

Transition School Established in Maidstone

September 12, 2011

The Northwest School Division has established a third Transition School in Maidstone to serve the needs of students in the southern portion of the Division.

“The need for something to be put into place was very evident,” said Maidstone Principal Brennan Becotte. “We were losing three to five students each year, and last year we noticed that a lot of students showed up who needed not just credits but an alternate environment and form of delivery for those credits. The transition programmes in Meadow Lake and Turtleford have excellent records, and after looking at those models I put in a proposal last January to the Northwest School Division for a Transition School here in town. The board was supportive and said yes, and here we are.”

Director of Education Duane Hauk affirmed Becotte’s comments: “The service models of the Transition School in the north and central area have been very successful and we realized we needed a model like that in the southern part of our division and the board fully supported that concept.”

There are currently 10 students in grades 10, 11 and 12 from the southern portion of the division enrolled in the program. School runs from 10:00AM -2:00PM for core subjects, and from 9:00-10:00AM and 2:00-3:00PM for electives.

“We’re basing our program on the best practices of Transition Place in Turtleford and the Transition Place Education Centre in Meadow Lake,” said Principal Becotte. “The difference from the other two Transition Schools currently is that we are in-house, whereas the other two schools have their own facilities. The Board has done an excellent job outfitting the classroom. They’ve installed a kitchen, fridge, stove, and cupboards, revamping the room to make it, in effect, a stand-alone school within a school. All the students will have a wireless laptop. Our teacher, Leah Huff, is being mentored by Fred Helgeton of the Turtleford Transition School.”

“Fred has just been wonderful,” said Huff. “He’s been incredibly helpful. If I have any questions, I just call him up, and if I need resources I go see him. He helps me with everything –it’s just so nice.”

“It is, in part, a credit recovery program: kids who need to can both work and go to school. We expect that once a student has set up their schedule that they will stick to it. The program is very flexible and students can work at the pace they set,” said Becotte.

“Our programmes are self-paced,” said Huff. “A student starts with a couple of courses, they work through them and then they move on to others. If they want to put in the time, they can get their credits very quickly. Each student has his or her own schedule. Some come everyday and some come part-time as they have jobs they’re working around.”

“The program means that I can graduate on time,” student Shaylene Oxby succinctly noted. “It means that we can work faster and get credits when we need to. When I enrolled I found that I could graduate this year. I’m very excited and happy about that.”

“Our traditional school system is designed to serve the needs of most children, but there’s another group of kids and it really doesn’t work for them,” said Becotte. “Our motto is ‘we’re here to help’ and it’s all up to the kids – we’re here for them.”

“The program lets us work independently,” said student Shelby Huxley. “It fits students who don’t fit. You get away from the class drama and all the other stuff going around. It gives a student a chance to focus better, and work at their own pace.”