

# Grade 7s and 8s in high school?

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But part of the reasoning behind integration would be precisely because Grade 13 is going to be phased out in Ontario in the near future. Halton's director of education sees that as an argument in favor of amalgamation.

"On the surface, it looks like a possibility," said Bob Williams. "Anytime we suggest a change, people will react negatively. In this case there are some significant positive features, particularly given they are going to reduce secondary school by one year."

Burlington Trustee Cheryl Craig said there's been "some talk" about integrating Grade 7s and 8s but the issue is just, "one of the many things being discussed." She said reaction to the idea among trustees and board staff was mixed.

Ms Craig was also quick to point out the concept of placing grade 7s and 8s in the high school setting is not an original one, not even in Halton. Elementary age kids have been a part of Queen Elizabeth Park in Oakville since the high school opened in the early 1970s; Central High School of Burlington has accommodated grade 7s and 8s on a limited basis for about 10 years.

Central principal Greg MacPherson said English, math and social science are taught to Central Public School grade 7 and 8 classes by their own public school teachers inside the high school; music, family

studies and design and technology classes are taught to the grade 7s and 8s in high school classrooms by the high school's instructors.

Mr. MacPherson said the arrangement has been a good one that operates on the principle of, "trying to capitalize on the facilities and expertise available".

The principal of Q.E. Park said she is "pretty sold on it" now, though she started out with a "neutral" attitude about the idea of integrating grade 7s and 8s with conventional high school students.

"There are some real bonuses to it," observed convert Linda Heaver. "The older students coordinate orientation for the incoming grade 7s, there's a strong (student-run) tutoring program in the school, and teachers and students will know each other longer and get to know each other better."

So far both Erica Andrew, president of the Halton Women Teachers' Association, and Kathleen Carroll, president of the Halton chapter of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, are non-committal on the idea.

Ms Carroll said such a change would have implications in terms of teacher qualifications, workload and pay, while Ms Andrew said little but sounded guarded.

"We have indeed heard of this. At this time I'm not able to say any more. I'll have a lot more to say at a later date."

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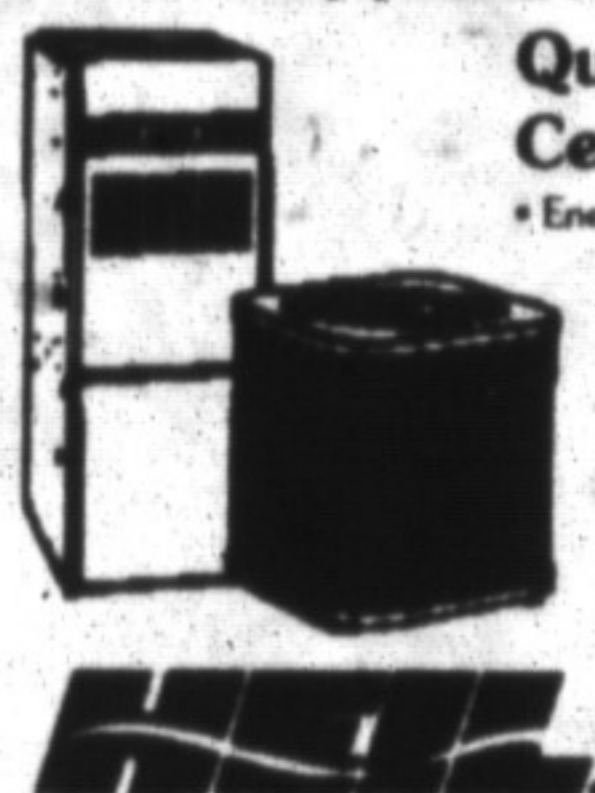
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