

EDUCATION: Public board teachers to be evaluated every three years to help officials monitor their progress

Report card for teachers

Intensive supervision in store for teachers who don't meet expectations

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

Teachers at the public board will face a new report card when they return to school this fall, but this time it will evaluate the skills they use in the classroom.

In September, 12 elementary schools and three high schools will test pilot the new teacher evaluation process, with full implementation scheduled for January.

The schools involved in the pilot include Franklin Street, Ramer Wood, Wilday, Aldergrove, Aurora Heights, Holland Landing, Maple Leaf, Stonehaven, Doncrest, Thornhill Public, Woodland, Brownridge, Dr. John M. Denison, King City Secondary and Markham District High School.

While there has always been an evaluation process for teachers, a need to update the way it was done had become a pressing issue, according to Colette Nemni, superintendent of employee services.

"We wanted to ask, how can we assure ourselves around the issue of accountability that we do have

an effective process for evaluating teachers?"

Currently, the board's policy for evaluating teachers requires a review every two years but, in reality, officials say very little evaluation has occurred at all, except for probationary teachers.

There is really nothing new here that hasn't already been done in the last 25 years.

Under the new program, teachers will be evaluated every three years and probationary teachers will receive their first evaluation 60 days from the first day of teaching.

Teachers who do not meet the expectations will receive more intensive supervision and will move through the evaluation cycle more frequently to monitor their progress.

Each teacher will have at least one planned classroom visit by an administrator.

Teachers will be given three to five days notice prior to the

IN THE CLASS

Stouffville schools did not volunteer to undertake board's teacher assessment pilot project

planned visit.

The teacher and the administrator will officially meet two days later to discuss the visit and, 10 days after that, a report indicating a level of performance will be sent to them.

Created by a team of teachers, union representatives, consultants and school administrators, the draft 24-page evaluation booklet includes a space for teachers to create their own "personal growth plan" and a series of questions that allow teachers to rate themselves, as well as their principal.

When it is determined that a teacher has not met expectations, a second evaluation will be completed no later than 40 days after the first report.

If they fail a second assessment, they will be placed on review.

"There is really nothing new here that hasn't already been done in the last 25 years," said Lynn Hitsman of the elementary teachers' union.

Teachers are asked a series of questions that reflect a standardized set of expectations.

The questions look at how a teacher instructs students, assesses student learning, evaluates their own professionalism and more.

Everything from how a teacher keeps current on new curriculum materials and whether they seek new skills in the area of technology to how they contribute to the life of the school is evaluated.

Teachers will be asked for their input on the document before it is fully implemented in January.

This document is evolutionary, not revolutionary. It is intended to acknowledge the complexity of teaching," said Mike Wasylenky, principal of Dr. John M. Denison Secondary School and one of the people who helped develop the report card.

After the document was presented, Aurora/King Trustee Susan Plamondon asked who would see

the evaluation after it was completed. "I've heard self-assessment and that the document will have a pocket for additional items... what is the intent of this document? Does it stay with the teacher?"

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Nemni said copies will be provided to the principal, one for the teacher's personal file and one at the board headquarters.

Vaughan Trustee Harvey Nightingale asked for more time to assess the document and that terms referred to in the book be more clearly defined.

The booklet will be discussed further at the board's September standing committee.

TOWN: Graduates are given a second chance at life in new program for school drop-outs

Youths learn to never say never

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Jay Dean found a new way into the world.

The school system, the Markham youth said, didn't work out. But a government-run program, Second Chance, gave Dean, 20, another shot at life this summer.

"This is the route I want to take," he said beside the partially renovated house where nine people from Greater Toronto became the first graduates of Second Chance.

In a backyard ceremony last week, project trainer Scott Davis pronounced them all stronger and better suited to go into society.

It sounded unfair. None of the nine — 12 when the program started — were in prison or in serious trouble with the law when they signed up in May.

But if they weren't really out of society, they weren't really part of it either. They had dropped out of school, felt worthless and weren't

employable.

"I always thought negative," said Ashley Raethorn, 16, of Scarborough. "I just felt like I was a failure and I could do nothing."

But deciding she "didn't want to sit at home all summer and do nothing," Raethorn enrolled in Second Chance, and the program changed her a lot, she said.

"It taught me if I put my mind to something, and if I put my best efforts into it, then I could actually do it."

Some graduates installed the interlocking brick and the wooden deck where Thursday's ceremony was held.

Others, like Thornhill teen Rory DeBora, 17, put up drywall in a room of the Markham Road house the group shares with the Markham African Caribbean Association.

"This was a run-down shack," DeBora said. "You could see the boards and everything."

At first, Raethorn, who wants to try work in the beauty field, thought



PHOTO/CHERYL JOHNSON

Tyler Way displays the furniture he created using twigs from the yard.

Second Chance was going to be a waste of her summer, but it got her doing things.

Working with Ontario Streams, the youths performed useful work along the Rouge River, such as

removing purple loosestrife, a near-indestructible wetland plant.

"I'm glad I could help the environment somehow," Raethorn said.

After Second Chance, run by the Ontario Social Development Council, Adrian Bailey, 19, of Markham, wants a trade. Virginia Thompson, 20, of Scarborough, wants to work with the elderly.

"I'd recommend it to anybody who's been through the school system and realized they just can't sit in a classroom 70 minutes at a time," Dean said.

The program, now interviewing its second set of participants, gets each graduate a job placement afterwards.

Anyone aged 16 to 22 who is unemployed, out of school and interested can call (416) 345-8561 for an interview.

"We're looking for kids that are going to be benefiting most from the experience," said local high school teacher Chris Williams.

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