 and 18, it's a 'distinctive' time, according to Montessori, Smith said.

"You need a different style, a different method of education," he said. "We're going to be out there in the community, in High Park, getting really hands-on. One exciting aspect of the program is the 'micro-economy.'"

Students will learn how to manage a small cafe or a store, for example. They'll grow cucumbers in a greenhouse and then spend time in the kitchen pickling them and jarring them before selling them in the store. They will

then use the money they've earned as a group for educational purposes such as a field trip to an organic farm or in their own community.

"Everything we do is going to be designed for real work. It's not work sheets or text books, it's real hands-on work," said Smith.

As for Smith, he grew up in Toronto and graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a BA in History. He began working in a Montessori school part-time. He decided to educate himself in Montessori education, which includes training at the North American Montessori Teacher's Association Orientation to Adolescent Studies and he has almost completed an AMI Elementary Diploma from Bergamo, Italy. He taught for five years at the Montessori House of Children in London, Ontario.

The application for HumberSide Montessori School's adolescent program for September 2010 is still open.

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