

Gen. Brock marks 10 years

Vocational schools gain acceptance

Career-oriented education is better accepted now than it used to be, said George Cass, principal of General Brock High School, one of the region's two vocational schools.

But pressure from peers and parents for teens to go on to university still exists, he acknowledged, as does a tendency to want to "try" a student in a regular high school before directing him to a vocational school.

Approximately 166 students from the Acton area are currently involved in the programs at Brock. The students are bused to Burlington by Tyler Transport each day.

The system allows for transfers between vocational and regular high schools. "Students transferring to Brock from other high schools are those who should have been here to start with," Mr. Cass commented.

He questioned the pursuit of unrealistic goals. "We can't all do better than our parents — where does it end?"

Rather, he placed the emphasis on finding out what the individual is good at and what makes him happy and successful. Mr. Cass made his remarks during a meeting with the press held in conjunction with the school's 10th anniversary, which falls this year.

Brock's stated philosophy is to create a climate in which the student has the opportunity not only to learn skills that will help him in a future career but also to develop respect for himself as a worthwhile person.

Many of the students who come to the school have been

made to feel unsuccessful, Mr. Cass said. The school tries to plan a program for the student in which he can succeed.

To qualify for admission a student should be at least 14, be experiencing difficulty in mathematics and reading, have an average IQ or lower, and be socially ready for high school.

Mr. Cass said the traditional view that a vocational school was a place for slow learners was incorrect. "We don't have many slow learners here."

He said the students are below their chronological peers in reading and mathematics for a variety of reasons. Their difficulties may stem from perceptual handicaps or may be related to behavioral or socio-cultural problems.

Reading and mathematics are stressed because knowledge of these two subjects is important for getting along in life. Each teacher is required to stress mathematics and reading concepts in every subject he teaches. "The whole school revolves around literacy and numeracy," the principal said. "The kids don't just work with their hands."

Most courses at Brock are offered at four levels of difficulty. The student is placed according to the level of study he is capable of handling.

In addition to English, mathematics, science and physical education, first year students rotate through 16 business and technical courses. In years three and four, students specialize in their chosen area. Merchandising, auto body, dry cleaning, floral design, restaurant services, masonry

and upholstery are but a few of the wide range of courses available.

Students who complete the required work graduate with a General Brock High School Certificate. Alternately, students who earn 27 credits can graduate with a Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD), the same diploma obtained by graduates of a regular high school. "The SSGD no longer means a grade 12 diploma, although many people still use the term," Mr. Cass commented. "The SSGD is only as good as the transcript (record of courses and marks)."

Brock offers a full four-year program. Any student who leaves the school before graduating, then changes his mind, is welcome to return the following semester.

If he leaves school early because of problems, such as poor attendance, he can return only on a contract basis. That is, he contracts with the school to maintain certain behaviors in exchange for being allowed to return, Mr. Cass explained.

There is more individual attention available at Brock than at most regular schools, the principal commented. The average class size is 18. Forty of the 62 teachers at the school have additional preparation in special education. All teachers have expertise in their vocational field. Educational, vocational and personal counselling are available as well.

Attendance and punctuality are stressed. Students are not penalized for absence or lateness, but poor attendance and frequent tardiness affect their evaluation if they haven't been able to complete sufficient work to meet course objectives. Attendance is important

because most of the work is done in school. Little exercise type homework is given, Mr. Cass said, although students do out-of-class assignments and projects.

Skipping classes is not a greater problem at Brock than it is in regular high schools but it is more visible, according to Mr. Cass. "Skipping class tells us something about a kid," he commented. "The teachers work with skippers to understand what prevents them from staying in class."



BROCK HIGH SCHOOL student Ken Paul of Campbellville works on cast iron fusion in his welding class. A year 4 student, Ken hopes to go into an apprenticeship in brick laying when he graduates.

Efforts are made to make school meaningful to the student. "We try to make school a better place to be than at the plaza or sitting home watching TV."

A tour of the resource centre (library) found two students hard at work while popular music played in the background. The radio is turned off only when special library projects are in progress. During the lunch hour, the library doubles as a lounge area for checkers, chess, TV and reading.

Hot lunches sold in the school cafeteria are prepared and served by students in the foods programs. Students also man an adjacent snack bar.

More boys than girls are enrolled at Brock. About 69 per cent of the 600 students are boys and 31 per cent girls, the principal said. He offered several possible explanations for the difference.

Little girls are better prepared to start school, he said. As babies and young children girls are given activities, such as using scissors and crayons, which help to get them ready for school.

Girls receive higher marks in school. A recent study of grade five pupils in Halton discovered that on tests of mathematics and reading concepts boys and girls achieved identical scores, he reported. However, a survey of their school marks showed the girls had received higher marks than the boys.

Lastly, Mr. Cass said, is the belief that boys are more likely to suffer from perceptual handicaps than are girls. "But my thesis is that perceptual handicaps, if found, should not prevent you

from moving along with the rest of the students," he declared.

The immigrant student is one who sometimes ends up in a vocational school because IQ tests were not available in his native language, Mr. Cass said. However, he can transfer to a regular school if that is felt to be more suitable for him.

Because of the costs of equipping a vocational school and of providing the special attention given at the school, vocational schools cost more per student — about 50 per cent more — than regular high schools, the principal estimated.

Asked about the major challenge facing Brock in the next 10 years, Mr. Cass replied it would be to find alternative programs for some of today's troubled youth. "As our training schools close, we get more and more of them," he commented. "The government is decreasing its social services budget. This puts more pressure on schools."

He said his other wish is to see his own daughter graduated. His daughter Karen is a first year student at Brock.

New school won't affect Gen. Brock

The principal of General Brock vocational school in Burlington said he would welcome the addition of a vocational school in the northern part of the region.

Currently, about one-quarter of the students at Brock live in the western half of North Halton. George Cass, principal at Brock since 1971, said the school would not be adversely affected if the students from the north got their own school. Partially, the difference in enrolment

would be made up by the increasing number of students who are staying on to complete the four years, he said.

Moreover, a vocational school in the north would be phased in gradually and the northern students at Brock phased out gradually.

Mr. Cass, who favors an integrated high school for the north, will address the issue during a meeting on the proposed new school Feb. 21 at J. M. Denyes School in Milton.

Study management

by Mark J. Leahy
The Beef Information Day was sponsored by the Halton-Peel Cattleman's Association on Thursday, March 16 in the Junior Farmer Building in the Brampton fair grounds. Chairman for the program was President Bill Jackson.

Larry Ritchie, Associate Agricultural Representative, Region of Peel, introduced total management concept. The beef business takes into consideration many aspects of the agriculture industry. Doug Dickie, O.M.A.F. Beef Cattle Specialist from Markdale, explained the benefits of using implants and M.G.A. in feeding for profit. Beef feedlot operators will realize an extra \$14 profit per head through the use of implants. A new feed additive for beef rations created much discussion.

Bruce Cook, representing Elanco, explained that Rumensin helps beef steers to convert feed more efficiently. It may be fed only to beef cattle intended for slaughter.

Dr. Dave Cunningham from U.C.O. discussed the role of protein in beef cattle rations.



SPECIALIZING in auto body and maintenance Fern Peltier of Milton, a year 4 student at Brock, gets ready to weld a vertical up butt joint with an arc welder.

Cass says

Should improve apprenticeships

General Brock High School needs more placements in business and industry in North Halton for field experience for its students. Nearly 200 of the school's 800 students live in the northwestern areas of the region.

Already 100 industries and businesses in the region offer placements for Brock students. Senior students go out for a period of up to two weeks of on-the-job experience. They may also apply for one full semester of experience in industry or business.

The school also lacks sufficient placements for girls in any field, said George Cass, the school's principal.

Another need in Canada is for an adequate system of apprenticeship, he said. "The

apprenticeship system leaves a lot to be desired. It's not as broad in scope as it should be. I would like to see more effort at the government level to expand the apprenticeship system."

Development of apprenticeships in Canada has lagged because this country has been able to import skilled people, Mr. Cass said. Welding and hairdressing are two occupations in Canada with good apprenticeship programs, according to the principal. Some firms, like Stelco, offer private programs, he said.

Most Brock graduates go directly into the labor force. About 10 per cent go on to community colleges. Only a few go into apprenticeship programs at present.

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Retroactive Payment of Retirement Benefits.

Retirement benefits may now be paid retroactively for a period of up to 12 months to contributors who had attained age 65 but who are under age 70 and who have retired from the labour force.

Post-Mortem Benefits.

Applications for retroactive benefits (i.e. up to 12 months) can now be made on behalf of a deceased person, in cases where a contributor qualified, but failed to apply, before death. Families or estates will be entitled to receive benefits in such cases.

Elimination of Reductions in Children's Benefits.

Orphans' and disabled contributors' children's benefits are no longer reduced for the fifth and subsequent children. All children in a family, regardless of its size, are eligible to receive equal benefits.

These important amendments to the Canada Pension Plan came into force on January 1st, 1978. If you have any questions, contact the Canada Pension Plan office nearest you:

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