



Terry Gray, Superintendent for Area F, York Region Board of Education, stresses the importance of heritage and history within today's pluralistic society. Before advancing to his present position, Mr. Gray was principal at Sharon and Whitchurch Highlands Public Schools. "I'm proud to be part of the York Region Board," he says, "it's where I want to be." — Blaine Kaneko

Supt. Terry Gray

Heritage important says area educator

By BRUCE STAPLEY

DICKSON'S HILL — He sits at his desk in a portable, just south of Dickson's Hill School, and points to a picture of the Old Huntsville Town Hall that hangs on his office wall. "People ask me why it's there," says Terry Gray, Board of Education superintendent for York Region's Area F. "I tell them (visitors) that it represents my roots. I could write three books from memories related to that building."

The Board of Education staffer believes it is essential that the individual heritage and history of each student in the region be acknowledged and encouraged. Because, for Terry Gray, education is all about heritage, history and people.

"We're so pluralistic," says Mr. Gray. "We have to respond to the diversity of philosophies in our society today. In one classroom in our area, there are a total of 24 languages spoken in the homes of the students."

Having held the position of Area Superintendent for the past year and a half, Mr. Gray is fully aware that being responsible for the operation of schools in an area which includes Markham, Stouffville, and Milliken Mills, involves constant long-range planning to accommodate future needs.

"It used to be that growth, for instance, was predictable," Mr. Gray says. "Now, if you're not planning long-range, you can find yourself in a real dilemma."

While growth is certainly the area of greatest concern for Mr. Gray, he knows he must also involve himself with all other aspects of education in a changing world.

"It is essential that we address such issues as the secondary school dropout rate," he says. "We must make secondary school education relevant by preparing students for jobs that are out there. We must convince society that there is dignity in working at something that doesn't require a university education."

The father of three is not unaware of the issues out there that can involve the actual survival of the student in a world of potentially fatal, sexually transmitted diseases, and the increasing problem of teenage suicide.

"I'm delighted with the programs the Board has developed in dealing with sex education. You have to get the information to the kids," Mr. Gray says. "There are things we just can't take for granted. Sure, this may not be a part of education, but we still have to deal with it."

The Huntsville native taught high school in his hometown before moving to York Region for a 14-year stint as principal for both Sharon and Whitchurch Highlands Public Schools. He became a supervisory officer with the Board before moving to Saulf St. Marie where he held a supervisory position with their Board of Education.

In 1986, Mr. Gray moved his family to the Toronto area, and resumed his employment with York Region, a move he doesn't regret.

"I've been with several other systems," he says. "I'm proud to be a part of the York Region Board. It's where I want to be."

The 48-year-old educator enjoys the challenge of being part of one of the fastest growing Boards in North America. Mr. Gray says Stouffville alone will have 700 new students over the next five years.

"I attended a two-week course recently in Banff, Alberta, dealing with education," he says. "Everyone was facing the issue of declining enrolment, except me."

"The growth we have in Stouffville is steady, but not explosive, whereas in the southern end of the area, there are literally hundreds of houses going up."

Presently, Mr. Gray says there are no immediate plans for new schools as an increase in enrolment can be handled with the use of school portables and minor boundary changes, but Mr. Gray does admit, depending on regional priorities, there will come a day when Stouffville will need new facilities.

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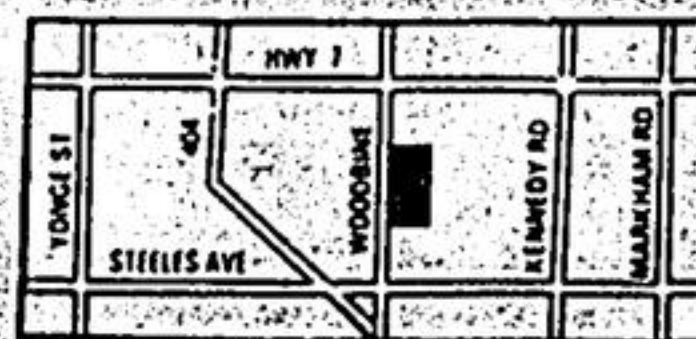
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