



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Andrew Nayler, 16, and his mother Sheila were frustrated Thursday after trying for two days to sign up for summer classes at Sir William Mulock Secondary School in Newmarket. "There's a lot of angry people here," Mrs. Nayler said.

Summer crush leaves students fuming

Summer enrolment almost double but little increase in teachers

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

Demand for summer school classes has outpaced the number of teachers, leaving frustrated students lining up for spaces in York Region high schools.

Ross Virgo, spokesperson for the York Region District School Board, said the summer registration rush begins as soon as students are warned they may not pass a course.

In 1998, 4,000 students enrolled for summer classes at the region's public high schools. Last year, it was up to 7,000 and it's up significantly this year, Mr. Virgo said.

The number of teachers willing to work during the summer hasn't increased nearly that much.

Graham Rayner, summer school principal at Sir William Mulock Secondary School in Newmarket, said it's a constant challenge finding teachers willing to work in the summer after a long school year.

"They're tired," Mr. Rayner said, adding many teachers use the time to take mandatory professional development courses.

The situation created a tense environment as dozens of parents and students waited inside the cafeteria at Sir William Mulock trying to stay cool — and keep their cool.

It's a scene duplicated at many high schools throughout the region. Summer courses are offered at Richmond Hill, Unionville and

Keswick high schools, along with Markville, Vaughan and Westmount secondary schools.

Sheila Nayler was making her third trip to Sir William Mulock in as many days to help her son, Andrew, register for a Grade 10 math course.

Each time, they left after waiting for hours without answers and without a spot in one of the classes.

Mrs. Nayler said school administrators weren't prepared for the number of students this summer.

"There seems to be a lack of communication," she said. "It's frustrating."

'If my daughter doesn't get this summer course ... she doesn't graduate.'

Mrs. Nayler, a teacher herself, said the provincial government has to accept responsibility for the problem because its new curriculum has proven too difficult for many students. "So many students were unable to pass their courses," Mrs. Nayler said.

While demand for summer classes has increased across the board, Mr. Virgo said math courses have posed the biggest challenge.

"It's mainly attributable to the fact the curriculum is changing," Mr. Virgo said. "There isn't any secret some students are finding the new curriculum more difficult than previous years."

Last week, the board was scrambling to find math teachers willing to forego their summer.

After making a lot of phone calls

and enlisting the services of teachers from neighbouring school boards, Mr. Virgo said every student who registered for a math course this summer would get in.

Mr. Virgo also attributed the increase in summer enrolment to students hoping to improve their grades and those needing courses from the old curriculum, which won't be offered in the fall.

Christine, a parent who did not want her last name used, said she and her daughter spent all day at the school Tuesday trying to register for a Grade 12 English course that won't be offered in the fall.

"If my daughter doesn't get this summer course ... she doesn't graduate," Christine said.

"She can't take it in the fall because it doesn't exist."

Many of the students waiting to be registered missed the June 21 deadline, Mr. Rayner pointed out.

"The nature of summer school is there's a lot of last-minute decisions that are made," Mr. Raynersaid.

He said many students showed up for the first day of class Tuesday hoping to register.

Students who met the June 21 registration deadline were given first priority and school board officials have been doing their best to accommodate everyone, Mr. Rayner said.

But, ultimately, Mr. Rayner admitted, some students will have to wait for the next session later this summer, or even the beginning of the regular school year, to make up needed credits.

The problem is compounded by students who register for classes but don't show up.

Media program lets teenagers express themselves

BY MITCHELL BROWN

Staff Writer

York Region's youth will soon have a new place to express themselves.

The Boys and Girls Club Youth Media Program is looking for a few good writers, photographers and other creative types for a youth-oriented newspaper that, if all goes according to plan, will hit doorsteps next month.

The as-yet-untitled newspaper, which is aimed at readers between ages 12 and 24, is being put together "to celebrate youth", says facilitator Matthew Cloutier.

"The one thing we always hear about in the press is ... no matter if we've done something good, there is something wrong about it," he said. "We want to show that there are more youth doing good things than bad things."

That's not to say the newspaper's sole reason for existing is to give young people a good name. Written by and for youth, its main goal will be "to show that youth have a brain", says the 18-year-old University of Toronto student.

"We don't have an agenda," he said. "Whatever the youth have to say, that's our agenda."

To that end, Mr. Cloutier and editor Stefania Ingrosso have been in touch with young people from all over York Region, asking them point-blank about the issues and stories they would like to see in a newspaper aimed at them.

'We will publish things that are edgy, as long as the article is intelligent.'

The list includes such topics as sexuality, issues surrounding the upcoming World Youth Day, the environment, homelessness, pop culture and media issues, self-esteem and suicide.

It's a heady mix that promises plenty of interesting — if not downright provocative — articles, especially the kind that might not see print in other places. But that's the point.

"We will publish things that are edgy, as long as the article is intelligent," Mr. Cloutier said. "We are dealing with youth and, therefore, their means of expression is different than the adult world. They

may say 'I'm pissed off about ... instead of 'I feel strongly about... and that's acceptable, but we have to make sure it fits (the tone)."

Indeed, speaking the language of young people is one of the goals of the newspaper, according to Miss Ingrosso, who says the paper will strive to represent as many viewpoints as possible.

Anika Khanna, 17, is one of the writers. A Richmond Hill native, her first article is about ethics surrounding Christian missionaries in foreign countries.

"I like to write, but I've never written (for newspapers) before," she said, adding the fact it's a youth paper is important to her.

"It's published by youth for youth and that's a big thing," she said. "It's not going to be where an adult has a youth write about things and then scraps it because he doesn't like the idea."

It's also a great way to get experience and explore her career options.

Miss Ingrosso, a 24-year-old journalism graduate, agrees.

"I'm thinking, where was this five years ago?" she said. "You can't get experience without experience, so this is a great opportunity for me."

Finding common ground for 127,000 readers from urban and rural communities may be difficult, Miss Ingrosso and Mr. Cloutier said, but not impossible. Today's youth have many things in common.


For instance, they are the first generation to grow up surrounded by computer technology, so they're far more comfortable using it than older people. And, thanks to the Internet, they're arguably the most media-savvy generation.

More importantly, Mr. Cloutier and Miss Ingrosso believe their peers are far more accepting of differences than previous generations.

"It doesn't matter to us where you're from or how you were raised; what matters is what you believe right now," Miss Ingrosso said.

The first issue, which is funded by a grant from the Laidlaw Foundation, will appear as an insert in Metroland newspapers across York Region next month.

For information, contact Stefania or Matthew at bgc.yorkregion@socialenterprise.ca



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