

## *Our History*

Lady Evelyn was first opened as a public school in 1905 to serve the town of Ottawa East and was named in honour of Governor General Earl Grey's daughter, Evelyn. The original corner stone can still be found in the front hall of the current building.

By the mid 1980s, the school population had shifted and Lady Evelyn was in danger of being shut down. In response, some parents, educators and community leaders (including former trustee, Lynn Graham), worked to set up an "Alternative" school, with modern teaching concepts radically different from the typical school. And so was born Lady Evelyn Primary Alternative School (JK - Grade 3), the first "Alternative" school in Ottawa.

By 1991, the old building was showing its age and was no longer safe for students. The current building was built and opened in 1992 with an expanded playground, due to the acquisition of two adjacent properties, and added grades 4 through 6. In 2005 the school celebrated its centennial. A commemorative plaque can be found just inside the gates to the playground.



Lady Evelyn Alternative School Ottawa

2011 - 2012

A School Primer

## *Seven Principles of Alternative Schools* *Lady Evelyn Alternative School, Ottawa*

Our Alternative School is built on values that cater to the whole child (their academics, their social and emotional intelligence and physical well being), their family, their teachers and everyone who takes active part and contributes to our day to day activities. Collectively these values define our community.

As a community, we strive to construct a space that is welcoming to all, regardless of ability, culture, family configuration, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. We strive to discover meaningful and innovative ways to engage our students in learning.

The Ottawa Carleton District School Board's (OCDSB) Alternative Program operates under seven broad principles:

1. Cooperative and Non-competitive
2. Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning
3. Child-Centered and Self Directed Approaches to Learning
4. Multi-Age Groupings
5. Integrated Curriculum
6. Family and Community Involvement
7. Creative Assessment and Evaluation

*These Are Our Values: What do they mean for someone coming into an Alternative School?*

## **1** *Cooperative and Non-competitive*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, we cultivate a non-competitive environment that is reflected in all aspects of the school. Students are not overtly compared to each other. Co-operation, teamwork and consensus are emphasized in all aspects of the school and help children learn the valuable lessons of team building, respect and diversity. Extrinsic rewards (stickers, point systems) are not used as a method to motivate students. The ultimate, intrinsic reward for students is that their opinions and way of seeing the world are valued and they feel a sense of belonging.

### **What It Looks Like**

- Students working both individually and in groups
- Classroom arrangements that facilitate collaboration
- Communal use and care of school supplies
- Explicit teaching of cooperative working skills and attitudes
- A celebration of personal and collective achievement and appreciation for standards of excellence
- Sport activities fostering teamwork and cooperation
- Interested students

### **You Won't See...**

- Tryouts for teams and activities
- Scoreboards or achievement charts
- Extrinsic Rewards
- An emphasis on winning and losing
- Students compared to one another

# 2

## *Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, innovation is driven by our desire to foster each child’s potential. This includes the *whole* child - their academics, their social and emotional intelligence and physical well being. Innovation requires creativity which is nurtured by risk taking and independent thinking.

### **What It Looks Like...**

- Unique and creative units of study
- Ongoing emphasis by staff and students on trying new ideas
- Ongoing reflection and evaluation of innovations by all members of the school community
- Pilot projects
- Participation in research projects
- Community projects

### **You Won't See...**

- Projects that all look the same
- Students working at individual desks all day long
- All students doing the same thing all the time

# 3

## *Child-Centered and Self Directed Learning*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, child-centered learning refers to presenting students with learning opportunities that are appropriate for them as individuals. The teacher acts as facilitator or guide of the children’s learning. This means that we strive to be responsive to their ideas and contributions to enhance their self-concept, enthusiasm for life-long learning and personal responsibility. We believe that learning will be meaningful to them when their ideas are being heard and their engagement valued. At Lady Evelyn this is facilitated by a staff that recognizes the ever-changing nature of the students and the world we live in (big picture).

### **What It Looks Like...**

- Opportunities to make choices
- Ongoing teaching of skills necessary to become a self-directed learner
- A balance of student directed and teacher-directed learning
- Teachers responding to the interests and needs of the class community balanced with the individual’s needs
- Children working together
- Classroom meetings to make plans and solve problems

- Children leading lessons and activities
- Children sharing their learning in different ways

### **You Won't See...**

- Projects that all look the same
- Students working at individual desks all day long
- All students doing the same thing all the time

# 4

## *Multi-Age Groupings*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, all classes are intentionally multi-age groupings. They are not split-grade classes. Instead they provide a wider range of learning levels per class, a more natural and family-like environment and afford opportunities for peer mentoring that teaches leadership and thinking skills. Ideally it allows the majority of students to have the same teacher for at least two years in a row. Other opportunities for multi-age interaction are cultivated within the whole school.

### **What It Looks Like...**

- Every effort to group students into classes with at least two grades
- Classes formed to include a wide variety of abilities
- The intent to have the same teacher for more than one year
- Student groups that include a wide range of ages working together

### **You Won't See...**

- Classes made up solely on the basis of similar abilities (developmental or academic)
- "Split classes" created solely to accommodate enrollment

# 5

## *Integrated Curriculum*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, few things happen in a vacuum. We believe there is an interconnectedness amongst subjects to deepen understanding. Subjects are taught in context. We integrate different perspectives such as character education, social justice, global understanding, cultural and religious diversity, environmental issues and LGBTTT ( lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited) rights. The integrated approach provides learning through authentic exploration, experience and reflection.

# 6

## *Family and Community Involvement*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, we recognize we are not only part of the community but we are a hub. We are comprised of staff, students, parents, guardians and the wider community members who, notwithstanding operational roles, recognize the equality of all community members.

Parental engagement allows teachers to enrich student-directed learning. Lady Evelyn operates with an open-door policy, so that children can be exposed to a wider range of expertise and increased one-on-one attention. Families and community members offer support in the classes such as providing one-on-one help, lead activities and accompany classes on field trips. Community members are also leaders on a variety of committees and councils.

Lady Evelyn Alternative operates with an open-door policy. Parents are expected to be part of daily school life, inside our classrooms and in our wider school community.

### **What It Looks Like...**

- Family and community members welcomed into all classrooms, committees and school activities
- Teachers and community members planning and teaching together
- Classes involved in community projects

### **You Won't See...**

- Parents discouraged from participating in classrooms

# 7

## *Creative Assessment and Evaluation*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, we engage in alternative methods of assessment such as the compilation of portfolios that include representative work. We strive to assess students in a variety of ways. The objective is to assess them based on their strengths (if a student is strong orally, we give them the opportunity to be assessed orally). In this way we truly are able to understand if a student has understood the material in a unit. We prefer not to focus on marks but rather how students engage in the whole process of learning.

### **What It Looks Like...**

- Portfolio creation
- Student Led Conferences
- Student Goal Setting
- Self Assessment
- Differentiated evaluation and assessment (maximizing a student's ability to show knowledge)
- Acknowledgment of individual learning styles in reference to assessment
- Ongoing conferencing with students and parents
- Use of class generated assessment tools (rubrics, checklists)

- Anecdotal reports without marks
- Student conferencing to give input for report cards

### **You Won't See...**

- Evaluation limited to one type of assessment
- Summative assessment without ongoing formative assessment and feedback

## *Homework*

At Lady Evelyn Alternative, as a rule we don't do homework (in the traditional sense of the word). We try to make any work or projects that might go home, meaningful. It is geared towards the individual needs of students.

Students are encouraged to spend their out of school time engaging with the world in the manner they and their families wish, whether through casual play, extracurricular activities or family time. As a community we hope that we all develop a joy of learning for its own sake through exploring our own particular areas of interest, both at home and at school.

### **What It Looks Like...**

- Daily required reading

### **You Won't See...**

- Daily review and revision
- Seat work sheets

### *However, you may see...*

Agreed upon extra study. This is in the case of a child's passion or need for more study that has been discussed by students, parents and teachers. In this case the teacher facilitates what, if any, extra work is assigned

Large multi-day projects. These are projects that can or require external help and cooperation. In this case it is recognized that a portion of this might be done at home.

Finishing up incomplete work. This is work that the student has been given plenty of time to complete at school but for various reasons did not (obviously the context therein is always weighed carefully).

## *EQAO*

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is an independent provincial agency funded by the Government of Ontario. The EQAO was a recommendation of the "Ontario Royal Commission on Learning" in 1995. Since then the Ontario Ministry of Education has mandated that there be province-wide tests at key points in every student's career in the public school system. Primary school children are tested in grades 3 and 6.

Note from the Lady Evelyn Alternative School Council: There is much debate at our school, in the province, across the country and around the world about the value, effectiveness and negative impact of this type of standardized testing. We will continue to monitor the debate closely, engage and advocate for our children.

### **What It Looks Like...**

- EQAO tests scheduled and delivered
- Some families choosing to keep children at home during testing
- Exposure to the testing situation to equip children with test writing skills

### **You Won't See...**

- Extensive teaching to the test

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*A review of our principles was conducted during  
the 2010-2011 School Year.*

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