



SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION
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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Community

B E G I N S H E R E

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Basing Post-Secondary Choices on Passion

Just as Bob Dylan sang, *The times, they are a changing*.

And with them, so is the way we look at post-secondary education and life after high school.

Over the next few months, many of our Gr. 11 and 12 students will be making major decisions – decisions that will have major impact on their post-high school lives. We know stress runs high around this time of year, and we're also aware how many questions run through students' minds.

What do I want to do with my life?

Should I go to school –and if so, what school?

What classes should I take? Do I have the credits I need to register?

And – perhaps most commonly – *What if I don't know what I want to do with my life?*

Unfortunately, we don't have all the answers – and we know our students and parents don't either.

But we can help alleviate some of the pressure.

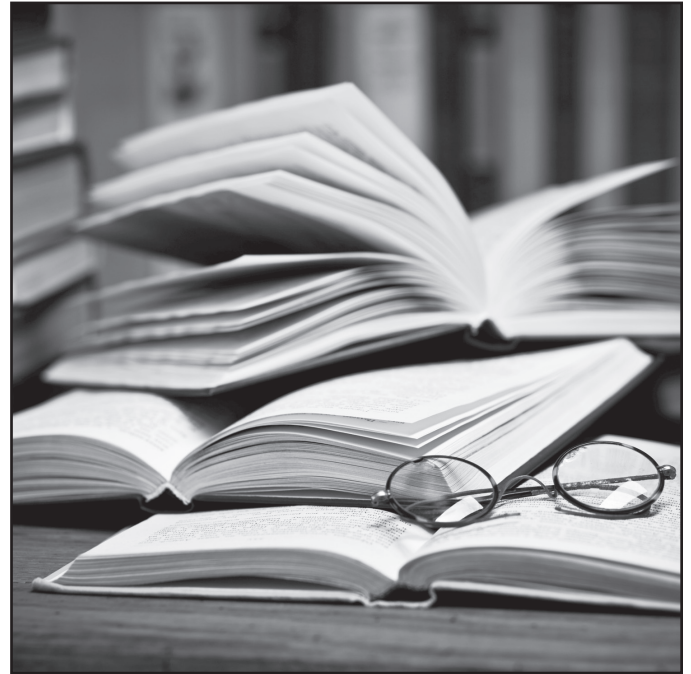
Recently, members of the student services teams at Maples, West Kildonan and Garden City Collegiates began focusing more effort than ever before on preparing students for life after high school – and that means

helping students realize they don't have to make all the decisions right now.

"If you were to interview two or three people in their 40's, they've probably been in two or three different directions by this point," says Tom Clasper, one of the counsellors in West Kildonan Collegiate's Student Services Centre who every day helps students approach post-secondary experiences with ease and a bit more clarity than traditional methods dictated.

"A lot of students aren't ready to make their major life decision right now," Clasper says. "My big push is to help students and parents realize that the best thing to do after high school is get experience – whether that is experience in school or in life or in travelling. Everything we do helps us learn skills and lessons that help us later in life. We just need to follow our passions."

At West Kildonan, Clasper and his colleagues visit with every Gr. 11 classroom, help the students explore their interests and set up trips to Red River College, University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba for those with interest. They also facilitate an internship program with each school



and some of the private, specialized schools that sees students spend a week shadowing students and meeting with professors and instructors.

The extra effort, Clasper says, alleviates some stress for students and can help clarify direction for those on the cusp.

It also helps those without any clear direction eliminate options and explore more about who they are and where their passions lay.

"A lot of the kids are nervous and many of them are asking themselves *Am I doing the right thing?*," Clasper says. "They all have this idea that if they go to university for two years and don't like it they've wasted money. They don't see that they've learned some things and picked up skills they can use. It's really hard on kids who know

they should be going somewhere, but aren't sure where in life that is."

In each of the SOSD high schools, counsellors are available to talk students through these issues and also to help guide them to whatever path turns out to be the right fit.

And school isn't always the right option.

For some students, travelling or working to gain life skills while they mature and figure things out is simply the better course of action.

"It's all learning, no matter where you're doing it," Clasper says, noting part of his job is helping parents be open to the fact that the world is a much different place right now than it was even 10 years ago.

"There are so many opportunities out there right now to go in so many directions," he says. "Whatever direction someone is going, it's probably not the direction they will end up in 20 years from now. But we can all work to find that out together."

By working together, Clasper says, parents, students and teachers can find a balance of what is important to students, what they are passionate about and what they are good at.

"Kids have to try things on," he says. "You don't go into a store and buy the first shirt you see. You try things on until you find something that feels good. In terms of careers, they have to go experience some things and find where their passions are."



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Malissa Magorel
Garden City
Collegiate, 2001

Every month, this section will bring you stories of success – straight from the mouths of those who have succeeded in Seven Oaks School Division as students, parents or educators. This month we asked Garden City Collegiate graduate Malissa Magorel – now an Employment Preparation Officer at the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities – to tell us about her experiences with charting her post-secondary territory.

At seventeen, the mere mention of the word "University" terrified me. I was very comfortable in my high school and did not want to leave it, let alone decide on a career path that, at the time, I thought would be a choice I'd have to live with for the rest of my life. The guidance counsellors did their best to convince me otherwise; booking a speaker from each of the major universities to help me decide which institution I should devote the next several years of my life to.

Being the editor of my high school newspaper and producing 90% in virtually all high school English courses, I decided to enrol at the University of Winnipeg, with the intention of completing the Creative Communications combined Degree/Diploma program offered through

the University and Red River College. A month into my University career I earned my first C.

I was shocked; needless to say I hadn't received anything lower than an A on an English paper in...well, ever. What am I going to do now? I thought. After two failed attempts on a successful admission into Red River College's Creative Communications program, I changed my focus to Psychology. Why? I got an A in my Introduction to Psychology course.

Looking back I'm not surprised I ended up an Honours Psychology graduate. In high school, a mandatory visit to the guidance office to complete a career and aptitude assessment revealed a number of social service related occupations on my career path printout. I didn't realize it at the time but coming across it at the end of my third year of University made me realize that I'd somehow found myself on the right path after all.

Ironically, I found myself providing a similar service to what my guidance counsellors provided me in my professional career: assisting and supporting high school students as they experience the transition from high school to university.

Today, I provide assistance to individuals with disabilities identifying their own employment and educational goals. Go figure.

Who knows where I'll end up ten, even twenty years from now but I'm happy with the choices I've made so far and look forward to the future.

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