

A HOLISTIC SYSTEM

Educators develop the person, not just the student

WHEN IT COMES TO A HOLISTIC APPROACH to education, Ryan Seeley, Vice-Principal and Head of Drama at Metropolitan Preparatory Academy, has a theory.

"I am a strong believer that the more the child is in the building – between classes, coming from a lab, coming from robotics club, or from drama club, whatever – the higher their grades," he says. "If they get Period 5 off, get in a car and go home? They get distracted. Before long it's 6 p.m., they are tired, hungry, and they haven't done any homework."

Metropolitan Preparatory Academy is a Toronto private school that believes in developing the student from a holistic perspective – from meeting high standards in the classroom to offering resources beyond the curriculum.

Those could be in areas like wellness, charity work, clubs, lead-

ership opportunities, travel and cultural exchanges.

Metropolitan Preparatory Academy offers Mr. Seeley's SMITH (School of Music, Integrated Arts, Theatre and Humanities) program, where kids can work in theatre, television, film production, and music. The school has a robust athletic department, and offers a long list of clubs. Students go on trips to such places as Kenya and Ecuador to take part in charity work.

Mr. Seeley says he spends a lot of time working with students on their university applications. "Schools are now looking for voluntary experience, have you travelled, were you on a sports team," he says.

"We haven't mastered the balance between grades and extracurricular – it's a process. But we offer so much more here, and parents and their kids see that."

Alison Uys, Director of University Relations at TFS – Canada's International School in Toronto and Mis-

RAISING GLOBAL CITIZENS

sissauga, says TFS doesn't look at extracurriculars from an "outside the classroom" perspective; it focuses more on an integrated approach. That's due in part to the fact that TFS offers the International Baccalaureate advanced study program, combining core academic excellence with developing "engaged students" who can be "positive game-changers in the world."

"Act local and think global," Ms. Uys says. "That is how we think as a school."

Many other private schools follow an identical path.

Among its many programs and opportunities, Holy Trinity School in Richmond Hill, Ont., offers the Senior School Trinitarian Award, promoting excellence in five areas outside the normal academic program: athletics, arts, leadership, service and global education. With three different levels to achieve, each with increasing involvement and experience as well

as rigorous reflection requirement, students are really challenged to develop themselves.

"Since the first day HTS opened its doors, the HTS educational experience has been rooted in developing young people of character – young people who value and live with integrity, respect, empathy and courage," says Helen Pereira-Raso, Head of School at Holy Trinity.

Laura Poce, Head of Student Services at The Bishop Strachan School in Toronto, says parents and students are increasingly looking for a holistic approach to education, to better prepare students for post-secondary life. That is especially true with Canadian universities.

"It's absolutely necessary these days, in terms of going out into the real world, where you need to have a much wider perspective than just your immediate community, in order to connect," she says.

Denise Power, Head of Student

Engagement and Wellbeing at St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School in Oakville, says they focus on the "whole girl" via three key areas – academic excellence, social/emotional/spiritual/physical development, and real world learning (which includes local and global experiences, community service and hands-on professional experience).

For example, their Professional Internship Signature Program in Grade 11 provides each girl with a four-week, OSSD credited work placement that is customized to her career interests.

Ed Kidd, Headmaster at Ridley College, says their objective is to go beyond academic achievement so students can truly flourish, especially as it relates to 21st-century global citizenry. "It is imperative that we prepare students to be good and to do good," he says.

"In addition to the learning that happens outside the classroom – arts, athletics, residential life, activities and clubs, community service – what happens in the classroom occurs through the lens of building community, developing values and cultivating wellness."