

Employment opportunities are out there for vocational training graduates

School strives to match students with jobs

By Susie Strachan

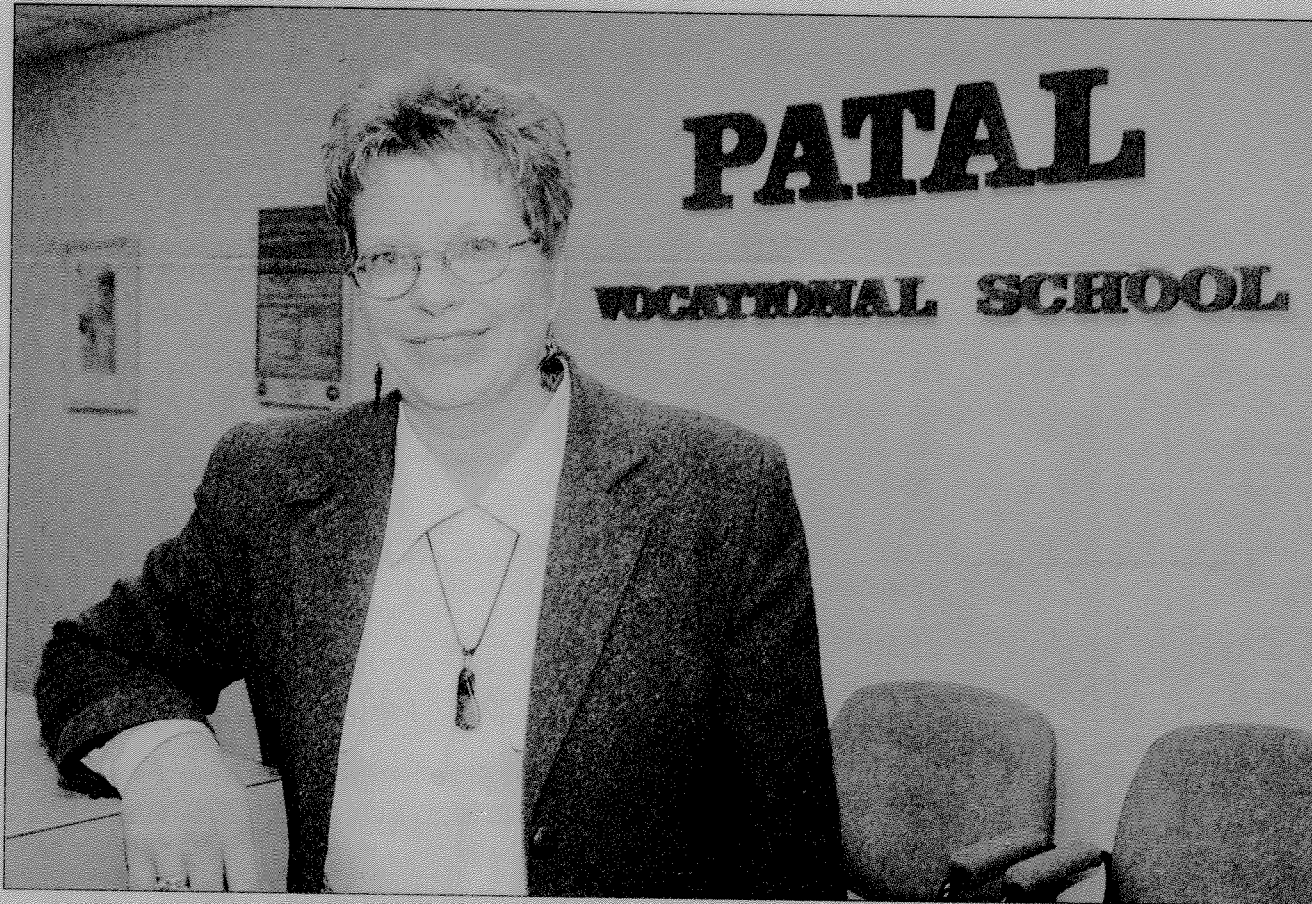
THERE's a growing concern that many young people do not see the connection between what they are learning in school and what their needs will be after graduation. Employers know there are critical skills, qualities and abilities that students require to make a successful transition from school to work.

Students in courses at the Patal Vocational School are trained in making that connection. The school's mission is to provide training for people displaced from the workforce, to assist every student in becoming employed at the end of their course of study, and to teach flexibility and long-term learning skills along with specific knowledge imparted from each program.

The vocational preparation school was started 14 years ago by Pat Winram and Al Dunsford, who combined their first names to come up with the name Patal. Terry Sakiyama bought the school three years ago, and continues to welcome input by Winram and Dunsford.

The students are reaping the benefits of partnerships between various Manitoba organizations and the school. Some of the major partners include Manitoba Education and Training, the Manitoba Call Centre Association, and the Manitoba Motor Dealers Association. Some courses are done in partnership with the Manitoba Metis Federation, Winnipeg First Nations Employment and Training, and the Centre for Aboriginal Resource Development. There are also partnerships with Workers Compensation and Taking Charge.

"I've worked hard on relationships with organizations, associations and the employers," says Sakiyama. "Our students come from all walks of life, from all corners of the world. Some of them



Terry Sakiyama, director of Patal Vocational School, works closely with employers to ensure that students at the school can find employment after graduating.

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employed at the end of their training."

The Service and Parts Inventory program, for example, is done in partnership with the Manitoba Motor Dealers Association. This course teaches students to identify auto systems and their functions, including the fuel, cooling, heating, air conditioning, ignition, starting and charging systems. Students are trained to do inventory control, work the

a catalogue and how to write up sales tickets, how to handle defective items, and how to handle cash, credit and chequing transactions. It also delves into five basic sales steps, correct procedures for waiting on customers, customer service skills, and general rules of grooming and clothing to be worn in a store setting.

The PC Service Technician/Network Management program is done in partnership with Itech Systems Consulting. One of the Itech owners is also a teacher at the school, and provides the equipment the students train on.

"The expertise offered by this partnership is invaluable," says Sakiyama. "The students get lots of hands-on work,

students will be able to build systems and run them using this software, which will be useful for the physically challenged, the legal and medical communities, university professors, and anyone who has to talk with a computer."

The outcome of this course is that it provides the students with the knowledge and practical skills to function in an entry-level position as a PC service technician, a network technician or a PC support specialist.

The call centre industry in Manitoba is another growing area looking to hire qualified workers. Patal offers the Technical Support Associate program, which trains students in the software, hardware and technical support for the following industries: call centres that provide software support services; companies that provide services via the Internet, such as banking or financial trading institutions; on-line services and Internet help desks.

Patal Vocational Preparation School also offers courses in sales and marketing, computerized accounting, becoming a purchasing/inventory clerk or a computerized office assistant. Students can also enroll for computer upgrade classes and GED preparation.

New location

The school recently moved to the Dayton Building, on the third floor of 323 Portage Ave., where the 7,900-square-foot space offers lots of room for classrooms and plenty of windows for light.

"The building is very accessible for all bus routes, and that area of Portage Avenue is very well lit at night, which is important for students taking night courses," says Sakiyama. "The space is completely wheelchair accessible, and it's a very welcoming building for our students. I'm also excited to be a part of the revitalization of Portage Avenue."