

School a welcomed addition

Parents in Brampton know many of the secondary schools in this city. They are familiar with their own local high school and they read about public and catholic secondary schools in the sports pages of the Guardian or experience great secondary school theatrical or musical productions. Few know about a new school in Brampton, Holy Name of Mary Secondary School and fewer still know that it is Brampton's and Peel's only publicly funded, open access, Catholic girls secondary school.

Brampton's new arrival, Holy Name of Mary Secondary School, started in 2008. Originally Holy Name of Mary was a private girl's school in Mississauga started by the Felician sisters in 1964. The Felicians and Holy Name became a partner with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board as a fully funded secondary school in 1987. In 2007, the Felicians dissolved the partnership with Dufferin-Peel and the board filled the gap by creating Holy Name of Mary Secondary School in Brampton at Glenvale Boulevard at Central Park Drive.

Holy Name is a regional school for girls and transportation is arranged by parents through a bus company. Although capped at 840, this year Holy Name has 705 girls enrolled in grades 9 to 12. The school has an academic program preparing girls for college and/or university.

On the first go around information night, Holy Name of Mary staff welcomed 600 people to hear what the school offered. Some parents seem more than interested in a publicly funded open access single gender girl's school.

The discussion about single gender schools is not dull. There are some people who have difficulty with single gender schools and usually that comes through a personal encounter with an individual school. Some have difficulty with single gender schools because they believe that the interaction between adolescent girls and boys is important in the development of social relationships. Others believe, straight out, that it is a waste of educational and financial resources.

On the other hand, there are parents

who believe that single gender schools are important because they provide an opportunity for girls and boys to learn differently, away from the social pressures that come in a dual gender school.

They point to increased academic performance for girls in a milieu that allows them to excel away from competition with boys. Parents and others, who support single gender girls' schools, say that having female role models and the confidence girls build up from assuming leadership roles in an all girls school is important to being confident in the world beyond the classroom. Administrators of single gender schools,

like Holy Name of Mary, are struck by the commitment of parents to the school program and curriculum.

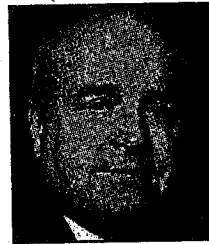
They point out that discipline problems are minor because the girls and their families seem to understand that school life is paramount.

While the discussion about single gender schools may go on forever, single gender schools represent parent desire to have their children educated in a format that they believe serves them and their children best. After all, parents are the first educators and are respon-

sible for the academic, social, cultural, religious and philosophical growth of their child. In our world where the pressure to conform to a uniform organized singular school is constantly before us a model for all, it is refreshing to see that some parents and school boards believe that diversity of educational models is important. Not everyone learns in the same way and not everyone learns well in the traditional school model.

In many school boards across Ontario, special schools or alternative education models are especially set up to recognize and to treat the learner as the most important individual in school, not the curriculum, not the teacher. At Holy Name of Mary, the Dufferin-Peel CDSB has recognized that a single gender school can go a long way to treating the learner as the most significant person in that school and for that the Brampton community should enthusiastically welcome this new school.

THE SCENE



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