

## **School Design Proposal**

Gabrielle Reece - V00912400

Faculty of Education, University of Victoria

EDCI 303 A01: Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Canadian Education

Dr. Graham McDonough

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## **I. Introduction**

This school proposal brings forwards the idea of Sunnyside Elementary which is located on a fully fenced and secured waterfront two acre lot off of Cordova Bay Road in Victoria, British Columbia. The school building takes up approximately half of an acre, two thirds of an acre are used for a playground/learning gardens and the remaining acreage is a free outside play area. Sunnyside Elementary contains grades kindergarten to grade five and has a capacity of 228 students. I bring forward the proposal for Sunnyside Elementary because I strive to create a learning environment where students not only thrive but have the ability to grow into their potential as passionate life long learners who are able to effectively work both as a part of a team and independently.

## **II. Philosophical/Historical Foundations**

The Philosophical foundations of Sunnyside Elementary come from Maria Montessori, A.S Neil, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Friedrich Fröbel. Sunnyside Elementary includes; Montessori's idea of education for whole students, auto-didactic lessons, and child-sized furniture (Gutek, 2001b), A.S. Niell's use of self-governing and self-discipline (Neil, 1960), as well as Mary Wollstonecraft's approach where students learn through interaction with their environment, students are involved in decision making and are taught to fulfil personal expectations rather than the expectations of others (Gutek, 2001c), and finally Froebel's Theory of Play, specifically the idea that play facilitates socialization and allows children to test out their interests without commitment (Gutek, 2001a). All of the aforementioned philosophies have been translated into the context of the 21st century and are put into place to reflect the vision that Sunnyside Elementary has for its students.

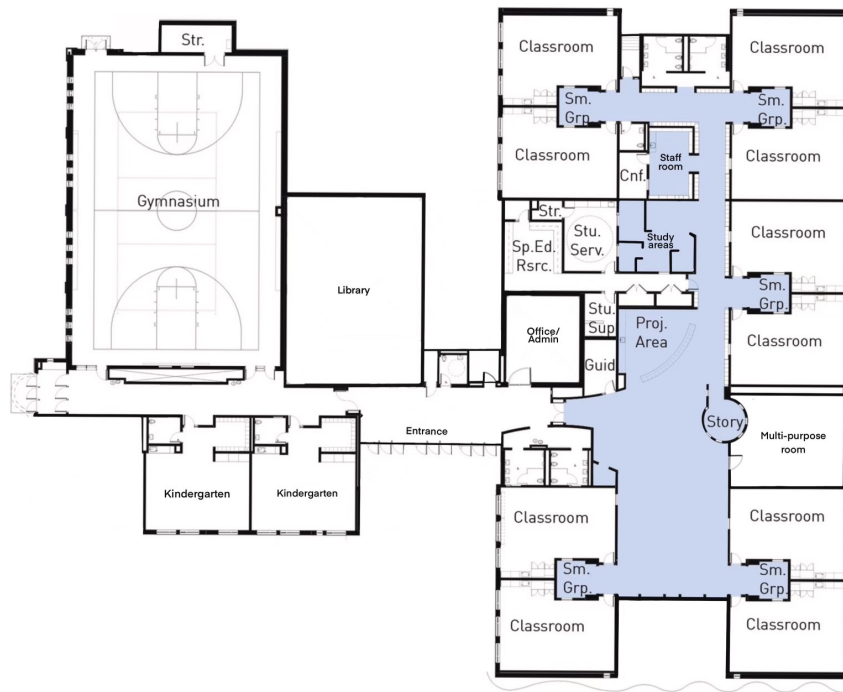
### **III. Aims for Service**

The purpose of Sunnyside Elementary is to encourage the development of independence and responsibility while promoting students to be passionate, kind, and social learners. The development of independence will be through; the use of child-sized furniture which allows for children to access the necessary tools to do their work without needing to rely on someone else (Guttek, 2001b), some auto-didactic lessons which encourage self-correcting, self-initiating, and self-confidence all of which provide the student with tools to work independently (Guttek, 2001b), and the use of independent play which teaches students to be self-reliant when it comes to creativity, imagination and focus, (White, 2012). While developing responsibility is one of Sunnyside Elementary's aims, we also believe that being able to work well in a group is incredibly important which is why we encourage students to ask for help, and to socialize through working and playing with their peers. Responsibility is developed through the use of; self-governing within classrooms which builds the students understanding of their social responsibility through setting and following classroom rules (Niell, 1960), and self-discipline which will be used during independent projects and will teach students to be responsible for themselves, via organization, and their learning (Niell, 1960). Students will be encouraged to be passionate learners through; lessons that are based off of the surrounding environment (Guttek, 2001c), including students in classroom decisions (Guttek, 2001c), teaching life-skills (Guttek, 2001b) and creating classroom environments that encourage discussion. Kindness will be predominantly taught through teachers using behaviour-modelling, positive play (Guttek, 2001a), and classroom lessons. Whilst the promotion of students being social learners may seem to contrast with our encouragement of developing independence we believe that for a students to be

successful in schooling and life in general they must be able to work both independently and socially, social learning is taught through play (Guttek, 2001a), group activities, and classroom discussions.

#### **IIV. Curriculum: Content and Experiences**

All of the teachings will include the standard British Columbia curriculum for English Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Physical Health Education, Arts Education, and Health and Career Education (Ministry of Education, 2018). Students will learn the French alphabet in kindergarten and the lessons will continue as they progress through their time at Sunnyside Elementary, resulting in a basic (and age appropriate) understanding of the language by the time they are finished grade five. Because Sunnyside Elementary values collaboration, students will experience our beloved buddy program. Students from grade five are paired with a buddy from grade two, grade four students are paired with grade one's and grade three's paired with kindergarteners, the buddies meet twice a week to work on an academic subject that the older students are able to help the younger students with. Since collaboration is deeply valued in Sunnyside Elementary we have prioritized space throughout the architectural design of the school that allows for small group work areas, reading nooks, and project areas (Image I.) that the students can use throughout the day (with teacher permission). During their time at Sunnyside Elementary students will have the opportunity to enjoy various experiences including; learning gardens, the breakfast program, the aforementioned buddy program, and academic related field trips which often include: trips to the local beach, observatory, aquarium, and museum.



(Image I)

Modified version of HMFH Architects Design

## V. Instructional Methods

As mentioned in my introduction Sunnyside Elementary teaches kindergarten to grade five with two classes of each grade and a maximum of eighteen students per class from kindergarten to grade two and twenty students per class from grade three to grade five. The smaller class size allows for teachers to give each student individual attention and allows better participation and communication from the students. The school day runs from 8:30am to 3:30pm Monday to Friday, starting early September and ending in late June and, while the same classes are taught year round, the school year is defined as two terms - fall term and spring term. Teachers form their classroom in a way that encourages open communication between the students and their peers as well as the students and their teacher. There is one teacher per class with a constant of an educational assistant that circulates between the two same-grade classes. Having a strong training in inclusive education is required to become a teacher at Sunnyside

Elementary because here we believe that every student deserves an equal education, if they have special needs, whether academic, physical, behavioural, or mental, any and all academic/ classroom adaptations will be made and their personal satisfactory education will be met. The classrooms have four (or five depending on the grade) table groups with the students equally assigned to a table, this seating arrangement allows for the children to have academic and social discussions, work together, and ask one another subject related questions. The students are reassigned to different table groups once every two weeks which encourages them to socialize and work with peers who they may not often have interactions with. Teachers use behaviour modelling to demonstrate/encourage positive behaviours, and inform students of their choices, never placing their personal opinions on the students or making decisions for the students without talking to them first. Teachers make sure that students understand that they are not in competition with each other, encourage students to work at their own pace (Gutek, 2001b) and ask for help when they need it, these are all important steps in making sure that no student slips between the cracks and fall behind in their schooling. As mentioned in paragraph IV, Sunnyside Elementary is on two acres of oceanfront land and features a learning garden as well as an outdoor play space, all of which the teachers incorporate into their lessons because it helps students understand that their studies and academic experiences are relevant to life outside of school. At Sunnyside Elementary the teachers include play in the daily schedule and encourage students to try various different activities in order to explore interests and discover passions.

If a student is acting out within the school grounds their teacher will pull them aside and talk to them in a positive manner. Teachers at Sunnyside Elementary will never remove a student from the classroom or have the student miss out on their education as a consequence for their actions.

## VI. Assessment Methods

The teachers at Sunnyside Elementary understand that all students learn differently and at different paces, because of this understanding the teachers are consistently assessing students (weekly) to see if any adjustments or adaptations need to be made in order for the student to academically flourish. Assessments are done in multiple ways, specifically - peer, self, and teacher assessments. Here at Sunnyside Elementary we do not determine if a student understands a subject by taking an exam or test, teachers are able to give students pop-quizzes that reflect what the student knows but they do not contribute to the students overall grade. Instead the teachers assess the competency level of their students through the use of; conversations and questions which allow for students to summarize or reflectively write or talk about what they have learnt, and independent projects that demonstrate the students understanding of material. Students are encouraged and reminded to ask their teacher if they would like to be assessed in a different way, if that were to happen the student will still be assessed on the same information it will just be presented in a different way. Similar to the end of term assessments, students are assessed everyday but in a much smaller way. Typically through using the “ticket out the door” method where teachers ask their students a simple question that they must respond to before being able to leave the class, or through using a “morning check-in” where the teacher poses a question that students must answer by choosing one of the three available options upon entering the classroom. If a student has special needs and requires to be assessed in a particular way their teacher will take that into consideration and will implement a more appropriate method of assessment. The teachers at Sunnyside Elementary understand that satisfactory education is not one-size fits all, when a teacher assesses that a student needs to have their expected competency

levels adapted that will be implemented along with any adjustments to assignments or course work.

## **VII. Governance Structure**

The Governance structure of Sunnyside Elementary features a principal and a vice principal both of whom contribute to the school through their administrative and educational leadership i.e. organization of programs, long and short term planning, and ensuring the welfare of staff and students. The teachers and Principal/Vice Principal work collaboratively when making decisions that impact the students but the Principal has final say. The whole school follows a set of basic rules - no weapons, violence, substances or bullying, be kind, and have appropriate foot wear for the weather and for playing outside. Along with the whole school rules every classroom democratically votes on a set of rules for everyone in the class to follow, teachers aid the process, keep the conversation on track and make sure they are academically/ socially relevant. Students have no say in the consequences if a classroom rule is broken, instead it is up to the discretion of the teacher. The teachers are in charge of their classrooms and reasonably consider their students opinions when making decisions that impact the class. At Sunnyside Elementary we encourage parents/guardians to join the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), which acts in accordance with what the BC School Act.

## **VIII. Policies**

As previously mentioned Sunnyside Elementary has a PAC where parents/guardians can discuss topics related to their children's education and school experience, the PAC then brings forward any pertinent topics, opinions or ideas to the Vice Principal. The Sunnyside Elementary PAC also features two student representatives (typically one from each grade five class) and one teacher representative, having the representatives present during PAC meetings allow for parents



and the teacher to deepen their knowledge of the students time at Sunnyside and how to further enrich their children's experiences. The school administrators meet once every two months with the Peer to Peer board which is made up of one teachers, one parent, and one student representative, the meetings allow for the administrators to make sure that each group is satisfied with their experience in the school. Sunnyside Elementary welcomes the local community and frequently calls on the expertise of some of the locals in order to further educational experiences, such as; asking the local gardeners and farmers to help instruct lessons in the learning gardens, or asking local artists/musicians to instruct some lessons. If a student is acting out within the school grounds, the student's teacher will either call or send an email to the parent/guardian discussing the incident. An email or phone call will also be made to a parent/guardian if the student's educational competency levels need to be adjusted.

#### **IX. Acknowledging Possible Situations**

As mentioned in section V every grade has an educational assistant that circulates between the two classes, if there is need for an educational assistant to constantly be in one of the classes an additional EA will be brought in as a constant feature to the required classroom. Section IIV mentions the buddy program, where older students are paired up with a younger buddy that they can help with academic work i.e. reading, writing, art, etc. Parents occasionally ask 'what happens if a student is paired up with a buddy that cannot help them?', whilst we understand the concern there are many assessments done prior to the pairing and in the rare instance that the buddy pairing isn't working a new arrangement will be made.

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