

Students face new challenges, plan for life after high school

By Wanda McConnell
Herald Writer

Mark Dowson just wants to finish high school.

He's 20 and because of his past habit of skipping classes, he's still a student at Miles Macdonell Collegiate. This year though, is different, he says. There's light at the end of the tunnel.

That's because he's in the school's Challenge Tomorrow program. He never got into "the school mode," as he puts it, until he signed on to the Grade 12 program, offered for the first time this year at Miles Mac.

"It's more one-on-one and we get to know everyone and the teachers and what they want," he explains. "It's made it more fun."

Forty Grade 12 students are in Challenge Tomorrow. For half a day the closely-knit group take aca-

demics from the two teachers who are most involved in the program, Darlene Lindsay and Irene Bilan.

Communication skills

Afternoons are spent planning for life beyond high school: exploring careers through volunteer work, job shadowing and work placements and learning what training is needed; analyzing their own strengths and potential; improving communication skills and becoming entrepreneurs.

The students in the program run the gamut - from those at risk of dropping out to honors students, some of whom tutor their peers in the program.

Milissa Sine was a good student but school never really excited her until now. She's looking forward to developing her entrepreneurial skills through the program because

someday she hopes to run her own business.

Michelle Crich meanwhile, is discovering skills she didn't know she had. Her strong leadership abilities surfaced when through the program she was selected to participate in a leadership conference sponsored by the Manitoba Co-operative Council.

She impressed the organizers so much she's been invited back to be a leader next year.

Prepare today for tomorrow

The program was designed in response to what industry is telling schools, says Bilan. "We're trying to prepare them for the kind of economy that's out there," she said, adding graduates have to "market" themselves in a whole new way.

The work experience will also help students make better decisions

about post-secondary training - before they invest thousands of dollars and several years in that training.

Bilan and Lindsay have the daunting task of finding companies in the community which are willing to allow their students to job shadow or get work experience.

Students have identified 47 career areas they want to explore.

"We'll need the co-operation of the community," Lindsay says.

Employers willing to work with the Challenge Tomorrow students should call Miles Macdonell Collegiate.

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