

# High schools help students make career decisions

by Heidi Riley

YOUTH CAREER DECISIONS

High schools offer a number of ways for students to make decisions about their future. One way to get more information is through **Post-Secondary Day**. In November, representatives from universities, colleges and other organizations visit schools to talk to students.

“Having all these people under one roof gives students a snapshot of opportunities after high school,” says **Kent Avery**, Cooperative Education Coordinator at **Charlottetown Rural High School**. “It also lets teachers learn more about career choices so they can help students sort through the information.”

## Resources for exploring careers

“Our **Career Centre** has a library of publications from Service Canada, the sector councils, and other organizations,” says Kent. “We also have catalogues from post-secondary institutions from Atlantic Canada and beyond. Our counsellors are available to help with the steps needed to enter post-secondary education.”

“This year, all grade 12 students at Charlottetown Rural have been trained to use the Career Cruising software program. It has information about every post-secondary institution in Canada. Students can list their interests and skills and receive a list of 40 careers suited to them, along with the educational programs needed to get there.”

“**Test Drive** is a new program at Charlottetown Rural this year. For the first time, students have the chance to follow people on the job to see what it is really like to work in that career. Students have spent time with radiologists, RCMP and police officers and PEI Department of Forestry workers, to name a few. Our school is very excited about offering even more job shadowing experiences in the near future.”



Kent Avery, Cooperative Education Coordinator at Charlottetown Rural High School, looks through some of the resources available for students and parents at the Career Centre at Student Services.

# Parents and teachers play a role in students' career decisions

by Stella Shepard

**Susan and Preston Conohan** of Cardigan have three daughters in the education system. Their oldest daughter is in her first year of a university science program off-Island. Choosing a field of post-secondary study without sufficient research and information has been a costly learning curve for them. Half-way through her first year, their daughter changed her mind about continuing in a university science program. She has decided to take a diploma program instead.



Susan Conohan

“My daughter was influenced by teachers she admired and respected,” says Susan. “These teachers encouraged her, emphasized her strengths, and believed in her vision of a career in animal science. The missing link was there was no guidance in place to consider the first steps needed for the plan to begin. There was no help to research the program and the courses involved. She could have taken such steps as talking to a faculty member, to a student in the program, and most importantly, to someone who is now working in the career.”

## The teachers' role

“The career information students receive from teachers and other school staff can be invaluable,” says Susan. “Young people often look to teachers as role models or as mentors. They consider them to be an important source of information and influence. As an educator, I know the role a teacher plays in providing students with the tools to build knowledge and skills and also to make informed decisions regarding their future education.”

“What seems to be lacking is the guidance to begin a well thought-out career and education plan that each student can follow when they leave high school.”

## Research can help make a career decision

“Talking to people in the workforce and to university and college graduates and faculty would give young people information to make better decisions. The literature students receive from colleges and universities is not sufficient alone to make such an important choice when deciding where and what to study.”

## The parents' role

“I had always believed that students should go on to post-secondary education immediately after high school. But after I was involved in a research project which talked to youth about their education experiences after high school, I began to rethink my previous beliefs. When my own daughter graduated from high school, I suggested that she take the time to consider her options, even if it meant delaying university. However, she did not take my advice, because she felt pressure from society to get her education right away.”

“Now, with our second oldest daughter in grade 11, conversations about her dreams have begun. She has definite interests, but she has no specific career or education plan in mind. Right now she is exploring a variety of careers and gathering information.”

“My husband and I have a role to play by supporting of our children's plans. Yet we need to encourage them to research and discuss possible options to allow them to make decisions which can help plan a foundation they can build on.”

# Post Secondary Day was a hit

by Patricia Roy

**Noelle Smith** is a 17-year-old Grade 12 student at Westisle Composite High School. “There were many universities and exhibitors I had never seen before,” says Noelle.

She says the exhibitors provided information on many career options for those who are still undecided about their future.

“Help is available to students on an on-going basis,” says Noelle. “Students can speak to School Counsellors to help them choose a career that suits them. We also have access to resource material from universities and colleges, post-secondary application forms, scholarships and student loan applications. As well, many universities give individual presentations to Grade 12 classes throughout the year.”



Noelle Smith

## Students get help with career choices

“We also have a **Career Futures** class in our school. And of course there are many websites to help students make career choices. Our school is very involved in the trades as well and we have won several awards through provincial trades competitions. If I could give advice to students, it would be to really start thinking about a career early.”

“I have known I've wanted to be a **Psychologist** since I was 10,” she says. “Once I entered high school and was able to learn more about the career, I absolutely fell in love with the idea. If there is something that you enjoy learning about, that is what you should choose as a career. Your career should be about what you enjoy doing and never just about how much money you can make.”

Noelle has already been accepted to the **University of Prince Edward Island**. “I plan to go for a double major in Biology and Psychology and then I will likely attend **Dalhousie University** for my Masters and PhD in Psychology. This will take about 10 years in total.”