

School to Build on Montessori Method

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About 45 children will attend a new downtown private school that combines the Montessori method with hands-on activities to stimulate the minds of kids three years old and up.

Beyond Montessori is the first school in the area to use the Waldorf philosophy, which encourages kids to learn by knitting, woodworking, puppetry and other hands-on activities, school owner Natasha Secord said.

The Montessori method provides children with educational toys and items that they explore in supervised classes. Combining the two approaches focuses on "the whole child," she said.

The school, which will open in September, will serve children in pre-school to Grade 2, with Grade 3 to be added in 2009. The toddler classes are already full.

Secord, a mother of two, had her four-year-old son enrolled at St. Catharines Montessori School in January when the school abruptly closed. She searched for another school, but couldn't find what she was looking for.

She and a six-member advisory board have hired seven teachers. The school will operate out of rented space at St. George's Anglican Church on Church Street.

Niagara public and Catholic school boards are examining closing schools because of declining enrolment. Secord said she is not concerned about the enrolment at Beyond Montessori.

"The statistics in Ontario show a decline in the Catholic and public boards and a steady increase in the private sector," she said. "A lot of parents are looking for alternatives."