



**Program Committee**

Thursday, October 13, 2016

Room 340-D

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558

Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

**AGENDA: 5:30 p.m.**

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Hill Park Report
4. Westmount Secondary School Self-directed Self-paced (SDSP) Approach
5. Adjournment



## EXECUTIVE REPORT TO PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**TO:** PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Manny Figueiredo, Director of Education

**DATE:** October 13, 2016

**PREPARED BY:** Executive Council

**RE:** Hill Park Update

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Action

Monitoring

### Background:

At the January 14, 2016 Finance and Facilities Committee meeting Board staff was directed to bring a report back to Finance and Facilities Committee in February 2016 that considers a 15 year plan that considers relocating all or portion of Community and Continuing Education programs, Alternative Education programs the Archives to Hill Park as well as pursuing community partnerships. The report should consider:

- space requirements and associated renovation costs
- operational costs and benefits
- additional parking requirements; and
- possible funding sources.

The recommendation from Finance & Facilities is that the Board relocate all or portions of Community and Continuing Education programs, Alternative Education programs and any other Board programs as appropriate to Hill Park contingent on:

- Results of a feasibility study (will return to Finance & Facilities Committee) and
- Results of consultation with affected parties (presented to Program Committee)

In addition, Board staff should be directed to engage with community partners that would be appropriate leases for the space.

### 15 Year Plan - Space Requirements and Associated Renovation Costs

#### Community and Continuing Education

Based on a preliminary review, continuing education will require approximately 23 classrooms for adult learning, a computer lab for correspondence courses and administrative spaces for all CCE staff.

Based on the fact that Hill Park is a former secondary school, it is anticipated that there would be little in the form of renovations required other than high and urgent needs.

#### Alternative Education

There are important things to consider when thinking about relocating any system alternative education classes. Some students are successful in an alternative program because of the alternative programming, some students are successful because of the alternative location and some students are successful because of both. For those students requiring an alternative location, Hill Park may not be the optimal location for these students. Board staff will contemplate this when making a final decision with regards to how many classes should be moved to Hill Park and feedback from the students, families and staff will be taken into consideration.

Currently the estimate is that alternative education would require 3 classrooms, a gymnasium, a hospitality classroom, an art classroom, and office space.

There would be little in the form of renovations required for regular classrooms other than high and urgent needs. Some of the specialized classrooms may need minor upgrades. In addition, it is likely that the Board will want to separate the alternative learning space from the CCE and other spaces. This would be an additional cost.

### **Other Board Programs**

Upon preliminary review, with the closure of Mountain, there are a number of Section 23 classes that will require a new home. Hill Park would be a realistic location for these classes. There are 5 Section 23 classes that could move to Hill Park. There would be little in the form of renovations required for regular classrooms other than high and urgent needs.

Currently, the Archives are at Vincent Massey and utilize approximately 8,500 square feet. As the vision of the HWDSB Archives continues to evolve, future operation as a museum open for school visits is under consideration. Centrally locating the Archives would support this programming aspect.

### **Total Space Requirements Compared to Space Available**

In total, the above requests total:

- 31 regular classrooms
- A computer lab
- Hospitality classroom
- Art classroom
- Office space for approximately 10-15 employees
- 8,500 square feet of archive space

The current layout of Hill Park has the following:

Space Type	Count
Art Room	1
Auditorium	1
Classroom	37
Commercial Room	2
Computer Room	2
Exercise Room	1
Family Studies	3
Gymnasium	1
Gymnasium Multiple	3
Library Resource Centre	1
Music Rm (Instrumental)	1
Other	2
Science Laboratory	2
Seminar Room	1
Special Ed.	2
Staff Work Rm./Lounge	10
Technical/Vocational	6
Grand Total	76

Therefore, Hill Park has more than enough room. A feasibility study will review the best location for the Board programs and section off the unused space so that it can be leased to a community partner.

## **A. Feedback from Principal of System Alternative Education (SAE) and Principal of Community and Continuing Education (CCE)**

### **Opportunities:**

- better facility in terms of ability to offer a wider range of engaging program opportunities for students (access to a gym & full kitchen as examples), space to potentially involve community partners and an overall environment that better suits secondary students (e.g., Vincent Massey and Red Hill, the present locations for CCE and SAE were designed as elementary buildings)
- the HP site also provides a suitable space for our CTC Section 23 agency partners to operate their programs in a well-suited location after the closure of Mountain SS
- a location that is more easily accessible by bus than Red Hill-with the hub at Limeridge, it is a single bus from almost every part of the city
- a space that was built to accommodate adult age students with task specific rooms such as offices that were built as offices, science classrooms, computer rooms, libraries, not spaces that get converted into an office and were not designed for people to sit in all day
- infrastructure such as electrical outlets and adult sized lockers, water fountains are built for running classes for adult age students
- some room to grow programs
- rooms like the auditorium can be used for Strings lessons and concerts and can reduce rental permits on other schools
- there was a child care on site in the past, there could be opportunity to work with city to open those spaces up again
- with an elevator, ramps, presumably door openers and washrooms, Hill Park is more accessible than Red Hill

### **Some Potential Challenges for Consideration:**

- St Charles (HWCDSB Adult and Alternative Education Program) is located on East 5th street which is not very far from Hill Park's location; the two adult education centres in the city are therefore very close to each other
- The parking at Hill Park may not be enough to accommodate the added staff and all the adult students; there is no street parking in the area so we are limited to parking in the school lot.
- We need to be mindful that our community partners are providing supplementary programming for our students as opposed to competing for them; community programs for students should be considered as additional support and/or transitional in nature
- Given Hill Park's close proximity to St Charles and the Immigrant Women's Centre, we need to check with the LINC funder to ensure they will support programs being so close to one another and if they will approve us continuing the program for us
- CCE also is a 12 month operation so a move in August might work for SAE, but not for CCE unless we close classes in August for a move; this will impact funding. We will need a well-organized plan for the move that ideally has phases if we are to move and not interrupt our summer operations.

### **B. Stakeholder Feedback:**

Staff and Student Feedback – from E-Best – will be provided to the Committee at the meeting for review.

## A. Purpose of Consultation

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is presently proposing the relocation of all or portions of our Community and Continuing Education (CCE) programs, System Alternative Education programs, our Archives and any other Board programs as appropriate, to the presently vacant Hill Park Secondary School. This decision is contingent on the results of a feasibility study and the results of consultation with affected parties - current staff and students.

In addition, Board staff will be engaging with community partners that would be appropriate to lease other spaces within the building. HWDSB asked students and staff involved in System Alternative Education and Community and Continuing Education (CCE) to provide feedback on the proposed change. Feedback could be provided by completing an online survey, and/or by mailing or emailing written correspondence to HWDSB.

## B. Respondent Characteristics

The online survey ran from September 30<sup>th</sup> to October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and garnered a total of **65** responses; all responses were received online. The majority of responses came from HWDSB staff members (N=39, 60%) while HWDSB students provided 40% of the responses (N=26). 74.2% of responses were received from respondents involved with the Community and Continuing Education (CCE) program, while 25.8% of responses were received from respondents involved with the System Alternative Education program.

## C. Limitations of the Consultation

Several limitations of the consultation are noteworthy. First, as a small number of HWDSB's stakeholders completed the survey, the responses summarized may not be representative of opinions of the larger population of HWDSB staff and students. Second, the total number of responses should not be equated with total number of unique respondents as it is possible that the same person may have submitted the survey multiple times. It is therefore recommended that the results summarized herein are interpreted within the bounds of these limitations.

## D. Summary of Findings

HWDSB staff members and students were invited to provide feedback on the following 6 areas:

- (1) Please tell us about what you like most about the System Alternative Education program being relocated to the Hill Park location
- (2) Please tell us about any concerns that you may have about the System Alternative Education program being relocated to the Hill Park location
- (3) Please tell us what you like most about the location that the Community and Continuing Education (CCE) program is currently offered at
- (4) Please tell us about what you like most about the Community and Continuing Education (CCE) program being relocated to the Hill Park location
- (5) Please tell us about any concerns that you may have about the Community and Continuing Education (CCE) program being relocated to the Hill Park location
- (6) Please tell us how HWDSB can support you through this transition

**Respondents were asked to share what they like most about the location that the System Alternative Education program is currently offered at.**

Majority of respondents indicated that they appreciated the proximity to home (42.3%), that the current location is easy to get to by car or transit (38.5%) and they also like the programs that are offered (34.6%).

Answer	%	Count
<b>Proximity to home</b>	42.3%*	11
<b>It is easy to get to by car or transit</b>	38.5%	10
<b>I like the programs that are offered</b>	34.6%	9
<b>It is a safe location</b>	23.0%	6
<b>Other (please explain:)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not like the current location (N=2)</li> <li>• Being able to travel between HWDSB sites with little time (N=1)</li> <li>• Appreciate the small size of the program in that it supports students (N=1)</li> <li>• Appreciate the small size of the current site (N=1)</li> </ul>	19.2%	5
<b>It is close to employment and/or volunteer opportunities</b>	11.5%	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

*\*Across all tables, the % may not total 100% as respondents could endorse multiple response options.*

## Respondents were asked to share what they like most about the System Alternative Education program being relocated to the Hill Park location.

Majority of respondents indicated that they appreciated that the new location will be easy to get to by car or transit (55.5%) and that it will be a safe location (44.4%). A large percentage of respondents (51.8%) also shared additional comments which are summarized in the table below:

Answer	%	Count
<b>It is easy to get to by car or transit</b>	55.5%	15
<b>It is a safe location</b>	44.4%	12
<b>Proximity to home</b>	29.6%	8
<b>It is close to employment and/or volunteer opportunities</b>	25.9%	7
<b>Other (please explain:)</b>	51.8%	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not support the move (N= 4)</li> <li>• Possibility of being able to work with students in a private space (N= 3)</li> <li>• Better space for specialized staff to run treatment groups (N= 2)</li> <li>• Better access to shops and gyms (N= 1)</li> <li>• Better space for specialized staff to meet with families (N= 1)</li> <li>• Better facilities to support student learning (N= 1)</li> <li>• Increased sense of community and belonging (N= 1)</li> <li>• Being able to provide more creating programming (N= 1)</li> <li>• Appreciate the opossibility of having more programs in the same location (N= 1)</li> <li>• Parking will be better (N= 1)</li> <li>• The bigger space (N= 1)</li> <li>• More reliable facility (e.g., heat and air conditioning quality; (N= 1)</li> </ul>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

## Respondents were asked to share any concerns that may have about the System Alternative Education program being relocated to the Hill Park location.

Majority of respondents (52.2%) provided several concerns and suggestions on relocating the System Alternative Education to the Hill Park location; these comments are summarized in the table below.

Answer	%	Count
<b>Other (please explain:)</b> <b>Concerns:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No concerns with the move (N= 4)</li> <li>Concern expressed that the new site will not be easily accessible for ESL students who are local to the Red Hill area; these students will not travel to the new location (N=1)</li> <li>Concern expressed that there will be an increase in the number of students which may result in more negative interaction between students (N= 1)</li> <li>Concern expressed that students will need to travel to multiple locations (N= 1)</li> <li>Concern expressed that students have been asked to relocate again and this additional move will cause stress (N= 1)</li> </ul> <b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please provide private space for specialized staff to meet with students/families (e.g., social workers; N= 2)</li> <li>Please ensure that there will be therapeutic space for student who may experiencing difficulties (e.g., quiet spaces; N= 1)</li> <li>Please ensure facilities be upgraded to better support student success and morale; currently students feel they do not receive facilities comparable with other schools (N= 1)</li> <li>Question raised as to whether there will be sufficient enrolment to populate the classrooms (N= 1)</li> </ul>	52.2%	12
<b>How long it will take to get there</b>	39.1%	9
<b>Safety of the location</b>	17.4%	4
<b>Cost of transportation</b>	13.0%	3
<b>Whether the programs or courses that I need will be offered</b>	13.0%	3
<b>How close it is to employment and/or volunteer opportunities</b>	0.00%	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>



## Respondents were asked to share what they like most about the location that the Community and Continuing Education (CCE) program is currently offered at.

Majority of respondents indicated that they appreciate the programs currently offered by CCE (62.5%), they appreciate that the current location is easy to get to by car or transit (54.2%), that it is a safe location (52.0%) and they appreciate the proximity to respondents' home (47.9%).

Answer	%	Count
<b>I like the programs that are offered</b>	62.5%	30
<b>It is easy to get to by car or transit</b>	54.2%	26
<b>It is a safe location</b>	52.0%	25
<b>Proximity to home</b>	47.9%	23
<b>Other (please explain:)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not like location; location is inconvenient (N= 4)</li> <li>• The location will be easy to get to for students living in the east end students (N= 1)</li> <li>• The location will be easy to commute from to other HWDSB locations (N= 1)</li> <li>• Concern expressed that most of HWDSB's stakeholders will find the location difficult to travel to and find (N= 1)</li> <li>• It is a positive place (N= 1)</li> <li>• Pleased with the staff (N= 1)</li> <li>• The location will have a good population of ESL students (N= 1)</li> <li>• The location will be easy to access for students in the ESL program who live in the area of RED Hill (N= 1)</li> <li>• Responent pleased with the largers classrooms which provide opportunity to "team-teach" with two classes of students instead of one (N= 2)</li> </ul>	25.0%	12
<b>It is close to employment and/or volunteer opportunities</b>	6.3%	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

## Respondents were asked to share what they like most about the Community and Continuing Education (CCE) program being relocated to the Hill Park location.

Majority of respondents indicated that they appreciate that the new location will be easy to get to by car or transit (71.4%), the proximity to respondents' home (47.9%), and that it will be a safe location (52.0%).

Answer	%	Count
<b>It is easy to get to by car or transit</b>	71.4%	35
<b>Proximity to home</b>	53.0%	26
<b>It is a safe location</b>	53.0%	26
<b>It is close to employment and/or volunteer opportunities</b>	26.5%	13
<b>Other (please explain:)</b>	22.5%	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not approve (N= 2)</li> <li>• More classrooms (N= 1)</li> <li>• More reliable heating/air conditions (N= 1)</li> <li>• Bigger space (N= 1)</li> <li>• The new location will be central (N= 1)</li> <li>• Uncertain on impact to ESL students (N= 1)</li> <li>• All programs housed in the same site is a positive (N= 1)</li> <li>• Location is accessible to students who will need to take only one bus (N= 1)</li> <li>• Opportunity that all programs will be able to expand (N= 1)</li> <li>• Pleased that parking will improve (N= 1)</li> </ul>		
	<b>Total</b>	49

**Respondents were asked to share any concerns that they may have about the Community and Continuing Education (CCE) program being relocated to the Hill Park location.**

Majority of respondents (41.5%) provided several concerns and suggestions on relocating CCE to the Hill Park location; these comments are summarized in the table below.

Answer	%	Count
<b>Other (please explain:)</b> <b>Concerns:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No concerns (N= 8)</li> <li>• Concern expressed with the age of the building (N= 2)</li> <li>• Concern expressed that not all students will be able to commute to Hill Park (N= 1)</li> <li>• Concern expressed that there will be too many students at the new location (N= 1)</li> <li>• Concern expressed that the current ESL population will not attend at the new location (N= 1)</li> <li>• Concern expressed that commuting to multiple sites for some staff will be very inconvenient (N= 1)</li> </ul> <b>Suggestions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestion to provide students near Red Hill with transportation support (N= 1)</li> <li>• Suggestion to ensure that the classroom sizes will match with what is <b>currently provided so that staff can deliver the same program in the same manner (N= 1)</b></li> </ul>	41.5%	17
<b>How long it will take to get there</b>	39.0%	16
<b>Cost of transportation</b>	17.1%	7
<b>Safety of the location</b>	12.2%	5
<b>Whether the programs or courses that I need will be offered</b>	12.2%	5
<b>How close it is to employment and/or volunteer opportunities</b>	2.4%	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

## Respondents were asked how HWDSB can support them through this transition.

Majority of respondents indicated that HWDSB can support them through the transition by providing up-to-date communication on the transition (90.6%) and by clarifying any impact of the relocation on the courses and programs that will be offered (45.3%).

Answer	%	Count
<b>Provide up-to-date communication on the transition</b>	90.6%	48
<b>Clarify any impact on courses or programs offered</b>	45.3%	24
<b>Other (please explain:)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please include staff in the entire planning process (e.g., planning of classrooms and equipment locations, offices, security, etc.; N= 2)</li> <li>• Please obtain feedback from staff on the planning process (e.g., which programs are offered, where classrooms will be located, etc.; N= 1)</li> <li>• Please ensure to obtain feedback from students (N= 1)</li> <li>• Provide resources and support to pack and move (N= 1)</li> <li>• Please clarify whether the same teachers will transition to Hill Park (N= 1)</li> <li>• Please ensure to involve staff in the decision-making of the facility design to ensure that staff and students have what is needed to continue to deliver high quality programming (N= 1)</li> <li>• Please clarify whether there will be employment services offered at the new location (N= 1)</li> <li>• Please ensure technology is well transported and connected (N= 1)</li> <li>• Please provide modern classroom space with needed technology (N= 1)</li> </ul>	20.6%	11
	Total	53

# HWDSB Program Committee – Executive Summary

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## Topic: Westmount Secondary School Self-directed Self-paced Approach

As a system school, Westmount Secondary School (WSS) students strive to develop skills in the areas of goal-setting, effective time management, and independent learning skills in a self-directed, self-paced learning environment. These students attend from schools across the HWDSB. The graduation requirements and courses offered are consistent with all of our secondary schools. Westmount Secondary School is open to all students in grade 9 in our district who choose self-directed self-paced learning. WSS does not offer any specialized programming leading to post-secondary accreditation or acceptance. Colleges and universities look at student marks for credits in grades 11 and 12 on the Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diploma and all schools are weighted equally across the province for acceptance into post-secondary institutions. Achievement is measured on a common curriculum and regulated through the Ministry of Education.

It is important to note the following:

1. Westmount is not a program. It is a whole school approach to Self-Directed Self-Paced (SDSP) learning offered at one location.
2. The approach cannot be partially operated within an existing school (dual track) where some students are on an SDSP timetable and others are on a traditional timetable. This would limit the number of courses available to those in SDSP and those in traditionally delivered courses.
3. Opening of this approach as a whole school in another location would force some within that school community to move to another location if they were not interested in SDSP learning. (i.e. those wanting traditional school model).

### **Student Achievement Results – Past 5 years**

The graduation rate at WSS has consistently been at or above the Board average over the past 5 years. The most recent Board Graduation Rate is 80%.

### **Equity of Access:**

#### **A. Westmount and the HWDSB Secondary Program Strategy:**

While Westmount Secondary School does offer a variety of choices to students who attend, it does not align with the Secondary Program Strategy Guiding Principles in the following ways:

- With 85-90% of the students in academic programming, the school offers certain pathways to a limited degree - apprenticeship, college, the community and the workplace to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, while the university pathway is offered most often based on student choice
- The limited number of pathways also limits the diversity within the school community
- Students attending Westmount instead of their home school may impact the home school's overall enrolment, reducing this to below 1,000 students and consequently reducing the ability to offer a wide range of programs; furthermore, reduced enrolment in the home school may also result in a reduction in the availability of some human and material resources

#### **B. Personalized Learning Opportunities in other Secondary Schools:**

All other secondary schools in the system offer opportunities for personalized, flexible programming to meet the individual learning needs of their students through the following:

- eLearning courses
- personalized timetables
- reach ahead summer programs
- school based alternative education courses
- literacy and math intervention programs
- grade 9 and 10 enrichment programs as preparation for IB



## EXECUTIVE REPORT TO PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**TO:** PROGRAM COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Manny Figueiredo, Director of Education

**DATE:** October 13, 2017

**PREPARED BY:** Executive Council

**RE:** Westmount Secondary School Self-directed Self-paced (SDSP) Approach

Action Monitoring 

Finance and Facilities Committee – February 4, 2016 **RESOLUTION #16-18:** Trustee Van Geffen, seconded by Trustee Beattie, moved: That the report of the Finance and Facilities Committee – February 4, 2016 be approved, including:

### Westmount Update Report

- a) That this report be referred to the Program Committee to review the equity of access of the current self-directed self-paced, program at Westmount and the viability of expanding the program; and
- b) That staff bring back a report to initiate the planned boundary review for the secondary mountain schools & that staff identify secondary schools across the rest of the system that could accommodate a satellite self-paced option.

### Key Points:

1. Westmount is not a program. It is a whole school approach to Self-Directed Self-Paced (SDSP) learning offered at one location.
2. The approach cannot be partially operated within an existing school (dual track) where some students are on an SDSP timetable and others are on a traditional timetable. This would limit the number of courses available to those in SDSP and those in traditionally delivered courses. In a dual track school, this would be an even greater challenge if programming for 2 smaller cohorts on a different schedule. Currently all students follow the same model and timetable at WSS, however, having some students following a traditional model while others were self-directed (a “dual-track” model) would not provide students with sufficient course offerings.
3. Opening of this approach as a whole school in another location would force some within that school community to move to another location if they were not interested in SDSP learning. (i.e. those wanting traditional school model).

### Background:

#### What is Self-Directed Self-Paced Learning?

As a system school, Westmount Secondary School (WSS) students strive to develop skills in the areas of goal-setting, effective time management, and independent learning skills in a self-directed, self-paced learning environment. These students attend from schools across the HWDSB. The graduation requirements and courses offered are consistent with all of our secondary schools.

This SDSP concept began in 1990 at a time when enrolment in our other secondary schools was relatively high and a variety of course options were available in all locations. With SDSP learning, students are expected to manage their own learning time and determine with teachers how to demonstrate their learning. Signs of readiness for self-directed learning include being: autonomous, organised, self-disciplined, able to communicate effectively and able to

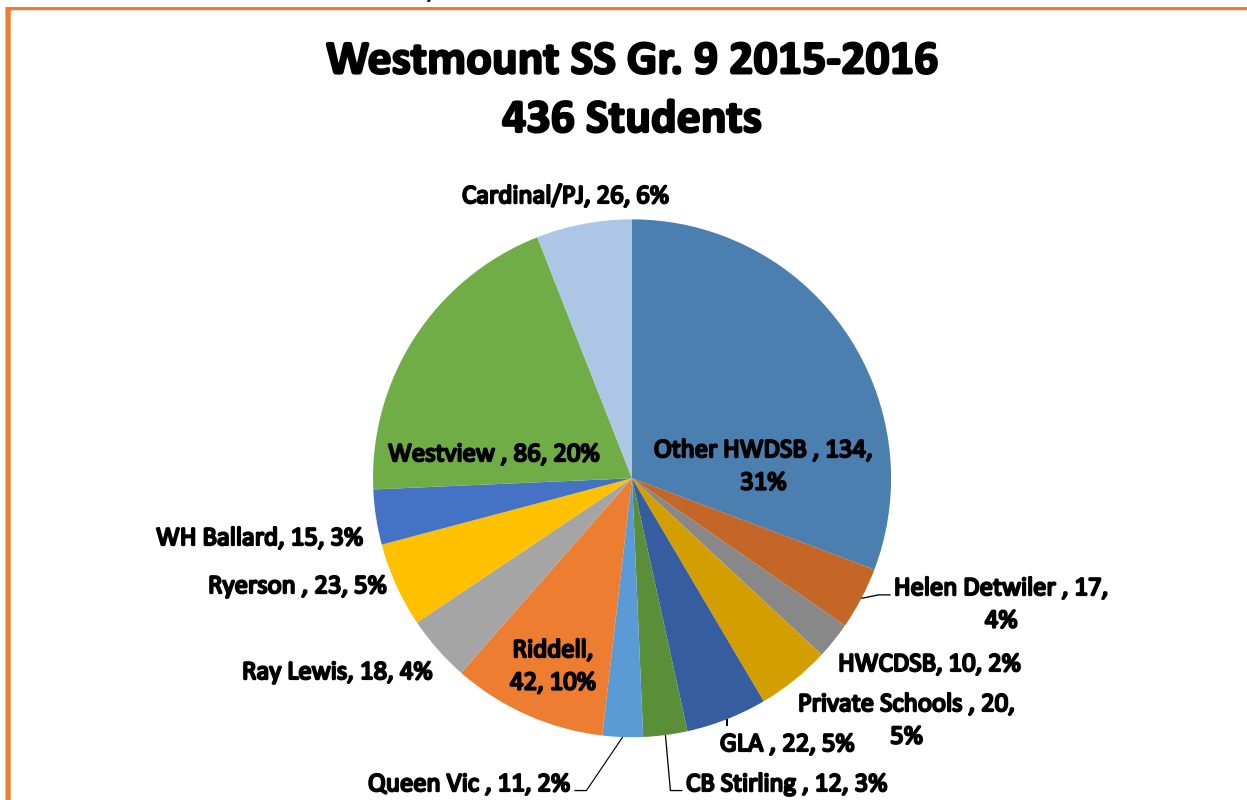
accept constructive feedback and engage in self-evaluation and self-reflection. Initially this approach was seen as suitable for only students with academic strengths and was often viewed as “independent study” due to the reliance on a series of Learning Guides (independent Booklets) that students were expected to follow. The reliance on booklets and students progressing “lock – step” through curriculum expectations is counter to recent educational research and effective pedagogy. Recently over the past few years current practices at WSS have started to move the teaching and learning agenda away from the use of prescriptive guides so that learning is personalized. Students’ experiences and interests are expected to be considered and learning tasks are the shared responsibility of teacher and student.

### Demographics

Westmount Secondary School is open to all students in grade 9 in our district who choose self-directed self-paced learning. Students graduate with the same credentials as in all of our secondary schools. WSS does not offer any specialized programming leading to post-secondary accreditation or acceptance. WSS does offer Advanced Placement courses which are offered in other HWDSB secondary schools. Colleges and universities look at student marks for credits in grades 11 and 12 on the Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diploma and all schools are weighted equally across the province for acceptance into post-secondary institutions. Achievement is measured on a common curriculum and regulated through the Ministry of Education.

Westmount students must provide their own transportation to and from school. Westmount does not have a catchment area; all students in HWDSB can access the school if interested in this model. Like all schools we can only accommodate the number of students for whom we have the space and resources to meet their needs. The enrollment is 1451 in September 2016 for school that has a capacity of 1155. There are currently 9 portables on site. It is not uncommon to have secondary at 120% capacity as students can be accommodated through a “double lunch period” timetable.

Westmount Intake from Elementary into Grade 9



Note: schools with fewer than 10 students enrolled do not appear in this chart. They are represented in “Other HWDSB” schools.

### Literature Search Summary – Self-Directed Learning

E-Best was requested to find and review any available research on the effectiveness of self-directed secondary school models. The thesaurus at the Education Resources Information Center ([www.ERIC.ed.gov](http://www.ERIC.ed.gov)) defines self-directed learning under the heading “**Independent Study**”, defined as “individual study, usually self-initiated, that may be directed or assisted by instructional staff through periodic consultations”. Also included under this heading are the terms Independent Learning, Individual Study (1966-1980), Self-Directed Learning, Self-Instruction, and Self-Teaching. A search of the ERIC database for “**independent study**” found 575 peer-reviewed references published between 1975 and 2015. Of these references, 76 references were focused on secondary-level education. Of these 76 references, **none focused on the effectiveness of self-paced secondary schools.**

We then reviewed information from the Canadian Coalition for Self-Directed Learning, a voluntary organization of self-directed learning schools across Canada. Like WSS, all of these operate with all students on a self-directed model. We contacted the Principal (or other contact person) at each school to inquire if they were aware of research that examined the effectiveness of self-directed learning.

To date, we have not received any information about unpublished studies that may have relevant outcome data. We did receive several responses indicating that Principals of self-directed learning were not aware of any studies that had examined the effectiveness of self-directed learning. Given the scarcity of research on self-directed learning, it may be worth examining the available data we have on our own self-directed learning approach at Westmount to determine the effectiveness of this approach.

### Student Achievement Results – Past 5 years

The graduation rate at WSS has consistently been at or above the Board average over the past 5 years. The most recent Board Graduation Rate is 80%. Along with 2014-15, the WSS graduation rate annually sits among the top 6 in the Board.

#### 2014/15 Grade 9 EQAO Math

School	Board
Applied 46%	Applied 40%
Academic 85%	Academic 81%

### Programming & Instruction

In a self-directed, self-paced learning environment students are encouraged and required to take responsibility for their own learning, to work through their credit course in sequence and at their own pace. As a system school, Westmount attracts students who strive to develop goal-setting, effective time management and independent learning skills. This supports the belief that students learn at different rates and therefore allows them to complete work at different times. It also recognizes students have differing learning styles and therefore allows students to direct various aspects of their own learning which is part of our strategy for transforming relationships, learning opportunities and environments in all of our secondary schools. Transforming Learning Everywhere (TLE) leads to greater collaboration and personalization of learning. The integration of digital tools, blended learning and the use of student voice and interests to drive learning in the classroom is emerging at Westmount as in all of our secondary schools.

Westmount does not offer special programming for gifted students. Westmount students have access to the same enriched programming offered in math and literacy at all HWDSB secondary schools. Enriched programming beyond math and literacy is offered only if there is a student need in all of our secondary schools. Like many HWDSB schools this year WSS is offering enriched programming in Math, English, Geography, History and Science. Enriched programming does not lead to additional or different course credits than a regular academic course as defined by the Ministry. Students are provided enriched tasks for their learning but it is based upon a common set of overall learning expectations and is the same in all streams (applied or academic). Currently WSS offers credits for students in all course destinations (Workplace/Open/University and College) in all curriculum areas as dictated by the needs of the students though electronic student option sheets, however the courses and pathways offered at the workplace and college level are limited based on student choice. The majority of students (approximately 85% - 90% annually) are selecting Academic level courses, with 10-15% at the Applied level, and less than 1% at the locally developed (workplace/essential) level.



This is based on students selecting grade 9 and 10 Academic Math. Comparison to the board average is as follows:

Grade 9/10 Math Courses in 2016/17	Westmount	Board
Locally Developed Math 1L and 2L	<1%	7.3%
Applied Level Math 1p and 2P	11.9%	30.8%
Academic Level Math 1D and 2D	88%	61.9%

### Carry-Over Credits

With the SDSPP approach to learning, students do not follow the usual semester system in comparison to a composite secondary school model. The entire student population begins each year with many students already partially through completing a course with the exception of students entering Grade 9 or new to the school. Students are expected to graduate within the 4 to 5 years as in all of our secondary schools. Students who complete a course in less time than the expected rate of the traditional semester may begin another course if available. If a student has begun a credit it may “carry over” into the next semester until they have had the opportunity to master learning outcomes. It is intended to allow students to “reach ahead” and accelerate their learning timeline. In this way students can earn credits in September if they had learning expectations from a course they began in April or in less than the 5 months it traditionally requires in a composite secondary school model.

2015 January	1360 carry overs at semester end	identified problem that many students who had potential to complete credits were not doing so in a timely manner
2015 June	580 carry overs	just by changing messaging and having teachers think about assessment and evaluation rather than unit completion
2016 January	503 carry overs	changed messaging in parent communications and stopped the idea of 10 units completed equaling automatic carry over; students now need to negotiate with teacher and demonstrate continual progress
2016 June	327 carry overs	mostly students who were fast tracking or students who actually need the extra time

### Flex Day

Bi – weekly throughout each semester students in Grades 9-12 have choice in which courses they will work on and what staff can best support them. (Note this is gradually introduced in Sem. 1 for Gr. 9 students). Under the Advisor Program, every student is assigned teacher who regularly meets to discuss progress, assist in planning and goal setting and ensure every student is working towards graduating on time. Flex Days are intended for students to have greater choice in how they spend their time. Students can choose to use larger blocks of time in order to accomplish tasks that may take more time or need to be completed at school.

On the day prior to the Flex Day, all students attend their Advisor and based on their progress in their courses, students will determine together how best the day be spent. Students will complete their planners for each Time Frame with the same attention to detail that they would on a regular day. Teacher Advisors check the plan, ensure that it is appropriate for the student and sign the planner, giving it approval.

On a Flex Day, students are responsible for:

- planning their Flex Day
- following their plan and working in their selected work locations
- using their time effectively
- being in attendance at school all day and reporting to each period of an attendance check

### Sign Out

Sign-out is a privilege that is extended to students who demonstrate responsibility and regular academic progress. A student may choose to work in a different supervised work location if they negotiate appropriately with their teacher. Each student is to have a specific task planned and written into the box that corresponds with the appropriate time frame. The teacher signs the box to allow the student to leave the classroom and the student proceeds immediately to his or her classroom.

## Considerations

### I. Timetabling

Currently the entire school timetable is built on students selecting courses and needs which are then aligned with staff qualifications and experience. This is the same process **in all of our secondary schools** however, since on average 85 to 90 % of students select academic level programming and are interested in more traditional compulsory credits leading to post – secondary education, this leads to limited electives being offered. Compared to a composite secondary school, this means offering twice as many compulsory courses in Science, Math and English. This is due to student demand which means these departments are larger and fewer options in the Arts, Business and other areas are required. Currently the student population allows for flexibility in including courses outside of the compulsory credits and there is a balance of other areas students can choose and are interested in taking. When enrollment falls below 600 it becomes difficult in any secondary program setting to ensure it is vibrant and appealing to a range of students by offering a range of credits in the many subject areas.

### II. Staffing

Staffing for WSS is the same as in all of our schools. We are following the same Collective Agreement and staffing procedure throughout the system. When the SDSP approach began, staff was offered the opportunity to interview for the school. Staffing is determined in the spring for the following school year in September. Challenges arise when students carry over a credit. There are limits in class size which at times does not allow students to access a course because it is at capacity. In a dual-track model you would have staff following different schedules. This presents operational challenges with the self-directed model due to Flex Days and scheduling of courses across more than one semester.

### III. Instructional Coherence

In the WSS model it is important that staff have the ability to work in a highly collaborative culture. Since many students do enter into credits at various points throughout the year, staff must be prepared to instruct a student who has completed part of the course expectations with another colleague or have a student begin a course at various times. The reliance on a model where students were expected to complete 20 booklets to work through the course content at the SDSP concept's inception has created challenges. Originally this was seen as the model for self-directed self-paced learning and became entrenched in the delivery at WSS. The "Guides" as they were developed were seen as similar to independent study which was not the intent.

In the past decade there has been a significant shift towards differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs and co-creating learning experiences with students. With TLE, personalized learning tasks are the shared responsibility of teacher and student and students' experiences and interests are considered. This is not aligned with the use of "Guides" which are teacher driven and do not consider learning styles or allow for the same level of collaboration and student responsibility for their own learning. While many of the guiding principles of self-directed self-paced learning promote this thinking, the use of "Guides" could limit rather than promote necessary skills like problem solving and critical thinking. Student-teacher 1:1 conferencing is a critical component of this work as is the Advisor model where students meet regularly with staff to ensure progress is being made.

### IV. Positive Culture and Student Well - Being

At WSS all students have chosen to participate in the model and attend this system school. Each fall, some students in Grade 9 leave Westmount and return to their home school. These numbers fluctuate yearly but it is not uncommon to see a decline of 30 to 40 students in a cohort that begins in Grade 10 from the previous school year. Some students register in the spring and do not attend or find the SDSP approach challenging and opt to return to a composite secondary program in their home school. The students who are successful at Westmount have strong learning skills and are well organised. Students demonstrate initiative, have an interest in asking questions and collaborating with teachers, are self-starters and have strong time management skills. Students must also be able to set individual goals and monitor their own progress in achieving them.

This whole school philosophy has led to a positive culture where the majority of students report feeling that they enjoy being at the school, are accepted by peers and adults and see Westmount as a friendly and welcoming place to learn. A recent 2016 survey shows that of 756 students who responded, 95% of students were feeling safe at school. Having some students follow this model while others are in the traditional day model could potentially be challenging. Some students would have sign-out privileges, could access flex days and use carry overs while others would not. There could also be challenges with supervision unless the schedules could be aligned.

**Equity of Access:****A. Westmount and the HWDSB Secondary Program Strategy:**

The HWDSB Secondary Program Strategy has the following vision and guiding principles.

- All secondary schools will be great schools
- Students will have choice within their local schools
- Expanded access for students looking for specialized programs
- All students achieving and graduating in HWDSB
  
- This is made possible by stabilizing our secondary enrolment across the system
- An underlying purpose of this strategy is to diversify our secondary school communities by providing all pathways at each schools; we aim to ensure that every HWDSB secondary school offers engaging programs for a diverse group of learners, regardless of whether they will head to an apprenticeship, college, the community, university or the workplace.
- We are reducing the number of secondary schools from 18 to 13. HWDSB's decision to close secondary schools will allow funds to be redirected from the maintenance of underused facilities to the renewal of school facilities (i.e., Secondary Facility Benchmarks).
- The remaining secondary schools are strategically located throughout the City of Hamilton, most with enrolments of over 1,000 students to ensure a wide range of program offerings.
- Where possible, school boundaries are designed to include a wide range of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

While Westmount Secondary School does offer a variety of choices to students who attend, it does not align with the Secondary Program Strategy Guiding Principles in the following ways:

- With 85-90% of the students in academic programming, the school offers certain pathways to a limited degree - apprenticeship, college, the community and the workplace to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, while the university pathway is offered most often based on student choice
- The limited number of pathways also limits the diversity within the school community
- Students attending Westmount instead of their home school may impact the home school's overall enrolment, reducing this to below 1,000 students and consequently reducing the ability to offer a wide range of programs; furthermore, reduced enrolment in the home school may also result in a reduction in the availability of some human and material resources

**B. Personalized Learning Opportunities in other Secondary Schools:**

All other secondary schools in the system offer opportunities for personalized, flexible programming to meet the individual learning needs of their students through the following:

- eLearning courses
- personalized timetables
- reach ahead summer programs
- school based alternative education courses
- literacy and math intervention programs
- grade 9 and 10 enrichment programs as preparation for IB