

Education For All

The West ARC needs to look at the environmental, program and logistical needs of **all** the students of the west end of the city. Ancaster High School cannot be left un-improved in a 50 year old segmented building to compete with a new building in our co-terminus board in the community and a possible new building in Dundas. To do this would have a huge detrimental effect on our already declining enrolment, which would then negatively impact our ability to sustain and offer programming. Indeed, opting to ignore Ancaster High's current and future concerns would run against our Board's core values: achievement matters, engagement matters and equity matters. What matters most is that we develop a sustainable, acceptable business plan to address the HWDSB's west end students current and future needs. Ancaster High is a crucial component of those needs.

The ARC must expand its vision at this time to create new learning environments that can:

- 1) Attract and engage students (Engagement Matters)
- 2) Repatriate students lost to the newer buildings of the Separate school board (Equity Matters)
- 3) Facilitate the delivery of curriculum in the 21st century through the updating of our old and high maintenance buildings (Achievement Matters)

Some history:

Ancaster is the only school in the West Arc that faces direct competition from a Separate school in the same community. Waterdown has no separate high school and St. Mary draws from all three other schools in the West end, but not one directly. From an equity standpoint, this places alternate pressures on Ancaster High's enrolment.

Ancaster is over 50 years old, was originally part of its own school board and included in the original Wentworth County School Board, was built in sections over a number of years, and eventually was the had a separate building attached to it by a tunnel when its enrolment increased. As our Board adopts and integrates a true 21st fluencies model, updating existing infrastructures will be essential for the practical implementation of this vision.

Fortunately, Ancaster High has always had incredible support from its community and a long history of educating generations of Ancaster citizens. Additionally, it is attached to the community pool, the boilers for which are included in the west wing of the building. It is across from the community's recreation centre. So its location is central to the community and the outdoor property is a huge asset to programming and community use. Unfortunately, it does lack in public accessibility due to the poor access via public transit.

Enrolment issues

The school's enrolment has been dropping due not only to demographic trends, since Ancaster is a growth area of the city, but started with the opening of Bishop Tonnos High School in 2005 and the board's decision to rearrange boundaries that resulted in the loss of Scenic Woods and Meadowlands as feeder areas for Ancaster High. Faced with the loss of students due to these boundary changes and competition from the separate board whose new building only highlighted the dysfunctional condition of the Ancaster building, the school's enrolment declined and has continued to decline. Given that environment, part of the school's focus shifted to

competing for students. We added new technology, add new programmes (hockey, aviation SHSM, biotechnology, IB), and highlighted our strength - which has always been our dedicated staff and wide range of extracurriculars and academic excellence - but the declining trend continues to this day. Public transit limitations (i.e. no direct route from Dundas and sporadic bus service from the across the mountain) makes it difficult to attract students to programming even if we are the only ones offering it if there is no school bus to bring them.

Limitations of the building

Little money has been put into improvements for the building over the years. New boilers for the east wing were added, and some “dressing up” (painting of lockers, hiding of wires and rebuild of the entry foyer) was done for its 50th reunion in 2009. However, there is a long list of existing physical plant problems, including climate concerns, electrical service issues, encapsulated asbestos, and aesthetically displeasing environments.

As such, the poor state of the building will further drain our enrolment if the ARC decides to rebuild Highland or build a new school in Dundas on some other location. Ancaster will be left in a position where with inadequate facilities we are trying to draw students whose options on either side of us are much more attractive, i.e. a new school in the town (Separate board) or a new school in Dundas that will drain our rural areas of students who may otherwise have attended Ancaster. Ancaster cannot be left sandwiched between such pressures and be expected to survive and offer program to all students. Something needs to be done to support Ancaster as part of the West ARC. What needs to be done...

- 1) Change the boundaries with Sir Allan MacNab to return some students to Ancaster from the west mountain or west mountain rural areas as well as change the boundaries of the areas feeding the Dundas school(s) to build Ancaster’s enrolment to nearer or above its capacity.
- 2) Build a business plan that supports the building of a new school on the Ancaster site (down Meadowbrook) that saves the community pool and Auditorium but replaces all other facilities.

These measures would result in a repatriation of students from the separate board and stop the drain of students to Dundas and allow Ancaster program to flourish once again in a modern environment where 21st century learning can take place.

Ancaster’s community deserves a public high school that serves the needs of students in this growing area.