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**Crescent School**

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# Crescent School

The Our Kids Review

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Written by Megan Easton

Since 1998, families have trusted Our Kids to help navigate the private school landscape. Drawing on years working with education experts, parents, and school insiders, Our Kids provides families with insights into the top schools—and into choosing the right school for a child.

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## Preface

Every private school is unique, with its own character, facilities, programming, culture, and reason for being. No private school is right for every learner, but for every learner there is a right school. Your task—and it isn't an easy one—is to find the right school for your child; the one that offers the right challenges and the necessary supports; the one where she feels comfortable and included; the one that allows him to grow into a sense of himself and his place in the world; the one where people laugh at their jokes, and ache in the same places. The one where they know, without question: those are my goals, these are my friends, this is my school.

### About Our Kids

We know how hard it can be for you, as a parent, to research private schools. For more than two decades we've published Canada's most trusted annual private school guide, building on insights gained over years of work. The *Our Kids Private School Reviews* series of book-length reviews is aimed at information-seeking families, providing a detailed look at the offerings, the traditions, and the culture of each school. Titles published in this series to date include:

- |                                      |  |
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## Table of Contents

Details .....	9
Introduction .....	11
Leadership .....	14
Campus .....	16
Background .....	18
Academics .....	20
Pedagogical approach.....	27
Character-in-action programs.....	31
Wellness .....	46
Student body and diversity initiatives.....	50
Getting in.....	53
Parents.....	55
Alumni.....	56



## Details: Crescent School

**Location:** Toronto, Ontario

**Founded:** 1913

**Enrolment:** 800 students

**Grades:** 3 to 12

**Gender:** Boys

**Living Arrangements:** Day school

**Language Of Instruction:** English

**School Focus:** Academics

**Curriculum:** Progressive

**Curriculum Pace:** Standard-enriched

**Academic Culture:** Rigorous



## Introduction

Crescent School was founded as a kinder, gentler alternative to the boys' private schools of the early twentieth century. It was a place where building character and strong teacher-student bonds was as important as sharpening minds and strengthening bodies. Today, that commitment is as strong as ever. "Men of Character from Boys of Promise," the school's mission, resonates inside and outside the classroom, as does a commitment to fostering positive relationships as the foundation for learning.

While it's a mid-sized day school with about 800 students, Crescent has the feel of a close-knit community. Teachers, parents, and students often refer to the "Crescent family," and the boys call each other "brothers." Despite having Grades 3 to 12 in a Lower, Middle, and Upper School, there are no hard physical divisions on campus. Many facilities are shared, and the dining hall is smack in the middle of the school, so the youngest boys regularly cross paths with the oldest. Leadership opportunities in extracurricular activities also bring the different grades together. The result is a one-family, one-school approach.

The academic program is rigorous but flexible, allowing students to pursue enriched learning where they excel. In addition to the Ontario curriculum, Upper School students can take Advanced Placement (AP) courses to earn university credits. Crescent's signature Character-in-Action programs—called "co-curricular" at

Crescent because of their tight integration with classroom learning—allow students to apply their knowledge and get hands-on, real-life experience in the arts, athletics, robotics, business, and outreach. STEM learning is a strength at Crescent, and the robotics teams compete at an international level.

A holistic “character-infused” education is the aim, says Headmaster Michael Fellin. “We promote ourselves as a school committed to the holistic development and well-being of boys—a place where students can come to be well. We may lose the odd championship but the more important outcome is that our boys’ character will be formed through experiencing a range of offerings.” Several teachers echoed this sentiment, describing a school culture that celebrates all interests and talents. Especially in the earlier years, the program offerings encourage boys to spread their wings.

Crescent parents we spoke to welcome this effort to nurture boys’ existing interests while sparking new ones. They also appreciate the attention given to the whole student, with equal focus on emotional and social well-being as on physical and intellectual achievement. “To bolster our health and well-being programs, the Crescent staff models good habits for a lifetime,” says Fellin. “Men haven’t always been the best at taking care of themselves in this way, and it’s good to share our own struggles with the boys so we can all do a better job. We can also learn a lot from women in this area.”

Women, in fact, make up more than half the faculty and leadership team at Crescent, which distinguishes it from many boys’ schools. “I think it’s really important that we surround our boys with both women and men that they can look up to, learn from, and respect,” says Fellin. “We first teach character through the role-modelling of our school’s core values.” He also stresses the importance of building a staff that better represents the racial and socio-economic diversity Crescent is striving for in its student body. “We want our boys to look around and say, ‘Oh, that teacher looks like me,’ or, ‘That teacher understands what I’ve been through.’” Proactive recruitment and hiring strategies developed in recent

years are moving the school closer to this goal.

Crescent staff are steeped in the educational research that shows boys learn best when they feel connected to, and known by, their teacher. The staff goes to great lengths to create positive relationships with students, from attending their games and performances to taking time to learn about their lives outside school. Most of the 70-plus athletic teams have a teacher-coach, offering teachers another way to forge bonds outside the classroom. “We hire people not only for their teaching and subject expertise, but also for their competency as mentors and role models,” says Fellin. Still, nearly 40% of the faculty hold advanced degrees, and many have previous or current professional experience in their respective fields. Crescent teachers have the unique opportunity to enhance their knowledge of how boys learn best through the Crescent Centre for Boys’ Education, a research arm within the school.

## Leadership

Attending a boys' school was transformative for Michael Fellin, boosting his confidence and offering him a newfound sense of self, and he's made it his life's work to give other boys the same extraordinary experience. Fellin became Crescent's 10th Headmaster in 2014 after serving as the Assistant Head of Upper School since 2011. He attended St. Michael's College School in Toronto before earning degrees in English and Education from Glendon College at York University, followed by a master's degree in Divinity from Regis College at the University of Toronto. His doctoral degree in Philosophy and Education will soon be complete.

From day one of his career, Fellin has worked with boys. Before joining Crescent, he spent over 10 years at a public Catholic boys' school in Toronto as a teacher, chaplain, department head, and vice-principal. In 2009, while at Neil McNeil High School, his leadership team was recognized with a Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence (along with Nick Kovacs, who is now Crescent's Deputy Headmaster). "I've always seen my career as devoted to supporting young men," he says. "I moved to Crescent because I saw a school that was not only a leader in boys' education but had a clarity of mission in developing boys' character."

Fellin often refers to the wealth of research that shows positive teacher-student relationships are the gateway to boy's learning, but he also walks the walk. He makes a point of consistently connecting with students, seeing what they're working on, and watching their

games and competitions. In 2019, he returned to mentoring after a hiatus from the Upper School mentorship program and realized how much he'd missed it. "Listening and sharing with the boys is always one of the highlights of my day," he says. "I get as much or more out of it than I give."

Though he tries not to take himself too seriously and enjoys sharing a laugh with faculty and students, Fellin's approach to his leadership role is another matter. "I'm always worrying about the boys and the school, and how we can do even better," he says. "I appear pretty stoic and even-keeled, but I'm like a duck on the placid water with my feet going furiously underneath." Beyond his school commitments, Fellin is on the Board of Trustees of the International Boys' School Coalition. "At the boys' school I attended, my teachers and coaches saw something in me that I didn't see in myself, and the relationships I formed there will last a lifetime. I'm trying to give back a little bit of what I received."



## Campus

Set on 37 acres in midtown Toronto, Crescent School is across from the Granite Club and backs onto a lush ravine shared with York University's Glendon campus. The first building that comes into view after the turn off Bayview Avenue is the Manor House, a gracious historic home that now serves as the school's administrative hub. Behind this building there's a formal garden for special events (and recess). In contrast, the rest of the Crescent campus infrastructure is decidedly contemporary, with buildings featuring abundant glass to let the light in. The overall impression when you arrive on campus is of entering a place firmly apart from the concrete city, where you're surrounded by green (or gold and red, depending on the season). Even inside, the natural landscape is on full display in many spaces, including the amphitheatre in the Upper School, an auditorium-style classroom that looks onto the ravine through a floor-to-ceiling wall of windows.

In 2021, a \$12-million pledge from Crescent graduate Ming Wai Lau helped the school acquire the seven-acre Bob Rumball Centre bordering the campus's north end. "We've been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to forever shape the future of the school," says Headmaster Fellin. A Centre of Excellence for the Deaf will remain on the site for three to five years, offering Crescent time to explore development options that align with its 25-year Master Campus Plan. The first capital improvement of the plan—resurfacing the main field with a multi-purpose turf and installing an air-supported

sports dome—was completed in May 2021.

"To us, this isn't about investing in real estate," says Fellin of the acquisition. "It's about ensuring the campus continues to be a reliable asset for our school and its mission. The new field and dome will support our athletics program, and we want each of our co-curricular programs—from the arts and business to robotics—to also have the requisite space and resources to grow their programs in the future. We're very excited about making that happen."

Upcoming plans also include an expansion of the dining hall. "We're going to be making food and friendship a more prominent feature at Crescent," says Fellin. "Moving forward, we're placing an even greater emphasis on intentionally designing the campus for well-being." In a very practical way, this also includes HEPA air filters in every classroom and a fivefold increase in airflow throughout the school compared to pre-pandemic. There's a decidedly modern element in the Crescent culture that's reflected in the mix of architecture. The main building, built 50 years ago, has had several additions in recent years, such as the window-lined, airy Latifi Family Commons, a gathering space for Upper School students, and the Middle and Upper School library.

Despite the 21st-century technology, facilities, and architecture, traditions run deep at this school with 100-plus years of history. Every student belongs to one of six houses, each named after a leading light in Canadian history (Cartier, Hudson, Mackenzie, Massey, Simcoe, and Wolfe) with an accompanying colour. Leadership opportunities within the house system are wide and varied across all the grades, ranging from captains to Head Boy.

## Background

In 1913, J.W. (“Jimmy”) James welcomed about 20 boys into his home at 43 Rosedale Road for the first day of a very different kind of boys’ school. His vision was to offer boys in Grades 5 to 8 a first-rate education in a caring environment. In the words of Crescent School historian Neil Campbell, it was to be “. . . kinder and gentler than the fierce caning world” of contemporary private schools. This was quite radical thinking for the time, but it persisted and grew into the school’s overarching philosophy.

The purpose of the school, according to James, was “to train boys in character, in knowledge, and in games. It is the aim of the school to develop right and vigorous characters, at an early age, and to guide boys in their responsibilities to their fellows.” The repetition of the word “character” was no accident, and James would be pleased to know that the school’s emphasis on character education (alongside an enriched academic education) is its most salient characteristic today.

In 1930, the school again established itself as ahead of the curve in boys’ education by expanding the curriculum to include music, art, and drama. Today, that early commitment to fostering an appreciation for the arts is evident in thriving curricular and co-curricular programs in every grade. Over the following decade, enrolment rose to the point where the school needed a more spacious home. Susan Massey—the widow of Canadian businessman Walter Massey—generously donated her 40-acre Dentonia Park

estate in eastern Toronto, allowing Crescent to add Grades 1 to 4 and include boarders (but just temporarily).

Kindergarten and nursery classes ran during the 1950s and 1960s but ended in the 1970s during a time of transition. The school moved to its current Bayview Avenue campus in 1970 after businessman and philanthropist W. Garfield Weston sold the property to Crescent for a million dollars. Weston purchased the estate in 1955 from the AGO, which was bequeathed it by financier, industrialist, and philanthropist Frank Porter Wood. The Manor House, the home Wood commissioned in 1931, now houses Crescent School’s main reception and administrative office. The present-day staff room wing was the Woods’ carriage house. Interestingly, Wood’s great- great-grandson and Weston’s great-grandson are current Crescent students.

Enrolment grew dramatically in the seventies. The school dropped the earliest grades and added high school, settling permanently into the Grade 3 to 13 (now 12) structure. In the years since then, Crescent has continued to grow and develop increasingly sophisticated facilities, but one thing is unchanged. The school remains steadfast in its commitment to Jimmy James’s goal of cultivating boys’ minds and characters in a warm, family-like school environment.

## Academics

The academic program is demanding, yet flexible and supportive, in keeping with the school's "kinder, gentler" roots. Recently, the Crescent community has been deeply engaged in curriculum redesign in consultation with the Boston-based Center for Curriculum Redesign. Deputy Headmaster Nick Kovacs describes the process as an effort to further operationalize the school's mission of developing men of character from boys of promise. "Our entire academic enterprise is in service to our mission. To that end, every academic department is mapping the key qualities in the school's 'Portrait of a Graduate' onto its curriculum." These qualities include being a moral person, positive leader, engaged citizen, and more.

"Grade by grade, lesson by lesson, our teachers are ensuring that the Crescent curriculum instills these character traits in our students," says Kovacs. "In math, for example, the curriculum promotes critical thinking and a growth mindset, while lessons in positive leadership are embedded in our physical education classes." The academic departments will not have to cultivate every character trait. Instead, they'll integrate those that fit naturally within the curriculum.

Moving forward, the goal is to offer students coaching and explicit feedback as they develop these desired character qualities. Soon, each boy graduating from the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools will receive a "Crescent Diploma" recognizing the character-building experiences they've had that go above and beyond the standard curriculum. "The diplomas will validate and

celebrate the unique path they've been on towards becoming a man of character," says Fellin.

The boys we spoke to, even in the Lower School, demonstrated a sound grasp of the school's dual aims of nurturing knowledge and character. "The mission is a huge thing we talk about in class, and so are our four values of respect, responsibility, honesty, and compassion," says one Grade 5 student. Another Grade 5 boy offered this explanation: "If a tree has good roots, it can become a strong tree. And if we have good character and education, we can grow into amazing people." By the time students reach Upper School, they understand that building character is simply part of Crescent's DNA. "It's ingrained in everything the school does," says one Grade 11 student. According to another: "Crescent teaches you to develop your own character in a way that's unique to you, but it starts with being a good and polite person."

While character is foundational in the curriculum, so is knowledge. "There's a lot of talk these days in education about moving away from knowledge and focusing mostly on skills-acquisition, but we don't think that's the right approach," says Kovacs. "So we're pairing modern, relevant knowledge with vital character qualities. And we're delivering this knowledge in an interdisciplinary way, because we don't experience the world in silos and our students shouldn't gain their knowledge in subject silos." According to Fellin, Crescent is zeroing in on the content and learning experiences that have become essential in today's world. This means making space for things like environmental literacy, financial literacy, and cultural competence.

There's an expectation that every student will keep pace with the curriculum, but they don't have to go it alone. And boys don't have to excel in every subject area or conform to a rigid learning style. Flexibility is paramount in Crescent's academic programs, especially since the pandemic. After experimenting with multiple schedules, including several semester styles, and conducting extensive research on the most effective models, the school landed on an

innovative six-term schedule. “It’s future-ready in that it’s highly adaptable to students’ unique needs and potential shifts online,” says Upper School Head Richard Prosser. “Our colleagues at post-secondary institutions have also praised the schedule as good preparation for university.”

According to the students, the academic culture among peers is encouraging and cooperative. The schools’ emphasis on collaborative learning would naturally encourage this, but the students also described an environment of mutual academic support. According to them, good marks are important, but not everything. “We share grades in our class, and if some are low nobody makes fun,” says one Grade 5 student. “We talk about how we all have bad days and struggle sometimes.” Several Upper School boys commented on how they feel comfortable asking anyone in their classes for help on assignments, even if they’re not good friends. While agreeing with this observation, several students said there’s also a bit of friendly academic rivalry that pushes boys to do their best.

“We provide multiple pathways through the provincial curriculum that are customized to the boys’ unique interests and abilities,” says Headmaster Fellin. “We enrich the curriculum, but we don’t layer on another.” In other words, Crescent doesn’t offer the International Baccalaureate (IB), found at some independent schools. Instead, teachers provide different ways to support or stretch students within the standard curriculum.

In the Lower School, it’s all about discovery. Just as Crescent boys are encouraged to explore a wide variety of athletics and co-curriculars during these years, they’re given the chance to try out different ways of gaining and demonstrating knowledge in the classroom. “There’s an incredible amount of opportunity for personalization in these early grades,” says Lower School Head Dr. Sandra Boyes. “We know that giving boys a voice and a choice is so essential to their engagement. So, when it comes to assessment, for example, they can often choose from different formats such as essays, group projects, a film, or a PowerPoint presentation. We

understand that there are many ways to show evidence of learning.”

While STEM is a consistent focus through all the grades, literacy has a prominent place in the Lower School. From the Kids’ Lit Club and the Dads’ Read Program to author visits and media studies, there’s a concerted effort to build the necessary skills and instill a love of language at this critical stage. According to one Crescent parent, it took just one week in Grade 3 for her son’s teacher to recognize his need for reading support. “I’d been trying to get help for him since Grade 1, but as soon as he arrived at Crescent they picked up on my exact concern,” she says. “He quickly got caught up and immediately began to thrive.”

The Middle School program is based on the latest research into how young adolescent boys learn best, says Head Ryan Bell. “Offering personalized teaching and learning goes a long way to enhancing the experience of boys at this age, so we aim to provide pathways of choice and specialization. It makes them feel more empowered, which translates into more effort and commitment on their part.” The Reach Ahead program gives boys in Grade 8 the chance to accelerate their learning or lighten next year’s load by taking Grade 9 courses. “If you feel like you’re not being challenged in the standard curriculum, the teachers provide great challenges,” says one Grade 8 student in the Reach Ahead program. Bell says this doesn’t equate to academic streaming, but rather personalized enrichment: “We give them opportunities to augment their academic experience based on their inclination and abilities.”

By Upper School, there’s an understanding at Crescent that boys will have narrowed their academic focus. “Universities today are looking for kids who are well-rounded but have gone deep in one or two academic areas and really developed a sense of purpose,” says Fellin. The Upper School offers more than 70 courses at the highest levels of the Ontario curriculum, along with Advanced Placement (AP) credits. A certain segment of parents, including some we spoke to, choose Crescent specifically for the AP program, which allows students to earn university-level credits in their strongest subjects.



“It’s very common for our boys to come back from university and say that they were very, very well-prepared for what they encountered academically,” says Deputy Headmaster Nick Kovacs. One parent proudly recounted the story of her son solving a problem in his first-year chemistry class that even stumped the professor.

Another reason Crescent offers customized academic routes to graduation in the Upper School is to align with the school’s focus on social and emotional health. While some boys opt for the full AP path, it’s not for everyone, says Kovacs. “We believe that when you take the one-size-fits-all approach that pushes everybody through the same pathway, you start to see the pressure points in the context of health and well-being. We don’t want students struggling to keep pace where it’s not an area of strength or passion for them.”

Whenever boys do need extra help, there are Learning Specialists for each division who provide one-on-one or small-group academic support. This includes working with students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

## Pedagogical approach

The school’s strategic academic plan, called “The Crescent Way,” lays out a commitment to active, relational, experiential learning. These buzz words are common in educational jargon, of course, but there’s ample evidence that Crescent teachers take them to heart. The pandemic shift to online learning—which everyone we spoke to said happened seamlessly—only reinforced the school’s commitment to this trio of teaching approaches. “We’ve come back with a firm belief that in-person learning is the ultimate learning, and a renewed commitment to our pedagogies,” says Richard Prosser, Head of the Upper School.

The pandemic experience also refined Crescent’s philosophy on technology in education. The school has always used a Learning Management System (LMS), where teachers post course content, notices, grades, and other academic information for students and parents to access. “It was mostly a static tool before, but when classes moved online our teachers got creative and started using it as a dynamic tool that enriches students’ learning,” says Prosser. Many teachers incorporated the concept of ‘flipped learning,’ which delivers engaging lessons on the LMS via videos, voice-overs, and more. Students view this instruction individually, then teachers use class time to ask questions, expand on the lessons, and spark discussion.

While staff members readily admit that the old “chalk and talk” teaching method is essential in certain circumstances, it’s always accompanied by active learning experiences such as labs, debates,

role-playing, or just lively discussion. “It comes down to giving the boys opportunities to take their learning and demonstrate it or apply it in a practical way—that’s when the neurons really get firing,” says Deputy Headmaster Nick Kovacs. As far as experiential learning, where students gain knowledge and skills outside the classroom, there’s something for everyone at Crescent. Outdoor education is part of the curriculum throughout the grades, with boys regularly trekking into the ravine to study flora, fauna, or water systems. One boy in the Lower School told us about his class venturing into the ravine to study biodiversity, while another described re-enacting a historical battle outside. Another told us he appreciates the extensive use of the lab facilities in science classes: “I like hands-on learning, and so do a lot of my friends. We get to do a lot of experiments.”

Knowledge-building beyond the classroom is also central to Crescent’s new six-term schedule, which has an Intersession Week directly before March Break dedicated to experiential learning activities. “Students don’t just go to school for academics,” says Kovacs. “They go to school for those powerful, memorable coming-of-age experiences that shape their character. Coming out of the pandemic, Crescent is doubling down on those experiences. Our students will choose from a wide range of activities during Intersession Week, ranging from spending the week on campus learning environmental stewardship to travelling abroad for three weeks on a service trip.”

The outreach program at Crescent, which will continue to run in addition to the Intersession Week, takes boys on day outings or international trips to settings where they can broaden their understanding of social and economic issues. And the signature “Character-in-Action” programs give boys a chance to tackle real-world challenges through their participation in clubs and teams in the arts, business, robotics, and athletics.

Everyone we spoke to at Crescent underscored the high value the school places on relational learning. It’s the differentiator that people seem most proud of and it appears to be embedded in

everything the school does. “We make sure each of our students feels known and cared for, because it fuels their learning,” says Fellin. Several teachers and school leaders we spoke to referenced a quote from Michael Reichart and Richard Hawley’s book *Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys*: “Boys experience their teachers before they experience the lessons they teach.”

Virtually every conversation with students confirmed that the school’s emphasis on nurturing student-teacher relationships is working. Even the younger boys articulated their sense that Crescent teachers genuinely care about them. “Our teachers like to have talks with us and know what’s happening in our lives,” says one Grade 6 student. According to another, “the teachers treat you like people and not just as their students that they have to teach. It seems like more of a passion than only their job.” In speaking to Upper School boys, we found many of them had formed lasting ties to teachers they had several years before. “My old French teacher always really cared how my life was going and she still talks to me in the halls,” says one Grade 12 student. “I still pop into her class sometimes.” Similarly, a Grade 11 boy said he goes back to one particular Middle School teacher when he needs advice and support.

The relational approach is instinctive for the kind of teachers Crescent hires—those with high emotional intelligence—but they also rely on research-based methods such as attending boys’ athletic or club events and sharing a common interest. In addition to a comprehensive professional development program, Crescent faculty benefit from the research culture underpinned by the Crescent Centre for Boys’ Education. While the school has had an active research program through its membership in the International Boys’ School Coalition for over a decade, the in-school centre was established in 2019 as a vehicle to expand and more easily share Crescent’s findings. Faculty members explore research in four areas prioritized by the school: character, well-being, pedagogy, and diversity.

Recent research projects have examined how character education builds boys’ resilience, for example, and ways to reduce test

anxiety in math. “The centre reinforces our culture of continual improvement and collaboration,” says Sandra Boyes, Executive Director of Professional Learning and Research as well as Head of the Lower School. “Even if teachers aren’t directly involved in research, they’re always taking a critical and research-based lens to their practice. We’re on a journey of constant self-improvement.”

It’s not just teachers who ask and answer research questions outside the classroom, though. Crescent students also conduct investigations that not only enrich their academic and personal experience but inform policy and practice at the school. With guidance from the research centre and external consultants, students tackle pressing topics by designing a research plan, choosing their data collection tools, and workshopping the plan with their advisors. Recently, Grade 10 boys explored the critical issues of how students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) experience the school culture, and in what ways they experience racial bias. Their findings and recommendations will shape larger efforts to improve the Crescent experience for all students.

Crescent is a member of the School Participatory Action Research Collaborative (SPARC), a research consortium based at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education. It’s the only Canadian independent school in the consortium, whose purpose is to mobilize student insights and voices to improve school culture, policy, and practice.

## Character-in-Action programs

Whether boys are acting in the latest theatre production, building a robot, running an investment fund, or snowshoeing in a remote northern community, Crescent’s Character-in-Action clubs, teams, and outreach activities intentionally design opportunities to build character outside the bubble of the classroom. “Every single co-curricular activity grows students’ character in some way,” says Deputy Headmaster Nick Kovacs.

While it’s optional, participation in co-curricular activities runs high across all the grades. Surprisingly, when learning shifted online during the pandemic, student co-curricular activities flourished. “Life outside the classroom has always been very student-driven and student-led, and that only increased with a slew of new virtual clubs,” says Kovacs. “When we returned to in-person learning, those new passions came with the boys.”

Inclusion is paramount in co-curriculars. “We all have a certain sport or club, or sometimes more than one, that we feel part of,” says one Grade 6 student. And boys can launch their own group if their passions don’t align with an existing one. We met with a Grade 11 student who started the Biology Competition League, which recently won a silver and bronze at the British Biology Olympiad. It doesn’t take long to see that this is not a school for boys who just want to go to class and make a quick exit at the end of the day. “These programs help students find a place where they feel at home, where their contributions matter,” says Gavin Muranaka, Director of Business and Entrepreneurship.



## 1. Arts

Every year Crescent puts on three major theatre productions—one for each of the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools—to showcase the talents of students in drama, music, and fine arts. The Upper School show, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, was a spectacular affair that ran in 2020 just before the pandemic. In addition to the Upper School leads, it featured the Lower School choir, a pit band of faculty and study musicians, and guest actors from Havergal College.

Not to be confused with your average school play, these shows take months of preparation and are staged in the 350-seat, professionally equipped theatre within Crescent's Centre for Creative Learning. "This venue is better than many theatres in Toronto where I've performed," says Godric Latimer-Kim, Head of Performing and Visual Arts, who acted professionally on stage and TV for 25 years. When she joined Crescent in 2003, drama courses were only available in the Upper School and there was just one production per year. In addition to adding a production for each division, she spearheaded the expansion of curricular drama into the Lower and Middle Schools.

"Involvement in the arts has exponential benefits for the development of boys' character," says Latimer-Kim. "Whether it's acting in a play, making a film, or performing with a musical ensemble, it takes boys out of their comfort zones and creates moments of vulnerability that foster empathy."

All the Arts teachers have worked in their fields of expertise, and many continue to do so alongside their teaching careers. Within the music faculty, for example, one teacher plays in a rock band, one plays professional piano, and one is part of the choral industry in Ontario. The Lower School drama teacher was a professional dancer, and all the teachers in the visual arts program have private studio practices. "We all bring a passion for our discipline to our teaching and very much stay active as performers and creators," says Latimer-Kim.

There's a deliberate effort in the arts program to expose students to ideas and creations they might not otherwise encounter. Luminaries occasionally visit Crescent, such as renowned landscape photographer Edward Burtynsky, but so do less mainstream figures such as Bruno Smoky, a legendary graffiti artist who ran a hands-on workshop at the school. "These experiences give the boys a wider, more fulsome appreciation for diversity in the arts," says Latimer-Kim. "We ask the boys to consider perspectives beyond their immediate experience and form human connections in this age of technology."

There are three sunlit art studios, one for each of the three schools. On our tour led by a group of Middle School students, several couldn't wait to show off the vast array of creative supplies in their studio. The variety of projects in progress was impressive, ranging from screen print pillows to pop art paintings in the style of Keith Haring. Much of the work the boys produce is on display throughout the school, creating galleries out of hallways. In the Grade 10 Media Arts course, students get to hone both their artistic and tech skills through video production, website design, sound and animation, and photography.

Crescent's many performance groups—including multiple choirs, a symphonic band, string and guitar ensembles, and chamber groups—compete in regional and national music festival, tour regularly, and can often be heard at school assemblies and recitals. The biannual Crescent School Choir Tour takes students, parents, and faculty members to European destinations with special significance in Canadian history, such as the Canadian National Vimy Memorial.

Every spring, Crescent invites family and friends to celebrate student creations in music, drama, fine arts, and media arts in an event called "Luna." Some faculty members even contribute to the performances and exhibits. The 2019 occasion marked the official unveiling of a mural on a two-storey wall in the Middle and Upper School library created by students, alumni, faculty, and a professional artist. The mural combines vivid watercolour painting with



handwritten words of wisdom that align with Crescent's mission of creating men of character: "Laugh at yourself," for example, and "Don't let setbacks be defined as failures, but rather as learning." After a couple of virtual events, Luna made a triumphant return to in-person festivities in 2022.

## 2. Athletics

Sports are big here, like they are at many boys' schools. The flagship teams are soccer and cross country in the fall, basketball and hockey in the winter, and track and field and rugby in the spring. "But there's such a healthy support network among all the different activities at Crescent, including but beyond athletics," says Fraser Bertram, who's been Director of Athletics since 2005. "And there's no big divide between the elite athletes and the rest of the boys. There's a great level of respect among the boys for athletics at all levels."

The boys we spoke to agreed that everyone who wants to play a sport can play a sport at Crescent, whether it's on a competitive team or through intramurals. "There's a softball league and a softball club, so if you don't make the team, you can still play and have fun," says one Grade 5 student, offering a concrete example.

This sense of camaraderie and mutual support is seeded and nurtured in both curricular physical education and co-curricular athletics. Athletics are much more than a physical and competitive outlet or a vehicle to build school spirit at Crescent. Instead, everything that happens on the field, court, or rink is a potential teaching moment. "In sport, boys are naturally exposed to so many character lessons, whether they're about friendship, perseverance, or heat-of-the-moment competition," says Bertram.

Conscious character-building in athletics follows a progressive model, where boys in the lower grades learn about fundamental values such as responsibility and teamwork and the themes become more mature over the years. The discussions and lessons happen organically, springing from events in the game or boys' reactions during play.

Participation in co-curricular sports is extremely high across the grades, more evidence of the inclusive athletics culture. Since Bertram arrived at Crescent, he's made it his goal to give as many boys as possible the chance to play on a team or simply make fitness part of their day. This has meant creating more teams at more levels, and today there are more than 70 covering everything from the classics to golf and ultimate frisbee (in partnership with Havergal College). As a result, 100% of boys in Grades 3 to 6 play on a team, while about 85% of boys in the Middle and Upper Schools take part.

Balanced is the best word to describe the school's overall approach to athletics. There are opportunities for students with the skill and drive to compete at the highest levels (and continue with university teams), but there's also a place for those students who want the experience of being on a team, practising and competing without too much intensity. "Our long-term goal is for the guys to still make fitness a part of their daily routine when they're 30 and 40," says Bertram.

If none of the team sports fit into their school schedules or match their interests, there's a fitness club, squash courts, and a ravine directly behind the school for running or walking. The athletic facilities are extensive and impressive, with two full-sized gyms, a low ropes course and the year-round bubbled Field House—a 30,000-square-foot indoor field with an indoor track and tennis and basketball courts.

The gem in the crown of Crescent's recreational amenities is the most recent addition: the dome. The air-supported dome sits atop Innes Field, which boasts a new multi-purpose turf certified for both FIFA Soccer and World Rugby. Thanks to its shelter, heating and lighting, the dome vastly extends students' recreational options year-round. Whether they're playing traditionally warm-weather intramural sports like soccer in the winter or simply enjoying the dome for recess and gym class, the boys have made excellent use of it since it opened in 2021. And its popularity is readily apparent in conversations with students from across the

grades. “It’s really fun to play in there when it’s cold and snowy outside,” says a Grade 6 student.

Nearly 60 faculty members coach at least one team—even if they start with no expertise in the sport in question. Guest coaches from the community bolster the teachers’ athletics knowledge and skills, but the real value of teacher-coaches is their 360-degree knowledge of the team members. “They bring the understanding that athletics are just one part of a boy’s school life,” says Bertram. “They know if the boy has had a rough day or other demands. It all comes back to reinforcing the teacher-student relationship.”

### 3. Business

Up to a third of Crescent students aspire to a career in business-related fields, according to Gavin Muranaka, Director of Business and Entrepreneurship. In Upper School, there’s a comprehensive business curriculum in accounting, economics, and business entrepreneurship. Muranaka, who worked in the venture capital industry before joining the Crescent faculty in 2008, is the first to admit that the theoretical aspect of these subjects can be dry unless they’re brought to life with real-world applications. That’s the approach he and his colleagues—who also switched to teaching after careers in marketing, banking, and technology—take in the classroom. But it’s in the thriving co-curricular business program where the boys really get to see the business curriculum come alive.

It’s not often that high school boys get to manage a \$65,000 investment portfolio, for example, but they do exactly that on the Investment Team. They deal with real money (the capital initially ceded by the school and alumni) and the real consequences of their decisions. The team is part of the broader Crescent Business Team, whose members participate in business competitions up to the international level.

Though the Investment Team has some adult advisors, students lead and run all Business Team activities. “The boys build leadership, communication, analytical, and critical thinking skills while

stoking their passion for business,” says Muranaka. “They go into high-pressure competitions where they not only have to think on their feet but perform and present to an audience.”

For boys in Grade 9 and 10, there’s a Junior Business Club where they can learn the essentials and get their feet wet in the world of business competitions. And there’s even a Crescent summer camp focused on financial literacy and investing.

### 4. Outreach

Sheryl Murray, Director of Outreach, wasn’t surprised when many Crescent alumni, students, and families launched support initiatives for people affected by COVID-19. But she was impressed by the scale of some of the projects. Three Grade 11 students raised more than \$14,000 for personal protective equipment, for example, and a Grade 12 student raised nearly \$7,000 to buy groceries for families in a subsidized housing development in his neighbourhood.

“These students came up with their ideas, researched them, and executed on their own,” says Murray, whose role involves reviewing students’ outreach proposals and helping them make the right connections. “What happened at the beginning of the pandemic just shows that Crescent’s core values of compassion and responsibility live in an inner place within our students. When they have a chance to put these values to work, it’s not just a resume-building moment. There are much easier ways to do that. They really want to make a difference.”

Crescent students are used to doing the legwork when they get involved in outreach projects. Once they reach Middle and Upper School, they take the lead in planning where they’re going to go and what they’re going to do. “It’s always more meaningful when they do the work themselves,” says Murray, who prefers the term “outreach” to “service” when describing the school’s approach. “I make sure the boys know that we’re not making people our projects. We reach out to different communities so the boys can learn from them, build relationships, and develop their empathy and understanding.”

In the Lower School, the outreach activities include curriculum-linked activities such as writing letters to people in retirement homes and day trips to community organizations. In Middle School, Crescent takes outreach to a whole new level. Every Tuesday for eight weeks, the boys spend the whole afternoon at one partner agency that supports vulnerable individuals. In the past, the focus has been on individuals who are homeless or struggling with substance abuse, for example. “We all work together during those two months and the boys gain new insight into the lives of people from all types of backgrounds and experiences,” says Middle School Head Ryan Bell.

This in-depth outreach comes at the perfect time in Crescent boys’ development, says Murray. “Middle school boys are curious, interested, and eager. It’s an ideal stage to extend their awareness of the world outside their inner circles.” While she has nothing against one-off outreach activities, Murray believes students should also challenge themselves with longer-term commitments. “Instead of patting themselves on the back for moving boxes for a few hours, we want the boys to see that, sometimes, outreach just means sitting and having a conversation with someone you wouldn’t ordinarily talk to. And going back every week to do the same thing, whether it’s uncomfortable for you or not.”

Crescent offers multiple outreach trips for boys in the Upper School. The popularity of these trips is a testament to the school’s culture. Going on an outreach trip is considered a kind of rite of passage for many students, but, again, Murray doesn’t present a resume-builder on a silver platter. “What the boys get out of these trips is up to them,” she says. “They need to put in the work in the pre-service component, really dig in while they’re there, and engage fully in the debriefing component. If they do, it’s meaningful for them and for the organization or community they immerse themselves in.” On recent trips, the boys have lived with a Maasai community in Tanzania, joined in Cree winter traditions in Moose Factory, Ontario, and contributed to a local school in Ecuador.

One weekend each month, Crescent parents can join their sons in a local outreach activity. These outings are also in high demand. “We really love those Saturdays,” says one parent. “We get to connect with other families while contributing to the community.” Murray recognizes that some critics might accuse the school of “poverty tourism,” but she says her 15 years at Crescent prove otherwise. “We see the ‘aha’ moments all the time when our outreach program brings the boys together with people living a different reality. They suddenly realize that boundaries and barriers don’t matter, and people are people. That’s the foundation for a man of character.”

## 5. Robotics

Shortly before the start of the pandemic, more than 200 people gathered to celebrate 20 years of robotics at Crescent. The guests—including alumni, current students, faculty, retired staff members, parents, and friends—witnessed the unveiling of Megalodon, the award-winning robotic team’s latest creation. Every year the team creates an impressive-looking piece of technology that can shoot hoops and run obstacles courses, among other things.

The history of robotics at Crescent began when David Grant, who retired as Dean of Studies in 2022, launched the robotics and technological design programs. A long-time science and technology teacher, Grant also contributed to the growth of robotics competitions in Canada as a founding board member of FIRST Robotics Canada. Don Morrison (who retired in 2021) led the program almost from the start, with a team boasting expertise in mechanical engineering, software engineering, electrical engineering, and computer science. Today, Marcella Fioroni is Director of Robotics, managing co-curricular robotics clubs and teams, and Tibor Torontali is Head of Technology Studies, overseeing robotics in the curriculum. They are among four robotics team mentors who spend countless after-school hours with the students preparing for competitions.

Crescent is deeply committed to its robotics and tech offerings inside and outside the classroom. According to Fioroni and

Torontali, the administration's consistent support has helped the programs grow and thrive. It was rare for Crescent's strength in robotics not to come up in our conversations with students and teachers—it's obviously a point of pride across the school.

Robotics is part of the Upper School curriculum, with hands-on courses that require students to design, program, machine, wire, and create technological solutions to a variety of challenges. The fully equipped Robotics Lab not only has a computer lab and spaces for building and testing, but machine rooms with state-of-the-art manual and computer-controlled equipment.

The Grade 12 Technological Design course is emblematic of the school's values and academic strengths. A collaboration with Sunny View Public School, which serves children with disabilities, it requires Crescent students to work alongside Sunny View students to design and adapt toys and equipment for accessibility. Previous end products have included a catapult that allowed the kids to play catch with their parents and a race car track with an accessible control device. "The driving forces in the course are creativity, empathy, and accountability," says Torontali, noting that these competencies align with the ongoing curriculum redesign efforts to explicitly embed character development in every academic subject. "The students have real-life clients—the children and parents—and they have to understand their needs and deliver a high-quality product on time."

While the Upper School robotics curriculum is robust and well-entrenched, with coding taught from Grade 9 onward, Crescent has also integrated coding and robotics-related content in the Lower and Middle Schools (many science and math classes in the lower grades already teach coding). Beyond the curriculum, however, there are plenty of co-curricular robotics opportunities for boys in any grade. In Lower and Middle School, students can participate in the VEX IQ Robotics Club or try out for the VEX IQ Robotics Team, which competes at the provincial level. VEX IQ is a snap-together robotics system that builds foundational skills for Upper School robotics, where the bar rises to new heights.

Crescent is the only independent boys' school in Ontario that competes in the FIRST Robotics Competition at the international level. Every year for the last two decades, the Upper School robotics team (Team 610) has built a five-foot-tall robot from scratch to compete in high-intensity robo sports. In 2013, Team 610 beat out 400 teams from across the globe to take gold at the world championships. It's hard not to notice the many winning banners from provincial, national, and international competitions proudly displayed in the lab.

Former director Don Morrison was known for frequently reminding team members that striving for excellence—not just winning—is the goal. "Don made excellence the goal for students at every step, from their designs and building processes to their teamwork and work ethic," says Torontali, who's quick to note that there's a lot of fun mixed in with the hard work.

In the months leading up to FIRST Robotics competitions, team members put in more than 20 hours per week, including Saturdays. "The boys have to keep going through failed designs, multiple iterations, and exhaustion, which leads to character growth," says Fioroni. "The team experience teaches them to collaborate, problem-solve under pressure, and persevere." Motivated by a sense of responsibility to their teammates and a desire to compete to the best of their ability, team members learn invaluable lessons about resilience. "Nothing works the first time in robotics, which sends the boys back to the drawing board countless times," says Fioroni. "When they don't perform as well as they'd like in a competition, you'll find the boys in the lab late on a Friday night adjusting and reprogramming for the next event."

Many former robotics team members go on to careers in science and technology fields, then return to the school as team mentors in the "Back Seat Drivers Union." Even those alumni who don't offer hands-on help continue to support robotics at Crescent financially through the Crescent Robotics Alumni Fund.



## Wellness

“We want our boys to be well,” says Headmaster Fellin. “Well-being is the foundation upon which our mission rests, because you can’t learn or develop your character without it. Since the pandemic and the resulting upsurge in young people’s mental health concerns, we’ve doubled down on our efforts to promote and sustain well-being.”

Regular physical activity, whether it’s a daily walk or playing on a top-tier team, is ingrained in Crescent’s culture. The full-time school nurse handles run-of-the-mill illnesses and injuries, liaises with teachers to accommodate chronic health conditions, and provides concussion education and care in partnership with Holland Bloorview Concussion Centre. Crescent also has two social workers on staff to help boys strengthen their social-emotional coping skills. They provide individual or group counselling, coaching, and advice to boys struggling with stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.

The parents we spoke to felt Crescent staff truly knew their boys and were attuned to their changing needs over the years. “The teachers don’t just care about our sons’ academic achievements, but also about their mental health,” says one parent of two sons in the Upper School. “The staff played a significant role in supporting them in their transition to the teen years, which can be a hard time. To me, this is what sets Crescent apart from other boys’ schools.” Another parent of two sons, one in Middle School and one a

graduate, recalls several times when a teacher spotted and addressed thorny issues occurring outside the classroom. “They address any situation that arises, even relationship conflicts between the boys. By paying attention like this, the staff play a huge role in the boys’ growth and development.”

Students in the Lower School described the “mood meter” they use to describe how they’re feeling each week during Community Time, when everyone has an opportunity to share experiences from their lives inside and outside the classroom. They appear at ease with the language of mental health, with one student recounting how his teacher openly discussed his own anxiety. “It made us feel like we can talk about those things too,” he says. The Middle and Upper School students expressed a more sophisticated understanding of Crescent’s mental health supports. “We’re encouraged to talk about how we feel, not just with our mentor or social worker but any teacher, to combat the stereotype of boys and men not being open,” says one. Another described his first experience at a peer assembly on mental health in Grade 9 as “a very powerful experience.”

The school’s Health and Wellbeing program is called STEM 1.0, which stands for Sleep, Think, Eat, and Move. More specifically, the message is: Sleep soundly, think clearly, eat smarter, and move more. It’s a clever reminder to the boys that they need to take care of themselves first if they want to succeed academically and professionally in fields such as science, technology, engineering, and math. “The concept of self-care traditionally hasn’t come as naturally to men, so our aim is to help the boys create healthy habits for a lifetime,” says Fellin. “All the adults at the school try to model these behaviours as best we can. I want the boys hearing how I’m managing my exercise routine or trying to maximize my sleep, for example, so that I can do my job well and be a good partner and father.”

Deputy Headmaster Nick Kovacs says it comes down to creating “a climate of care” at Crescent. “Alongside the overall messaging, we have practical initiatives aligned under each of those STEM 1.0 categories,” he says. Wednesdays are recovery days, for example, where



school starts later so the boys can catch up on their sleep. To further enhance the well-being program, Crescent has partnered with a Stanford University-based organization called Challenge Success to implement research-based strategies to broaden the concept of success beyond academic achievement. “We never want a scenario here where the stress is unhealthy to the point where kids can’t cope,” says Kovacs. “We’re always paying attention to the fine balance between high academic standards and health and well-being.”

One core strategy Crescent uses to stay aware of and responsive to boys’ overall state of well-being is the mentorship program. While mentors for boys in the Lower and Middle Schools are the home form teachers, students in Grade 9 are assigned to a mentor group of 10 to 12 that stays together until graduation. They meet regularly with their mentors—a teacher or staff member—to chat about everything from current events to personal relationships. “Mentor groups are the smaller families within the larger Crescent family,” says Kovacs. “They’re support networks within the school where we deliver a lot of character-related education through informal discussion.” In our talks with students, they communicated a strong attachment to their mentors and mentor groups. “You can talk to your mentor if you have any problems with your school work, but also if you have any problems in your life,” says one Grade 7 student. Another expressed how much he values the honest and open conversations with his mentor group: “Everyone shares their opinions and emotions, which are always respected.” For Upper School students, the long-term nature of the arrangement yields strong connections. “We have four years to build that relationship and feel supported during a crucial time in our lives,” says one Grade 11 student.

The mentorship program is so important at Crescent that hiring decisions hinge on whether candidates will thrive as educators and role models. “We’re just as interested in the way a person is going to show up as a mentor in the building as they are as a teacher, because it’s so foundational to our mission,” says Kovacs. “We consider whether

they’re going to be able to connect with the boys and whether they buy into the notion that we’re not just preparing students to succeed in university and professional life, but as human beings.”

## Student body and diversity initiatives

There was a strong consensus among all the students we spoke to—from the Lower School to the Upper School—that Crescent boys are generally kind and supportive. We sensed a broad feeling of camaraderie, with no evidence of exclusive groups or social hierarchies. “Not everyone has the strongest bond, but no one dislikes each other or is mean,” says one Grade 5 student. Asked to recall their first impressions of their fellow students on starting at Crescent, several Lower School students commented on how they felt welcomed from day one. “What I like most about Crescent are the people around me,” says one Grade 6 student. “This is a big school, but Crescent tries to, and succeeds in, making us feel like we’re all one big family. We always talk about the Crescent Brotherhood, which just means you can always rely on someone to be a friend and help you.” A Grade 8 boy added: “There aren’t a lot of cliques and people just get along. It’s a nice community where you’re invited into other groups of friends.”

Crescent is not just for hockey players or robotics enthusiasts or arts aficionados: it has room for all these students and more. “The cheers for the artist are just as loud as the cheers for the athlete or the math contest winner,” says Godric Latimer-Kim, Head of Performing and Visual Arts. “Our culture empowers boys to express who they are and not conform to one idea of the Crescent student.” Several students talked about the spirit of acceptance at

the school. According to one Grade 8 student, “there’s a positive, energetic vibe here. When I arrive in the morning, I feel the energy and I can be myself. I don’t worry about being judged.”

When it comes to other types of diversity, however, the school has traditionally come up short, and Fellin has made it his personal mission to change that. “I feel very, very strongly about making a Crescent education available to a greater range of boys from a greater range of backgrounds,” he says. “My hope is that, in the future, Crescent students will better reflect the diversity of the city we live in.” While he’s optimistic that the racial and cultural diversity of the school will continue to evolve somewhat in step with Toronto’s composition, he says Crescent has a lot of work ahead when it comes to expanding students’ socio-economic diversity. “In recent years, we’ve worked hard to grow our endowment to support student financial assistance, and those efforts are ongoing,” he says. Crescent currently allocates \$1.2 million in financial assistance each year. Five years ago, about 20 boys received this help, and that number has more than doubled. The school is in the quiet phase of a campaign to raise \$15 million for student financial assistance, which will enable 60 boys to benefit by 2030.

To create a more inclusive community for current Crescent students, the school has undertaken external partnerships, launched school-wide initiatives, and forged new alliances between students, staff, and alumni. Diversity issues are integrated into professional development, curriculum design, assemblies, and school celebrations. But the most recent developments on the diversity front are worth noting. “Be the One,” conceived in 2018 as an anti-bullying program by Michael Farkouh ’20, has expanded its focus to include training in bias reduction and empathetic leadership. A “Be the One” toolkit helps student leaders, such as prefects, hone their skills in these areas so they can create a safe, inclusive school culture. In the next phase of implementation, teachers in every school division will receive this training and “Be the One” principles will be embedded across the curriculum.

In another significant step forward, Crescent's Executive Team developed a Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Action Plan in 2021–22, specifying specific goals by constituency. Exploring diverse hiring approaches, reviewing and refining school cultural celebrations, and securing key partners to assist with diversity training and support for teachers and parents are just a few of the ongoing objectives. The school has already made good progress on several goals, such as establishing an Alumni Diversity Committee chaired by Dan Pringle '05. The committee partners with the Student Diversity Council, providing mentorship opportunities to BIPOC students and young alumni.

## Getting in

Crescent is highly selective about admitting new members of the “family.” While the acceptance rate is just one factor among many that determine a good independent school, our rankings clearly show it's not easy to get into Crescent. At 22%, it has the third lowest admission rate in Toronto and the fifth lowest in Canada. Rather than elitism, though, this seems to be further proof that the school takes great care in building its close-knit community.

The admissions team is looking for boys who are not only bright and have a wide variety of interests outside the classroom, but are also good, kind citizens of the world. Standardized testing is part of the application process, which isn't uncommon at comparable schools. For boys entering Grades 3 to 6, there is also an “Experience Crescent” day. While there is an assessment component to the day, it is also an opportunity for younger boys to experience the type of teaching pedagogies intrinsic to a Crescent education.

The application process starts with an online form, followed by an interview. Parents report that the interviews were warm, informal, and comfortable. “It was a lovely, calm environment,” says one parent. “We were especially impressed by the way everyone spoke to and related to our son in an age-appropriate way.”

Tuition is on par with other schools of its kind in Toronto, and it includes the lunch program. There's a one-time new student enrolment fee, and parents will want to note the suggested annual giving of \$2,500. Mandatory supplemental fees cover

things like technology, uniforms, and textbooks in Upper School, while optional supplemental fees are charged for before/after care, co-curricular activities such as tournaments and competitions, and outreach trips. A third-party organization assesses eligibility for financial assistance, and all financial information is kept confidential. Boys who receive assistance are not identified to the faculty (or students, of course) without permission. While financial assistance usually remains the same throughout a boy's time at Crescent, families must re-apply each year.

When offer day comes around in February, the school goes all out to welcome its newest students. More than 30 faculty and staff, parents, alumni and Grade 12 students head out into the cold very early in the morning to deliver Crescent toques and giant ties to the boys' front doors. For boys starting Crescent at the key entry points to each of the division—Grade 3, 7, and 9—there are optional “Successful Start” summer programs focused on math and literacy.

## Parents

A core group of parents are extensively involved as ambassadors and volunteers at Crescent through the Crescent Parent Association, leading everything from book clubs and teacher appreciation luncheons to the annual garage sale, the school's main fundraising event. But there are ample opportunities for parents interested in getting involved only occasionally, or even once a year. The volunteer listings—including detailed responsibilities and time commitments—are available online.

The parents we spoke to said there's strong, consistent communication between the school and families. Every Friday a school-wide email details the upcoming week's events and highlights, and Crescent shares news, photos, and videos through the main social media channels. “We pride ourselves on being very connected with our parents, and understanding that they're the boys' first teachers,” says Sandra Boyes, Head of the Lower School. “Together, we are the learning environment for the boys.”

## Alumni

The Crescent Brotherhood is a strong one, with wide-ranging involvement of alumni at the school and beyond. Recent grads often visit to share their experiences of university life at lunch and learn sessions, while older, more established alumni return to share their professional insight. The robotics and business programs have particularly robust alumni involvement, with grads helping students prepare for competitions or contributing financial support. The pandemic-driven rise of virtual connections inspired the school to build on this type of relationship with alumni near and far. “While we do a good job of bringing out graduates together to celebrate milestone events and reminisce about the past, we’re investing more in efforts to enable alumni to be dynamic contributors to the learning of our current students,” says Fellin. “The next stage in the evolution of Crescent alumni engagement will enrich the curriculum by bringing graduates from all over the world into the daily experience of the classroom, where they can share their professional and personal insights.”

Every Grade 12 student can access advice about university programs and career choices through the Alumni Professional Mentoring Program, while young grads can find meaningful summer employment through the Alumni Internship Program. In a typical graduating class, a quarter of the boys enter Commerce/Business programs, tied with those who chose Liberal Arts and Social Science. The next two most popular destination disciplines are Engineering and Science.



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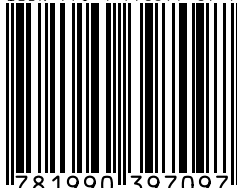
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