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Good things come in small packages

THE TORONTO STAR, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1988

Cartwright High School, a six-room building constructed in 1925, is Ontario's smallest secondary school. Cartwright students — all 96 of them — think that's a blast. The school, which has a good reputation for academic excellence, is in the village of Blackstock, northeast of



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BAKER'S DOZEN: That's how many Grade 13 students attended English class with Sue Ellis the day a Star photographer visited Cartwright High School. Its problem is not absenteeism. The demand for places at Ontario's smallest high school in Blackstock is always high.

Special intimacy at high school with just 6 rooms, 96 students

By Rita Daly Toronto Star

Small is beautiful at Cartwright High School.

Nestled in the tiny village of Blackstock, this obscure red brick building has its own claim to fame. With 96 students, it is the smallest high school in Ontario.

"You don't get lost in this school," principal Peter Fawcett says.

The two-storey structure has six rooms altogether, including the library and laboratory. A portable was added to the schoolyard several years ago.

Personal attention

The schoolhouse was built in 1925 when the area was virtually unknown to anyone residing in Metro Toronto and farmers' children walked in from the country to learn their lessons.

Those children's grandchildren are now attending the school.

On top of that, families moving from Toronto to 'rural' subdivisions are fighting to get their children into the school.

At Cartwright, they feel their children are guaranteed the kind of personal attention they might not get at a large high school with more than 1,500 students.

Spirits high

"I get calls every week from people inquiring about coming here" from as far away as the next county, Fawcett says.

At Cartwright, school spirit is strong. Despite its lack of shops and technical training, the school prides itself on academic excellence, its school band and its hockey and basketball teams.

"You certainly can communicate with the students well," says Ray Ashton, who has taught mathematics at Cartwright for the past 28 years.

When he started, 56 students were enrolled. About six years ago, enrolment peaked with (are you ready?) 135 students.

Last month, the school held one of its biggest events, graduation. All 18 Grade 13 graduates were there — and the entire community of 300 people.

Those who came for the ceremony were the same folks who have fought to keep the school from being closed in the past.

A couple of times it was threatened, when school board officials proposed sending the students to Port Perry High School. That idea caused such a stir, the board quickly backed off.

"The community will never let the school be shut down," Fawcett says.