

Former Speyside School

New home for York students

By LISA TALLYN
Staff writer

Students are back at Speyside School but instead of little kids, adults fill the chairs at the site of the former Halton elementary school.

Speyside is now home to York University's Faculty of Education students.

About 85 of the 760 adults attending York's Faculty of Education consecutive program are working toward their Bachelor of Education degrees at Speyside this year. When they graduate they will have what it takes to teach in the primary and junior grades (kindergarten to Grade 6).

Halton Hills resident, Carol Howitt, and Milton's Kevin Finnegan are directors at York University's Speyside site. Howitt, a former teacher and math consultant with the Halton Board of Education, and Finnegan, a principal at St. Matthew's Separate School in Oakville have been seconded to fill the jobs at York.

"The students here all have undergraduate degrees," said Howitt. "Most of them tend to live on this side of Toronto."

York has seven similar sites including one in Brampton and two in Toronto.

One of the main thrusts of the York education program is practical experience. Howitt says York's program is unique in that students are out in the classrooms with children the very first week of the school year, and spend about two days a week for the rest of the year with the children.

Sixteen schools in Halton, 11 public and five separate, are training grounds for the York students. In Georgetown they practise teaching at Robert Little and George Kennedy schools.

Georgetown resident Pat Sands is a student at York's Speyside site this year. Two days of the week she co-teaches a Grade 6 class at Brookville under the guidance of a host teacher.

So far she loves it. Teaching is a second career for Sands. She has two

children at Georgetown District High School and decided to go back to school to finish her undergraduate degree and pursue a teaching career after her husband died.

"As a mature student I have so much life experience to draw upon," said Sands. "Being in the classroom so early gives us a chance to grow with the children and learn from our mistakes."

The teacher candidates work with host teachers in the classrooms. The host teachers don't evaluate them but act as mentors and coaches.

"By working with the host teachers the teacher candidates learn how to teach and work together," said Howitt.



York University's Faculty of Education has taken over the former Speyside School. The school is home base for several students working toward their bachelors of education. One of those students is Pat Sands (centre) from Georgetown. She is pictured here with directors of the university's Speyside site Carol Howitt of Halton Hills and Kevin Finnegan from Milton.

Since the host teachers don't grade the teacher candidates the students can feel comfortable discussing any problems they are having as teachers.

Each school has an adjunct professor who acts as a liaison between the school and the faculty, and meets regularly with the teacher candidates in the host schools. Adjunct professors and the directors are responsible for the teacher candidate's evaluations.

The theory in the York program is taught by directors Howitt and Finnegan at Speyside two days a week.

"We teach the teacher candidates how to teach," said Finnegan. Students take courses in communication and the education process, socialization and human development and models and foundations of education.

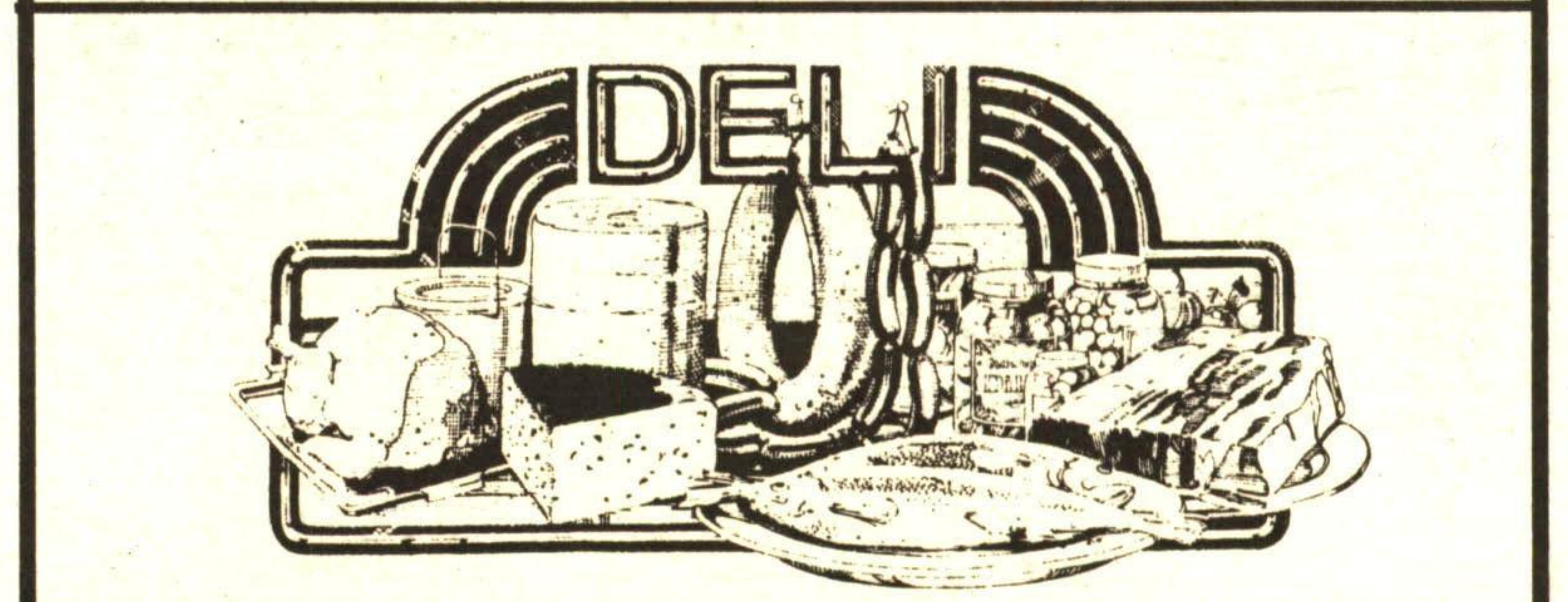
Finnegan and Howitt stress that an important role of a teacher today is to ensure a child has self esteem.

They say that teacher candidates are taught to steer away from "fragmented teaching" and learn to teach a variety of subjects from one situation. For example through one story they learn to hone a child's math, language, and writing skills.

Both Finnegan and Howitt say York graduates are well respected by boards of education, largely because of all the practical experience they gain in the classroom.



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