

Beyond Classrooms

- Kingston

New Site Information Package

What is Beyond Classrooms Kingston?

The *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* innovative education approach gives teachers the opportunity to move their classrooms into the rich world beyond the school so that learning becomes deeper. Extended experiences in such sites as museums, zoos, city halls, and nature centres are ideal catalysts for the “habits of mind” that help students to be the creative, curious, thoughtful citizens that our world needs. These sites are



fascinating, educationally rich environments that engage students in authentic exploration and discovery. A critical component of this concept is time: time for students to slow down and see the world, and time for teachers to slow down and see teaching and learning, and their children, in new ways. The *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* experience has been shown to be a powerful tool in staff development for teachers. For them it is hands-on learning with one on one support.

Principal elements of *Beyond Classrooms Kingston*:

- Classroom teachers have ownership of the entire process. The week is part of a long-term study developed by the teacher, and the week itself is jointly developed and facilitated with the education staff at the site and with the *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* Program Manager
- Students are at the site for an extended period (preferably every day for a week)
- Students are given time and choice to fully explore the site
- The programming focus is experiential, hands-on learning, using an inquiry approach

A Closer Look at Beyond Classrooms Kingston

Once teachers and classrooms have been selected for the school year, the *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* (BCK) Program Manager meets with the teachers to provide orientation to program objectives and concepts, and to explain the philosophy behind the program. The BCK Program Manager helps teachers develop a plan for pre-visit activities, which will assist in developing the knowledge and skills base that the students will need for their week at the site. They also provide teacher in-servicing, and in-school classroom instruction on the *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* approach to journaling and learning through observation. Journal writing supports students in their own creative and critical thought processes, as they write in informal, experience-rich museum and community spaces.



Over several months before the week-long site visit, the classroom teacher helps students gain the skills of observation, descriptive writing and drawing, that help them to slow down and acquire new knowledge and skills, during their week at the site. The teacher uses their yearly planning, current best practices, school board initiatives, and students' needs to ensure the continued growth and development of all participating students. Students become invested in their learning, as they plan for their week's visit by developing questions for experts, creating success-based criteria for journal writing and observations. Accordingly, they take ownership of their own learning.



The *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* week begins with the students, teacher, and parent volunteers arriving at the site via school-funded or public transportation, or on foot. On Monday, the students have the opportunity to meet the site's staff, explore the site surroundings, and participate in teacher and student led activities. By the end of the first day students have lost the novelty effect of a "field trip" where they quickly try to see everything, and settle in to use the deep observation skills they have developed in the preceding months.

Each day's activities continue to be led by the classroom teacher. Invited content experts (museum curators, Elders, knowledge holders, historians, scientists, artists, community leaders, etc.) share their knowledge and students engage these experts in discussions to further their understanding of the topics presented. Areas of study may include but are not limited to the site's collection, complementary activities or information, the building, and outdoor areas.

A designated classroom space within the site provides a home base for the students and their belongings, and a working space when they are not immersed within the site's areas, galleries, and displays. As students learn from and share their knowledge with their teacher, *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* Program Manager, site staff, volunteers, and visiting content experts, they not only gain academic awareness, but also develop a strong sense of respect and fair treatment of others, outside of a formal classroom setting in a public space.



By Friday, the students, teacher and parent volunteers have become part of the site's community, feel a sense of connection, and take ownership of their new knowledge. As educational experts have commented: *"Community becomes a rich marketplace where knowledge, skills and competencies develop and are shared, as student and teacher are engaged in a rich exchange of experience and learning."* Making connections between classroom learning and the community, provides a deeper learning of curriculum content areas. Students are thus provided with the opportunity to make informed



choices about their learning, by enabling them to be active participants in their educational experience beyond the classroom, and encouraging them to be stewards of their community's resources.

Beyond Classrooms Kingston learning and engagement continues when the teacher and students return to their school classroom, as they apply and practice the skills and knowledge they have acquired. A post-visit assignment or

evaluative activity, allows students to provide feedback and appreciation of the site, the personnel, and content specialists they engaged with during their *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* week.

What makes a community site a BCK site?

Sites that have traditional education mandates such as zoos, museums, nature centres or aquaria are the most obvious places to host this concept. However, there are many other places within a community that have interesting things happening and experts at hand. These could include a municipal facility, a sports center, a hospital, a university or college, a provincial or federal building, a factory, a store or a wind farm. The range is limitless. The site does not necessarily have to appear exciting on the surface, but must be culturally rich with objects and information, and where students can become immersed in an authentic experience.

Benefits to Sites hosting Beyond Classrooms Kingston

- Community engagement: School visitors, both child and adult, gain better understanding of the host site, gallery, or museum's collection and mandate, and how it fits in their community.
- Gain stronger connections to other partners in the community
- See long-term visitor connections being formed
- Increase their understanding of how people learn, resulting in implementations of relevant educational programs and resources, thus creating more effective programs for the community at large
- Incorporate current best practices into all of their educational programming to further engage the community at large with the site



The following descriptions are a list of ideal characteristics of a *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* site, but many successful sites have non-traditional spaces and equipment*:

- Fully physically accessible, including washroom facilities
- A safe, secure site for students
- A large gathering space which can easily accommodate a class of at least 25 students, their teacher, and volunteers
- Dedicated space for programming supplies and equipment that can be locked and does not have to be packed up each night
- Tables and chairs for an entire class, plus volunteers
- Additional tables/counters for display of books/artifacts etc.
- A carpeted area where the teacher can have discussion time with the students sitting near
- Outside gathering/recess space
- White board or easel
- An overhead projector and LCD projector, although *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* does have one
- Internet access



- Public liability insurance in the amount of \$5 million (site will be required to provide proof of insurance)
- Counter with sink, coffee maker, cupboards
- Coat racks and runner for shoes/boots
- Ability to re-schedule for snow days

* note: this is a list of ideal conditions; accommodations are frequently made through negotiation with the site, classroom teacher and *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* prior to programming start.



Other items for your site to consider:

- Does your site have a list of content and community experts available to give presentations relevant to the site's collection and/or mandate?
- Does your site have the ability to support French language programming?
- Is your site open to new ideas and flexible? What can be done within your site? Are you open to other ideas? (math theme in an art gallery, human health at a marine museum, other ideas a teacher may have)
- Is there a time of year that you would not be able to host a *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* week?
- Site staff does not need to be with the class at all times. The teacher and volunteers are always with the class and the *BCK* Program Manager or delegate is available
- Does your site have the ability and/ or interest in partnering with *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* for fundraising initiatives?

Is your site interested in becoming a *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* (BCK) site? Please contact the BCK Program Manager to begin.

Site evaluation Process:

1. Prospective Site Package is reviewed by interested site
2. Site indicates interest in being a *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* site and contacts the BCK Program Manager to set up an observation visit to a week in progress
3. If a site feels that they are a good fit for *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* and they have support from their board or Managing Director, they arrange an on-site visit with the BCK Program Manager and a Committee or Board member.
4. BCK Program Manager and a BCK Programming Committee Member visit the site and meet with site staff to discuss *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* expectations/deliverables.
5. BCK Programming Committee meets in early spring to determine which new sites will be added to the following school year's calendar.
6. *Beyond Classrooms Kingston* will contact the prospective site to advise them of the success of their application.