

## January 2017 Newsletter Articles

### Creative Thinking

The Ministry of Education recently released a document entitled *21st Century Competencies* that outlines four key competencies. They include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and **creativity and innovation**. The document outlines how these key competencies impact learning in the classroom, in the world, and later in life in careers.

Looking for some ideas to inspire creativity at home? Consider these invitations to create and innovate:

1. Read picture books that promote creative thinking with everyday materials such as *Not a Box or Not a Stick* by Antoinette Portis. Then collect some sticks or a few boxes and let your child's imagination run wild!
2. Explore the idea of provocations at home. A provocation is simply putting materials or items together that provoke thinking and curiosity. It could be as simple as a basket of unusual household items (old vinyl records, a variety of nuts and bolts, open-ended building materials, some paper and writing materials, etc.) and asking your child what they might be able to do with these items. Offering similar materials over a period of time allows children to challenge themselves to come up with even more creative ideas using the same things.
3. Offer your child a variety of open-ended art materials (markers, watercolours, plasticine, buttons and loose parts, etc.) to allow them to do the creative thinking and planning instead of pre-planned crafts.
4. Together create a dance routine to a current song, or even better, use an oldie but a goodie. Inspire your child to create dance moves for the verses, and then change up the moves in the chorus. Engaged in the fun of being innovative; your child will be creating *dance phrases* and exploring *musical form* by doing this!
5. Re-purpose containers, or small boxes and create a scavenger hunt outside in the snow. Place found objects in the containers/boxes as clues that your child needs to piece together. By placing the containers/boxes ahead of time as a scavenger hunt, you will have created a large scale "provocation" that can lead to imaginative play afterwards. Use the idea of discovering artifacts in the outside environment as an invitation to create a map of your backyard, or a forested area near your house. Build on this idea...and make new scavenger hunts and maps as an inquisitive way to learn about your home and local environment together.

*"Awareness of one's inner feelings and thoughts is a prerequisite to making art. Inspiration and innovative thinking spring from this awareness and provide us with new answers and solutions, and new questions to pursue"* (The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: The Arts, p.19).

## **Avoid school suspension by keeping immunization records up-to-date!**

Student's immunization records must be provided to Public Health in order to attend school. In the next few weeks, Public Health will be sending notices to students with incomplete immunization records. Anyone who gets a notice should contact their family doctor so they can update their vaccines, and then report their new vaccines to Public Health.

Report every vaccine to Public Health using one of the following methods:

- Online: Fill in the form at [www.immunizewdg.ca](http://www.immunizewdg.ca)
- Email: Send a photo of the immunization record to [vaccine.records@wdgpublichealth.ca](mailto:vaccine.records@wdgpublichealth.ca)
- Call: 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4396

If a student is not getting vaccinated for medical reasons, reasons of conscience or religious beliefs, an exemption form must be submitted to Public Health. The forms are available at [www.wdgpublichealth.ca](http://www.wdgpublichealth.ca).

Public Health is committed to helping students update their vaccination records so they can avoid suspension from school.

Talking About Mental Health January 2017 – Nature and Mental Health

Getting outside makes such a difference to how we all are doing inside. Spending time in nature improves our mental health and well-being. It is a simple way to add some much needed down time from screens. Adding some time in nature is having some much deserved peace and quiet in our busy lives.

If you want your family:

To be less stressed

To be happier

To be more resilient

To feel better about themselves

To have increased attention

To have a better ability to learn

Then GO OUTSIDE! Take your kids outside! Enjoy and be part of nature.

One study showed that even 5 minutes in nature improves our mood. 5 minutes! We all can take 5 minutes (or more if we have it) to go outside and enjoy nature.

Go for a walk or a ski or a skate or a run. Head for the woods. Go birdwatching. Follow tracks in the snow. Watch the sunrise or the sunset. Watch the clouds drift by. Visit a river or lake or pond. Listen for all the sounds of nature. Take in the smells. Notice all the colours and textures. Notice the light as the days get longer.

If you are not sure where to go, check out the links below for lots of great parks in our area.

<http://guelph.ca/living/recreation/parks/>

<http://www.wellington.ca/en/discover/trailsandforests.asp?hdcContent=>

<https://www.grandriver.ca/en/grand-river-parks.aspx>

<http://headwaters.ca/experience/parks-conservation-areas/>

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/arboretum/>

Have a mentally healthy 2017!

*Dr. Lynn Woodford is the Mental Health Lead for the Upper Grand District School Board.*

*Follow me on Twitter @drlynnwoodford.*

## **What is the Special Education Advisory Committee?**

Every school district is required to have a **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)**.

SEAC is a broad-based, educationally focused committee that meets monthly to engage in a variety of discussions all related to the educational programs for students with special needs. These meetings are open to the public and are held on the second Wednesday of each month throughout the school year. Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Upper Grand District School Board office in Guelph.

At SEAC meetings, the representative members from different organizations (ABC - Association for Bright Children, Autism Ontario Wellington Chapter, FASD-Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community (Ontario), Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County, Parents for Children's Mental Health, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children) share knowledge about their agency programs with the committee. These community members then take back points of information about the Board's educational programs to the agencies that they represent. In addition, SEAC makes recommendations to the board with respect to any matters affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of Special Education programs and services for exceptional students within the board. The SEAC committee also participates in the board's annual review of the Special Education Plan and participates in the board's annual budget process as it relates to Special Education.

For further information about SEAC or Special Education Programs in the Upper Grand District School Board please call the Program Department at 519-941-6191 ext. 254.



## Grade 7 & 8 Parents and Students Information Night for the 2017-18 school year

Grade 7 & 8 students and their parents are invited to learn more about the great opportunities **Erin District High School** has to offer - from academics to sports, music and art. Learn more about our English and French Immersion Programs and the registration process on **Thursday, January 19, 2017** for the 2017-18 school year. 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the Theatre.

For parents of French Immersion students, specific information about our F.I. program will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Theatre.

Please check our website <http://www.ugdsb.on.ca/edhs/> in the event of inclement weather.