



# Vernon Montessori program seeks room to grow

Silver Star Elementary Montessori program hopes to expand to kindergarten, Grade 7

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Montessori programming at Silver Star Elementary is looking to expand.

Colleen Harvie, Silver Star Elementary principal, met the School District 22 board of education Wednesday, Nov. 21 to request that the Montessori program begin in kindergarten and end in Grade 7. Currently, Montessori runs from Grade 1 to Grade 6.

“Presently, students who begin the program in Grade 1 experience disruption in both classroom and school community because of the transition to both a new school and program,” Harvie said. “They will become used to their new community and parents may think, ‘No. I’m not going to put them in the Montessori program,’ where they may be missing an opportunity.”

Silver Star Elementary has two kindergarten classes. Harvie said a third Montessori kindergarten would fill quickly.

“This would allow students to enter the program in a natural progression,” she said.

After completing Grade 6 in the program, students have the option of staying at Silver Star or returning to their catchment area schools. However, future legislation will dictate that future students must go to their catchment.

“It’s a completely different way of learning,” Harvie said. “It’s a different philosophy.”

Designed around the research of Maria Montessori, the program focuses on children’s learning rather than teacher’s instruction. Harvie said the program’s strength is the multi-age groupings that cultivate mentorship, independence and respect.

Harvie’s presentation to trustees was for their future consideration.

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### **Information decision comes with large price tag**

School District 22 trustees are faced with a mammoth decision: implement new information technology now for a large sum or risk future rate hikes.

Secretary treasurer Sterling Olson briefed the board on MyEd BC – a portal used by most school districts in the province. Currently, the Vernon school district utilizes CIMS, which has become embedded in the district fabric in terms of user knowledge and support.

The one-time transition would cost the district an estimated \$471,000 for implementation and training. Annual operation costs of MyEd BC are forecast at \$109,000. Currently, the district pays \$226,500 annually to use CIMS. However, Olson said, should the other three districts using CIMS jump ship, School District 22 could end up on hook for annual costs of more than \$600,000.

“CIMS will eventually be obsolete. The question is do we want to wait,” superintendent Joe Rogers said. “It’s a big cost at the beginning but then you get a better product.”

Should the district opt to wait, Olson said it is possible that the transition fee will also rise.

“The likelihood that the amount would increase for whatever reason is pretty likely,” Olson said.

Lisa LaBoucane, Vernon Teachers’ Association president, asked the board to investigate districts of a similar size who have implemented MyEd BC and their associated costs.

Trustees took the information into consideration for decision at a future meeting.

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