

## Full History of Braemar House School

In **May of 1996** a group of concerned parents met to discuss starting a new private school. They wanted to create an alternative school option in Brant County, with an emphasis on shared values and beliefs. They wanted to create a true partnership between school and home.

In **September 1996**, Braemar House School opened in the former Cainsville Public School. There were five classrooms, covering Junior Kindergarten to Grade 7.

In early **1997**, Braemar House School was incorporated, and obtained not-for-profit status. The first Board of Directors was elected along with an Educational Advisory Committee. In **May of 1997** a joint parent and staff committee was established to create necessary policies.

In **August 1997**, the school was relocated to the former Grand Woodlands Public School on Baxter St. in Brantford, where we remain today. This move allowed for an expansion of the programming offered. **September 1998** saw the introduction of the first Grade 8 class.

By **December 1998**, the need for an extensive review of policies and programs became apparent. Each teacher, staff member and parent was asked to participate. The review led to defining the school's Mission Statement and Vision and the creation of Student and Staff Handbooks.

In **January 1999**, under the direction of the Educational Advisory Committee, expanded programs were added to the curriculum. In March of **1999**, the Parent Council was established to provide further opportunities for parental involvement, marketing support and fundraising.

Proudly in **June 1999**, Braemar House School held its first Grade Eight Graduation ceremony.

The first Spirit of Braemar dinner and auction was held in **January 2000**. It was a great success and began a tradition of parent contribution specifically for enhanced programming opportunities.

In **May 2000**, every student and staff member, with the support of many parents and the community at large, performed in Braemar's first full-scale musical production of The Wizard of Oz. It was a wonderful success and inspired a Drama Program that culminates in a musical production each spring involving the entire school.

The Montessori Casa Program was introduced to Braemar in **September 2000**, welcoming into our school students from ages three to six.

The Board of Directors produced the school's first Business Plan in **February 2001**. The Business Plan is now an annual document that outlines the continued improvements to programming, equipment and future plans for the school.

In **April 2001** we proudly saw The Corporation of Braemar House School, the parent body that acts as shareholders of the school, purchase the building and property at 36 Baxter Street.

A Before and After School Care Program was introduced in **September of 2001** to meet the needs of working parents in our school.

In **May of 2002** the first of what has become an annual Parent Survey was conducted, giving a voice to the vision of our stakeholders for the future of the school.

In **June of 2002** the administration model of the school moved to that of an Executive Director with full responsibility for the operations, staffing, marketing, and financial management of the school as a business.

In **September 2002** several new programming initiatives were added and investments made. The Classical Performance Guitar program was created for Grades 7 & 8; there was a significant expansion of the computer resources in the school, adding computers in all classrooms and the implementation of the NETS computer-based curriculum; expansion of the Primary French; an eight week swimming program as part of the Physical Education curriculum for all students; and significant capital investments were made and financial support for the Drama productions.

In **December 2003** a school-wide vote was held for a school mascot and the Braemar Bear was chosen and logo was designed.

The **2004-2005** school year marked a major accomplishment, moving to offer straight grades, this year Grade One and Two were separated. This was part of the first phase of a long-term strategic plan.

Over the summer of **2004** Braemar purchased a sophisticated audio sound system to enhance our annual spring musical and provide technical experiences for our students.

Early in **2005** the Braemar Board of Directors undertook the development and implementation of a Capital Expansion Campaign to meet the needs of a growing school population in a fiscally responsible and timely way.

September of **2005** saw the introduction of several more programs to compliment a newly formalized Citizenship Program. These programs, along with our assemblies, daily opening exercises, and disciplinary measures, are shaped and informed by the Virtues Project, a powerful whole-school moral/character building initiative.

The Fall of **2006** saw the establishment of a supportive partnership with the City of Brantford and its Parks and Recreation Department in the shared construction of a 40 spot parking lot which serves both the community and the school.

Renovations in the summer of **2006** resulted in additional classroom space for our expanding needs. We continue to make creative use of all of our physical space as our student population grows.

Our first Braemar Art Show was held **February of 2007**. The opportunity to showcase our students' artistic talents was so well-received that a plan for a bi-annual Art Show was established.

Our unique and innovative Prep One program was designed in the summer of **2007**, taking full advantage of the hands-on inspired learning that comes with a Montessori introduction to school, culminating in the successful preparation of our students for our traditional Grade One program.

Steady increases in enrollment resulted in the addition of two classrooms to the back of the school in the summer of **2007**. Grades 3 and 4 were offered as separate classes that September.

A very successful Science Fair was held in **February of 2008**, with judged entries displayed at the Lynden Park Mall. In addition, a new program called “Career Experiences” was added to Grade 8, allowing them an opportunity to visit 6 different workplaces.

Growing enrolments and attention to small class sizes led to the separation of Grade 5 and 6 for September **2008**. In **2009**, we were successful in reaching our long- term goal of offering straight grade classes for each of Grades 1 through 8.

Continuing interest in Braemar’s programming saw enrolment grow to 125 students in **2010** and **2011**, and the need for additional classrooms resulted in the addition of phase two of our modular classroom plan in the summer of **2011**.

Braemar’s commitment to enhanced student programs was furthered with the appointment of a Director of Curriculum in **2010**, responsible for the consistent, integrated delivery of challenging curriculum and rich extra-curricular activities. The introduction of competitive on-line Mathematics programming and our two competitive Robotics teams was a direct result of the new position.

Commitment to the most current practices in the delivery of a strong curriculum, led to the installation of three more interactive white boards in the summer of **2011** and another three in the summer of **2012**, so that all classrooms from Grade 1 to 8 now have interactive white boards.

In September **2011** Braemar House School celebrated its 15th anniversary. The newly installed crest on the front of the school and upgrades to the front entranceway were noticeable for our Open House and Art Show celebrations. The Board of Directors began its Strategic Planning process this year with a review of Braemar’s Mission Statement, which was reaffirmed by the Board and members of the parent community. The Board also reviewed and updated the school’s By-Laws and its many policies and procedures, ensuring that the school has anticipated the questions, concerns, and practices that will be instrumental to our school’s success.

In October of **2012** the Executive Director was charged with the task of establishing a Strategic Plan that would focus on growing Braemar’s programming and exploring the feasibility of, and interest in, expanding our pre-school programs, introducing a secondary school program, and enhancing our already strong academic programs.

The early months of **2013** saw the Board of Directors explore possibilities, carefully considering enrolment projections, community feedback, and financial concerns. The journey was informative, as Braemar was able to affirm its strengths (a strong academic experience, community respect and support for Braemar, and acceptance in the greater educational community), as well as acknowledge important

challenges (the limitations of our existing facilities and space, softer enrollments in a struggling economy, and the need to ensure maximized enrollment).

As part of the strategic process, the position of Director of Curriculum was re-positioned as Principal in the winter of **2013**, resulting in an effective and logical division of responsibility with the Executive Director.

In an effort to deliver stronger Arts Programming, Braemar introduced in September **2013** an Arts focus for each term, allowing for greater depth, more effective resource allocation, and shared concentration on each of the three Art subjects.

Braemar's Information Technology Program was enriched with the addition of the Grade 7 and 8 One-to-One Laptop Program in September **2013**, and fittingly the school received the Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Award in Technology in May 2014. Diverse and sophisticated educational software, specialized robotics programming, cameras, lighting and sound systems, integrated computer centres and interactive white boards in each classroom and a cutting edge one-on-one laptop program ensure our students will be 21st Century Learners.

In the summer of **2014**, significant capital improvements occurred at the school. Including creating a larger Montessori classroom with its own washroom, outdoor lighting for increased security, new front doors and repaved tarvia in the outside play area.