

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING – What every parent needs to know

Full-day kindergarten is coming to Manor Park Public School in September. Along with it comes other recommendations from the Pascal Report: Extended Day programming (before and after-school programs), and childcare activities on PD Days and school holidays.

The purpose of the Extended Day programming is to provide a 'seamless' day for elementary school children: classes and extra hours care in the same location, resulting in ease of organization for families. The Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is responsible for organizing Extended Day programs, and has recently decided to consider third party providers for this service. The MPCC has been the local after school care provider for more than 20 years, and wants to become the school board's third party provider of before- and after-school programming at Manor Park Public School.

At a public consultation organized by the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) in November, Dr. Charles Pascal described 'seamless' as having children remain in the same classroom with the same staff before-, during-, and after-school hours.

Many parents challenged that this definition was too narrow. Parents reported that they currently enjoyed 'seamless' programming simply because it was at the school site. At the MPCC, we agree. In fact, we continually look for ways to meet the needs of our families while making their connections to school and community fully 'seamless'.

Manor Park After-School is currently operated by the MPCC from 3-6pm on school days. After-school programming takes place in both the Manor Park Community Centre and in the school. The 100 students who join the program each school day walk to their programming space with their Instructors. To classrooms and other school facilities, the MPCC 'seamlessly' adds outdoor sports fields, rinks, and play structures provided by the community and the city.

We hire local teachers, Early Childhood Educators and instructors when we can. Whenever possible we combine two part-time jobs so that they can 'seamlessly' have meaningful and full-time employment. Being both an After-School instructor and sports instructor makes sense. Our staff gets to know Manor Park families really well, and remain on staff with us for many years.

Manor Park After-School program welcomes neighbourhood children who attend other local elementary schools so that they can 'seamlessly' return to their own community and friends at the end of the day.

The MPCC works with the principal and Home & School Association to bring children sports and arts programming during the school day. We volunteer at sports events. We provide staff for the outdoor rink.

We organize special events such as 'Rock the Block', Movie Nights, Children's Christmas Shoppe and the annual Skating Party. When possible, we reinvest in the community through fee subsidies and initiatives like play structures and other improvements, 'seamlessly' linking the efforts of the school and residents for the betterment of both.

These events are made possible by the revenue generated by the after-school program and run by many of the same staff. The MPCC hopes that parents see the advantage and value in having a local not-for-profit organization administering the before- and after- school program at our neighborhood school.

The OCDSB will choose the Extended Day program provider after distributing a survey to school families later this month, asking about their before- and after-school program needs. The MPCC hopes that families will indicate that they want the MPCC to continue to provide its quality after-school program on this survey and to communicate their wishes to school board officials. Only by being chosen as the third party Extended Day program provider will the MPCC be able to continue to provide the recreational programs and special events in our community as we have done for more than 35 years.