

Acces centre

Luc Massé took a look at life

Luc Massé was fed up with working for minimum wage when he sat down to reflect upon what life could offer him.

"I'd done a bit of everything. I'd worked in a mill and in a garage as an auto mechanic. Since I never finished high school, my possibilities were limited. I went to the unemployment insurance office to explain my situation. After that, I received a call from the Access Centre," says the 24-year-old native of Saint-Arthur, near Campbellton.

Massé says contacting staff at the Access Centre was very helpful to him. "It changed my life completely. They told me what I had to do to head in the right direction."

Before choosing a specific career path, he had to finish high school, which he did by taking the academic upgrading program at the Campbellton community college. By the time he finished high school, he decided to be an electrician. Massé is enrolled in the electrical training program at the New Brunswick Community College in Edmundston. "I like electrical, because there's no routine. I like the travelling, and no two jobs are alike. There's always something new," he says.

Coming into contact with the Access Centre, going back to school and choosing a career changed him profoundly. "Luc used to be very self-conscious. He often went no further than from his bedroom to the television," says a family member.

At the Edmundston community college, Massé ran for class president, something unimaginable to him a few years ago. "I never would have dared do that in grade school," he says.

The province's 11 access centres were set up in 1989 to help young people, between the ages of 15 and 24, having trouble making the transition from school to work, sometimes collecting unemployment insurance along the way. The centres have helped over 17,000 young people find a new direction in life.

"For some people, finding a new direction means going back to school. But some Access Centre clients have enough education to meet the needs of the labor market. What they lack are the skills that will help them find a job," explains Lucie Duchesne, a counsellor at the Campbellton Access Centre.

The centres have entered into a partnership with community agencies and provincial departments to help young people overcome personal and family problems that prevent them from achieving their objectives. "The partnership with parents is essential to us," says Mark Palmer, co-ordinator of the Saint John Access Centre. "Obviously, it can take time to achieve the anticipated results."

"Nothing happens by magic," says Ed Nowlan, a counsellor at the Chatham Access Centre. "If young people come here determined to do whatever it takes and willing to devote their time,

whether it's two weeks or two years, they'll get good results in the end."

Duchesne of Campbellton concurs. "A number of young people have the right job qualifications but don't know where to look. Others have the tendency to look for a job rather than offer their services. Some of our clients don't know how to build themselves up in an interview. Some young people don't know how to look for a job or how to write a résumé. We teach them how to do these things."

School dropouts are invited to take a series of aptitude tests at the Access Centre. The tests are analyzed by counsellors, who try to steer clients towards an area they are interested in.

For more information, call the nearest Access Centre or dial toll-free 1-800-561-1524.



Luc Massé is determined to better himself.

Youth Strategy helps students stay in school

Students leave school before graduation for a variety of reasons. The reasons for dropping out of school are as varied as the students themselves, since each individual and situation is unique. Some students leave because they are attracted by the immediate rewards of the workplace. Others may be frustrated by a curriculum they perceive to be irrelevant and a waste of time. Still others feel they do not belong in school and believe their teachers and peers do not value them. Some students experience all of these feelings; others may be struggling with very different difficulties, such as unplanned pregnancy, substance abuse or disorganized families.

Since 1988, the Canada/New Brunswick Youth Strategy agreement has been providing programs to help students stay in school. More recently, in 1990, a Stay-In-School initiative was introduced in the province. As a result of these two agreements, terms such as WOW, Start, and SIS have become part of the vocabulary of some students, parents, and teachers. These terms refer to programs funded through the YS agreement and SIS initiatives. "Although programs may

have the same title, they vary from school to school and from one community to the next in order to adapt to local situations and individual student needs," says Glenda Plummer, of the New Brunswick Department and Education.

YS/SIS programs provide something different from the traditional classroom setting. Students may have work experiences, go on field trips, or do community service. Students in other classes may also have these experiences, but YS/SIS programs generally are distinguished by lower student/teacher ratios allowing for more individualized instruction and closer ties between students and teachers.

Students thinking about leaving school may not need a change of program but they often benefit from interactions with a significant adult. This person may be a family member, teacher or someone from the community. Today, in a number of New Brunswick junior and senior high schools, intervention workers hired through YS/SIS are the significant adults in the lives of some students. With the support of intervention workers, students are managing the demands of regular school attendance. Inter-

vention workers help students with goal setting, study skills and effective communication. They work with parents, teachers and community agencies in support of the students they mentor and tutor.

During the past summer, more than 300 junior high students around the province were selected by their school districts for special summer enhancement programs supported through YS. The students participated in a variety of activities the development of academic and social skills. In addition to improving in the areas of language arts and math, students were involved in hiking, fishing, swimming and craft-making. They learned while having fun. As one student described it, "I wish there was a summer school all year."

A small group of students discussed their experience with a YS program recently. "If we didn't understand, she'd take us individually and show us how to do it. I think that's why we did so well last year. We knew there was someone who would help us."

For further information, contact a school principal in your area.

Co-op education gaining momentum across Canada

A system of combining school and work has become the fastest-growing education program in Canada with more than 170,000 students participating last year.

The system requires students to spend a portion of their time at a job and the balance in school. The time spent on the job contributes to the credits the student earns.

Initially, co-op education was created for university students enabling them to spend four months in class and four months on the job gaining practical experience. Employers

pay the university students a salary, helping them finance their education while gaining valuable on-the-job experience.

Recently, the program moved to high schools where the emphasis of assignments is to get work experience rather than to assist in careers already chosen.

Information is available in your province from the Canada Employment Centre or write:

The National Co-operative Education Centre
295 Fennell Ave. West
Hamilton, Ont.
L9C 5R7
Tel.: (416) 575-2351