

All schools implement provincial curriculum: board

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addition to writing exams in courses like English, history or physics.

While some see this as unfair, Markham High vice principal George Tisgaridis disagrees. "We are a unique school. We're a full-year school that is non-semestered."

Not every course at Markham High requires a written exam, but "every student will be participating in some time of summative evaluation", Mr. Tisgaridis said.

The York Region District School Board expects a student's grade to be a 70/30 split between work done through the term and evaluations

due near the course's end.

"The learning style can be more difficult at Markham because you have to maintain good grades in eight subjects at once," former Markham High student Yvonne Cai (now a Grade 11 student at Milliken) believes.

"However, the curriculum seems to be more difficult at Milliken. This may be biased because Grade 9 is always easy and I was only at Markham District in Grade 9."

No school is easier or harder than another, York Region District School Board spokesperson Lucia Cascioli said.

"Every one of our schools imple-

ment the Ontario curriculum," she said. "Teachers have a variety of ways to assess tools to determine how students do in courses."

Milliken Mills principal Kadri Mereweather strongly supports the leeway teachers are given in picking their own course materials.

"They can choose something reflective of the community, of its cultures and religions," she said, referring to Milliken's diverse population.

She believes since teachers can choose their class assignments, the assignments can be more relevant to the students than standardized ones.

The York Catholic District School Board is much of the same story. Course and evaluation outlines are determined through meetings of school department heads, communications officer Joann MacDonald said, adding "teachers provide different nuances to the course."

Since the curriculum at York Region schools is the same, the only perceived variations come in teachers' interpretation of the expectations.

Christy Kissoore, a Grade 11 Markville Secondary School student, doesn't believe in the concept of easy schools.

"That's what it looks like, but in

reality, it has nothing to do with schools, it has to do with individual teachers," she said.

"Marking is subjective to a certain extent. I might have an easy teacher, but not an easy school."

Theories about attending certain schools to get higher grades with less effort are dodgy, but interesting. The topic certainly demands in-depth study to discover if there is any truth to the speculation. Regardless, the wheels of the machine keep turning as students continue their education.

Vicky Tam is a student at Milliken Mills High School.

Print offers distinct advantages over cathode-ray cousins

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house call on the company's behalf.

Taking the if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em attitude, the company created Britannica.com, offering libraries and individual subscribers online access to its holdings for a fee while still selling a reduced number of print sets.

It's a tactic that has also been adopted by Scholastic, which bought the Grolier company a few years ago.

"The prints sales continue," said Wendy Graham, director of Scholastic's education division in Markham.

"The people who have been in this business a lot longer than me, they tell me that even when a board

or library buys the online database, they often buy the books every few years as well."

Indeed, before we close the book on these leatherbound lifesavers, there are signs they're not ready to give up the fight yet.

At Aurora's Northern Lights Public School, for example, a brand new set of World Books sits in the school's library, a curious acquisition in a school designed to be a high-tech laboratory for studying how technology can be best used to teach students.

"We had a dialogue about this and we decided some people need a paper-based product," principal Jim Forbes said.

"You have to have a variety of resources to appeal to a variety of

learning styles. There are still a lot of people who find information on a screen difficult to translate in a meaningful way."

Meanwhile, at the Richmond Hill Public Library's main branch, a 1991 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica is being removed to make way for an updated print set and computers allowing patrons to access the online version.

"We find some of our users prefer the print," said Mary Jane Celsie, director of service development at the library. "They do different things for people. The print (version) provides a nice introduction and a hint of where else to go."

Plus, Megan Wallar added, print versions have distinct advantages over their cathode-ray cousins.

"The thing about research on the web is the computer is not portable," the Newmarket mother of three said.

"You can take an encyclopedia to the bedroom or the kitchen table. I haven't been happy about it, but they've even taken them to school."

While she says her three children, aged 12, 15 and 16, are computer-literate and use a lot of online research in their studies, she figures the family turns to its World Book set at least once a week.

"The other thing I like is they're a safe form of research," she added.

"On the web, your kids may have good intentions, but they might stumble across something they're not supposed to see."

Indeed, a certain air of authori-

tativeness has always been one of the encyclopedia's biggest selling points and it's one that may yet prove useful in its battle against the Internet, an information source that's free but also infamous for allowing biased, false or pornographic material to fall into young hands.

Still, it remains to be seen if that will be enough to keep the books alive in an age where information dates quickly and a good set of encyclopedias can become obsolete in the blink of an eye.

"I was out in the garage the other day and the tears were just flowing," Ms. Gilmer said, referring to her old set. "I'm a booklover, obviously, and I hate to destroy a book, but what am I going to do with them?"

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