



## Dickson Hill

# Oui, it's dual track

By MAXINE SHARE  
 What happens when you fill a schoolyard with 275 French immersion students and 110 English program students?

Why they play together, of course.

"It works extremely well," says Dickson Hill Public School principal Bruce Paradine. He's been at the "dual track" school — there is both the French immersion program and an English instruction program — for three years now.

"Although the immersion students speak only French in the classroom, they switch back to English in the playground," says Mr. Paradine. For most of the children, English is their first language.

This is the second year of the "very popular" program where young children can become bilingual by second-grade, a skill that has some fringe benefits according to one teacher.

Mr. Paradine says the school "welcomes anyone who wishes to enrol."

Grade 3 immersion teacher Flora Jaskolka concedes. "This is not an elite program. Everyone can succeed in it."

She says "young children have a very good facility for learning languages, and very few have trouble learning French. They are pretty fluent by this grade."

Paradine agrees: "They rarely have difficulty. Only three students have been transferred into the English program because of difficulty with the French program."

The program begins at the Grade 1 level, and the pupils are instructed "entirely in French for three years, then in Grade 4, forty minutes of English language arts is added." By Grade 5, the students are spending 80 minutes a day on developing their English

language skills, Mr. Paradine explains.

Currently, there are 11 classes distributed from Grades 1 through 6, including two Grade 1 classes where students must begin the program.

Mr. Paradine says the demand for the program is high. "We have a waiting list of 20 students so far for the fall," he says, "and if there is a demand for it, we may decide to open another class in September."

According to Elfi Berndt, administrative assistant to Board of Education superintendent Terry Gray, "the decision to add another (Grade 1) class or not hasn't been made, and depends on how enrollment goes for the rest of the year."

Although the prospect of adding another Grade 1 class is in limbo, Paradine says the school will add a Grade 7 class this fall, then a Grade 8 class in 1988. "The board is looking at developing a program at the secondary school level" so that students can continue their education in French, he says.

That education is now provided with a "hands on" approach, says Ms. Jaskolka. "They write stories, do plays... we even have a kind of store in class where they can learn about money, about items, all in the French language."

She says the program does more than give the children a second language.

"It gives them a sense of what it's like to be Canadian. They can see the French and the English side" of our culture.

From her upside down position on a climbing apparatus, French immersion student Courtney Powell can see her French and English schoolmates playing at recess. The youngster says she loves the immersion program, and says her dad has even learned a little French.

"But," she says, her long raven hair grazing the sand as she hangs by her knees, "he just doesn't have the right accent."

Touche, Courtney.

## St. Roberts to hold memorial service

The St. Robert Alumni Association is holding a memorial service in honor of former students who died while attending school.

The memorial service, scheduled for Sunday, May 31 at 10:30 a.m., will be held in the gymnasium at St. Robert High School in Markham.

An alumni association spokesman said there will also be a mass in memory of the students.

All are welcome to attend.

## Charge of dipping into till

A cashier at the Unionville IGA store has been charged with theft under \$1,000 after an incident involving cash taken from the till.

York Regional Police say the incident took place between May 13 at 2 p.m. and May 14 at 2:45 p.m. at the store on Hwy 7 at Unionville By-pass. An item worth \$5.50 was not rung into the cash register and the money was later removed.

A 25-year-old Unionville woman was charged in relation to the incident. She was released to appear in court May 28.

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Heather Lawrence (left), Courtney Powell and Christine Miranda, all 9-year-olds, take a break on the monkey bars during a break from their French immersion classes. The Grade 3 pupils "have no problem communicating in either language," says teacher Flora Jaskolka.

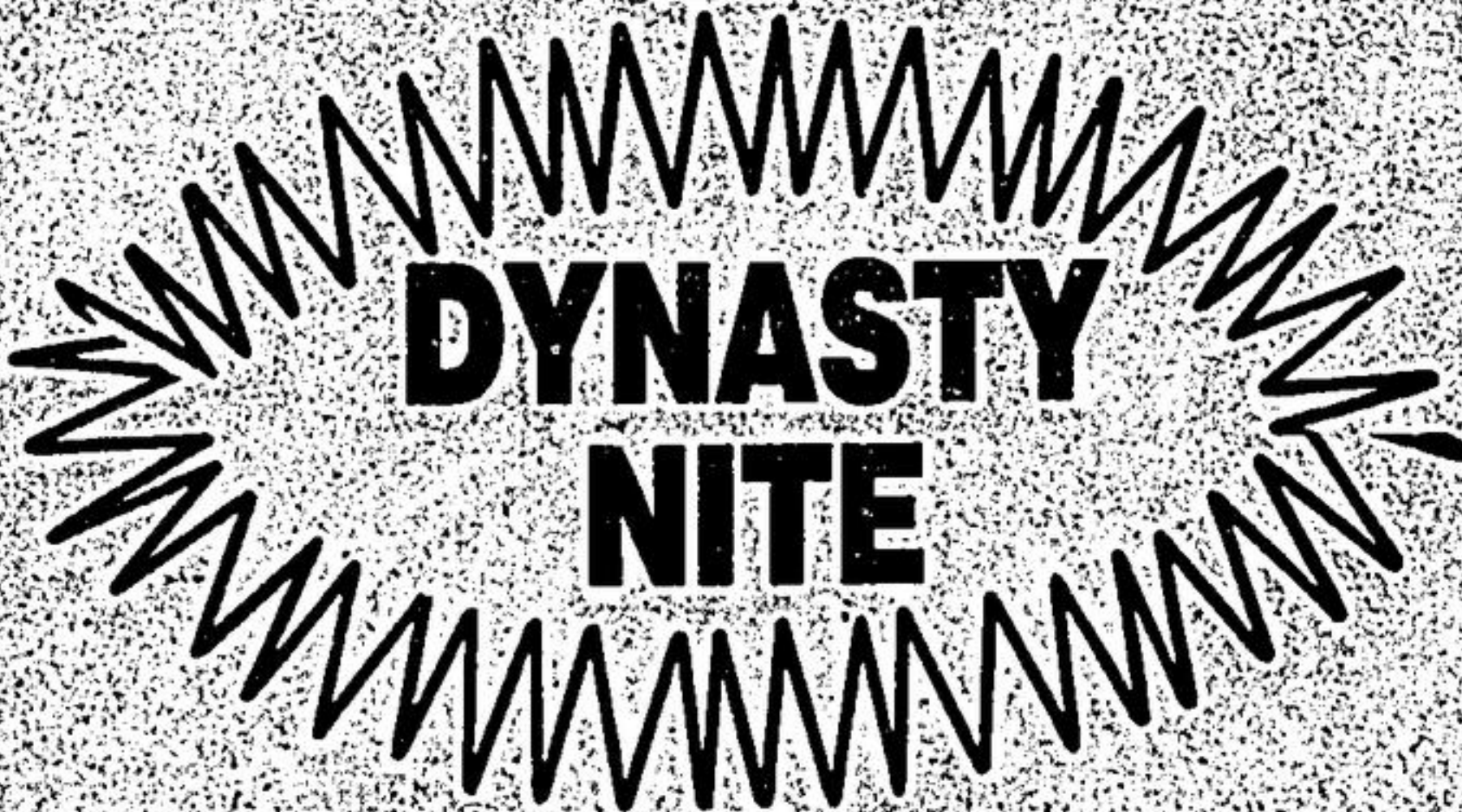
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