

## WHAT MAKES LDVA SPECIAL ?

by S. Ritacca, Co-founder of Leonardo Da Vinci Academy

Since 1984 LDVA has been described as a "valuable Canadian educational resource" and "an educational gem". Former graduates continue to express deep fondness for the school and describe its role in shaping their future. What makes LDVA so special ?

Aside from the fact that LDVA is a safe, healthy learning environment that promotes respect, family values, and personal development, the "Thinking Like Leonardo" approach to lifelong learning is one aspect unique to LDVA that stands out. Children immersed in this philosophy develop a confidence and love of learning that goes beyond curriculum and memorizing facts. They are set on a path where whole brain thinking, creativity, curiosity, and perseverance serve as stepping stones to personal growth. In the process children learn to embrace ambiguity, make connections, and to appreciate their physical nature. Promoted during their formative years, these skills and attitudes will serve as the foundation for reaching their potential and inspiring a love for lifelong learning.

Especially during this modern age of digital technology where reality is increasingly being obscured by virtual realities, LDVA's approach to education, rooted in the analog world of nature, provides a counter-balance to help mitigate the harmful effects of excessive exposure to digital screens.

Learning at LDVA is further enhanced by the intimate size of the classrooms which allows for more individualized attention. At the same time, through a Montessori methodology, the children are encouraged to become self-aware and given freedom to explore and develop as nature intended.

At LDVA a student's safety and best interest are top priority. This dedication of staff is another aspect of LDVA that makes it special. The selection of teachers is based on their character as much as it is on their qualifications. The school community is like an extended family and politics are displaced by honest communication. The common goal for parents and staff is to work together for the betterment of our children.

The study of the Italian language and culture is another feature of LDVA that distinguishes the school. Children are exposed to a rich Italian language and culture in a manner and degree that is exceptional in Canada. The value of learning another language at a young age is well documented and has proven to be advantageous to their intellectual development.

The purpose of formal schooling, especially during the formative years, is to nurture a child's potential and promote a healthy self-esteem, self-discipline, learning skills and independence. With this in mind, it is obvious why LDVA is such a special school. Not only are students of LDVA treated as responsible individuals but they are part of a learning environment that challenges their best effort and encourages a love of learning. These should be the goals of every school !