



Linnaea School – An Overview

Relationships

The nature of the relationship between the staff and students at Linnaea School is one of the school's most distinctive qualities. The teaching staff see the individuality of each child and each child benefits from the staff's commitment to nourish their strengths and cultivate solutions to assist them in overcoming their challenges. At weekly staff meetings the specific needs of individual children are discussed and strategies are agreed upon. The teachers are motivated to help children in ways that go beyond the classroom. Teacher time in different classrooms in the afternoon results in children having a strong relationship with their future and past teachers as well as with the teacher at their current grade level. As they advance through the grades, those relationships provide security and continuity. It is this depth of caring between teachers and children helps to distinguish Linnaea from many other schools.

Linnaea offers an unusual degree of parent participation in school life. This provides a strong bridge between home and school. When issues effect the happiness and security of a child whether they are connected to school or home life, the staff works in partnership with parents to resolve them.

The Curriculum

Linnaea School provides a balance of academic excellence, a rich experience with the arts and lessons in social skills that will last a lifetime. Consistency in curriculum and classes gives children the security they need to fully develop their sense of self and self-esteem. Consistent and cohesive curricular elements carry over from class to class, such as the nature journal and table, the home reading program, problem of the week and theme units. Children are supported by a structure that enables them to find a balance between the basic curriculum and taking the initiative to define what they want to focus on.

The Linnaea curriculum encourages students to form a strong relationship to the natural world. Class time spent out of doors, creating nature books, participating in nature activities and observing and participating in the animal life on the farm, give the children an outstanding understanding of the life sciences. Through the weaving of life sciences with the creative arts in the curriculum, children look to the natural world for learning and inspiration.

The high ratio of adults to students and the multi-age classrooms allows each child to choose the teaching style they learn from best. The teachers are able to provide challenges appropriate to each child's developmental level. The staff helps students define what academic excellence means for them, and encourages them to achieve that excellence. Remedial and enrichment support takes place within the classroom, so that children are not singled out and yet are able to proceed at their own pace.

Aside from the home reading programme and studying for spelling tests, children at Linnaea are generally not given specific homework assignments until grade six. Students are given time enough to complete their school work in the classroom. Only uncompleted classroom work is taken home. This helps children learn to take responsibility for how they use their time in school

and helps them to value the importance of completion. Where homework creates family stress, students are given extra school time and/or an altered work load. Another unique aspect of Linnaea is the encouragement for students to call their teacher at home for assistance with their work.

Social Skills

The staff has worked hard to develop strategies that encourage children to develop as well rounded, healthy and happy human beings. The Learner Characteristics and the Virtues programme are designed to give kids the language and guidelines of positive social behaviour. Role plays and class discussion give children the language of tolerance, respect, creative thinking and cooperative problem solving. Through on-going attention to social issues and conflict resolution they learn how to practice these behaviours.

Contrary to some concerns that such an education shelters children and leaves them unprepared to face the harsh realities of the 'real world', students from Linnaea are aware and knowledgeable about the problems of our society. At the same time they lack the negativity and the feeling of helplessness that plagues so many of their peers. They believe that they can make a difference in the world. Most importantly, they have developed the self-confidence and the skills to know what they want and the sense of inner strength to achieve it.

Fine Arts

The depth of the integration of the fine arts into the classroom is another unique aspect of Linnaea School. Music, drama and visual arts are woven into the curriculum. This gives students life long tools in self-expression. The pride they learn in the presentation of their work, and the knowledge that well-presented work is valued, will serve them well as they enter their work life. Joy in the arts is cultivated as well. Children entering Linnaea from other school systems often lack a grounding in creative skills. Music and art has not been a part of their successful experiences. Children leave Linnaea with incredible confidence in their creative selves.

Graduates

Students leave Linnaea School as articulate, confident and independent thinkers. High school teachers have consistently commented on how impressed they are with the confidence, social skills and academic preparedness of students coming from Linnaea. As the school's first students grow into adulthood we are proud to see positive young people who feel empowered to make a difference. Linnaea students leave the school well prepared to succeed academically, artistically and socially in all aspects of their lives.