

More to biology than dissecting worms

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"English is in every part of science," she said. "You have to be a good writer, an excellent English student to be a physician or a scientist for example, and those skills need to be top level."

The teachers were given the green light, so they set out to promote it to the students.

"I think as adults, we say, we don't see where those two subjects link up," Brennan said. "But a student says, I want to see where that link goes."

During the last school year, the teachers set out a sign-up sheet and quickly the class was filled. Now, the school is an active part of the pair's schedule, taking up two periods every day where Brennan and De Mendonca teach one period after the other.

Although together, the students earn two different letter grades for each subject. For the end-unit as-

signment, the two classes collide. For example, one of the latest assignments the students had to complete was a children's book simplifying biological processes, which they then read to Harrison Public School students.

The goals of the course were to have it experimental and experiential forms of learning, and to bring in as many guest speakers as they can.

So far, a female physician has come in to speak about her English minor, and a scientist has spoken about their love for the arts.

"The students couldn't believe how important English still was, even if you're in a purely science career," Brennan said.

Brennan said the experience has been beneficial to the students, in more ways than learning the two subjects on different levels.

"We're like a family in our class," she said. "We're



Kathryn Boyle/Metroland

Since September, Grade 11 GDHS students have participated in 'engology': a fusion between English and biology. Back row, from left: Chris Zytaruk, Tanner Fiskien, teacher Sylvonna Brennan, Malek Benmusa, Prabhjeet Manu, Aiden Weir, Elizabeth Boland Janke, Luke Ritchie, Meghan VanDoorn, Jaden Hughes, Ryme Hossain, and Ryan McAskill. Front: Mackenzie Matthews, Jaymie Thorne, Sarah Thomsen, Cassandra Eardley, Alison Laurie, Chris Bowen, and biology teacher Andrea De Mendonca.

with each other 74 minutes times two now."

To commemorate the program and the friendships, the class designed their own shirts, and began calling the course 'engolo-

gy.'

"We created this little inclusive group," Brennan said.

According to the teacher, the students have had an overwhelmingly posi-

tive response to the course, and have vocalized how they enjoy learning one of the subjects they previously didn't care much for.

The bridging of the two subjects isn't the only thing

that differentiates itself from other courses: when it comes to assignments, the students and the teachers collaborate together on what would be an appropriate task.

"We're letting the kids lead a lot of it," Brennan said. "It's a pretty unique and different course. We're really trying to push cross-curricular learning, and the biology and English is something I don't think anyone is doing."

Brennan and De Mendonca have plans to feature the course again next year and are in the stages of pitching it to Grade 10 students.

"There is no curriculum," Brennan said. "It is literally a course that was created by us, there isn't anything for us to base it on. But students are pretty interested in something new, which speaks to how great high school kids are: they're interested and they're curious."

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