

CANADIAN

Today's Parent

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Abbotsford School of Integrated Arts

Abbotsford, BC • Public • 620 students • K-10

All teachers at the two campuses in "ASIA" are specialists in visual arts, dance, drama or music. At North Poplar (kindergarten to grade five), the halls are yellow, blue, periwinkle and green. Stained-glass windows — crafted by students — jazz up the foyer. Sumas Mountain (grades six to 10) opened in 2006 and operates in a former church. The school meets provincial curriculum requirements by incorporating the arts into academic subjects. For example, grade fives might depict the workings of the circulatory system by creating a dance.

WOW Performing in front of an audience is a given at art schools. Students enter ASIA at any grade, but the earlier they start, generally speaking, the more comfortable they are at performing — even the most shy.

Prince of Wales School

Calgary • Public • 380 students • K-6

Walk into classrooms here and you'll spot questions on the walls: What is beauty? What does peace feel like? Those are just a few examples. Each class's annual question stimulates rich, inquiry-based learning leading to deeper understanding of various subjects. Kindergarteners have created their own iMovie and students in grade one and two have met their provincial premier at the legislature. The initiative stems from the non-profit Galileo Educational Network, which supports educators in designing inquiry-based projects in various provinces. A similar philosophy underlies the school's participation in a hands-on educational program in which classes spend an entire week at a community site such as a conservation area.

WOW The level of questioning at Prince of Wales leads to plenty of writing, journaling and sketching.

OVERCOMING A CHALLENGE

Alexander's Public School

Burlington, Ont. • Public • 850 students • JK-8

In 2006, when construction snags delayed the opening of this new school by two months, disappointment quickly turned into community action. The most pressing question was where to put the kids. The board of education suggested a high school, but, after much consultation, parents opted to split the students into three elementary schools. Before Alexander's opened in November, grades four to seven got to know each other better at a team-building day while sixes and sevens interviewed the students at the three holding schools and produced a video.

WOW An active parent body can smooth most transitions. The school council at Alexander's boasted 30-plus members last year (all the more impressive because enrolment was about 200 less than it is this year).

ALL-ROUND COOL SCHOOLS

Hawthorne Village Public School

Milton, Ont. • Public • 1,037 students • JK-8

Hawthorne Village is a cohesive school in Canada's fastest-growing municipality. While it's not technically an arts school, Hawthorne weaves the arts into traditional curriculum areas daily and co-curriculars are crammed into every possible time slot — whether it's basketball at 8 a.m., Lego robotics at 10:55 a.m., or clay class at 3:30 p.m. Once-a-month Arts Beats assemblies give kids a chance to showcase what they've learned. The supporting cast includes creative and industrious teachers, an encouraging principal and about 200 parent volunteers.

WOW Many of the school's language classes integrate drama or visual arts, helping kids to express their comprehension of material they've read.

Ecole Seven Oaks Middle School

Winnipeg • Public • 600 students • 6-8

Students have countless opportunities to explore their interests at this vibrant middle school. For a half day every six days, they pursue options such as curling, multimedia, robotics, indoor soccer, nutrition and aerobics. Meanwhile, the school's annual human rights initiative challenges them to creatively depict such injustices as the Darfur crisis, the Holocaust and Second World War internment camps in Canada. Two out of three students play on school teams, and kids, teachers and parents mastermind a huge January theatrical production. Last school year's five performances of *Anne of Green Gables* sold out 800 seats at Winnipeg's historic Pantages Playhouse Theatre.

WOW The school uses community resources as much as possible, whether it's having an arrangement with a soccer complex or a nearby hockey rink.

Lord Tennyson Elementary School

Vancouver • Public • 450 students • K-7

It's not surprising that film companies seek out Lord Tennyson, with its stately 1912 red brick building, arched entranceway and grand windows. It's kid-friendly, too, with two childcare centres, adventure playgrounds, picnic tables, a garden of native plants and benches. Plus, this French immersion school has awesome parent support. In October last year, more than 150 parents pitched in to pull off the school's 20th Hallowe'en Howl, transforming two floors of the building into an eerie, fun-filled haunted house. Despite a dearth of snow, the school celebrated its first "Carnavale" in February, with a sugar-cube castle-building contest and a visit from Bonhomme.

WOW On Fridays, school begins at 8:40 a.m. and ends at 1:45 p.m. Teachers get valuable meeting and prep time while students start the weekend early! ❤️