

Trillium School opens

The Ontario Ministry of Education's first school for youngsters with learning disabilities will open in Halton on September 5.

The Trillium School will be the first of its kind in Canada since it is both a government school and a school with a built-in teacher education component. The school is situated in an unused portion of the E.C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton and was placed there because dropping enrollment at Drury made space available there for the ministry's new school. Prior to this time students with learning disabilities either attended private Canadian schools or were sent to schools in the United States.

The ministry defines learning disabilities as "disorders in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language". Children with this problem show great discrepancy between their actual academic achievement and the achievement expected from them because of their abilities as shown by numerous tests including I.Q. tests.

Children whose problems result mainly from physical handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbances or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantages are not classed as having learning disabilities.

The school aims to provide residential education for students with severe learning disabilities as well as for students in sparsely populated areas whose home schools lack programs to deal with their disability. Once the students have gained sufficient mastery over their disabilities it is hoped they can return to their home schools.

R.L. Borthwick, the school's director, says that

the school will open with 20 students and five teachers but another 20 students will arrive by the end of September.

The school staff has been cross-appointed so that they will teach both the students and the teachers sent by various boards of education



R.L. BORTHWICK to learn how to work with such children and take their knowledge back to their own schools.

A cross section of teachers, principals, and supervisory personnel will come to the school in groups of 12 to 15 every other week and cover a comprehensive program as well as having a chance to become involved with the students after classes end each day.

The school program will be highly individualized and the teachers will use whatever they find works best with a particular student. Mr. Borthwick said. The staff will concentrate on academics during class hours and counselors will work on their sports activities during their free time since the students will be at the school on a five

or seven day schedule. Students, such as those from Halton, who live close enough to their homes to go home for the weekend will do so.


Mr. Borthwick feels that the teachers who have been seconded for the school, including Marie Darnforth from Halton, all have excellent skills and experience and should keep using them in the classroom. The fact that they are still working with students while they instruct teachers gives them a high degree of credibility and keeps them in touch with new developments, he says.

The school is situated to the south-east of the Drury campus and shares its sports facilities, including two Olympic-size swimming pools, the gymnasium, the outdoor skating rink and the football field and tennis court. What was once the Drury campus hospital has been converted into a students' residence.

The school accepts students between the ages of six

and 21. This year's group are mostly in the 12 to 17-year-old

age bracket, he said.



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