

THE BEAR

THE MAPLE BEAR SCHOOL MAGAZINE



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MULTICULTURALISM

GLOBAL VIEW

STUDENTS SEE A BORDERLESS WORLD

The best of
Canadian education
for a global future.





Maple Bear

OUR SPACE. OUR TEACHING

MORE THAN INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, MAPLE BEAR'S CLASSROOMS ARE THE PHYSICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE CANADIAN METHODOLOGY

Maple Bear's classrooms are safe and friendly learning environments designed to stimulate the brain, boost concentration and engage the mind. In these environments, the students read, research, and share their findings. Everything is designed for excellence in education, from the furnishings, interior design, games, books, and manipulative materials to the Learning Centres that facilitate teaching outcomes.

GET TO KNOW SOME LEARNING CENTRES' SPACES:

- CIRCLE TIME MATH CENTRE SCIENCE CENTRE BLOCK CENTRE
- READING CENTRE DRAMA CENTRE
- SAND AND WATER CENTRE ART CENTRE COMPUTER CENTRE





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THE BEAR

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LIFELONG LEARNING – EVEN FOR EDUCATORS!

NEW RESOURCES
AND METHODS CHANGED
THE WAY OF
TEACHING IN THE LAST DECADE

The period of social distancing demanded from all of us – individuals and organizations – a significant capacity to adapt, and fostered a wide-scale transformation of society. In this environment, like no other time in recent history, qualities such as creativity, organization, resilience and empathy are critical.

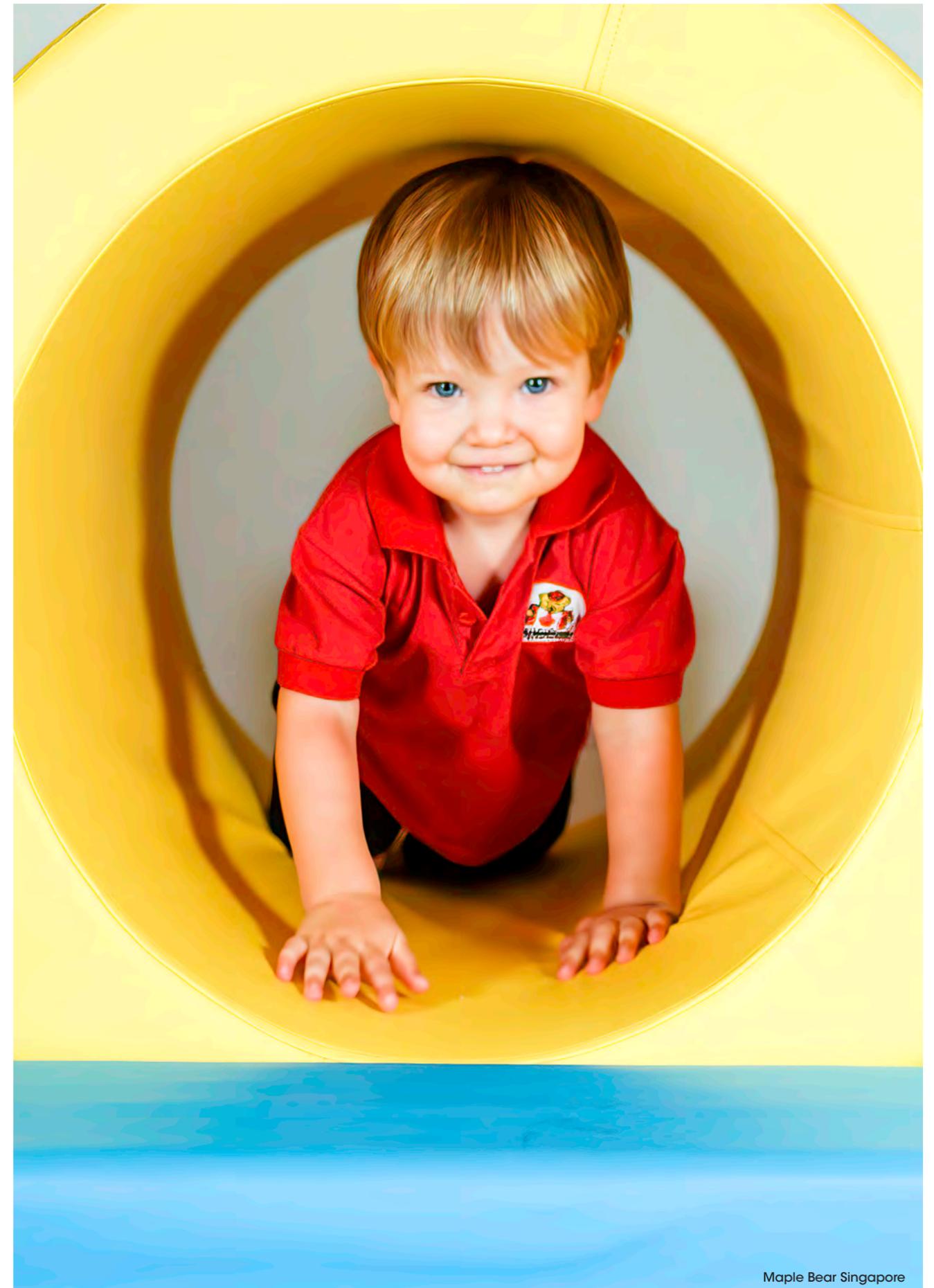
Among all the pivots that were necessary during this time, some will remain regardless of the circumstances. Some are temporary in nature and others have become a permanent part of our educational process.

At Maple Bear, we developed a complete, virtually-supported education model, with an integral focus on student learning and offered the highest standard of excellence in all learning formats: face to face, on-line or hybrid, from early childhood education to high school. Schools are more than buildings, books, computers and digital platforms. Schools are organizations dedicated to one purpose.

The perception of many people is that the goal of a good education is to prepare children and young people for the challenges they will face in adult life, from university entrance examinations to a productive and successful professional life.

This perception is correct. However, at Maple Bear, we go above and beyond. Our schools are organizations dedicated to awaken the students' passion for knowledge, creating a culture of lifelong learning and using this knowledge to build a better world.

The means have changed. But the joy and the pride we feel from supporting your children's development is what each Maple Bear school and educator around the planet is focused on! ■





Message from the Chairman and Founder



Rodney Briggs
Chairman & Founder Maple Bear Global Schools



Welcome to the first global issue of the Bear Magazine. The Bear Magazine has been produced by different Maple Bear countries for over thirteen years. This year, we have combined the great work from all these magazines and included articles and stories from our partners around the globe. Maple Bear is committed to bringing the very best of Canadian immersion-based bilingual education to the world. Our successful methodology has crossed the Canadian borders and is now available to more than 40,000 students at over 500 schools in 30 countries and is growing all the time.

With the advent of COVID-19, we quickly pivoted Maple Bear's proprietary, Canadian, student-centered curriculum to a fully integrated online model. Further, as schools around the globe began to re-open, we were able to share best practices on social distancing and hygiene protocols with all our partners and owners to ensure the safety of our students, teachers and families.

At Maple Bear, we are very proud to instill a love of lifelong learning in our students to ensure they are successful in all their endeavors academically and professionally, and we encourage them to become actively involved in supporting their local communities. Recently, we achieved a significant milestone with our first grade 12 graduating classes from two Maple Bear high schools in Brazil, and we look forward to congratulating even more graduates in the years to come.

In this issue you will learn more about how Maple Bear is constantly refreshing its academic curriculum and how we invest heavily in training the academic leaders and teaching staff at our schools, and why we conduct periodic quality assurance reviews, even in an online world, to ensure that Maple Bear schools are providing our students with the best of Canadian education for a global future.

Our mission is to create critical thinkers with the social and emotional skills to be leaders in the 21st century and to achieve success in their educational aspirations and personal lives. Please enjoy this first global issue of The Bear Magazine. ■



Message from the CEO, Maple Bear Global Schools



Arno Krug
CEO, Maple Bear Global Schools

A GLOBAL TEAM

THE MISSION NOW IS
TO HELP OUR STUDENTS
AROUND THE WORLD

Iwould like to invite you to look at the clock right now. It doesn't matter if it is day or night outside, dawn, or even Saturday, Sunday or a holiday. At this exact moment, rest assured that somewhere on the planet, there are toddlers, children and teenagers having their lives transformed in a Maple Bear School.

Through the Maple Bear methodology, students are being encouraged to investigate, experiment and share discoveries. They are becoming independent, responsible and resilient. As well, they are learning to value differences, to work collaboratively in multicultural environments, to take risks, and to develop a lifelong love of learning. These skills and character traits will carry them through their entire life.

This proprietary, highly successful Canadian methodology, along with Maple Bear's strong global presence in more than 30 countries to-date and growing rapidly, provides us with a unique opportunity as the only educational network able to offer its students a truly multicultural experience and innovative environment, in which best practices are created, enhanced and shared globally on an on-going basis.

Regardless of whether it is a virtual experience or an in-person classroom, Maple Bear promotes a truly global educational experience in every one of its more than 500 schools worldwide. There is not enough space to describe all the incredible initiatives and learning activities occurring daily in each Maple Bear school, but we hope that this 13th edition of The Bear Magazine gives you a small window into the world of Maple Bear. We are very proud of our program and the way in which it will positively impact the lives of our students and transform the world. Happy reading! ■



KEN McCLUSKEY

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT

CANADIAN
EDUCATOR FROM
THE UNIVERSITY
OF WINNIPEG, TALKS
TO THE BEAR AND
HIGHLIGHTS
THE PARTNERSHIP WITH
MAPLE BEAR GLOBAL SCHOOLS





Dr. Ken McCluskey, a professor and former Dean of Education, at the University of Winnipeg is known internationally for his work in several areas, including (1) Mentorship, (2) ADHD, (3) Gifted Education, and (4) At Risk Children and Youth, where his book called Lost Prizes and other related projects serve as programmatic models worldwide. He has received major recognition and awards for program development, creativity, research, and publications from such organizations as the Council for Exceptional Children, ICIE, the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, and Reclaiming Youth International (along with his institution's awards for teaching, research, governance, and community service).

A popular keynote speaker (whose work has taken him to 40 countries and all the wonders of the world), Ken has written over 130 professional articles and chapters and is author, co-author or editor of more than 20 books, including Understanding ADHD, Our Personal Journey; Lost Prizes: Talent Development and Problem Solving with At-Risk Populations; and Enriching Teaching and Learning for Talent Development.

THE BEAR — How did this relationship start?

KEN McCLUSKEY — It all began with the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education (PBDE), a 30-credit hour program offered to Maple Bear teachers and administrators in Brazil. The program is demanding, for it requires participants to give up free time and put in extra work in addition to their regular jobs. Since 2014, over 200 Maple Bear educators have completed their PBDE's and the program is still going strong.

THE BEAR — To what do you attribute that success?

KEN — Importantly, there is such tangible interest on the part of the administrators and owners in Maple Bear for upgrading and enhancing pedagogical practice, expanding horizons, and hear-

ing a number of different voices from a Canadian perspective. The Post-Baccalaureate is the flagship of our partnership.

THE BEAR — What are other aspects to the partnership?

KEN — Faculty and Administration from the University have attended conferences for owners and for teachers. Both the former Vice-President (Academic) of UW, Dr. Neil Besner, and I have given keynote addresses at conferences in Brazil, and found it to be a horizon-expanding experience. We were also able to visit schools; the buildings, themselves were lovely and the tone in the classrooms was exceedingly positive. The networking that took place was invaluable. As well, The University of Winnipeg facilitates and hosts an annual symposium for Maple Bear-affiliated educators, trainers and curriculum experts, who get together to stay on top of current research and strategies and share new knowledge.

Several University of Winnipeg faculty members have been involved in curriculum design for Maple Bear, and certainly the work that Maple Bear does in curriculum and professional development to put it succinctly, MB provides strong ongoing support for teachers.

THE BEAR — You mentioned visiting some schools. Can you comment further on that?

KEN — The schools I saw were well-designed and well-equipped, with a positive tone that was palpable. Parents, teachers, and students were enthusiastic and motivated.

On another note, MBGS names people to their Advisory Committee, which is a think tank with representation from MBGS, University of Winnipeg, former Manitoba government employees and administrators, and the International Centre for Innovation in Education ICIE. Essentially, the committee is involved in augmenting and improving the Maple Bear curriculum. This committee has taken a critical look at and enhanced the Maple Bear program in the areas of sustainable development (ecological competence), technology



"SOME EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS AND PROGRAMS THAT MAPLE BEAR CAN ACCESS ARE DYNAMIC AND AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS, INTEREST INVENTORIES FOR CHILDREN, AND ONLINE OPTIONS THAT GIVE STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE THEIR PASSIONS AND STRETCH THEIR LIMITS"

— KEN McCLUSKEY

and computational thinking, and gifted education. Another important initiative in the partnership is the Early Childhood Certificate program, which is being developed by a joint committee of Maple Bear teachers and consultants, and University of Winnipeg Faculty.

THE BEAR — You had talked originally about a Centre for Excellence. Can you elaborate on that?

KEN — The Faculty of Education at The University of Winnipeg is affiliated with organizations such as ICIE, Lost Prizes International, and Reclaiming Youth At Risk (RYAR). Maple Bear can piggyback on such affiliations by accessing their journals, attending their conferences, and calling upon world-renowned experts for their conventions. There are exciting possibilities. Some examples of materials and programs that Maple Bear can access are dynamic and authentic assessment instruments, interest inventories for children, and online options that give students the opportunity to explore their passions and stretch their limits as they strive for high levels of thinking and doing. ■

MAPLE BEAR AROUND THE WORLD





What does Maple Bear mean to you?

"For our family, Maple Bear is a community of people who work together to meet our needs and requirements. The Maple Bear program offers freedom and a pleasant and playful environment where my child can develop emotionally at their own pace. When I chose this school, I did it with my heart, knowing that my wishes will be respected."

MATHEO'S MOTHER, MAPLE BEAR ROMANIA



"At Maple Bear, my daughter feels welcomed by professionals who respectfully understand her personally, in addition to allowing her to develop her curious and creative potential with freedom."

LILIAN AND VINICIUS, LUIZA'S PARENTS
MAPLE BEAR GRANJA JULIETA, SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Maple Bear School proved to be a cozy and modern place. Our son finds the peace and comfort necessary for his emotional, mental, and physical health, free from any negative social interaction. Be healthy, strong, and brave!"

MARIANA, STEVEN'S MOTHER.
MAPLE BEAR BULGARIA

"Since my daughter started studying at Maple Bear, we noticed a great development on her learning, especially regarding languages. She is very happy at the school."

CARLOS PONCK - ALICIA'S FATHER
MAPLE BEAR TURKEY

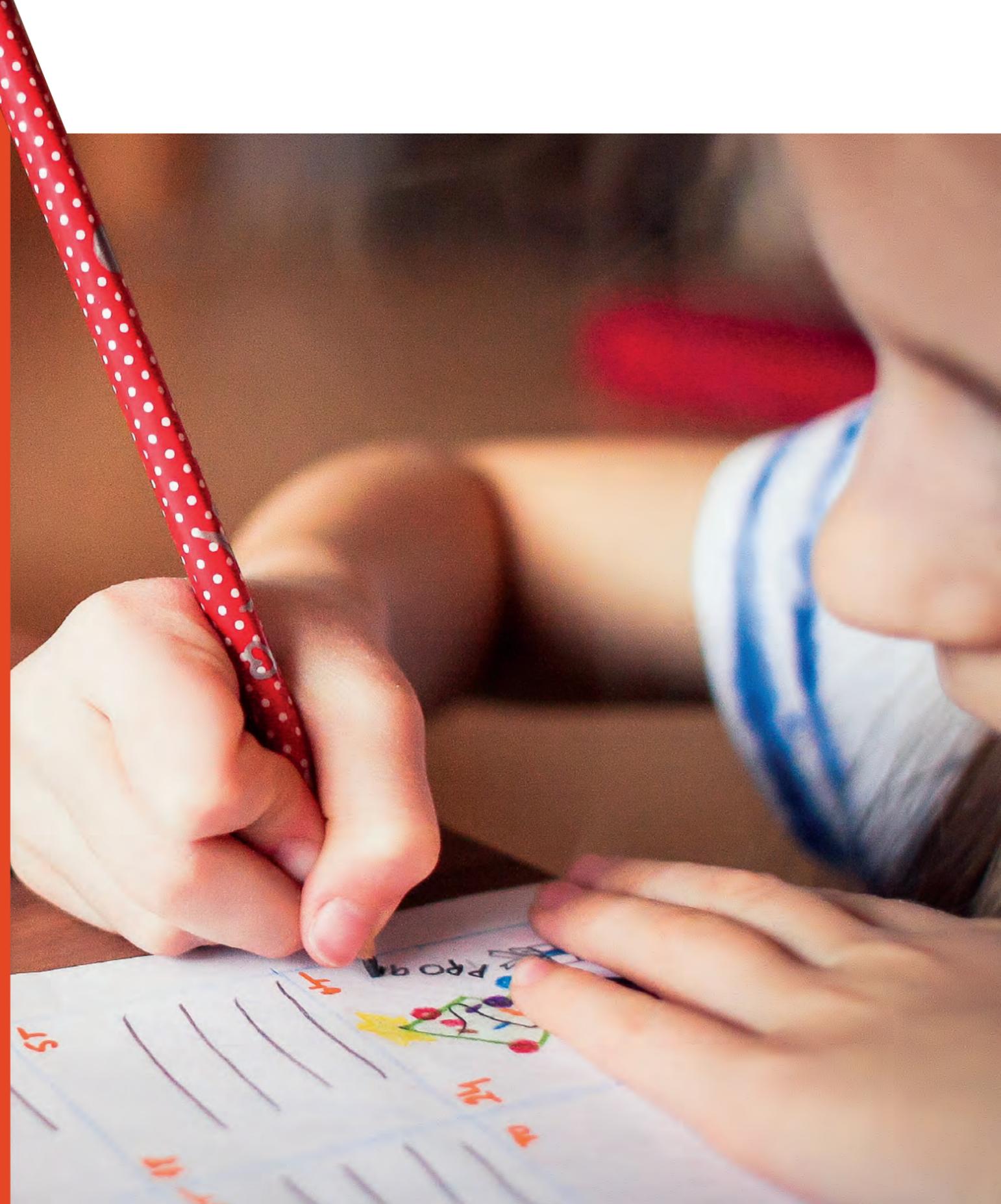


"We are impressed with the knowledge and passion of the Maple Bear teachers to maintain our child's curiosity, interest, and pleasure in learning. It has been wonderful to see how they use their teaching styles to share knowledge, a positive attitude, and a love for learning. We also thank the management team for their commitment and responsibility to our son."

MILENA AND YORDAN, PRESLAV'S PARENTS, MAPLE BEAR BULGARIA

excellence in education

The Maple Bear
program
offers one of the
world's best pedagogic
models and prepares
students for university
studies, professional life
and global citizenship.



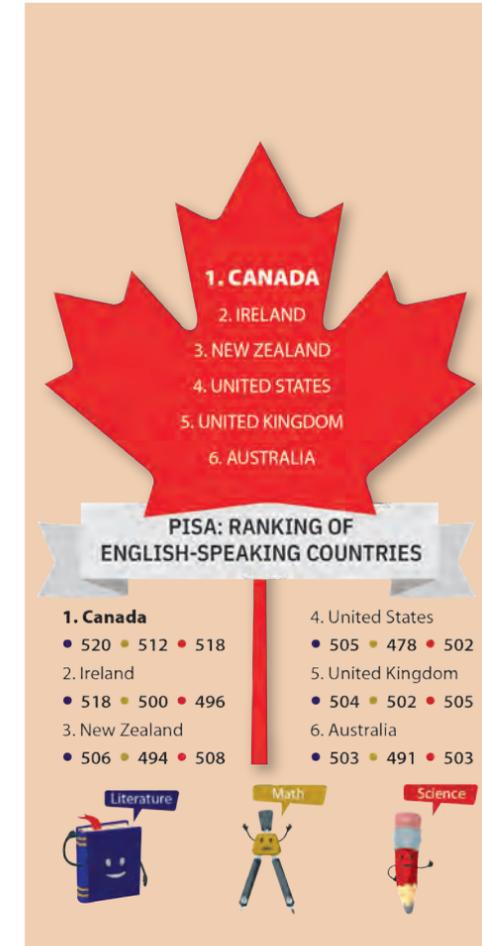


Maple Bear Singapore

PISA

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

ACCORDING TO THE OECD, CANADA IS THE LEADER IN EDUCATION AMONG ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES AND RANKED AS ONE THE BEST EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN THEWORLD



Canada is a constant presence in PISA's highest rankings. Every three years, 15-year-old students – representatives of the basic education cycle in each country – are evaluated in their reading, mathematics, and sciences proficiency. In this last evaluation, 600 thousand students from 80 countries participated.

Like education itself, PISA evolves as society is transformed in terms of the families' expectations and the economic and technological evolutions of the country. The future editions will have a greater focus on mathematics, creative thinking and will include an evaluation in foreign languages. It will also consider the student's capacity to learn in the digital world using online tools. "PISA is not just the most comprehensive and reliable indicator of the student's capacities, it's also a powerful tool that countries and economies can use to adjust their educational policies," states OECD's General-Secretary, Angel Gurría. Twenty-two thousand students from 800 Canadian schools took the evaluation in the most recent evaluation 15% of them reached the test's highest level, well above the global average of 9%. Additionally, they registered a performance which classified them as leaders among the English-speaking countries, surpassing Australia, United Kingdom, United States, among others. One of the highlights was the reading section, where Canadian students ranked 4th global-

ly. One out of three Canadian students stated that reading is one of their favorite hobbies, and indicated that on average, they read at least 30 minutes per day. More than 80% of the country's students are confident in their reading ability.

Canada also stands out as one of the world's most inclusive countries, guaranteeing an equivalent comparative performance between immigrants, second-generations, and non-immigrants. In sciences and mathematics, Canadian students ranked 6th and 10th globally.

The addition of bilingualism is also crucial. "We understand that the English language is the universal language, and learning it is beneficial to our students. By being exposed to different points of view, students enrich their perspectives and their relationships with other cultures from several parts of the world", says Cintia Sant'Anna, Academic Director of Maple Bear. According to the Academic Director, the Canadian methodology focuses on going beyond the exam. "We prepare young people for life beyond the classroom. From the physical and emotional points of view, students need to feel safe in school to develop academic knowledge and the social-emotional abilities that will allow them to be successful in their future as students, citizens, and professionals". ■



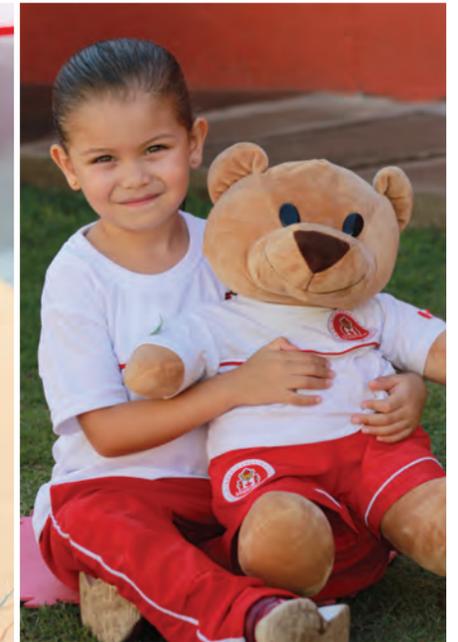
Maple Bear Turkey



Maple South Korea



Maple Bear USA



Maple Bear Mexico

BILINGUALISM

ACQUISITION OF CULTURE

MORE THAN LEARNING A LANGUAGE, STUDENTS ARE EXPOSED TO A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT WITH SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT GAINS

For Canadian educators, the term bilingualism means more than just learning a second language. Bilingualism is an approach, not an end in itself. It is about an opportunity for students to learn while being completely immersed in a second language. This gives them exposure to a multicultural environment, naturally developing the ability to think in another language and enhancing the capacity to adapt quickly and comfortably to different contexts. This is why the nature of Canadian education is built upon a multicultural approach. Since its foundation in 1867, Canada has had two primary languages, English and French. The country has also welcomed immigration and diversity. During different migratory movements, the government took measures to receive and integrate these new Canadian families. Education is this process's primary tool, always seeking to understand the families and students' needs and by adopting strategies focused on practical learning using perception, experimentation, and sharing. This is the fundamental difference from "learning English" to "learn in English."

At the end of the 1960s, while establishing the obligation for all Canadian Federal Organizations to offer support to its citizens in both French and English, The Official Languages Act helped spread the concept that bilingualism means not just developing fluency in a second language, but having two officially recognized native languages. Maple Bear's methodology aims to create connections and a favourable environment for the student's development. "When being immersed in an environment where a new language is used, children gradually adopt the language. They do this not only by memorizing vocabulary and grammar structures but by truly assimilating the nuances and subtle meanings of the language in an effective and definitive form", explains Cintia Sant'Anna, Maple Bear Academic Director.

One of the experts of this method is the Canadian lecturer, writer, and educator Michael Fullan. He highlights the importance of the 6C's: Character Education, Citizenship, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, and Critical Thinking. Fullan, the author of Deep Learning, states that the anticipated result from this model is that students care more for school and for life. They also learn to think about how to make a difference and how to help humanity. Maple Bear takes bilingualism to another level, going beyond linguistic teaching. Maple Bear provides an education focused on research, citizenship, and entrepreneurship. These skills can make all the difference in a child's life. ■



Maple Bear Vietnam



MULTICULTURALISM

MANY VIEWPOINTS

IMMERSION PROGRAMS OPEN DOORS IN A NEW ERA



Maple Bear Vietnam

We live in a borderless world. People from many different backgrounds and cultures interact, build relationships and work in a collaborative way. They make use of this richness and variety to innovate and to create outstanding solutions. In this way, knowledge from different cultures is used to benefit other societies. Since the country's birth, multiculturalism is one of Canada's foundations. Among several other aspects, Canada has one of the world's most inclusive educational models in the world, according to PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment. This approach is influential in preparing children for the challenges and opportunities they will meet during their lives.



Maple Bear Philippines



Maple Bear Bulgaria



Maple Bear South Korea



Maple Bear Malaysia



Maple Bear Thailand



Maple Bear USA

Students in Canada learn from an early age to practice empathy and to value the differences in others - two fundamental socio-emotional abilities that enable them to become successful students and promising professionals. Along with learning traditional subjects, children get the world view that every person has different abilities, knowledge and perspectives. Most importantly, they understand that everyone can make a positive contribution to society.

Maple Bear schools teach these concepts in different ways. Starting with appropriate questions for each age range, the students research cultural expressions in both national and international communities. At the same time, they develop curricular strategies and competencies. Maple Bear complies with the national curriculum requirements of the countries where it operates; however, it doesn't limit itself to these requirements. The schools are connected to a more global vision and present-day values. Canada's effort in research and in methodology development is an opportunity for students around the world. The school integrates and widens the curricula of each country. Maple Bear prepares immersion programs for every regional reality, implementing a customized version in every situation. More than a successful classroom model, the school prepares its students for the world, personally, professionally and emotionally. ■

MAPLE BEAR
REPRESENTS
CANADA IN
YOUR COUNTRY



TEACHER
TRAINING



PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT

THE MAPLE BEAR
MODEL
FOR BRINGING
CANADIAN
EXCELLENCE
TROUGHOUT THE GLOBE

cultural embassies

Maple Bear represents
a little piece
of Canada in each
of our schools.
Professionals are trained
by Canadian educators
to ensure the
quality of the teaching



QUALITY
ASSURANCE



Maple Bear Philippines



Maple Bear Hong Kong

HIGH PERFORMANCE

WELL-TRAINED TEACHERS ARE KEY TO MAPLE BEAR'S PEDAGOGICAL MODEL



Maple Bear Peru

Maple Bear schools are places for teachers as well. Maple Bear teachers undergo frequent training to improve their understanding of the Canadian way of teaching. Everyone who is part of the school community has Life Long Learning in mind. Without a doubt, learning is constant. "No school starts operations without first having all its teachers trained by a Canadian professional", says Phyllis Hildebrandt, Academic Director. After that, the educator explains that an In School Training program agenda is created, and teachers receive training every semester. All of this used to be done face-to-face. In the context of the pandemic, the trainers pass on all their expertise and work in the training of teachers remotely. There is a Virtual Director, who does all the monitoring of the team's training. Initially, monitoring is done, especially with

classroom observation and specific practical guidance. In a year of adaptations, Maple Bear also needed to establish new routines, such as the Webinars. There were more than 100 in the past year. They had global participation from teachers, who discussed assessment issues in the virtual context. "The type of assessment for learning and the resources that would be used were at the center of the debate," says Phyllis. "It is a new routine, especially for checking the student's level of understanding when the teacher is not near him or her." For the second semester, an on-site Canadian educator is planned. "Maple Bear's program is gigantic for all of this," says Phyllis. More face-to-face activities are expected to be possible throughout the year. Always with every care. Maple Bear is not limited to the quality of its teaching, but it is also a welcoming place for students and teachers. ■



Maple Bear Nepal



GLOBAL EDUCATION MODEL, CANADIAN METHODOLOGY AND LOCAL CURRICULUM

MAPLE BEAR STUDENTS EXPERIENCE THE BEST CANADIAN PRACTICES WHILE FOLLOWING EACH COUNTRY'S CURRICULUM AND REGULATIONS

In all schools, Maple Bear implements programs created by experienced educators in Canadian curricula, and the methodologies they use enrich student abilities and knowledge development in the different subjects. However, it is important to highlight that this global approach always incorporates the curriculum established by the local educational agencies.



Maple Bear Morocco

In the 30 countries where Maple Bear operates, this approach is followed in a standardized way using established learning principles and strategies, specifically, immersion in two languages and active learning. Maple Bear schools provide bilingual education using Canadian methodologies starting from preschool up to the end of high school. The high-school-aged students have diverse course options with mandatory and elective credits, which the students may choose to perform in English or in their native language. English, mathematics, and science are some of the subjects that appear in this grid. Other programs included are career studies and community service as they are essential for the students' future in their own countries or abroad.



Maple Bear India

Investigation is a key component of the Maple Bear methodology. A very clear learning objective is typically established by the student with direction from the teacher. By empowering the student to take ownership of their learning in this way, it inspires curiosity and motivates the students to complete the task with enthusiasm. Through investigation, questioning, observation, and problem-solving, Maple Bear programs encourage this type of exploration in the classroom so that students search meaningfully for answers - not just find or memorize them. The simple memorization of facts, formulas, and data is an outdated approach that does not meet the needs of the 21st-century world. The intention of Maple Bear is to encourage our students to be ready to face challenges and to cultivate a passion for learning so that they become life-long learners. ■



Maple Bear Mexico

Maple Bear USA



Maple Bear South Korea



Maple Bear Singapore

QUALITY EDUCATION

CANADIAN EDUCATION SPECIALISTS
CERTIFY MAPLE BEAR SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD TO ENSURE
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING FOR EVERY CLASSROOM

When entering a classroom in any Maple Bear school around the world, parents and students can be certain that it follows the best Canadian pedagogical practices. The team responsible for this is a faculty of experienced Canadian educators who have developed criteria to promote academic excellence in each school. The certification, known as Quality Assurance, is an integral process for Maple Bear schools to ensure optimal academic performance. These specialists perform a detailed verification role annually of all policies and practices to create continual improvement plans for each school. The local staff and faculty participate in the process with an in-person QA faculty member from Canada under normal conditions. During the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the evaluation is carried out remotely.

In the online format, schools perform a self-assessment on all the criteria, which is then compared to the Canadian faculty member's observations. This results in a rich discussion of key success areas and areas where improvement is needed. Each Maple Bear school verifies that they are complying with all the quality standards. The second step is a review of the materials provided to the school. This allows the Quality Assurance faculty member to analyze the data and evaluate the school's level of understanding of the entire process. "A virtual visit is held for this conversation", states Cintia Sant'Anna, Academic Director of Maple Bear LATAM. "We do this so the school understands which areas require closer attention. From that point on, an action plan is generated, including the development of criteria for the areas requiring improvement plans." The whole process is followed very diligently and carefully – even if it's conducted remotely. ■



Maple Bear India



Maple Bear Mexico



Maple Bear South Korea



Maple Bear India

WITH AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

MAPLE BEAR DEVELOPS CHILDREN'S COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SKILLS

Canada is a pioneer among countries that developed their educational systems to encompass the skills needed for the 21st century. Since 1994, Canada has applied a methodology focused on developing key abilities for students to be able to achieve high standards in all areas of life.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) identifies 12 abilities, split into three groups: cognitive and meta-cognitive abilities (critical thinking, creative thinking, learn to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional abilities (empathy, self-efficiency, collaboration and responsibility); and practical abilities (information, media, arts and technology).

In this context, it's worth mentioning Maple Bear Camaçari – Busca Vida (Search for Life) located in the state of Bahia, in Brazil's northeast region. During COVID-19, a socio-emotional development project was led by the school psychologist Tessa Ramalho. She explains the work developed in this period of remote learning: "In a playful approach, the children had the opportunity to talk about their emotions and feelings in bi-monthly meetings". During the pandemic, Maple Bear provided emotional check-ins for the students. In this way, children are able to share their experiences and reflect on their current mental states. In addition to the discussion, the classrooms also became places for breathing exercises and for expressing feelings through drawings. "This project certainly pointed to the importance of the creation of routines as well as promoting opportunities for self-expression and mental well-being.", states Cintia Sant'Anna, Academic Director of Maple Bear LATAM.

At Maple Bear Singapore, the students adapted themselves quickly to the "new normal" in the classroom. The schools reopened with all the necessary precautions following health protocols and using protective equipment. All of this was done with a strong sense of calm and empathy.

From the schools' point of view, it is important that children grow to become independent, compassionate, committed and responsible adults. This is our contribution to society and to our local communities. The school's role is to provide orientation and positive discipline that supports the development of a global citizen. ■



Maple Bear South Korea



WHAT THE PANDEMIC HAS BROUGHT TO BEAR

HOW MAPLE BEAR SCHOOL OWNERS BENEFIT FROM THE AGILITY AND EXPANSE OF THE MAPLE BEAR GLOBAL NETWORK

Being at once educators and caregivers, early childhood professionals and educational institutions typically place greater emphasis on behaviours that make the nursery feel less like a business and more like a family home. Time, talent and assets are proactively aligned to create an informal culture that lends itself eagerly towards nurturing relationships and creating an ecosystem that feels warm and comfortable, and one that is founded and run on deep interpersonal trust.

While a great deal of planning is involved in the daily work of an educator, the inevitable focus on minute-to-minute objectives, the emotionally

engaged nature of the profession and the unpredictability of the preschool-age student can make it difficult to take a macro-level perspective on the operation. In fact, it can be almost unnerving to regard the same love-and-laughter-filled classroom and the people within it as numbers on a quarterly performance spreadsheet or to look at dearly loved books and toys as depreciating assets.

But just as in many other aspects of education delivery, more than ever today the intense importance of robust strategic planning systems and agile business management culture are laid bare. Along with an overnight shift to virtual

instruction, the pandemic has demanded innovation in oversight, curriculum design, staff management and parent relationship management. Policies and procedures have had to be adapted for more visible and tangible alignment of outcomes, data collection, evaluation processes, feedback and improvement.

Now with schools slowly returning to classroom instruction, the importance of risk oversight, contingency planning and precision in policy and standards is even more pressing on everything from staff attendance to COVID-19 case detection and isolation protocols.

A glance at the recent reopening process which Maple Bear schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) underwent this past autumn provides excellent insights into the full suite of corporate management tools and systems necessary for bulletproof early childhood education management. The reopening experience of the region's three preschools, which involved submission and approval from nearly five distinct regulatory bodies in the UAE, is also a great business case for the strategic advantage that being part of an internationally established education franchise provides.

After a lengthy and nearly devastating eight-month period of shutdown, regulators finally signalled reopening permission to the UAE early years sector in early September 2020. Nurseries were told they would be permitted to open by October 4th, 2020, provided they met the exhaustive lists of reopening protocols issued independently by each of

the regulatory bodies overseeing health, academic programs and facilities in the private education sector.

Within a timeframe just shy of four weeks, preschool owners and teams were being asked to provide precise policy directives, supported with documented operating procedures and implementation tools with evidence of use. Also required was an accompanying narrative response identifying the systems and practices to be adopted to ensure compliance with social distancing amongst students and staff, demonstrate capability to monitor and detect infection, dedicate an isolation facility on-site, while sustaining quality of experience and standards of instruction.

In a "baptism by fire" approach, nursery owners and managers were thrown head first into the world of strategic planning, being tasked with also developing comprehensive business risk mapping frameworks, that take the pandemic, general health and safety of the environment, academic instruction and inclusivity risks into consideration.

Needless to say, many independent nurseries across the country could not respond adequately, not being in a position to up-skill staff overnight in strategic management approaches or even simultaneously implement protocols, nor having access to a corporate brain trust or pre-existing policy frameworks and quality assurance processes. Without a doubt, thus, Maple Bear schools in the UAE were well positioned to demonstrate compliance and document their branch level readiness. Drawing on the tools and products and direct real-time guidance provided by the Maple Bear Global Communications team, the Maple Bear Gulf Communications and Management team was able to enhance the local school operational policy framework to adapt for the post pandemic reality. Amongst the plethora of considerations and amendments were regulating remote learning and instruction, student and staff illness as well as absence and leave in a pandemic, enhanced hygiene standards and sanitation procedures, resource sharing and usage limitations, classroom configuration, scheduling and circulation of groups for social distance at arrival,



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throughout school day, and departure, as well as remote business administration, parent communication, and team management systems. Design of simplified tools, detailed SOPs and adoption of a shared cloud storage made both implementation and demonstration of compliance possible for all assessment stages and physical inspections.

Through the reopening processes across our branches in the UAE, perhaps the most valuable reaffirmation lies in the assured consistency and equal quality across branches that a centralized pen on the reopening plan and policies provides. With vested interest in maintaining the

success of each branch within the Maple Bear network, the corporate leadership teams at Maple Bear Global Schools have taken ownership of regional stewardship needs and proved to be agile in the face of all unforeseen challenges that have reared their head in this academic year. Without a doubt, Maple Bear school owners around the globe will have deeper appreciation of the value of belonging to an organization that can draw on talent, tools and innovative best practices in business management with just as much strength as its unmatched ability to bring the best practices of Canadian education to education sector investors globally. ■

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