



SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION

community begins here

Community

B E G I N S H E R E

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School just isn't what it used to be... and that's a good thing!

In the Seven Oaks School Division, teachers don't just teach. They inspire. They involve. They get students excited about what they're learning so that they want to learn more.

That's the challenge faced by every teacher, every day. Here's how three of the teachers in the Seven Oaks School Division's High Schools are meeting that challenge.

Note-Worthy Choral Programming

In her six years at Maples Collegiate, Choir Instructor Dorothy Dyck has seen the school's program grow immensely.

"When I started there was one concert choir, which grew to include about 75 students by the end of the first year," Dyck recalls. "There was also one vocal jazz group."

That's a far cry from today's choir programming where over 150 students take part in six different choir groups that range from a Grade 9 concert choir to the Chamber Choir formed last year. So where does that growth come from?

"Word of mouth, and through seeing the choirs perform," explains Dyck. "Often after a concert a few people will ask about joining choir. Now that the program has grown so large, I do very little recruiting. The program sort of feeds itself."

Of course, it also helps that the students have an instructor who's so enthusiastic about the programs.

"I think my own excitement and energy keeps them interested. The challenge of new music, and often unusual or difficult music keeps them excited about the next level."

"I also like to add unusual elements to the pieces. For example, last year the senior choir did a Bach piece involving black lights and gloves and masks. This year we did a very unusual modern piece that called for lots of vocalizing that wasn't exactly....

singing. It was more like using chanting, repetitive sounds and loud calling, as well as choreography. It was challenging and fun to do something off the mainstream."

While Dyck often works together with the band and theatre instructors on numerous projects - most notably the school's annual musicals - her most important collaborators in choir are without a doubt the students themselves.

"Each grade has input and decision making into what we sing, and how music is presented. At the grade 9 and 10 levels the students' input into repertoire is guided. They soon learn to trust my choices, and to genuinely enjoy a far wider range of music than if they were always allowed to choose it. I will also frequently allow them to vote on similar styles of music, and choose the one they like."

And what does Ms. Dyck hope the students ultimately gain from their choral experience?

"What every music teacher wants: that students have a life-long love of music. I also want them to have security and assurance in their own voices. I want them to be able to stand tall, breathe deeply, look people in the eyes, and have their voices heard."

"I hope they take away a conviction that the world needs music. Now more than ever."



Dorothy Dyck is definitely a music teacher who loves her work.

Experiencing "Hire" Education

We all know a good education leads to a good job... but a good job also leads to a good education.

Just ask Lina La Rosa, who started the Business Internship Program at Garden City Collegiate six years ago.

"There was a work experience program that existed previously, but it was just work experience. It didn't have any classroom work," explains La Rosa. "It was also only offered to certain students who needed to earn extra credits."

Under La Rosa's leadership, the program is now offered to any students who are interested in gaining some practical experience - as well as extra credits to go toward college and university. Through Business Internship, students get actual on-the-job experience over the course of twelve weeks - three hours a day, four days a week.

"It gives the students the opportunity to learn in a different way, in a different environment," says La Rosa. "It also helps make the transition from the school environment to the work environment a little easier for them."

"The first month is spent in the classroom where we do work-readiness activities such as resume preparation and practicing interview skills. We also invite in a number of guest speakers to speak on such things as employment standards, work and health safety, and human rights."

"We've also had Youth Employment Service speakers who help us out a lot. They actually take students to their offices and do mock interviews there."

Once they've got the basics down, La Rosa places each student with one of the program's numerous business partners where they get to learn while on the job. And that placement can be virtually anywhere, from banks or museums to law firms and retail.

"I try to place students in work areas that

interest them," says La Rosa. "When I first meet them, I ask them to give me a little background into what their interests are, what business skills they would like to gain."

"The only areas I've had difficulty in placing students is with law enforcement and emergency services because they need specialized training first and unfortunately there isn't time for that."

And while the students are hard at work, so is La Rosa. She's either paying visits to each job site to make sure things are going smoothly, or she's contacting new places about taking part in the internship program. It keeps her busy, but she wouldn't have it any other way.



Lina La Rosa in a rare moment of standing still.

"This is something I've been so happy to be involved with because the students really see the value of this. It's not like other school subjects. They get to go out in the workplace, and experience a different kind of learning."

"This is what keeps me coming back, because I really enjoy what I'm doing."

Global Interest

At West Kildonan Collegiate, social studies aren't all learned in the classroom; they're experienced in the world around us.

Around two years ago, Tom Schmidt - a Social Studies teacher at West Kildonan - began exploring new ways to broaden his students' worldviews.

"I was teaching geography and I just felt like the textbooks weren't really cutting it," recalls Schmidt. "Another instructor named Richard Harbeck was working on some really innovative ideas, and he inspired me to do the same for my students."

"We look for ways to explore three main themes: environmental/sustainable development, human rights and culture."

One of the projects the students got involved with was a "Twinning Project" done in conjunction with a school in the Netherlands.

"Each of our students paired up with a student from the class in Holland by chats and e-mail," explains Schmidt. "They chose

a topic about culture or geography. They then developed slide shows about their topic. The shows included teen life, families, holidays, clothing, communities, sites in the city, arts, food, etc."

"Slide shows were posted on a joint web site, and after the shows were done, chats took place so we could compare ourselves to each other and make observations about the students' work."

Another of the students' projects was featured on CKY News: the Billy Bishop Quilt.

"Last year we created a virtual museum piece on the Billy Bishop Quilt which is currently being used by the Virtual Museum of Canada," says Schmidt. "The quilt has over 1,000 signatures of various people on it and was sold by Billy Bishop's wife at a charity fundraiser."

"Students had to research the names on the quilt, as well the history of the quilt itself. Then they had to create a website presentation based on that research."

"It was a great way to develop students' research skills as well as their technological skills. It gave them a real opportunity to work on a project with real historical and national significance."

Projects, games and the globe-spanning communications capabilities all help to bring lessons out of the classroom and put them into a real-world context - which is exactly what Schmidt wants for his students.

"I want students to realize there's so much more to the world than what's in the text books. The projects we do help them to really see things, to experience them. It gives the students a new way to look at the world."

In the Seven Oaks School Division, teachers may have different approaches, but they all want the same thing for their students: to instill a life long love of learning that will ultimately make them successful, responsible leaders. For more information on the programming at each school, visit www.7oaks.org, find the school directory and then click on the school you want more info on.



Tom Schmidt with his Eno internet class - the net course about the environment that West Kildonan does with over 100 schools from around the world.

Visit our website at www.7oaks.org

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