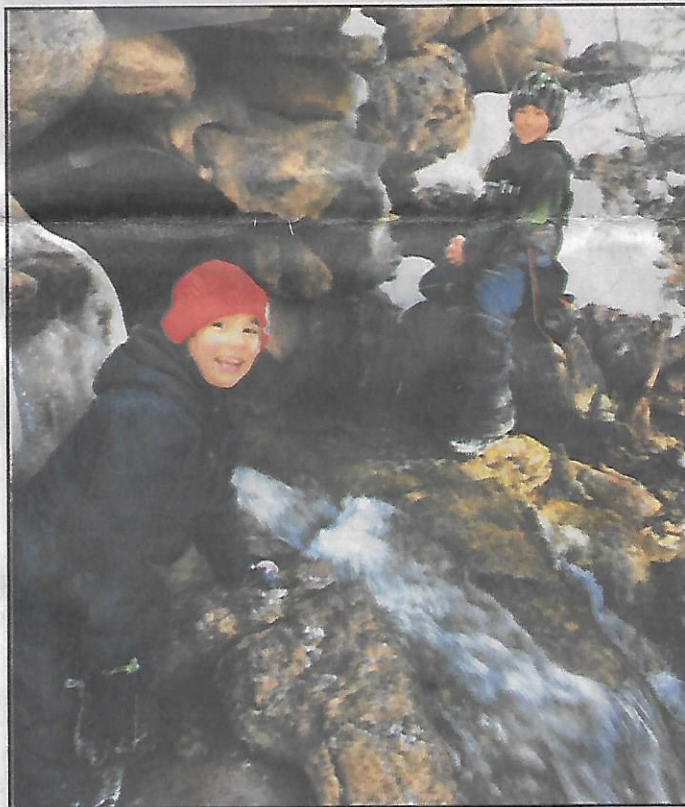


Headwaters Academy plans to move to new home near Kimberley



EXPLORING & LEARNING— The focus on Headwaters Academy is on learning in context, whether that is robotics on a dairy farm or eco-education out of doors. A new school building is planned for the Kimberley area. *(submitted photo)*

(by Kimberley Black)

Developing young minds and cultivating new ideas is not the only development plan for Headwaters Academy this year.

Enrollment is growing at the school and in anticipation of reaching capacity, plans are moving forward to build its permanent home, south of Kimberley.

This experiential private school opened its doors in September 2017 with 16 students. It offers alternative hands-on learning experience for children needing greater stimulation, more one-on-one support or simply to provide a way for high-energy children to learn by doing, said Mark Brown, principal of Headwaters Academy.

The word is spreading throughout the school's catchment area, and where they originally saw enrollments coming from Thornbury and Meaford, this past year they welcomed students from the Flesherton area as well, he said.

While enrollment is currently at 18 students, Brown anticipates that it will not be long before they reach capacity at 24 students. One of the commitments the school makes is that they offer a low teacher-to-student ratio.

"We will never have

more than eight students per class and of course offering that low a ratio comes at a price," he said. Tuition for one student for an entire school year is currently set at \$16,300.

Another commitment Headwaters makes to its parents is that their children will meet or exceed the Ontario curriculum levels. For some students, this means that they will experience accelerated levels of learning, while others will need to take things a little slower.

Programming individually seems to be working for the school. Recently, the students of Headwaters Academy attended the Grey County Science Fair and Brown was pleased to report that 2/3 of their students received awards. He also shared that they received the results of their Canadian Achievement Test in mathematics and Headwaters students are currently testing two grade levels ahead of their peer groups.

When asked what his biggest hurdle is, Brown shared that the thing that keeps him up most at night is coming up with new ways to further stimulate these young minds.

"Some of them are moving so quickly through

the curriculum and I don't want them to become bored," he said.

One way the school has tackled this challenge in the past is to connect the students to their greater community.

Every Thursday, the students have a field trip that is somehow connected to their learning.

When they were studying Trends in the Municipality, they met with the Mayor of Grey Highlands and the owner of Fleshcon to learn what kind of development is coming to the municipality.

On another occasion when they were studying robotics they attended a robotic dairy farm and experienced first-hand how what they learn in the classroom is applied in real life, Brown said.

This fall while construction is underway, the academy will move from its current location at Kimbercote Farms outside of Heathcote to the Highlands Nordic Ski Club near Duntroon.

Brown hopes to see construction start as soon as possible at the permanent location, which is 5 km south of Kimberley on Grey Road #13. Currently he is awaiting approval of permits from the County of Grey and from the NEC.

The floor plans for the 3,200 sq.-ft. building will house four classrooms, four mudrooms, a common sitting area, kitchen and bathrooms. It will not be laid out like a regular school, he said, but "more like a chalet with a fireplace and each classroom will have a mudroom, it is essential with our programming," Brown said.

The school hopes to open its new doors by the fall of 2020.

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Thanks Fred + Gail.