



On Bouge, On Marche, on Danse,  
 on Mange Bien; We Move,  
 we Walk, we Dance, we Eat Well



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 Galileo Adult Education Centre

*“The heart  
 of the home  
 beats in the  
 kitchen and  
 a healthy one  
 beats three  
 times a day.”*

–Bangambiki Habyarimana  
 (Great Pearl of Wisdom)

**A**t Galileo Adult Education Centre, a second home to many of our students, this saying rings true. The heart of the school is the kitchen, which fuels Galileo’s population with a healthy dose of nutrition, learning and cultural integration that makes up the unique diversity of our centre. On any given day, the aroma of fresh delicacies baking in the oven fills our hallways, a scent that awakens the nostalgic senses of our own childhood.

Furthermore, Gadget, our pet therapy Bernese dog and school mascot, provides students with a sentiment of wellbeing. Providing a familiar environment for our students and staff encourages a feeling of security and acceptance and, most importantly, unity in a communal setting that is encompassed by a healthy lifestyle.

**Programs offered at Galileo: S.I.S., C.C.B.E., and academic**

Galileo Adult Education Centre, part of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), educates over 1,000 students with various learning needs. Our S.I.S. (Social Integration Services) program caters to adults living with special needs ranging in age from 21 to 56 years old. Our C.C.B.E. (Common Core Basic Education) program educates adult learners aspiring to learn the English or French language. Furthermore, we offer credit courses to academic students who wish to complete their high school diploma or to attain pre-requisite courses leading to higher education. With a student body as diverse as ours, it can be challenging at first to find common ground. But there’s one thing with which we can always find commonality, food!

**Objectives of programs**

The schedule alignment of the three educational programs featured at our centre affords

ongoing multi-faceted healthy nutrition, physical fitness and learning integration-based models. This is because all students participate in school-wide events that celebrate a balanced healthy lifestyle throughout the year as contributors, consumers or both. The objective of our S.I.S. program is to integrate students within a social setting and transfer their learning to their own environments. At Galileo, our S.I.S. students learn to cook healthy meals through hands-on cooking activities that are always planned for a purpose, such as transition to independent living, welcoming guests to the centre or fundraising for extracurricular activities.

### Cooking programs at Galileo and fundraising

*Ralph's Kitchen* is a culinary program that runs every Wednesday, featuring weekly hot meal lunch specialties. S.I.S. students assist in the preparation of a variety of roasted meats and vegetables, homemade soups, lasagna, home-made pasta with vegetarian and/or meat sauces made from scratch as well as cauliflower crust vegetarian pizza. All of our hot lunches are made on site and are available to the entire faculty and students.

Basic Language students visit our kitchen and prepare traditional recipes from their countries of origin: couscous, vegetables and various baked dishes. Not only do these students willingly lend their time, but they also construct step-by-step guidelines to ensure S.I.S. students' ability to recreate these recipes. This also gives our language learning students an opportunity to acclimate and familiarize themselves with the S.I.S. population. Working with students who are managing their learning challenges alters their perspective of tolerance to a healthy viewpoint of inclusivity.

Café Galileo is set up daily for coffee breaks and S.I.S. students sell healthy fresh baked goods. Apples picked from the annual apple picking field trip are used as ingredients year-round, preserving them as soon as they're picked. The same is done with pumpkins, as the seeds are used for freshly baked bread on Fridays. In-class cooking projects have allowed students to participate in international pastry competitions, like the Bordeaux, France Abilympics of 2016.

At Galileo, learning to be empathetic is an essential component of leading a healthy lifestyle, therefore, we work at helping others in need too. In 2016, we held a pizza fundraiser

for *Leucan*, an organization committed to helping cancer-stricken children and their families. In two weeks, we raised \$3,000 in collaboration with the *Ky Cares Foundation*.

### School-wide health and nutrition activities

We begin the year with a Welcome Back Corn Roast. Students husk the corn, while teachers serve it up and introduce the corn as a Canadian cultural food. By February, we visit the Sugar Shack, where there is dancing, sleigh rides and maple syrup savouring. We also organize end of term dances and potluck dinners, where students share their cultural dishes, learning an appreciation for healthy foods from around the world. Dancing allows participants to keep in shape and impart new dance moves to their peers.

Likewise, daily activities are also ongoing; spinning bikes are available during the day for students to exercise, and there are daily rehearsals for the S.I.S. Musical. The basketball court is also open for free play and is always busy with many players. We have an end of year BBQ and talent show with healthy vegetarian and Halal options. The event benefits everyone in that the relationships that have been formed

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are celebrated with the underlying philosophy of our principal, Martina Schiavone; “on bouge, on marche, on danse et on mange bien. We move, we walk, we dance and eat well.”

During the course of the year we leave the centre to exercise our minds, bodies and spirits in new spaces, such as Upper Canada Village, Quebec City, Ottawa and the Botanical Gardens, as well as walking tours in addition to the Planetarium to visit outer space. S.I.S. students go camping, yearly, to get in touch with nature in a healthy and outdoor activity-laden setting with fishing, archery, swimming, boat rides, zip lining and soccer. All through the term we invite guests to give lessons in traditional Gumboots, Zumba and other dances.

Pet therapy has been a healthy lifestyle component in terms of emotional intelligence and is composed of learning to trust another living entity. Feeding and caring for the animals is emotionally stimulating and provides a sense of security in a healthy environment.

The pet therapy program has done so much to bridge the gap between all the Galileo students and teachers. As a result, the S.I.S. students are eager to communicate more often with the students from the other

educational programs—this has become a model of what true integration is all about and proves that pets really do bring out the good nature in everyone.

Even the teachers use the services of pet therapy when they are having a difficult day and need to take a break. They will come to Mr. Alain’s class and tell him, “I need to hug an animal” and they’ll take one of the dogs with them during lunch time, or walk the dog outside during their break, or bring the dog to class. (Martina Schiavone, *Precious Pets*, Vol.3. Issue7. March 25, 2016).

### Brain-based learning

Healthy nutrition and lifestyle is the brain-based approach to learning employed at Galileo Adult Centre, as in all EMSB centres and schools. At Galileo, we are unique in that the centre is composed of special needs, academic and C.C.B.E. adult students in three separate but integrated programs. Our school promotes a healthy and safe environment that supports learning and growing together, while celebrating our differences. Furthermore, at Galileo the focus on balancing the body, mind and spirit is also promoted through activities that fuel

cognitive, emotional and social development through physical activity and proper nutrition. The natural flow of the programs fuels the symbiotic relationship bringing the centre’s population together and accepting all unique differences.

One brain-based approach to pedagogy, as defined by Jeffery A. Lackney and which is intricate at Galileo, comprises linking indoor and outdoor spaces through movement. “When engaging the motor cortex linked to the cerebral cortex, for oxygenation, it creates coherency and meaning for students.” Thus, learning is best accomplished when the learning activity is connected directly to physical activity. Upon entering Galileo centre, its hallways, stairwells, gymnasium and classrooms are a buzz with the hustle and bustle of activity-based programs in action, as students prepare for a new day of abundant learning, in a healthy environment. ○

*Martina Schiavone is the Centre Principal at Galileo. Dina Vourdousis is Vice Principal. Lisa Trotto is a teacher at Galileo, who helped edit this article. Learn more about Galileo at [www.gaec.ca](http://www.gaec.ca).*

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