



Programs of Choice Policy

Date Approved:

Projected Review Date: 04/23/2012

Policy Statement

It is the policy of The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board to support innovative programs within its schools and enhance student achievement by responding to stakeholder needs through the adoption of approved Programs of Choice.

RESPONSIBILITY: Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice

Definition:

Programs of Choice is used to define non-Ministry mandated, unique, innovative learning programs in focused areas, designed to engage students who have differing educational interests. The programs have the capacity to develop a broad range of skills and further enhance character development, academic achievement, and leadership development and may include languages, environmental studies, the arts and fitness and wellness. These programs compliment subjects/courses consistent with the Ontario Curriculum however, offer specialized learning opportunities that develop skills with greater depth and intensity. Students may enter a Program of Choice at different elementary and secondary grade levels based on program availability and admission criteria. Secondary Programs of Choice may contribute to a Ministry approved Specialist High Skills Major when a career-focused pathway offering opportunities in apprenticeship, college, university and workplace exists.

1. Guiding Principles:

Programs of Choice must:

- Conform to The Education Act, Board policies, collective agreements and an approved Programs of Choice Implementation Plan
- Adhere to the highest standards of programming excellence expected by the Board, the community, the associated partners and the parents and students in the program
- Align with the Board's Vision, Mission and Core Commitments
- Endeavour to provide accessibility for all students

2. Policy Objectives

Programs of Choice will endeavour to strengthen public education by:

- Supporting student achievement by helping students meet provincial standards and the intended outcomes of the Program of Choice
- Offering high quality, innovative educational programs in focused areas
- Attracting, retaining and engaging students with differing educational interests
- Attracting, retaining and engaging staff with specialized knowledge, skills and training
- Increasing parent involvement and satisfaction

3. A statement of intended outcome:

Programs of Choice are a means by which HWDSB can:

- Realize its vision of ensuring a future in which all learners achieve their full potential
- Attract and retain students and families who view HWDSB as a *Board of Choice* that offers dynamic programming to meet the diverse needs and interests of the community
- Respond to parental requests for programs in specialized areas that meet the unique needs of students across our district.

- Develop career-focused pathways for existing Programs of Choice to become Specialist High Skills Major

4. **Action Required:**

- 4.1 Programs of Choice can be initiated by a community group or school staff in the HWDSB who approach the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice with a specific Program of Choice proposal.
- If the proposal originates from school staff in the HWDSB it must be supported by the school administration, the School Council, the school Superintendent of Education and the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice.
 - If the proposal originates from the community it must have the support of the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice, Executive Council and the Board of Trustees.
 - The location of all Programs of Choice will be at the discretion of the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice and Executive Council. There will be no stand-alone Programs of Choice entertained by the Board.
- 4.2 Potential Programs of Choice that meet the criteria identified above will be provided with a *Programs of Choice Application Proposal Form*.
- *Programs of Choice Application Proposal Forms* are completed and submitted to the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice. The Superintendent, in consultation with the school Superintendent of Education and school administration will decide on whether or not to support the idea.
 - Once approved a *Programs of Choice Implementation Plan* is completed.
 - A *Programs of Choice Implementation Plan* must include the rationale for the program and how the program will address the guiding principles and intended outcomes of Programs of Choice
 - Final approval, prior to the commencement of any new Program of Choice requires that the Implementation Plan along with any supporting information is presented to the Programs of Choice Proposal Review Committee.
 - The process is summarized in Appendix A.
- 4.3 The Programs of Choice Proposal Review Committee will be composed of the following:
- 1 Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice
 - 1 Trustee of the Board
 - 1 Parent Involvement Committee Member
 - 1 Elementary Teacher
 - 1 Secondary Teacher
 - 1 Elementary Administrator
 - 1 Secondary Administrator
 - 1 non-parent ratepayer
 - 1 Elementary Student Leader
 - 1 Secondary Student Leader
- 4.4 Once the *Programs of Choice Proposal Review Committee* has reviewed the implementation of a new Program of Choice the program will be referred to Executive Council for final approval. Proposals brought forward by a community group must have the approval of the Board of Trustees. If approved, the program will be considered to be in a Pilot Year. See Appendix B.
- 4.5 Pilot Year Requirements:
- Implement program as per proposal
 - Present status report to the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice prior to the end of the Pilot Year
 - If the report demonstrates that the program is viable, as determined by positive student achievement, student engagement, and parent satisfaction data, it will be recommended that the program continue. Alternatively if it is shown to not be viable a recommendation may be made that the program is discontinued.

- At the end of year 2 the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice will require a review of the Program of Choice conducted by external reviewers from outside the HWDSB and/or EBEST with a report being presented to Executive Council.

4.6 Programs of Choice Resourcing:

- Financial and other resource considerations in support of Programs of Choice will be determined through the collaborative efforts of the school administration, the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice, Board personnel and Executive Council.
- Staffing considerations in support of each program, based on specialized training and qualifications, will be determined by the staffing process, the Superintendent of Operations in consultation with the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice and school administration.
- Resource allocation will be reviewed annually by the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice.

5. **Key Measures of Success:**

- A formal program review will be completed every 3 years by school administration, school staff and/or EBEST and reported to the Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice, Executive Council and included as part of the annual report to the Board of Trustees. As part of the review process evidence must be presented to demonstrate growth in student achievement, student engagement, and parent satisfaction.
- In addition to the formal program review, for an **elementary** Program of Choice to be considered viable, it must have a sufficient number of students to run one full class and generate 1 FTE teaching position according to staffing protocols. If the enrolment numbers fall below this minimum for two years consideration will be given to discontinue the program.
- In addition to the formal program review, for a **secondary** Program of Choice to be considered viable, it must generate enough student interest to warrant the allocation of staffing lines. If the enrolment numbers fall below an acceptable threshold that make it financially viable for two years, consideration will be given to discontinue the program.
- If the existing POC grows successfully beyond the current capacity of the existing building as indicated in the mandatory review process consideration may be given to moving/expanding the POC to an additional location as determined by an extensive review of all data sources, including the Capital Plan, with the final decision being made by the Superintendent responsible for Programs and Choice in consultation with Executive Council and where necessary the Board of Trustees.

6. **Reporting Requirements:**

The Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice will prepare an annual report for Board as part of the Trustees' Annual Work Plan. The Superintendent responsible for Programs of Choice will make bi-annual reports to Executive Council based on the how the programs align with the HWDSB Strategic Direction and Annual Operating Plans including:

- Program viability as determined by student and parent engagement and satisfaction surveys
- Growth potential of the programs as projected over a 3 year period
- Growth potential to evolve into SHSM when programs have a career focus
- Financial viability as determined by the allocation of school and central funds
- Academic viability as determined by student achievement data
- Retention and attraction of students as determined by analysis of enrolment data
- Partnership viability as determined through consultation with associated organization and groups
- Student access to programs from all parts of the district as determined by an analysis of demographic information

7. **References to related policies/policy directives:**

- Equity Policy
- Information Technology Policy
- Collective Agreements for all employee groups

- Purchasing/Procurement Policies
- OCT Standards of Teaching Practice