

Home-schooling in Halton Hills

By **Nelia Raposo**
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As the first day of classes approaches, many families are gearing up for a new school year. But for at least one Georgetown family, the kids are already in school.

Maureen Winata is her children's teacher. She is home-schooling Alexander, 6, and Theodore, 5. So, technically, her kids are always in school.

Up until about a year ago, the boys attended a Christian school. Alexander was enrolled in full-day kindergarten and Thomas attended preschool for half a day, three times a week. But as a former educator in her native Indonesia, Winata decided she can do a better job teaching her kids herself.

It's just that as a parent, I want to see them succeed so we decided to home-school them. I'm trying the first year and so far we are doing great, Winata says.

And, she's not alone in taking this seemingly radical approach to education.

There are 21,662 Canadian children registered as home-schooled students, according to statistics released last year in a study by the Fraser Institute.

But experts believe the number is closer to 100,000 home-schooling students in Canada as not all families register.

The study shows a growing number of Canadian families are choosing to home-school their children. In the report, home-schooling is defined as the approach to education where parents take final responsibility for the selection, management, provision, and supervision of their child's education program and that education occurs largely outside of an institutional setting.

Dr. Carlo Ricci teaches in the faculty of education's graduate program at Nipissing University and specializes in this area.

He says home-schooling is increasingly becoming normalized. Schools are very top down and often impose onto people curric-

ulum of which the receiver has no interest.

I'm interested in self-determination or willed learning. The learner gets to take charge and decide what they are going to learn, how they are going to learn, when they are going to learn. From an ethical perspective, it's also something that in a democracy we should be advocating for, Ricci says.

He argues that home-schooling is about understanding that learning happens everywhere. The whole world is a classroom.

People have misperceptions and incorrect information of what home-schooling is, Ricci says. While critics think home-schooled kids get a shoddy education as ministry of education curriculum may or may not be followed, or that home-schooled people are anti-social and have few friends. This is not true, he says.

There is data that shows that people who have been home-schooled volunteer more in the community, vote more, and do better in university despite not having gone to school, Ricci says.

Among the home-schooling success stories are tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams, famous crime novelist Agatha Christie, innovator Thomas Edison, U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt and telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell.

I was never a fan of (traditional) school so if my elementary or high school teachers knew that I now teach at a faculty of education, it would surprise them, Ricci says. My experience as a student speaks volumes to how a lot of the school curriculum is not of interest to people in the system. Students are capable of doing interesting academic work but it has to be of interest to them.

In fact, he says there are schools in Canada that do not test students and everybody comes out literate and contributing adults in their communities. Each of us learns most of what we know outside of school.

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