



Mind Wide Open



Ontario Student and Graduate Profile



In the late 1990s, the Ontario government reduced funding for adult education programs. Toronto's **George Harvey Collegiate** was deeply affected by the cuts and was slated for possible closure.

It was up to then-principal Libert Castillo to find a way to turn things around for the school. With the help of local superintendents and the school board, Castillo came up with a school renewal plan that included actively pursuing partnerships with industry and business. Specifically, they needed to find a partnership that would help change George Harvey from a technical school to a high tech school.

The Cisco Networking Academy helped accomplish this goal, and according to Castillo, was a major component of the renewal program for the school.

"We couldn't have found the program at a better time," says Castillo. "We wanted to find a program to fill a need in our community and to develop the skills and knowledge to prepare students for jobs right out of high school."

Opened in 1998, the Networking Academy at George Harvey teaches students how to design, install, and maintain networks, preparing them for immediate positions in today's global economy.

Beginning as early as grade 11, students have the opportunity to learn networking fundamentals, router theory and technologies, and advanced routing and switching. Additionally, students engage in project-based learning where they practice hands-on network design and management.

Bruce Melrose, who is the assistant curriculum leader for high tech, says, "George Harvey Collegiate offers students one-on-one instruction, hands-on lab experience, co-op employment opportunities, and the ability to take the CCNA exam. Having this accreditation, which is internationally recognized, provides our students with a competitive advantage when they graduate and are looking for a job in the real world."

Former student **Joshua Hill** enrolled in the Cisco Networking Academy in 2005. Within a year, Joshua was able to achieve his CCNA status. He said, "I always liked computers and was naturally drawn to this program. I began taking computer classes in my first year, but the Cisco courses I took in my later high school years were by far the best."

Joshua also has great things to say about his instructor, Jim Donis: "Jim gave us a lot of opportunity to use and test the equipment. This was critical because you need more than just 'book smarts' to successfully complete and get the most out of the program."

After graduation, Josh moved to Bermuda and took a job at **Logic Communications**, Bermuda's premier Internet service provider. He currently works for the company as a residential IT consultant where he sets up, maintains, and repairs networks for small businesses, home offices, and individuals. He says, "One skill that I learned through the Cisco Networking Academy that I use all of the time at my job is how to troubleshoot. That knowledge has been instrumental to me in my day-to-day work."

Ultimately, Josh hopes to return to Canada and continue working in the field. "The Cisco Networking Academy has definitely helped my career. It's much easier getting your foot in the door once you have Cisco on your resume," he says.

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