

South Accommodation Review Committee

Correspondence – April 5, 2011

Sent by email

Hello:

I am a parent of two children at Lawfield School who are in french immersion. Both Norwood Park and Lawfield are currently struggling with large and growing french immersion enrollments. In fact, there may be a need for a third FI elementary site to be created on the Mountain within the 3-10 time frame. Currently, the only option for students to continue in the FI program is to attend school at Westdale Secondary as no secondary school within the south ARC offers french immersion. I would like to know if/how the South ARC is considering this program as it deliberates and if it has (or will) considered a K-12 french immersion school as part of its recommendations?

Regards,

Tony Gzik

.....

Sent by email

To the people who are working on behalf of the South ARC Review committee

First and for-most thank-you for your time and energies devoted to this review

I am writing as a concerned parent of a child who is planning to attend grade 9 at Westmount this September. We moved to this area 6 years ago after undergoing the closure of Peace Memorial School. At that time Sherwood Parents advocated to keep Highview open and to close Peace Memorial. I realize that Peace Memorial was old (I went there) However, being an involved parent on committees and student council, I did not see the "terrible" shape it was in. I did however, see the TERRIBLE shape that Highview was in as my older son was already there. On a daily basis the science teacher would empty the overhead florescent light fixtures of water that was leaking from from the roof. Eventually they "fixed" the problem by covering the ceiling in plastic. Then we endured some time of the roof being re asphalted. This among many other so called "little" fixes. I would like to say that I never once experienced leaks or maintenance issues in old Peace Memorial. The transition was difficult from jk - 8 for both students and parents. I believe, the parents of the Sherwood area would like to keep their school open. We all feel the same about the schools our children attend. Westmount is one of three well attended schools on virtually the same property. A brand new recreation centre is in the process of being built. Westmount's program of choice has put Hamilton on the map for education. The self paced nature of the program cannot be spread out and offered in different schools. It needs to be offered in one location with a staff of committed educators. Our oldest son has graduated from Westmount and gone on to further education. The unique program Westmount offered along with the committed educators, and whole school environment, has been instrumental in his success this year. Programs of choice offered in other schools keep the students all together, French Immersion, Sage, and Sage Quest. Westmount's Students are already "together" Where do you put 1350 Students? Westmount is already in a perfect location, with lots of property, and a new

facility going up next door, that will be useful for the Sports Academy program also offered as a program of choice at Westmount.

I am respectfully asking you, on behalf of our students, to stand by your original decision, to leave Westmount out of the review altogether due to the unique program that 100% of staff, students and their parents are committed to.

Sincerely,
Kathi Potter.

Sent by email

In regards to the March 10th show With Laura Peddle, Al Pierce and Angela Koklis;

Angela Koklis, Sherwood Parent representative's comment that Westmounts program of choice can be moved to any school because it's portable and Quote "those kids are of higher intelligence"

The fact that the parent rep of Sherwood high school would say this about the self paced students at Westmount is offensive to all of the students in our city, and incorrect. Ms. Koklis obviously does not understand the nature of the self paced program. The students "intelligence" is not a factor. It is based on their ability to work independently. Her statement also that Mountain School and Parkview should be excluded from Arc review and those students should remain together and not reintegrated into a "system that failed them" rings like a not in my back yard attitude. Ms. Koklis wants all the high schools in the Arc review except Mountain and Parkview because they offer a specialized program for those students. However, She does not feel Westmount comes under that category. Ms. Koklis does feel that programs of choice are portable. I wonder if Ms. Koklis would recommend that Mountain and Parkview amalgamate and move their specialized portable program to Sherwood?

I believe Mountain and Parkview should remain open but for the same reason that Westmount should remain, because they are whole school populations being offered programs by educators that believe in the programs they are teaching, in an atmosphere that those students can be successful in.

Westmount was chosen as the site for the self paced program years ago. It could have gone anywhere that is true, but this site was chosen for a reason. Plans and Improvement take time and money. Now there is a Recreation Centre going up next door. This will improve the ability of Westmount to serve the Students of the Sports Academy and the community at large. This community has a lower income housing population that can only benefit from having a neighborhood recreation Centre. Ms. Koklis states that 82% of Westmounts students come from all over the city. I am unaware of actual percentages but Westmount does serve students from all over our city. For that reason it cannot be included in the review or counted as a neighborhood school. McNab is the neighborhood high school in this area, and well attended. That is why it is not on the review. Moving a program of choice to Sherwood does not suddenly offer the area a neighborhood high school. The students of the East mountain that are attending Sherwood, and not a program of choice, would still need to go to another school. Westmounts program is in this area because it was chosen years ago as the area that could manage growth and include facilities needed like the rec. centre, and now that is coming to fruition.

Sincerely
Kathi Potter

.....

Sent by email

Hello everyone

After February 15th's meeting I decided that I would email you to let you know about my desires for the accommodation and programming for the Special Ed classes at Sherwood.

We have 3 Special Ed classes at Sherwood. Two are for Students with Developmental Disabilities and one is a specialized program called the Abilities Program for students that require extensive support in order to participate in mainstream classes. Many of our students have autism. As I stated on February 15, I have four students in my class who have autism and 5 other students.

Because all of my students have problems with transitioning, it is essential that the Accommodation plan for these students be as least disruptive as possible. It takes them a long time to become well adjusted to new situations. In fact we have just worked through a difficult period with one of my students who quit eating when his family moved at the end of the summer. This was of great concern because he was already underweight. He also started having what we think were petit mal seizures.

In the Accommodation plan it is highly desirable if not essential that the special needs students have the following:

A room with windows. Two of the rooms that we have for the students with DD do not have windows

Adequate facilities to teach life and social skills (This includes laundry facilities, a living room space, a full kitchen with a stove with an oven, refrigerator, microwave, dishwasher, double sink for washing dishes) These spaces should be separate from the class area.

Satisfactory washroom facilities that includes space for students who require hooyer lifts and a height adjustable change table.

A room with a bath and shower facilities so we can teach these self help skills

A Snoozelen room for all students but especially for the students who have sensory integration needs.

Please present these needs to the committee when they are planning what will happen in 2013. I would like these accommodations made immediately but Sherwood is already full and there is no space to move where we still have ready access to the washroom for my students.

Finally I want to send kudos to the admin team at Sherwood. Our principal, Randy Gallant, is actively involved with all the Special needs students on a daily basis. He plays music with them on a weekly basis and lets all of us in Special ed know that we

are a valued. My students adore him. Evelyn Wilkie and Wendy Yarr visit our classrooms frequently and are always ready to assist us when we need help. I am fortunate indeed to work with such a kind and compassionate administration.

Sincerely

Dawn Sawford
Dawn Sawford
Special Education Teacher
Sherwood Secondary School
Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
Phone: (905) 383-3377
Fax: (905) 318-6561
dawn.sawford@hwdsb.on.ca