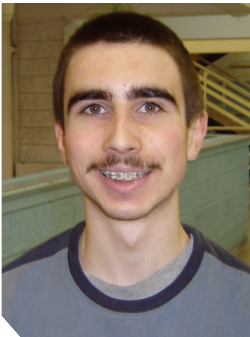




School strives to keep students through innovation and hard work

A caring community combines to give school the tools it needs



Mikael Papadimitriou

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- Philippe Warnier, Instructor

They say it takes a village to raise a child and in an impoverished area of Montreal, a school and some caring companies combined to bring the Cisco Networking Academy to its students.

Calixa-Lavallée is a high school in Montreal where the average annual family income is less than \$30,000. The school has high drop-out rates. Even the school building is old and described by some as unappealing. Yet the school fights to keep its students and to get them to complete their high school education.

It decided to take advantage of an impoverished schools initiative that would allow them to offer the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) program to its students. Cisco donated the lab equipment while Panduit Canada Corporation and Fluke Networks Canada provided the kit it required. McGill University donated the instructor training.

Mikael Papadimitriou chose to follow in his mother’s footsteps and go to Calixa-Lavallée because he likes the ambience of the school and feels safe there. “When I go places, they say this is the school where there are a lot of gangs and drugs, but this school is fine,” he says.

Papadimitriou is enjoying the CCNA courses. He says they are very new for the school; they didn’t have any computer courses before this. “Nobody even knew about binary and hexadecimal,” he says. It matters to him that companies came together to make the course possible. “It was very lucky they

chose us as we are really poor and don’t have much.”

Philippe Warnier is the instructor for CCNA. He sees the impact this course has had on his students. “At a parent-teacher meeting a parent told me it was the first time their son had talked about going on to college.” He also tells of a student who hasn’t normally done well in math and French. “He loves CCNA and it is likely keeping him in school. He has a passion for it and he has to keep his French and math marks up so he can continue with it,” he says.

Warnier talks to students in grade eight, before the selection for CCNA is done. He tells them they don’t have to take a job in IT but rather, the course will help them in the future, in their everyday lives.

Andy Gepp is the business manager for Panduit. He says, “We are happy to help get technology in the hands of students who otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity.” It gains Panduit name recognition and helps students at the same time.

Fluke sees great opportunities in the IT sector for youth in the future. David Green, director of marketing says, “So many schools are so well equipped but there are lots of have-nots, so we thought this was something worth supporting.”

There is a great future for students with CCNA. Now, because these companies cared, the students of Calixa-Lavallée will have the same access to it as those in other areas.