



PROGRAM COMMITTEE

October 15, 2015
Education Centre, Room 308

AGENDA

5:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Secondary Transitions Implementation 2014-2015
4. Update on Transitions
5. Next Program Committee Meeting: November 12, 2015
 - a. Student Achievement Report
 - b. Elementary Program Strategy
6. Adjournment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Secondary Transitions Report – October 2015

Supporting students and their families through the school closing process was pivotal as part of our secondary transition work throughout the 2014-15 school year. This report documents the findings from focus groups with students from five secondary schools within Hamilton Wentworth District School board who experienced a transition due to the closure of Hill Park Secondary School, Barton Secondary School and Parkview Secondary School during the 2013-2014 school year. This report is written in response to the motion by the Board of Trustee (March 13, 2015): *We gather feedback on transitions that occur as a result of school closure. Staff will gather feedback from all stakeholders involved in the transition. The feedback will collated into a report for the Program Committee (6-8 months from the date of the transition).*

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) believes that all of its schools are great schools. To ensure that we maintain effective programs in up-to-date, purposeful school buildings, with supports that provide for equity of access and outcomes, requires us to be strategic in our approach to both elementary and secondary programs in all of our schools.

School renewal, boundary changes, program enhancements combined with new opportunities for student learning, and school consolidation all impact on staff, students, parents, and communities. We have completed Phase 1 of our Secondary Program Strategy and are currently in Phase 2. We will finalize our Elementary Program Strategy over the course of the next year, and we have moved forward with several elementary school closures over the past year.

This has been challenging work that has called upon parents, students, communities and staff to provide input into through Transition Committees in each of these communities. At the request of Trustees, we also began a process to hold Post-Transition Committees to gather feedback to allow for continuous improvement in our work in this area. We want to identify what worked well and what areas need improvement.

Student learning and engagement are at the core of this work, so in addition to the transition committees, we have also monitored students who were relocated to other schools to gauge the impact of the move on their success and progress toward graduation, work, higher education, or apprenticeship.

This report contains information on what we learned from our transition committees, how our students who transitioned are doing, and what next steps will be taken to improve as we continue to implement our Secondary and Elementary Program Strategies.

The themes that emerged from the consultation and feedback from those involved in the transitions were as follows:

- Communication
- Transition Planning and Pre-Transition Activities
- School Culture and honouring all stakeholders (including memory walls, graduates receiving certificates from their former school, memorabilia, and traditions)
- Transportation and travel time
- Programs
- School Councils and Parent Engagement
- Staffing
- Student Achievement

Summary of our findings from Student Focus Groups:

Students from all schools reported the following positives resulting from the transition:

- Students from all schools reported feelings of success and accomplishment.

- Overall, they felt that the school communities have come together and are forming new school identities.
- They also report that incidents of bullying, isolation and one group not welcoming another have lessened.
- Students reported having made new connections to teachers, sports teams, co-curricular activities and friends.
- Many are proud of their academic success and are looking forward to graduation.
- Students previously attending Mountain Secondary reported that they have improved attendance as a result of the provision of school buses.
- Students expressed appreciation for the supportive teachers and administrators who made them feel welcome and included in activities.
- They valued the special events that schools organized; these helped break down the barriers between students from various locations.
- Students like the wider range of course offerings available at their new school sites. They identified being able to access courses at their level of study as a positive outcome of the move to their new location.

The following student recommendations were put forward to guide the work of future Accommodation Review Committees:

- If you promise something, follow through – otherwise don't promise it
- Value and respect the past
- Be careful of too much change all at once – new school and new educational initiatives (i.e., iPads) was overwhelming for both students and staff
- Be inclusive in your communication methods; Communicate as much as possible and in as many ways as possible
- Make sure front line workers are aware of the transition plan, know the answers to questions or can respond to questions from students and parents in a timely manner

Summary of our findings / learnings from Parents, Caregivers, Guardians and the Community:

- Taking the time to develop and nurture a positive and safe school environment is essential. This happens when processes are transparent, clearly communicated, and receptive to stakeholder input and refinement.
- Having informed front line workers who are easily accessible and report back in a timely manner is a critical component of the transition process.
- Ongoing and multiple forms of communication around essential elements are required. These communications should be clear and concise while offering reliable contact information for those who require additional direction.
- Big picture thinking should be conveyed well in advance of transition activities in order to prepare students, staff, and parents for upcoming events and to help them understand the fundamental processes associated with school closures.
- At the board level, a framework for blending schools should be developed that outlines effective processes, pre-transition activities, and checklists for staff and students. This document should include the valuable information provided by staff, parents, and students represented in this report.



EXECUTIVE REPORT TO PROGRAM COMMITTEE

TO: PROGRAM COMMITTEE

FROM: Executive Council

DATE: October 6, 2015

PREPARED BY: Pam Reinholdt, Executive Superintendent of School Operations & Facilities
Jamie Nunn, Superintendent of Leadership & Learning

RE: Secondary Transitions Implementation 2014-2015

BACKGROUND:

On May 28, 2012, the Board of Trustees approved:

- That the approved secondary boundaries in the Secondary Program Strategy be implemented in the South Cluster and a holding school for the New South Secondary School (now Nora Frances Henderson Secondary School) be created at Barton Secondary School beginning September 2014.
- The closure of Hill Park Secondary School in June 2014 and the relocation of the students to New South Secondary School (now Nora Frances Henderson Secondary School) or their home secondary schools
- The closure of Parkview Secondary School in June 2014 and the relocation of the students and program to Mountain Secondary School effective September 2014. That Mountain Secondary School close in June 2017.
- The programs and supports currently in place at Parkview such as dedicated learning rooms, small class sizes, and intervention programs (e.g. Wilson Reading, Empower) would be available at Mountain and Delta.
- Students currently attending Parkview would have the choice of attending Mountain or Delta Secondary School, or their home school.
- Transportation would be provided to Mountain and Delta where necessary.

On March 13, 2015, the Program Committee of the Board recommended that we gather feedback on transitions that occurred as a result of school closures. Staff gathered feedback from stakeholders involved in the transition 6 to 8 months after the transition. The feedback was collated into this report for the Program Committee

Supporting students and their families through the school closing process has been pivotal as part of our secondary transition work throughout the 2014-15 school year. This report documents the findings from focus groups with students from five secondary schools within Hamilton Wentworth District School board who experienced transitions due to school closures during the 2013-2014 school year.

Supporting students who transitioned from a closing secondary school

The Secondary Program Strategy is foundational in creating equity of opportunity and access for our students. This Strategy considers which schools provide which programs and how to ensure students are able to participate

in the programs that they need. The strategy also considers the role of programs and supports that are essential for some and good for all.

In September 2014, 601 students transitioned from either Hill Park Secondary School or Parkview Secondary School to a HWDSB secondary school. 163 students transitioned from Parkview Secondary School and 438 students transitioned from Hill Park Secondary School.

By grade, the following number of students transferred from Parkview or Hill Park to an alternate school:

- Grade 9 transferring to grade 10: N= 132
- Grade 10 transferring to grade 11: N=156
- Grade 11 transferring to grade 12: N=313

Throughout the school year, we were responsive to students and communities and their needs. The following decisions and supports were put in place to support students and their families throughout the transition process:

Student Achievement

- A successful transition between grade 7/8 and 9 is pivotal for all students. As part of the transition process, staff were asked to ensure the Individual Education Plan (IEP) was updated, appropriate school visits had been arranged for each student and family and assistive technology (if appropriate) had been organized for the following year.
- All secondary principals received a list of students who transitioned from Grade 8 to Grade 9 who needed to be tracked so that their transition and secondary experience was successful, both from an academic and a social-emotional standpoint. The students listed represented students who may have been in special education programs at the elementary level (including gifted), students who received assistive technology through the Centre for Success program, students who required either literacy or numeracy support, or other students where the elementary sending school expressed some concern. These students were supported throughout the 2014-2015 school year.
- Interventions and supports were offered in all secondary schools, including the following: EMPOWER, Bump It Up Math, and enriched programming.

Transportation:

- For students attending Henderson Secondary School, yellow school bus transportation was provided for eligible students according to HWDSB Transportation Policy on the following conditions:
 - If the student needs to take more than one HSR bus, AND
 - If the scheduled HSR service would require the student to ride more than 60 minutes.
- Students eligible for transportation to Nora Henderson Secondary School but not meeting this criterion above were provided HSR passes. This transition transportation is in effect until Henderson Secondary School is constructed at the Rymal/Upper Sherman location. Once the new school has opened, then the transition transportation will end. Transportation is not provided for students outside the catchment area.
- For the Sir Allan MacNab community: Grade 8 students at Cardinal Heights, and living south of the Linc, were given the choice of attending Sir Allan MacNab or Henderson in September 2014 and 2015. Students from this area who attended Sir Allan MacNab also received transportation to and from school. Transportation may be in the form of yellow bus or HSR bus passes. This will also be considered transition transportation and will be reviewed in June 2016.
- As per the HWDSB Transportation policy, students who reside 3.2 km from either Sherwood Secondary School or Sir Allan MacNab were provided HSR bus passes to get to school.

Graduation Celebrations

- Students were recognized and celebrated at their high school graduation for their transition. For example, at Sir Allan MacNab, students were given the choice of celebrating with either Hill Park or Sir Allan MacNab coloured tassels on their graduation cap.

Athletics and Extra-Curriculars

- Students who moved secondary schools as a result of a school closure or a Tier 3 program (like a SHSM) in Grade 11, were considered eligible to play sports for their new school team.

Facilities Management and Archives

- John Aikman worked closely with the 8 principals involved in the secondary and elementary school closing process and identified which items were to be moved to the Vincent Massey site. John Aikman and his team inventoried and retrieved all historically significant records and artifacts from the closing elementary and secondary schools for safe-keeping.

Support for our Early Leavers

- Prior to the beginning of each semester, we attempted to contact our early leavers (students who left our schools before graduating). Students leave school often for medical reasons, employment, family demands or other reasons. When this happens, each student is phoned individually to see how we could help them return to learning to enable them to graduate. Both system and school staff have attempted to reach all of our students who left the HWDSB in fall 2014, including the 24 students who were at Hill Park and the 16 students who were at Parkview in the effort to re-engage them in school. The secondary staff continue to re-engage students this semester through a variety of different avenues.

Transition Findings:

Student Voice Forums: Method

Student-voice forums were held to capture the feedback from students on the transition process. Students volunteered to participate in the student voice sessions after being invited by Student Success teachers, mentoring EAs, guidance counselors and school administration. Each invited student had moved from a closing school to a new location at the start of the 2014 school year. Following is a breakdown of the number of students who participated in the focus groups across the five schools:

- 17 students from Sherwood Secondary
- 14 students from Sir Allan MacNab
- 22 students from Mountain Secondary
- 24 students from Nora Henderson
- 18 students from Delta Secondary

Students were asked to comment on the following five questions:

- 1) What things do you like about your new school?
- 2) As you have moved to this new location, what are you most proud of?
- 3) What might have made the transition to your new school smoother?
- 4) As you think about your success at school, what might best help you to reach your goals?
- 5) What other things might be helpful for all of us to know?

Student Voice Forums: Results

Four main themes emerged from students' comments; these were:

- safety
- academic programming
- communication, and

- transportation

Figure 1 displays the frequency by which these themes emerged in students’ comments. Safety and academic programming received the most mentions (44 and 40 comments respectively), while the themes communication and transportation received 19 and 7 comments respectively.

It is also noteworthy that individual schools showed differing trends in the areas of discussion (see figure 2 to figure 6). For example, more students at Mountain Secondary School commented on the topic of academic programming than the other four schools surveyed. Students from all schools reported relatively equally on the themes of safety and communication. Students from Sir Allan MacNab reported more often on the theme of transportation.

Figure 1. Student Voice Themes Across All Schools

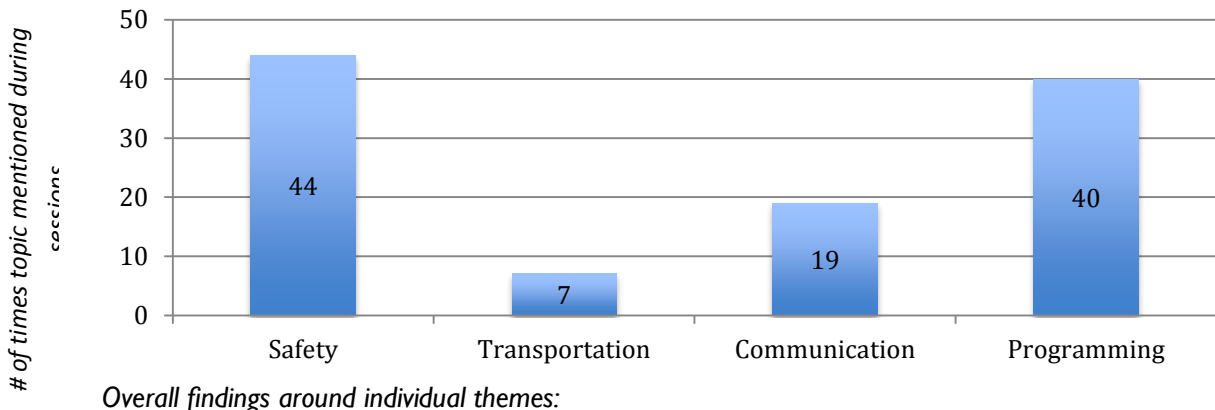
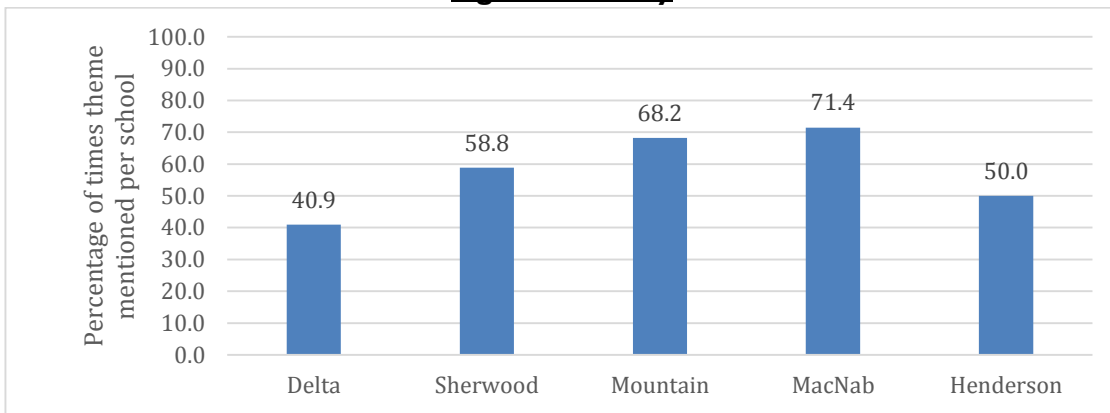


Figure 2. Safety

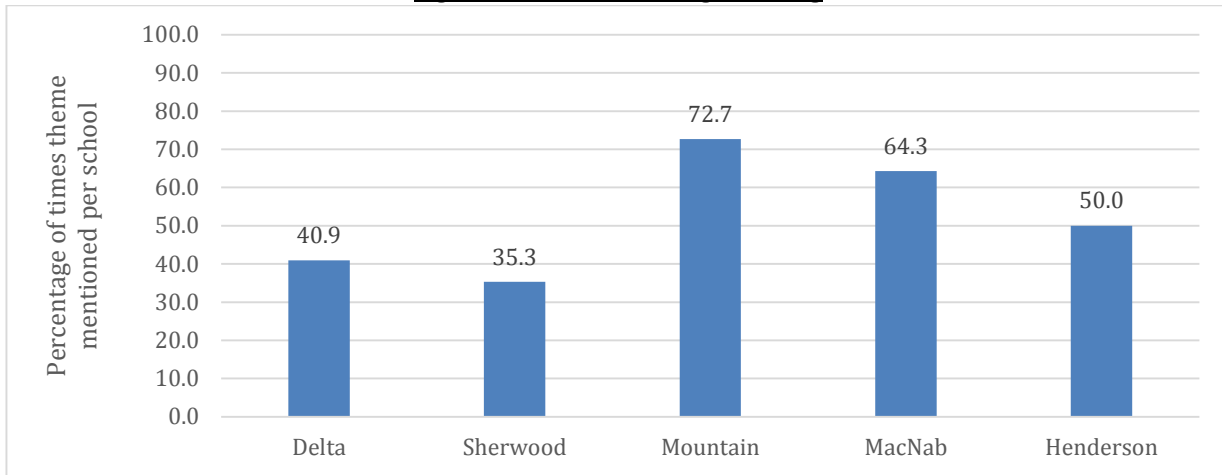


Highlights of comments (number in brackets indicates the frequency in which the comment was made by students):

- Foster a sense of community throughout the year leading into the transition by having visits, joint activities (i.e., dances and events), choosing school colors, name, mascot etc. jointly etc., (20 comments)
- Treat incidents of bullying (especially on line) and threats seriously. Make sure students feel safe in their school (8)
- Follow up many times through the school year with students, staff and stakeholders in order to see how everyone is doing and to resolve issues as they arise (8)
- Make the new school a welcoming place by having good signage, maps, access to supports such as guidance and special education teachers made visible and communicated to all students (7)

- Have support staff (student success, mentoring EA's) reach out to students who may be at risk of not transitioning well (3)

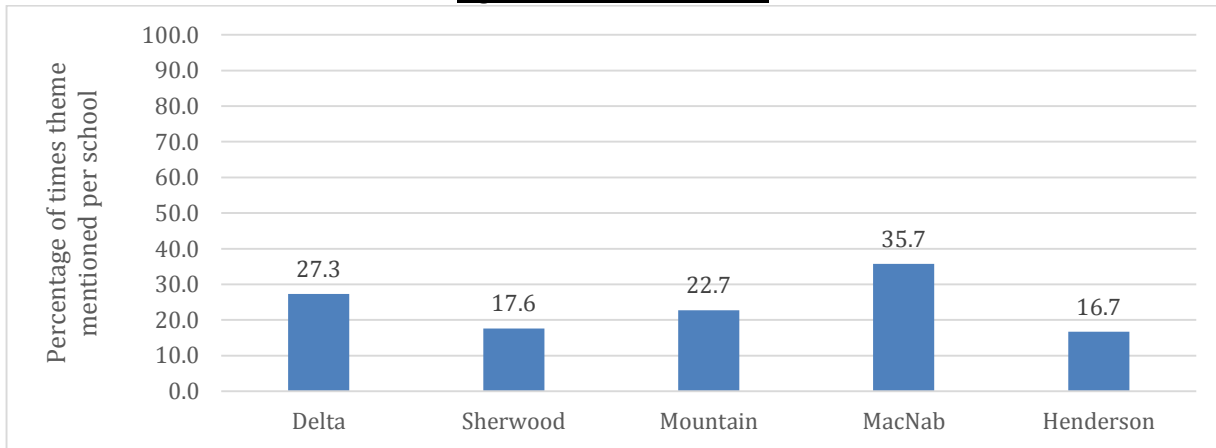
Figure 3. Academic Programming



Highlights of comments (number in brackets indicates the frequency in which the comment was made by students):

- Integration activities helped school communities come together (e.g., Camp Henderson, Pep Rally and Dances, Whole school trips and events, recognition of past at award ceremonies and graduation) (10 comments)
- Great teachers: enthusiastic, friendly and helpful (6)
- Continuity of programming (e.g., Wilson, Empower, Bump) was very helpful (5)
- Moving staff with students in key areas was helpful (e.g., VP, guidance, student success, mentoring EAs; 5)

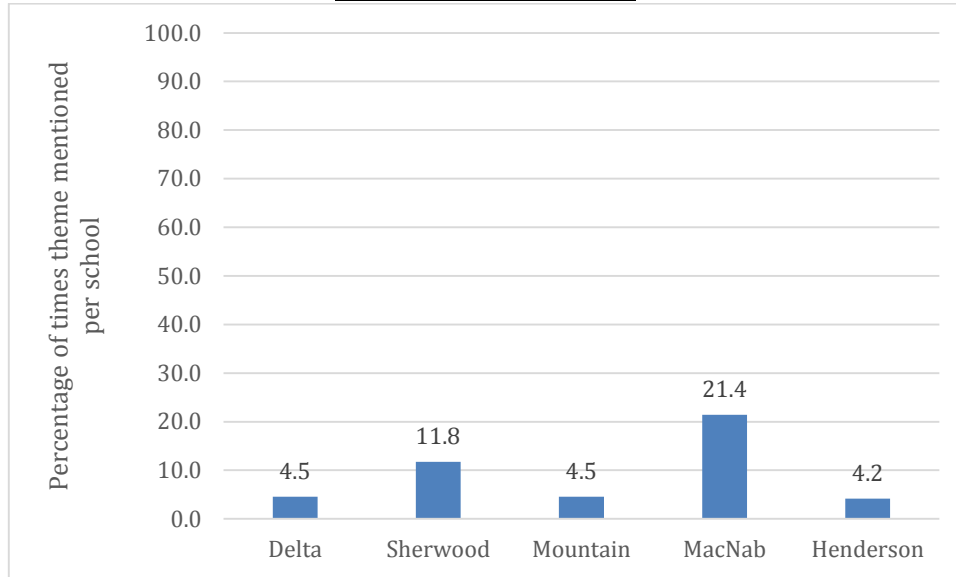
Figure 4. Communication



Highlights of comments (number in brackets indicates the frequency in which the comment was made by students):

- Have a 5 year plan or a big picture plan that is communicated well in advance of any movement and stick with it (too many unexpected and unexplained changes; 10 comments)
- Communicate as much as possible. Make sure front line workers (office staff) have answers or know where to go to get answers to students' questions. Encourage office staff to welcome students and address their questions/problems/requests (8)

- Encourage staff to avoid referring to students as a group from another school (i.e. “the Parkview students”, “the Hill Park students”; 3)
- Recognize that all parents and students do not have access to web based communications. Communicate in a variety of ways so all are included (2)

Figure 5. Transportation

Highlights of comments (number in brackets indicates the frequency in which the comment was made by students):

- During the beginning of the year, HSR bussing was problematic due to not having enough buses at peak times, buses being full and passing by students waiting at bus stops (3)
- Access to bus passes and process for obtaining promised bus passes was unclear and inefficient (3)
- School staff was not sure how to resolve transportation issues (2)

Conclusions and Recommendations: Student Voice Forums

Students from all schools reported feelings of success and accomplishment. Overall, they felt that the school communities have come together and are forming new school identities. They also report that incidents of bullying, isolation and one group not welcoming another have lessened. Students reported having made new connections to teachers, sports teams, co-curricular activities and friends. Many are proud of their academic success and are looking forward to graduation. Students previously attending Mountain Secondary reported that they have improved attendance as a result of the provision of school buses. Students expressed appreciation for the supportive teachers and administrators who made them feel welcome and included in activities. They valued the special events that schools organized; these helped break down the barriers between students from various locations. Students like the wider range of course offerings available at their new school sites. They identified being able to access courses at their level of study as a positive outcome of the move to their new location.

Students put forward the following recommendations to guide the work of future Accommodation Review Committees:

- If you promise something, follow through – otherwise don't promise it
- Value and respect the past
- Be careful of too much change all at once – new school and new educational initiatives (i.e., iPads) was overwhelming for both students and staff

- Be inclusive in your communication methods; Communicate as much as possible and in as many ways as possible
- Make sure front line workers are aware of the transition plan, know the answers to questions or can respond to questions from students and parents in a timely manner

Parent and Community Voice

Method

HWDSB invited community members, HWDSB staff and Trustees, members of Accommodation Review Committees (ARCs) and parents/guardians/caregivers of students who experienced school transitions, to provide feedback on the transition process. Data were gathered through an online survey and in-person feedback sessions, which were held on June 2nd and 3rd at Delta Secondary and Nora Henderson Secondary Schools. Trained facilitators scribed the data from the in-person sessions. Data were coded from common themes.

Findings

A total of 44 responses were received on the online survey. Majority of responses were received from HWDSB staff or ARC member (N= 26, 84%), while 6 (16%) responses were received from parents/guardians/caregivers of students who experienced a school transition during 2014-2015. Approximately 40 participants attended the open forum feedback sessions. There was a balanced representation from the invited groups: parents, ARC committee members, and HWDSB staff. Data from open-ended questions on the survey and data gathered from the in-person sessions were amalgamated and analyzed for common themes, while numerical data from the on-line survey are presented separately.

Theme: Academic Programming

Question	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree/Agree	Total Responses
There are adequate choices of programs to choose from	30.4	30.4%	39.2%	23
The programming offered are appropriate for students who are transitioning	34.8%	21.7%	43.5%	23
Students have sufficient opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities	30.5%	26.1%	43.4%	23

As shown in the table above, although majority of respondents endorsed the ‘*Strongly Agree/Agree*’ category to questions regarding adequacy and appropriateness of academic programming for students, a similar percentage of respondents also endorsed the ‘*Strongly Disagree/Disagree*’ and ‘*Neutral*’ response options. This indicates that while the programming might have been appropriate for some students, it may have not met the needs of all students.

Feedback gathered through the in-person sessions and through the open-ended questions echoed this pattern. Specifically, there was a general theme of concern around the need for additional programming supports such as staff training in Empower, Wilson and Bump Math, Educational Assistants in the classroom, and the availability of appropriately levelled learning materials. Respondents also indicated in the case of student moving from vocational schools to composite schools, the academic programming required extensive modification to meet students’ needs.

On the other hand, respondents also reported several areas of success with regard to academic programming. For example, respondents commented on the sense of mastery that students felt from being able to do “regular” work

with less support as opposed to the highly modified expectations they had experienced at their previous schools. Respondents also shared broad support for specialized programming such as Empower and Wilson for grade 9, and the desire for these supports to continue past grade 9/10.

Theme: Social Connections

Question	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree/Agree	Total Responses
students are supported in establishing new relationships with school staff	30.4%	8.7%	60.8%	23
students are supported in establishing new relationships with his/her peers	21.7%	34.8%	43.4%	23

As shown in the table above, 60.8% of respondents endorsed the '*Strongly Agree/Agree*' category with regard to students being well supported in establishing new relationships with school staff. A mixed pattern of response is observed with regard to the extent to which respondents felt that students were supported in establishing new relationships with peers with 43.4% endorsing the '*Strongly Agree/Agree*' category while the remaining percentage were mixed between "*Strongly Disagree/Disagree*" and the "*Neutral*" response option.

Feedback gathered through the in-person sessions and through the open-ended questions indicated that respondents felt favorably with regard to the type of support students received, and the extent to which they established new relationships. For example, most respondents recognized that after some early challenges, students were well integrated into the life of their new school having established new friendships and the uptake of extracurricular activities. There was also a recognition that developing a welcoming environment was critical to the successful transition (i.e., "*it's not about curriculum...it's about belonging*"). Respondents also indicated an appreciation of having teachers and key staff members move with students to new locations: for example, 'it was huge to have our mentoring EA come with us', 'it was helpful for students to find familiar faces in key areas (i.e. guidance counsellors, teachers, administrators)'. Overall, respondents recognized the efforts of staff and school administration to bring students together and honour the past 'we had awards...their past was included', 'grads can pick their own tassel colours and they changed the gown colour'.

A recommendation for future planning involved communicating student needs to staff who are not familiar with them to best support with the transition (e.g., 'staff was very supportive of the students who were coming in (but there were) many individual issues that had to be addressed and we didn't know where to get help').

Theme: Communication

Question	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree/Agree	Total Responses
we received the needed information regarding the move	34.8%	43.5%	21.7%	23
the information received was accurate	39.1%	26.1%	34.8%	23
we received the information in a timely manner	27.2%	50.0%	22.7%	22
we were given opportunities to express concerns	30.4%	26.1%	43.4%	23
we were given opportunities to ask questions	40.9%	13.6%	45.4%	22

As shown in the table above, respondents' feedback with regard to communication was mixed with majority of respondents endorsing both the "*Strongly Disagree/Disagree*" option, the "*Strongly Agree/Agree*" option, and the "*Neutral*" option at best. Likewise, feedback from the in-person and open-ended survey questions showed that communication was an area of concern for respondents. One area of concern was access to correct information. For example, respondents noted the importance of front line workers having the required information 'people at the front desk need to know what's going on...parents got one piece of information but then talked with others who didn't know what was going on', 'we sought communication (but it was) not always clear'. The theme of consistency and transparency of process emerged: '(we) need consistency in message – where are kids going to school? The board kept changing their mind', 'concern from students that things keep changing "I think the whole process needs to be more transparent to all"'.

There were also multiple mentions around the theme of transportation: "communication about transportation was not clear, nor were there opportunities to really raise concerns so they could be addressed", '(transportation) was a huge nightmare', 'it was not clear who would get a bus pass', 'things were not reported to transportation and they didn't get back to parents until Friday (before the start of the school year)', 'many (transportation) questions, fewer answers...made it difficult for staff to help parents and students', "the transportation issues are still really not resolved").

What might have made the transition smoother? (N=83)

- Respondents most often ranked *support in resolving problems as soon as they came up* as the first or second top support that would have made the move smoother, *more regular communication from the school*, *supports for social connections with staff and peers*, *providing programming that is appropriate for the students level and support around school attendance*, were mentioned almost equally as required supportive methods
- Respondents gave examples of methods to improve the problem solving process: 'An exit package including *Have you thought about* items or (a pamphlet with) *Go to if you have questions* would have been helpful', 'as a parent there needs to be a better layered approach regarding how information gets out to people...even for students – what about something like Remind101 – this could help keep students on track'
- Respondents cited the need for patience and flexibility when dealing with transition based problems beyond the student's control: 'teachers sometimes don't see the big picture and think kids are late for wrong reasons (discussion regarding bus scheduling issues)'
- There was a general theme expressed around building readiness: "having the building 'move in' ready as opposed to still under construction", '(regarding building preparation) it's such a big deal...we should be ready', 'it was messy, yes, but much of it was in bins – it was messy but not unsafe', 'kids said they needed signs and maps'

What are you most proud of? (N=51)

- Respondents most often ranked *academic success* and *connecting with an adult mentor* as the first or second element that they are proud of when they reflected on their son/daughter's success at transitioning to their new school. Making *new friends* was the next most identified element mentioned.
- Respondents also noted the positive impact of staff: "(students) had many teachers from (the) old school to help with transition", 'they have made connections it was hoped they would: teachers, friends', '(students have) established good connections with student success and guidance'
- There was a general theme expressed around consolidation of school culture and the creation of a new identity while respecting the past: '(we) used to do things a certain way...but now we are creating a new way', "graduation honoured the past of each student group", "(we are) creating an accepting new community"

What supports are needed now to help students achieve their goals? (N=68)

- Respondents' most often ranked *Provide information about post-secondary options for my son/daughter* as the first or second element that would help support student's reaching their goals at their new school.

Providing *information about community agencies and community programs* that help student's transition beyond high school were also mentioned as important elements.

- Other required supports mentioned were: “caring adult known to student”, “appropriate programming and purposeful staffing”, “support staff in schools”, ‘more of a targeted support for those students that haven’t transitioned well’, ‘welcoming more community mentorship and support to provide pathways - welcome families to learn (about) this as well as students’.
- A theme emerged around support for transitioning teachers: ‘maybe have a staff checklist’, ‘what are the rules regarding having people in a building when there are still construction things happening. Are there contingency plans?’, ‘we feel like we are working with kids and supporting them on a shoestring budget’, ‘students require a lot of follow up, (it is) exhausting to stay on top of the kids and their progress or lack of’, ‘safety concerns in the shops and needing extra eyes/hands’, ‘what programs were at Parkview and how do they come here?’, ‘need to assess to understand where students are at’, “you must also support the staff in the schools with this change - staffs in closing schools often feel isolated in their new buildings so it is difficult to imagine how students might feel.”

What other information that might be helpful for us to know about how to best support students that move from one school to another?

- ‘Look at what programs are working in our schools and carry it forward to other schools’
- ‘Include student voice each step of the way’
- “Meet with people and allow them to voice their opinion in a way that they can access. Staged meetings where people pretended to listen only angered students and their parents”
- Transitional activities should start early and be frequent: “Allow for more opportunities for the students of both schools to come together more often to build relationships and increase positive school climate.”

Conclusions and Recommendations: Parent & Community Sessions

Gathering timely and accurate information in order to effectively plan for best meeting the needs of our school communities is a critical element in developing effective future processes and procedures around school closures. The Hamilton Wentworth District School Board is grateful to those parents, staff members, students, and educational stakeholders who completed the on-line survey and took the time to participate in the feedback sessions in order to provide us with this information.

There is much to be gained by celebrating our successes and honestly facing our challenges. Key learning's from this study include the following points:

- Taking the time to develop and nurture a positive and safe school environment is essential. This happens when processes are transparent, clearly communicated, and receptive to stakeholder input and refinement.
- Having informed front line workers who are easily accessible and report back in a timely manner is a critical component of the transition process.
- Ongoing and multiple forms of communication around essential elements are required. These communications should be clear and concise while offering reliable contact information for those who require additional direction.
- Big picture thinking should be conveyed well in advance of transition activities in order to prepare students, staff, and parents for upcoming events and to help them understand the fundamental processes associated with school closures.
- At the board level, a framework for blending schools should be developed that outlines effective processes, pre-transition activities, and checklists for staff and students. This document should include the valuable information provided by staff, parents, and students represented in this report.

While school closure and amalgamation are not easy events, the staff of HWDSB can take pride in their efforts and success in lessening the stress and anxiety of the process. All stakeholders who responded either on-line, at feedback sessions or through student voice forums noted the positive impact of school board staff, who went above and beyond to help both students, parents, and their colleagues make the sometimes anxious move to new locations. Their dedication to their students and co-workers is noted and appreciated.