

# MET School continues to grow

BY MATEA TUHTAR

Canada's first and only MET School has come a long way from its humble beginning in 2009 when it opened up with three classrooms housed inside Garden City Collegiate. This fall, the Seven Oaks MET School moved into its very own building, with over one hundred students attending the 2015 school year. It's a move that attests to the success of the school, and they're ready to take on the challenge.

"It's sort of MET School 2.0 - a fresh start in a space we can call our own," says Acting Principal Nancy Janelle. "1.0 started 7 years ago and we were in our original small location at Garden City, and it was sort of an experiment to see if we can make a go of it. So we feel that 6 years in the old building was us establishing ourselves, proving ourselves and saying 'Yes we can do this, we've got community support, parent and student support - we're making this happen!'"

This spring the MET School celebrated their fourth graduating class with students continuing their education at post-secondary institutions - some with scholarships in hand. "We've really been able to prove that the program works and doing it in this alternative way really produces capable kids."

The Seven Oaks MET School is a 'Big Picture Learning' school with the philosophy of engaging students in their learning through creative and challenging interest-based project work and internships that provide real world learning opportunities. The classes have a 1 to 15 advisor to student ratio and students have the same advisor for all four years of high school who have the responsibility to connect their projects and internships to the curriculum.

Some of the places that have provided internships to students include St. Andrews Airport, Health Sciences Centre Volunteer Services, Amber Trails Day Care and the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame.

The new MET School building houses 8 classrooms, a great room and lobby. Each grade level classroom is next to each other and divided by a glass wall so there's still a lot of sharing going on between classes, and a lot of collaboration. Students go across the street to Garden City Collegiate for phys-ed and band or choir.

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- Nancy Janelle, Acting Principal

able to do more things in-house," explains Janelle. "By next year we'll do all of our math in-house including pre-calculus whereas before we relied on Garden City for that."

For the last four years the school has added a staff member and in September 2016 will see 30 new students and one more advisor, putting them at capacity. The school also has a waiting list for admission, with some students traveling across the city to attend.

"We're finally able to create our own identity," says Janelle. That identity was shown off during the school's packed Open House night on November 10th. School and school board officials, students and parents came out to celebrate the new space and were treated to skits and movies from the students

describing their life at school.

Also in attendance was the MET School co-founder Elliot Washor. "When we first opened up as a Big Picture School, part of that process was them giving us a mentor. Just as our students have mentors in the community, we get a mentor who comes and spends a certain amount of time with a new school to help them get established and answer questions," says Janelle, adding they've taken the last few years to iron out the kinks.

Janelle says she sees there is a need for MET schools and gets a great interest from other school divisions across Canada. "I started this role last year, and it feels like once a week I've got somebody coming in to meet me, to see the school, or do an interview."

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Janelle says it's the smaller numbers that really help kids get to know each other. "When you see Grade 9's hanging out with Grade 12's - that doesn't happen in a high school. The kids love it, the ownership they're taking of it is nice to see. The students are proud of it and that makes such a big difference."