

Teen takes the class in co-op

By BRUCE STAPLEY

Rob Pagliaro, the 17-year-old Grade 11 student at Stouffville District Secondary School, is a self-confident young man with a way about him that makes you think he's got it all figured out.

But he'll be the first to admit that when it comes to an eventual career, he's caught between the horns of a dilemma. But thanks to the school's co-op program, that sees students get the opportunity to experience work place situations, Rob is getting a taste of something he feels he just might want to pursue on a full time basis after his schooling is through.

Since October of last year, the personable young gentleman has been spending every second morning of the school week at Orchard Park Public School, as a teacher's assistant, and he's fit in so well that some of the teachers have mistaken him for a full-time teacher. "They thought I was in my first year as a teacher, I guess because I always wear a shirt and tie when I go there."

Can't decide

Rob, who lives just north of Markham with his parents and his three brothers and sisters, is torn between two different types of occupations, and he thought the teaching experience would help him make his decision.

"My mom was a teacher," he says. "But my dad and my brother are electricians and I might be interested in becoming one too."

People person

While he has never worked with his father or his brother, he claims to have a certain aptitude for that type of work. But in the meantime, he's getting to experience, first hand, the world of teaching, and although he doesn't know if he would necessarily become a teacher or not, he feels he would certainly like to have a job where he works with people.

The idea of trying out a teaching position as part of the co-op program came to him last year when he talked to Ann Wilson, the head of the Family Studies Department at SDSS. A supervisor of the co-op program, she set Rob onto Orchard Park teacher Barb Wideman, who along with Grade 8 teacher John Sandham, agreed to take him on as an assistant.

Problem learners

"I spend an hour and a half with Barb in her Special Education class, and another hour and a half with John in his Grade 8 class," says Rob. "As Barb's assistant, I work right with the kids — everything from reading and math, to

working on the computer. I really enjoy it. Some of the kids are close to being mentally retarded, so it's a real challenge. A lot of them have trouble reading, answering questions and understanding math. But there has been progress."

His Grade 8 kids provide him with the opportunity to teach the class, work with groups, and even conduct and mark tests. "The Grade 8's are older, and are more of a challenge in some ways," he claims. "But there has been great interaction, and you can really talk to them."

Learned support

Rob feels that returning to a public school setting several years after attending as a child has helped him see things from a different angle, and he says that things have definitely changed since he was there. "The kids are more open, and they tell you what they think. That, plus the fact they are now so aware of things like sex and AIDS. They have professionals come to the school and talk to them about that kind of thing."

He has enjoyed the fact that so many of the teachers at Orchard Park are relatively young, with an open approach to the kids. "The teachers treat me like one of them in the staff room. There is a good atmosphere at the school, and the teachers are friendly."

Along with the time he spends in the classroom, Rob claims he must also spend a certain amount of time in preparation for his lessons. "I'll write up a lesson plan if I'm teaching a class. It's necessary to prepare a day ahead."

Keeps busy

He still manages to find time for his part time job with Consumers Distributing in Markham, and manages the "squeeze" in some skiing and hockey in the winter.

As for the co-op involvement meeting his original expectations, Rob claims it has done so, and then some. "I got more than I bargained for," he maintains. "And I found out I couldn't just put in time, that there is a lot of involvement. And it's good to see that the kids enjoy it. It's a break in their regular routine."

Being his first experience with kids, the teaching opportunity has shown him the importance of staying on top of things when you are in charge of youngsters. "The kids will tell you what to do if you don't take charge right away."

Rob's career dilemma will continue for a while yet. He still hasn't decided whether he'll take a job at a day camp this summer, or work as an electrician's assistant. But whatever he ends up doing, he will have benefitted from his year of being the youngest teacher at Orchard Park School.



Rob Pagliaro is a 17-year-old "teacher" at Orchard Park Public School, on a co-op program which he says has taught him as much as he's learned and then some. He's a teacher's assistant.

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STOUFFVILLE — Town Council is willing to sponsor "A Day At The Pig Races", Oct. 5, at Markham Fair, but members are showing a reluctance to become personally associated with the porkers. The request was discussed at a meeting April 25.

Each pig is to be outfitted with a jacket with a councillor's name attached.

"It will add to the fun," commented Fair director Don Miller in a letter to the Town.

Mayor Fran Sainsbury didn't consider it all the humorous, suggesting association with a pig not her idea of a compliment.

Wayne Emmerson was named a delegation of one to check into the matter further.

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