

## Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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# OPINION

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Dave Teetzel

## Basic concepts of right, wrong must be planted deeper

One of the gripes people have about the media is we tend to focus on horrific stories.

My response is I hope people can learn by reading about the consequences of others' mistakes, especially if they are grim. It's worth depressing a few readers if it means they won't have to read about the same horrible thing again.

That's why I was aghast at what happened outside St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School in Maple last week.

A long-standing feud between students came to a head last Monday, when a 15-year-old was surrounded by a group of eight students. He was knocked to the ground and repeatedly punched and kicked.

Although 100 people saw the incident, nobody did anything until the school administrators noticed and called 911.

The victim suffered a minor concussion, as well as cuts and bruises.

But these kids should know by now the injuries could have been much, much worse.

This newspaper has been running stories about the Jonathan Wamback case — which parallels this incident so closely it's downright terrifying — for nearly two years.

Jonathan Wamback suffered brain damage; he was in a coma for three months; he has spent two of the prime years of his life physically and mentally limited by his injuries. It's unlikely he will fully recover. All because a teenage dispute was settled with violence.

Did we publish every detail of that crime for nothing? Was it an enormous waste of time and effort and ink to cover the resulting trial? It seems that way when a group of teenagers goes out and does the same stupid thing again.

There are those who will suggest the perpetrators of this attack learned plenty from our coverage of the Wamback case, particularly from the last couple of stories, which described how the guilty parties received one-year sentences in youth detention facilities, a year's probation and some community service.

And maybe that's it. Maybe as long as young people are guaranteed light sentences, they figure they're free to indulge in all sorts of criminal behaviour.

That's why the basic concepts of right and wrong have to be planted a little deeper than the intellect, in a place deep enough they can put on the brakes, even when the emotions take over.

I'm not foolish enough to think a newspaper article can do that. I don't think teachers or cops can do it, either. I'm not even sure a parent can do it alone.

But we all have to make a concentrated effort to instill at least that minimum respect for life. If we don't, I'm afraid you'll have to read a lot more horrific stories in your local newspaper.



## EDITORIAL

### Time for residents to make a commitment to recycling programs

Trash is big business and York Region is making it a top priority.

With the implementation of its new three-step waste process, York is committing \$8 million next year to build a state-of-the-art facility to handle and process diverted trash.

Residents, many of whom grumble separating waste is a cumbersome, time-consuming chore, will be asked to boost efforts even further to include compostable items such as egg shells, food scraps and meat.

"Trashers" (people who refuse to separate household waste) argue fast-paced lifestyles make recycling unfeasible. People are already expected to rinse cans, bundle newspapers and flatten cardboard. Many people complain there are so many items still not accepted in the blue box it has become confusing as to what we can and can't recycle.

Well, it's time to stop complaining. Residents have to realize separating trash is a necessary commitment — one we all must make to secure a healthy future for our children.

No matter how difficult and tedious it becomes, diverting trash should be part of our daily regimen, much like washing our hands and brushing our teeth.

York Region is dealing with a double-edged sword when it comes to waste. Residents have said for years they want the Keele Valley landfill site in Maple closed and they don't want trash shipped to an abandoned mine to the north.

So now it's time to put our money where our mouths are.

The region's goal is to divert 50 per cent of its solid waste from landfill, but we have a long way to go.

Today, the region is at a meagre 24 per cent. Long-term, York hopes to achieve a lofty 80-per-cent diversion rate.

The region plans to implement a huge education program to introduce its new three-stream process.

While the three-stream method is less expensive than our current system (a saving of \$9 million a year), it has to be simple and convenient to get people on board.

It's a give-and-take process but one that is anything but a waste.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Walkout gives residents time to assess relocating students

*An open letter to the community of Glad Park Public School in Stouffville.*

In a last-ditch effort to protect your right to be fully informed and consulted, three trustees — me, Nancy Elgie of Georgina and Markham's Susan Lee Pollock — walked out of a York Region District School Board meeting April 9 in order to deprive the board of quorum and preventing it from taking a vote on a decision being considered for your school.

After my motion to delay this decision for a month (so as to include you in the decision-making process) was defeated, it became apparent the board was intent on pushing ahead with accepting staff recommendations to relocate the French immersion program at Dickson Hill Public School to your school before you had been adequately consulted.

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has also passed a resolution requesting full consultation on this matter. As a result of all this, I strenuously urge your community to request, through your school administration, that the board arrange an information evening at your school as soon as possible.

You may also wish to reserve standing at the next board meeting to present your responses to the staff recommendations.

**BOB BURROWS**

*Trustee, East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville*

### Grade 10 test results can only serve to mislead

The publication of 'ranked' lists of schools with 'results' of the province's practice literacy test last fall can only serve to mislead.

These results include those which counted as zero, which was all students who didn't write the test — absentees, deferred new-to-English and learning disabled students and averaged them in!

Add to that the fact that no one knows what constitutes a pass or fail, that many test questions were written in misleading language, that students who wrote too much or too little, even if those answers were 'correct' were marked as failures and that the curriculum is still three years away from matching the tests, and I have to wonder how this \$14-million exercise will assist schools improve literacy.

From now on they will all 'teach to the test' to improve these meaningless scores, but does that address the real literacy issues which go beyond and into the homes, the media habits, the age of technology and the value society places on language and communication studies?

Perhaps the Minister of Education, the premier and some people from the Education Quality and Accountability Office should be chosen at random to see how they fare. Or do we count them as zero for not doing the test?

**S. TURCHET**  
*Unionville*

## LETTERS POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write: Letters to the Editor,  
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## Stouffville Tribune

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