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UNDER ONE ROOF IN CANADA

ETOBICOKE, CANADA.—Canadian educators call it a "composite school," by which they mean the combining of vocational and academic training under one roof. On either side of the border, the concept can start an argument whenever two or more vocational-technical educators get together.

In 1966, the New York City Board of Education ruled that separate vocational and technical schools were "out" and that comprehensive schools, combining academic with vocational and technical courses, were "in." This spring the board reversed its position, and the old controversy flared anew.

The New York superintendent of schools and the Board of Education, while committed to comprehensive schools in theory, have declared that the closing of separate vocational and technical schools is just not economically feasible.

Critics of the "separate-schools" policy charge that discrimination is at the heart of the New York decision. The city's trade schools enroll a majority of ethnic-group children. Opponents argue that this doesn't give such children a proper chance at a richer academic diet. Separate vocational schools are too often thought of as second rate and have long been known informally as the dumping ground for "difficult" students.

It is quite true that the boy or girl who is academically deficient, socially inept, rebellious, or fractious is frequently counseled out of an academic program into a vocational one.

SUITABILITY ARGUED

But vocational educators insist that such students are even less suited to learning a skill—combining scholarship with manual dexterity—than they are to following a less-demanding program stressing academics.

While New York argues, the Borough of Etobicoke, just west of Toronto, has taken composite schools in its stride. Two special vocational schools continue in operation. But these are for boys and girls of limited ability who need to learn basic care of themselves as well as how to hold down an unskilled or semiskilled job.

Almost all the Etobicoke Borough high schools combine an arts and science program with either business, or commerce and technology, or both. Not all of the high schools teach all the various skills and subjects, and only five carry a strong technical program. The policy, though, is to house teaching of the separate academic disciplines and manual skills under one roof, and to give each student the same options, electives, pride in scholarship and school, and opportunity for free choice of program.

Etobicoke is in an area of exciting growth. In 1928, the township had one high school. Today the borough has 17—most of which are helping to provide the skilled workers needed by area industries. Laboratory technicians are needed, as are men in the construction trades. Girls with secretarial and office skills can be employed by the scores of businesses moving into this Toronto suburb.

Recently I visited Martingrove Collegiate Institute, for grades 9–13. Martingrove opened its doors in December, 1966, and is already building an addition. When completed, the school will have cost more than $5 million.

Martingrove conducts two curriculums: arts and science, and science and technology. About 60 percent of the students are enrolled in the technical program; the others are enrolled in the more academic arts and science curriculum.

FOLLOW-UP SOUGHT

Martingrove's principal, James M. Day is very much in favor of composite schools.

"The academic work which is common to both programs is not divided up," he explained. "If we were to split them into different classes, we must make differing standards, and this is unfair."

Students who elect arts and science are university bound and must complete a five-year program to qualify. Boys and girls who major in science and technology may opt for a four-year terminal program or a five-year university-bound curriculum. And students may change their courses if they decide either to complete high school at Grade 12 instead of Grade 13 or vice versa.

When Mr. Day and I visited the microbiology laboratory we got into conversation with a 10th grader.