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REAL CHALLENGES, REAL SOLUTIONS ... SHARING SUCCESSES

case study:

Private Education in Ottawa

LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS

At AcadeCap, educators think outside the book

A FAMILY WITH UNIQUE NEEDS

Charles Khazzam didn't like private schools, but he and spouse Marie Carmen Berlie were quite happy to have their three children enrolled in this one.

The school they have chosen is Académie de La Capitale, or AcadeCap. This unique Ottawa institution uses learning expectations from the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, the Ontario Ministry of Education and the OSSD.

But these parents, like many others, have found AcadeCap to be much more than a curriculum.

"This school encourages an absolute love of learning through independent learning and team learning," said Khazzam. "It instills all the qualities you need to succeed and excel in a good university and of course in professional life."

Khazzam and Berlie are flying doctors who spend part of each month among the Cree of James Bay and take their children with them. As a result, they had very specific requirements that were beyond what most schools could provide.

They wanted a professional education with strong pedagogical concepts, delivered by a dedicated faculty willing to adapt to their lifestyle. They

researched public boards as well as a number of private options before deciding AcadeCap was the best choice for them.

Their children, ages 15, 13 and 10, continue to learn and be part of their classroom environment, even when away from Ottawa. All three have flourished at AcadeCap because the emphasis is on adapting learning to the unique needs of each child.

"This school isn't about just following a curriculum, or a set of written criteria," said Berlie. "But discovering the best way to teach each individual student that is suited to their talents and capacities, using the technology that is available."

These parents have also found AcadeCap to be free of the materialism, bullying and emphasis on social strata common to many schools, but these students are anything but sheltered.

"Here risk taking is a valued quality," Khazzam said. "This school teaches resilience, esteem, self-discipline -- social skills and qualities that are transferrable elsewhere. I am often surprised by how our children appear to be far ahead of their peers in the public system."

"At first we wondered if we had made the right decision," said Berlie. "The proof is in the pudding.

AcadeCap has been beyond our expectations of what a school could be."

A SCHOOL LIKE NO OTHER

Director Lucie Lalonde founded AcadeCap 15 years ago with the goal of not only educating

children, but also teaching them how to learn for themselves. Her team applies the latest neuroscientific research into how the human brain works, learns and develops.

It's a model that

allows each child to push ahead at their own pace, where younger students can find role models and older students can provide leadership. This approach has proven itself effective with gifted learners, as well as children with disabilities such as dyslexia and blindness.

"Our understanding of how children learn, and how we can best teach to that, is constantly evolving," Lalonde said.

"It isn't just about the neuroscience -- we also model our classroom after open-concept workplaces that emphasize teamwork and collaboration between all ages. We like to say that our space is half studio, half high-tech company. When students walk in, they feel energized and empowered."

AcadeCap offers bilingual programs for grades K-12. To learn more, please visit www.acadecap.org, call (613) 721-3872 or email info@acadecap.org.

Toddler and pre-school daycare options are also available next door at AcadeKidz (www.acadekidz.org).

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— LUCIE LALONDE, DIRECTOR, ACADECAP 15



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