

Starting school at the age three: why not?

By Pierre Allard, courtesy of *Le Droit newspaper*, August 22, 2009

Catholic schools in the Ottawa area are introducing an innovative program into their elementary schools this year. “Petits pas à trois” (Small steps at three) is Ontario’s first nursery school program and the 2009 back-to-school season saw the arrival of two- and three-year-olds in three schools: Terre des Jeunes (west end), Le Petit Prince (downtown) and St-Joseph (Orleans).

“We wanted children to have one more year to get ready to start Grade 1,” explained Nathalie Daoust, Manager of early childhood services at the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE). “They will be better prepared with three years of early childhood education and their families can develop a deeper attachment to the school.”

The program is intended especially for families with children who have not attended daycare, or where French is not their day-to-day language. It gives the children an opportunity to socialize, along with an extra year to acquire the language and identity.

In the classroom, the children will learn primarily through play. “It’s the same philosophy as in kindergarten,” said Daoust. “The activities are tailored to their interests.”

All three classes are full, and there is already a waiting list. The Board is nonetheless inviting parents to register on the waiting list. Details can be found on their website at: www.ecolecatholique.ca.

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