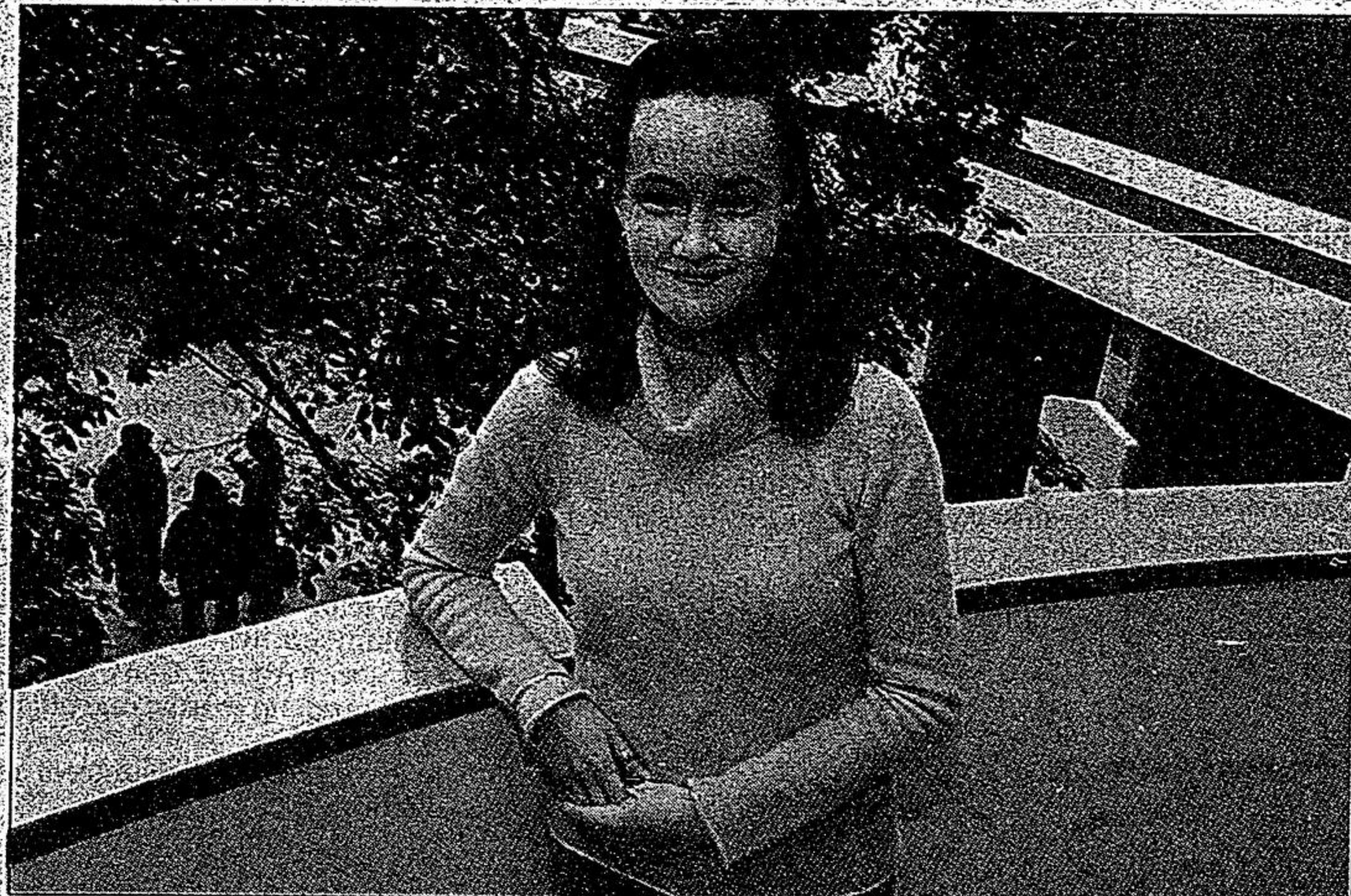


The Economist & Sun/Sun-Tribune

# At the Schools

DECEMBER TEACHER OF THE MONTH



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

April Morris has dreamed of teaching since Grade 1.

## Global experience aide in classroom

*Teacher well prepared for career in Canada*

BY PATRICK MANGION  
Staff Writer

Who better to offer lessons about the world than a well-travelled teacher?

April Morris has been teaching character and geography hand-in-hand to her students at Vaughan Secondary School for more than three years now and she's using funny money to do it.

"Sumo bucks" have been a big hit among her grade 9 and 11 students at the Thornhill high school.

Students can earn the pseudo currency created by Ms Morris by combining the Canadian dollar and Japanese yen, through acts of kindness and success in classroom.

"It buys them things like one day's grace on a homework

assignment or improving their mark on a test. I think the students like it," Ms Morris said.

The idea to create the motivational currency for her students was partly a result of her time spent teaching in Japan from 1996 to 1998.

While the plan was to land a job with a school board closer to home following graduation, the Chatham native said the experience was invaluable.

"It turned out there were no teaching jobs," said Ms Morris, a 1995 graduate of Queen's University's concurrent education program.

She credits teaching in a town far from Tokyo for developing proficiency in Japanese. Although she admits her Japanese writing skills are far inferior to her command of the language.

But Japan was actually Ms Morris' second international teaching job.

Soon after graduation, she

accepted a job in Mexico with the American School of Puerto Vallarta.

"You would teach in the morning and be on the beach by 2:30. Yeah, that was a bummer," she joked of the popular vacation destination.

But looking back fondly on the beginning of her teaching career overseas, Ms Morris said she returned to Canada well prepared for the career she dreamed of since Grade 1.

"It was a big difference when I came back. The kids are brought up different. They have an energy right away here.

But her students might say it's actually Ms Morris whose energy motivates them.

"Ms Morris makes all our lessons come alive," Grade 9 student Shirelle Goodman said in a letter to the York Region Newspaper Group.

"Each lesson is similar to a

See HARD, page 16.



Hailey McInnis

My Grade 9 diary

## It's the most wonderful time of the year

Christmas is definitely my favourite holiday.

It is a happy occasion when we can forget about school and homework and spend time with family and friends.

Well, we can almost forget about homework. I, personally, have four projects due the week we get back, but Christmas is not the day to worry about that.

I'll admit my family was a little late this year putting up the Christmas tree and other decorations around the house, but that doesn't mean we are not in the holiday spirit.

It seems as though everyone is a little late this year.

The malls are becoming packed with last minute shopping and almost everyone I know just put up their Christmas tree last week.

I actually find it more fun to go shopping during the busy time of year because it brings out a great variety of people.

I find amusement in just watching everyone walking around and hopefully having fun at the mall.

I remember when we would put the decorations and the Christmas tree up at the beginning of the month because, in my younger years, I was much more of a Christmas fanatic than I am today.

I think it would be easier to get in the holiday spirit if there was enough snow on the ground to well, enjoy.

When I think Christmas vacation, I think about going tobogganing with my friends, having snowball fights, making

See MERRY, page 16.

### Kid Talk

We asked: What's your favourite bedtime snack?



JORDAN LEWIS, 9

I'd say Halloween candies.



JESSICA NEELY, 9

Milk and chocolate chip cookies.



JOSH BHULAI, 9

Vanilla ice cream with chocolate syrup.



STEPHANIE BURDON, 9

I like warm milk.

# FLYERS

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