

More P.E.I. parents becoming interested in home-schooling ^[1]

Hundreds of people have expressed interest in attending virtual information session

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EXCERPTS

A group that serves families who home school on Prince Edward Island has seen a big increase in the number of people considering educating from home.

Emily Ross, chair of the Prince Edward Island Christian Home Educators, told CBC 10 new families have joined the group in the last month.

"Which is pretty huge," said Ross, adding that typically two or three new families join every year.

"Maybe some people got a little bit of taste of what it's been like this past spring and realize that, hey, this is working for us."

Ross said about 225 families who home-school on P.E.I. are connected with her group.

She said while the board is faith-based, the group is open to and serves everyone, regardless of their home-schooling philosophy or methods. She said the group's aim is to advocate for home-schooling rights, to offer help for those starting out, and provide opportunities for children to do group sports and arts activities with other home-schooling families.

Membership is growing, as well as interest in home-schooling, according to Ross.

More than 300 people have expressed interest in the group's annual information session, which is being held virtually on Facebook Live on July 30 at 7 p.m. Last year's event saw no one show up.

"So that's telling me that people are researching their options that they're looking for other avenues to educate their children," said Ross.

Home-schooling a 'viable option'

The session will provide some basic information for those looking to start home-schooling, as well as information on the legal requirements, curriculum and resources that are available.

"We want people to know that it's a viable option," said Ross, who's been teaching her children from home for a decade.

"You can home-school here, and there is a great community here and we want people to feel like they can get plugged in and have some sense of direction as they get started."

Pandemic provides 'best time to try'

Marina Silva-Opps, Sheldon Opps, and their son Elijah are one of the families who've decided to begin home-schooling this year.

Elijah will be starting sixth grade from his kitchen table, with his parents splitting teaching duties equally. Both parents are university instructors and will be working from home in September.

They said they had considered home-schooling before the pandemic because their son tends to work ahead of the rest of his class and plays tennis competitively, which requires some travel.

But, Silva-Opps told CBC the lingering questions over what school would look like due to COVID-19 pushed them to try something different this year.

"It's a combination of factors for us," Silva-Opps said.

"Because, again, we don't know exactly how the government is going to proceed with the year and what's going to happen with the virus. So this is just probably the best time for us to try this."

The family said they are excited about learning from home. After schools closed in March, both parents began to teach their son, dividing his day into a schedule comprised of Hebrew lessons, math, literacy, hands-on science projects, and coding.

"It's going to require a little bit extra organization because we both work full time," Silva-Opps said.

"We feel that if we really think about the education for our son and we want to do the best for him, this is what we have to do."

A statement from the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning directs families interested in home-schooling to information on its website.

"Families have the right to choose the kind of education that is right for them and their children. Parents who choose not to register their child with the public education system register for home education," the website said.

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