

Regency aims for a renaissance as a makerspace?



By Brock Weir

Necessity might be the mother of intervention, but a really cool opportunity might be the mother for re-invention over at Regency Acres Public School, as far as their library is concerned.

Having opened its doors nearly 60 years ago, the school has seen technology come and go, the way lessons are taught rethought and, with your vote, you can help set the school on a new course to put students at the centre of learning.

Regency Acres is in the running for a \$100,000 grant to create a makerspace in their library through the CST Inspired Minds Learning Project.

With the grant money, they plan to redesign their library to create hands-on learning spaces that allow kids to learn and work together to design and invent through 3D printers, Lego robotics, app creation, and other innovations.

"I think the best way to learn is to do," says science teacher Stephen Lanning. "We can tell them and give them all the background information, but if they have the opportunity to do an experiment and try it, they are going to remember their successes and failures and learn just as much through both. Any time that I have a chance to do hands-on, I do, but budget is always a consideration.

"Right now we are doing a project building out of all sorts of paper products. It would be great to take that and learn out of Lego, add solar energy to it, and bring it to life, rather than just [create] a 3D model. This provides us that next step" and the part I like is we get to learn along with the kids. We will be getting new equipment that we will train ourselves on and the kids will be able to teach us as well. It's a chance for kids to take on a leadership role."

The team behind the pitch is very much focused on putting the students in the "centre" of learning, according to teacher Robin Morrison-Claus, who will be taking the helm as librarian in the 2016-2017 school year.

"It places students in the centre of learning, but it also places teacher and student as learners alongside each other, and I think that is a really powerful statement because it removes the power dynamic of teachers being holders of knowledge to students being at the centre and teachers being the facilitators," adds principal Lisa Leoni.

At this point, Regency Acres is committed to "reinvent" its library space and other learning hubs around the school, but how much of a reinvention they can actually swing depends entirely on the amount of resources available at their disposal. They're dreaming big, but with each vote their dream comes closer to reality.

Voting is now underway through Monday, May 16 at learningproject.cst.org/ideas/1225. You can vote once every day but, if you also use Facebook and Twitter you can vote up to three times each day in three different ways.

Should their dreams become a reality, a win will not only benefit Regency Acres, but the community as a whole, they say. When their makerspace is installed, it will be a resource that will be a big draw.

“Makerspaces are really becoming a big thing because it is very hands on; it uses other parts of your brain,” says Ms. Morrison-Claus. “Where we have some kids who can't sit at a desk and be successful, this is an opportunity for our hands-on learners, as well as our kids who can sit at a desk, to work together to really collaborate, think, create, produce and be successful.”

Adds Mr. Lanning: “It's the challenge many employers face: how do we create a product that people want? We need innovative people. I think any time you support a school, the children in it and you empower the children, the community benefits whether it is kids who are more engaged, who are better educated, who are happier to be here and loving it, the community wins no matter what.

“Maybe that next engineer is someone who will fall in love with that one lesson here we get to take computers apart.”