



MICHAEL STUPARYK/TORONTO STAR

From left to right: Students Mary Chiu, Timothy Leung and Sophia Yang are filling part of their summer vacation by taking Grade 10 history.

History is music to their ears

LOUISE BROWN
EDUCATION REPORTER

So many courses, so little time — and so many kids dropping music from their timetables.

With art, music and drama getting the squeeze under Ontario's packed new four-year curriculum, Toronto music teacher Paul Adams came up with a brain wave three years ago.

He would tell his Grade 9 music students at Brébeuf College School to take their compulsory Grade 10 history course in the summer before Grade 10, which would free up a period for taking band music during the year.

Otherwise, many dropped music. It worked, and word has spread.

This year 350 students are taking Grade 10 history from the Toronto Catholic District School Board —

SUMMER SCHOOL 101

WHY HISTORY IS HIP

FOURTH OF FIVE PARTS

almost twice as many as last year, with three classes at Brébeuf alone.

Other GTA boards say history is also a popular summer school subject. So are the two compulsory Grade 10 half-courses — civics and career studies — that 300 students are taking this month from the Toronto Catholic District School Board, some of them online.

"I'm a bad guy — I've created my own boom in summer school to help students take a broader range of subjects, including the arts," said Adams, who is now principal of Brébeuf's bustling summer school on Steeles Ave. E. And his Grade 10

band classes have grown, too.

Adams called fact-based courses such as history and civics better suited for a one-month blitz than theoretical subjects such as math.

Grade 10 student Mary Chiu is taking Canadian history this summer so she can fit in a visual art course this fall at Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School.

"I wanted to take more arts courses and I also want to fast-track and finish early," said the 15-year-old.

"It's actually a great subject to teach over four weeks — before World War I, after World War I, the Roaring '20s and the Dirty '30s — and these kids are all pretty much keeners, so they get a kick out of all of it all," said Matthew Lannan, who runs the program at Brébeuf.

While lack of time has forced Lannan to skip the guest speakers he

normally brings in, students are being asked to make 1920s scrapbooks and 1930s songbooks to balance the mountain of material they learn in a month.

"History is one of my harder subjects so it's worth it to take it now, even though it's 24/7 history for a month," said Timothy Leung, a Grade 10 student.

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