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### Abstract

Exploring the 'Mission' of Education and Our Cultural Understanding of Vocational Studies: John Grant High School as a Pragmatic Model for Discussion

John Grant High School is an institution located in the west end of Montreal, Quebec that is dedicated to providing 'vocational studies' for students. The expectations of mainstream schooling have had a profound effect on their reputation as a school, but also represent a significant opportunity for exposing the tensions or ambiguities evidenced in their mission statement. Such a discussion hinges on the value that has been assigned to a 'vocation' in the past (a religious calling), and how the metaphor has been transformed into something undesirable, substandard, an 'avocation' (a call away) for students who are unable to perform at an academic level. This transition of meaning can be attributed to an implicit valuation of work and schooling throughout history, shifting from a monastic view to the rise of industry and capitalism with a 'vocation' being termed a sideline occupation. Despite the many challenges the staff of JGHS are facing, there is substantial evidence in the work/study program of the school to re-connect with a monastic view of a 'vocation'. It focuses on the process of becoming a competent and responsible citizen and helping the students be proud of what they are able to do, rather than focusing on weaknesses and inability. John Grant's vocational program should no longer be on the sidelines or ignored, but viewed as the vanguard of a new educational outlook that enhances social equity for students, promotes introspection, and also provides broad work incentives for motivation and active learning in life.