

The Need for a Safe, Inclusive, Accessible Facility

Why Every Westmount Student Deserves A Chance to Play
Presented by Westmount School Council Athletic Sub-Committee
Presenters: Josh Mok, Reasa Diab

Why Playing Facilities Matter

Westmount needs an athletic facility. An athletic facility provides:

- students with a space to learn, exercise, and socialize, promoting good health
- space for curricular learning, including HPE, geography, outdoor ed, science and Indigenous studies as well as extracurricular clubs and athletics
- space for school events and community gatherings, essential to well-being

Factors to Consider

- Student Safety
- Accessibility
- Equitable Opportunities to Build Westmount Community
- Upholding Agreements With the City

Student Safety

- The field at Westmount is NOT safe
- It is not regularly maintained by the city. Requests are made by the school to have the grass cut, seeded and opened for use
- It is a mud pit most of seasons and contains massive divots, potholes, rocks, uneven ground, cliff at the endzone
- Students have suffered rolled ankles, broken bones, sprains, concussions, torn ligaments and other soft injuries
- EMS/paramedics cannot access the injured at the bottom of the hill or midpoint when an injury occurs. If a stretcher was required there is no ramp/access to wheel the injured to the ambulance
- This impacts not just our students but other visiting schools when participating in athletics

Accessibility

- At Westmount, our playing field is located at the very top of a hill
- Quickest way to access from gym: 400 steps and **48** stairs up two sets of steep metal staircase. Route without stairs is a 13-minute walk.
- Students, staff and community with physical challenges, health issues and/or who use mobility aids cannot get up these stairs.
- EMS/paramedics cannot access the injured at the bottom of the hill or midpoint when an injury occurs. If a stretcher was required there is no ramp/access to wheel the injured to the ambulance.
- As part of our request for an athletic facility, we place an emphasis on making it an accessible, inclusive space, that everyone in the Westmount community can enjoy.

Equitable Opportunities to Build Community

- Mental Health is promoted when all students can participate at their school
 - Other school teams refuse to play on our field for safety reasons
 - Financial/personal stress to find transportation to other fields for practice/games
 - Pressure to choose practice over part-time job as access to other fields begins in the evening after the home school has finished their practice/game
 - Currently few home games and no evening games at Westmount
- No opportunities to host community-building events such as Terry Fox, Relay for Life, Friday Night Lights and Commencement (pandemic)
- Difficult to build community as a system school



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What Could This Facility Look Like?

We have said we want an upgraded athletic facility, but what does that look like? We would like these components to be considered:

- 1) An accessible ramp up to the facility
- 2) A turf field to minimize maintenance
- 3) A track surrounding the turf field
- 4) Bleachers for spectators
- 5) Flood lights / Stadium lights

The "Agreement"

- A long-term contract was signed by the City and the Board which eliminated our original field and track beside the school. New Rec Centre was built in its place
- In exchange Captain Cornelius Park was given for school use
- City Promise: well-maintained field with access to water and electricity
- Currently, plot of land is classified as Category C Park (minimal upkeep); no electricity (lights) and no water (fountain/washrooms)
- To date, neither City or Board has provided details to the terms of the agreement

Our Ask

- School Council has worked through proper channels with the City and our superintendent and trustee closely over the last 3 years
- Have been told by Board staff/trustee that there is little they can do
- The City recently devoted funds towards this land. Terms of funds are unclear

Westmount students deserve a safe, accessible and inclusive playing facility –will the committee support and advocate for our students and families to provide the same opportunities that other schools have been given?

How Can You Help?

- Re-examine/re-open the agreement signed between HWDSB and the City
- Work with the City to support a Category A field (top maintenance)
- Invest Board funding with the City to create a facility
- Look for alternatives for an athletic facility for Westmount

Please help us. Thank you for your support and advocacy!