



Program Committee

Tuesday, June 7, 2022

Virtual Meeting

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558

Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

AGENDA: 5:30-8:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Elementary Focus Programs Review
4. Positive Culture & Well-Being report – update
5. Adjournment

EXECUTIVE REPORT TO PROGRAM COMMITTEE

TO: PROGRAM COMMITTEE

FROM: Sue Dunlop, Interim Director of Education

DATE: Tuesday, June 7th, 2022

PREPARED BY: Bill Torrens, Superintendent of Student Achievement, Program

RE: Elementary Focus Programs Review

Action **X** Monitoring

Recommended Action

It is recommended that:

- 1. All six Elementary Focus Programs remain open at their current locations.**
- 2. Elementary Focus Programs will not expand further, as per the Elementary Program Strategy.**
- 3. Systemic barriers to accessing the programs will be addressed by:**
 - a) Creating a system application process and communication strategy; and**
 - b) Developing strategies to mitigate financial and transportation barriers.**
- 4. Programs will receive detailed feedback about program specific barriers to access and concerns about adherence to the program mandates for implementation in 2022-23.**
- 5. A monitoring report regarding the implementation of recommendations #3 and #4 will be provided in 2022-23.**

The following report includes:

- Rationale for the Recommendations
- Background and Review Findings
- Appendices
 - A) School Specific Findings
 - B) Review Data Sets

Rationale

The recommendations maintain the direction provided in the [Elementary Program Strategy](#) related to locations, size, and access to the programs. The recommendations reflect several of the Elementary Program Strategy's guiding principles, including equity of access and outcome. Further, the recommendations reflect the Viability Criteria for Maintaining Optional Programs outlined in the Elementary Program Strategy:

- Program maintains the original intent /mandate of the program;
- Sufficient student enrolment to assign a teacher;
- Ontario Curriculum is embedded in the delivery model;
- Feasibility of maintaining on-going operating costs, including fees to external organizations;
- Continuation of exemplary program delivery and sustainability.

The recommendations support the overall findings of the review outlined below and take an incremental approach to addressing barriers to student access to the programs uncovered through the review. Staff will provide each program with feedback related to their specific program to act upon. The incremental approach provides programs time to make changes to practices.

Recommendation One: All six programs remain open at their current locations

Keeping all six programs open places a focus on improving the programs and reflects the positive student and parent¹ voice gathered during the review. It also acknowledges that this is the first review of the Focus Programs since the development of the HWDSB Elementary Program Strategy in 2016 due to COVID-19. Schools and programs need time to act on the findings of the review. Schools and programs will be presented with feedback in June 2022 and will be supported in developing and implementing a plan to act on that feedback in 2022-23. The next review will be scheduled for 2023-24 and staff will continue to learn more about each program through observation, stakeholder engagement, and gathering further demographic data collection through the Student Census. The 2023-24 review may explore if the programs are in the right locations based on available space in host schools and whether moving school locations may reduce barriers to student access, namely barriers related to transportation.

Recommendation Two: The Elementary Focus Programs will not expand further, as per the Elementary Program Strategy

Adding additional programs or program sites was outside of the scope of the review. The Elementary Program Strategy did not envision the development of more programs or the addition of more program sites for existing programs. Instead, it spoke to the importance of creating similar learning experiences through experiential learning. The strategy's approach was "to ensure equity of access, all schools are working to meet the interests of students through experiential learning as part of regular programming." Therefore, the focus is on having practices that engage students evident in all schools without creating new programs or locations. For example, elements of many Focus programs are evident in schools, especially the SAGE and SAGE Quest focus on critical thinking, inquiry, and learning through the Arts.

Recommendation Three: Address systemic barriers to access in 2022-23, by:

A) Creating a system application process and communication strategy; and

B) Exploring strategies for mitigating financial and transportation barriers

The review found several barriers to students accessing programs, including transportation costs, communications, program costs, and the application process. The overall result is programs that underserve² some student communities because they are not diverse³ in terms of student identity, they privilege families with a strong knowledge of the school system, and they have fewer students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) or who are English Language Learners than the HWDSB average.

Creating a system application process and communication strategy would reduce two key barriers. A consistent application process with a robust communication plan will be more effective in ensuring students who are from historically or currently underserved communities have access to the program. A potential model for the new processes is the Grade One French Immersion Application process which features a system-based application via the HWDSB website and system-led information nights and communications.

The applications and criteria for entry into each program will be revised through this process. Staff will consider how to remove areas of potential bias in the application process, such as asking if a student has an IEP or requiring a reference. Instead, as with the course selection process in secondary school, family interest and aspirations would be the key application criteria. The new process and communication strategy will likely increase applications; therefore, a selection process that seeks to remove bias, like the random selection process used for French Immersion Application Process, will be developed. Creating spaces for historically and currently underserved students in each program will also be considered.

Two additional barriers to accessing Elementary Focus Review Programs are transportation and costs. Transportation is not provided, which families have identified as a barrier due to cost and distance, Staff will

¹ The term "parent" represents parents, guardians, and caregivers throughout the document.

² HWDSB acknowledges that school systems have historically and currently underserve students self-identify as Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Two-Spirited, LGBTQIA+, and students who need special education supports and services

³ The Mandarin Program is not diverse culturally or linguistically by design. Students in the Mandarin Program should speak Mandarin as a first language and be acquiring English as a Second or Additional Language.

explore strategies such as re-directing budget formerly devoted to one Focus Review Program to creating supports for individual students to access a program by mitigating the transportation or program costs. Overall funding of the programs will also be re-examined.

Recommendation Four: Programs will receive detailed feedback about program specific barriers to access and concerns about adherence to the program mandates for implementation in 2022-23

Recommendation Three addresses systemic barriers while this recommendation focuses on program specific barriers and concerns. While student and parent voice support the continuation of each program, there are elements within each program that must be re-examined and changed. Each program will receive feedback based on the findings of the review. The feedback will focus on elements that schools can influence, such as: fidelity to the program mandate, relationship to the wider school community, and removing program specific barriers to access. Learning Services teams, primarily the Program Division, will support schools in unpacking the review findings and feedback. They will facilitate the development of an action plan for each school and then support its implementation.

Recommendation Five: Bring a monitoring report in 2022-23

A monitoring report will provide an update on the implementation of recommendations three and four, including the new application and communication processes and the progress made by programs on addressing the review findings. Updates on enrollment and staffing will also be provided. This report may become an annual monitoring report, like the annual Specialist High Skills Major/Secondary Pathways Programs report.

Background

At the October 18th, 2021, Board Meeting, the Board initiated a review of its six Elementary Focus Programs. A seventh program, a Sports Academy at Hillcrest, had already closed due to low enrollment. The Elementary Program Strategy calls for a review every two years. Additional, public facing, information about each program can be found at: <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/elementary/programs/all/>.

The Elementary Focus Programs were once known as Specialized Learning Programs or Programs of Choice and were developed over time to meet specific interests within the parent community for a focused learning experience. The six programs are:

- The Hockey Program at Tapleytown Elementary School.
- Mandarin Transitional Language Program at Cootes Paradise Elementary School.
- Scholastic Arts and Global Education (SAGE) Program at Strathcona Elementary School.
- Scholastic Arts and Global Education Quest (SAGE Quest) at Ryerson Elementary School.
- Sports Academy-Basketball Program at R.A. Riddell Elementary School.
- Sports Academy-High Potential Program at R.A. Riddell Elementary School.

The Elementary Program Strategy limits the programs to their existing size and provides viability criteria for the continuing operation of the programs. Each program has an application process, open to students across the board, with specific acceptance criteria due to limited enrollment. Transportation is not provided for out-of-catchment students attending a Focus Program. The programs may be relocated if space in the host school is needed for in-catchment students.

This review of Elementary Focus Programs also is a part of the implementation of the [HWDSB Equity Action Plan](#), which states the HWDSB's commitment "to the principles of equity through inclusive programs, curriculum, services and operations with a mission to empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world."

Review Process

The review was led by a Review Team that included members of the following: Equity, Human Rights, Program Division, and Research and Analytics, as well as a school principal. The evaluation model focused on answering the following three questions:

1. How do Focus Programs accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those who are currently and historically underserved?
2. How are Focus Programs making a difference in students' lives?
3. To what extent are Focus Programs sustainable and feasible?

The first question provides information about the capacity of the programs to serve the needs of all students across the system. The second question explores the impact the programs have on students in the programs as well as the school and community. This question also evaluated programs' original mandates and to what extent mandates are evident in student skills and learning (e.g., leadership, specific knowledge and skills). The last question explored the costs related to the program, such as staffing, and the potential costs to provide transportation.

Staff captured data to answer the review's three key questions through multiple means:

1) Surveys

Between March 28 and April 8, 2022, a survey collected feedback and perceptions from the HWDSB community on the 6 elementary Focus Programs. The total number of responses was 466. Of those: 422 were parents and 44 were representing a community organization.

Additional information about the respondents includes:

- 350 parents knew about our Focus Programs
- 110 of those parents had never enrolled a child in a program before but 69 of them considered it
- 52 parents had never heard of the programs before
- 41 parents who had never heard of the programs expressed interest in having their children attend one
- 129 parents have children currently enrolled in a program
- 87 parents had children who graduated from a program

During the same timeframe, an educator survey was sent to all Focus Program schools and all educators, administrators, and school staff were invited to participate. In total, 63 educators responded: 13 who taught in Focus Programs, 47 educators who do not work in Focus Programs, and 3 non-educator staff members.

2) Focus groups

During April 2022, Program staff visited Focus Program schools and conducted 13 focus groups with program students. The focus groups involved entire classes of students and reached every class in every program. Students were asked a variety of questions about what they are learning in the program; how their learning impacts their school and lives outside of the classroom; and what improvements they would make to the program.

3) Administrator Interviews

Prior to surveys and focus groups, informal, open-ended interviews were conducted with school administrators in Focus Program schools to help us better understand the programs, how they operate, the impact on the school, and the application processes.

4) School Data

Using class lists and PowerSchool, data was obtained for program, school and board levels to look at demographics (e.g., gender, students with Individual Education Plans, students who are English Language Learners), achievement (reading and Math) and engagement (attendance).

5) Transportation, Planning and Business Services

HWDSB Planning Department, Transportation, and Business Services were able to provide data on student enrollment in and out of school and board catchment, the cost of offering bussing for all current students, and information on School Generated Funds.

Please see *Appendix B: Review Data Sets* for detailed data related to the Elementary Focus Programs.

Overall Findings

How do Focus Programs accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those who are currently and historically underserved?

The review found that the programs do not serve diverse populations. Students from currently and historically underserved communities are under-represented in programs, most notably students who are English Language learners (apart from the Mandarin Transitional Language Program). The Student Census will likely confirm this finding. Key barriers to accessing programs included transportation, costs, and lack of awareness by parents. Transportation is a major barrier to access because families are required to provide their own transportation to programs, but the cost of providing transportation to the current program students would be approximately \$900 000 (see *Appendix B*). The locations of the host schools also exacerbate the transportation barrier. The communication or marketing of the programs is inconsistent and ineffective, creating barriers to access. In fact, word of mouth was the primary means by which many families became aware of the program rather than by formal communication.

Nonetheless, the survey comments and the focus group session revealed that Elementary Focus Programs serve a need for many students who may not feel included when attending their home school outside of the program. These are some of the comments we heard from students and their parents, as well as educators, regarding the ways in which students' needs are being met:

- *I thought it would be good [to join the program] to get exercise in the morning so I wouldn't be hyper in class.*
- *This program has been absolutely amazing for my child.... My son, as a sports-oriented child, struggled to find peers with similar interests (many only liked video games). My child went from not wanting to go to school last year to never wanting to miss a day of school this year.*
- *If you have trouble making friends, it relieves the stress of having to make friends each year.*
- *The SAGE program has been an incredible experience for my daughter.*
- *Sometimes the students who apply to this program are students who are not successful in regular classes because of learning needs and social emotional needs.*
- *The Mandarin program helps my kid in ways that aren't limited to merely lingual transition but also help raise awareness of cultural diversity and inclusivity.*
- *The girls in my class didn't play a lot of sports. The girls made me feel left out. I wanted to be around kids like me.*

How are Focus Programs making a difference in students' lives?

The review revealed that the programs appear to be making a difference in the lives of their students. Survey comments, like those above, indicate that there is enthusiastic support for the programs from parents and students. Students in a Focus Program have, in general, higher achievement than students in the host school and the board average in Reading and Mathematics (see *Appendix B*). The programs appear to provide safety and sense of belonging for students because they:

- Provide an environment with classmates with similar interests *(e.g., hockey or the Arts).
- Engage students in their interests.
- Create a safe and inclusive space for Two-Spirit-LGBTQIA+ families (SAGE and SAGE Quest) and racialized students (Mandarin).
- Create the perception that they have smaller classes with more individual support.⁴

Another theme was related to the programs' impact on school culture. There is not universal support for the programs within their host schools, and there is a sense that each program is separate from the wider school community. This can create tensions in some host schools because of perceptions of the program students being privileged within the school.

To what extent are Focus Programs sustainable and feasible?

The sustainability and feasibility of some programs is in question. Several of the programs (The Mandarin Transitional Language Program, SAGE, and SAGE Quest) have low enrollment which results in combined classes, sometimes with three grades within one class. Some of the programs follow their original mandate while others may not. It appears that programming within the sports themed programs more closely align with the original program mandates than other Focus programs. Transportation and program costs are a barrier for many students.

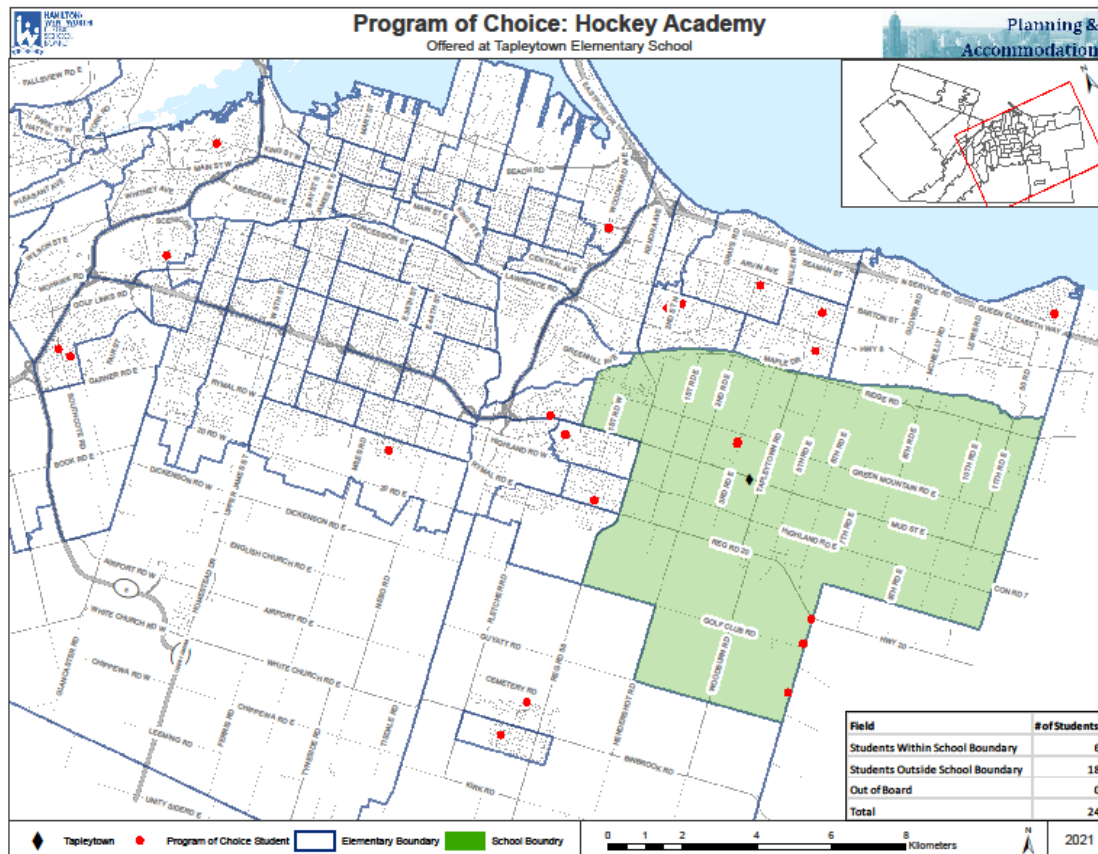
⁴ Please note that all Elementary Focus Programs follow the class size parameters used for regular classes.

The location of some of the host schools is not central and therefore amplifies the transportation barrier. Part of the work in 2022-23 is to more fully understand the true costs of each program and the impact of potentially closing or moving a program. _____

Appendix A: School Specific Findings

Hockey Program at Tapleystown Elementary School

The HWDSB Hockey Canada Skills Academy provides an opportunity for students to participate in the Grade 7-8 Hockey Canada Skills Curriculum, which aims to improve and develop overall fitness and hockey skills during the school day. The program values student academic achievement within its structured, organized, active learning environment. Male and female students in the program improve through specific training on and off the ice.



The program is open to students in Grades 7 and 8. There are 24 students currently enrolled (6 in catchment, 18 out of catchment, and 0 outside of Board). The program is staffed with one teacher teaching a grade 7/8 combined class. There is a \$750 fee for each student, which covers transportation (from the rink to school) and rental of Mohawk 4 Ice Centre, registration, and uniforms.

How does the Hockey Program accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those currently and historically underserved?

Meeting the diverse needs of students

The survey comments and the focus group session indicate that Focus Programs do serve a need for many students. The Hockey Program benefits students who may have trouble paying attention in class. Early morning workouts and keeping active throughout the day allows students to release their energy so they can focus better in the classroom and on their academics. The Hockey Program also accommodates students who otherwise would not be engaged in school. This program allows students to connect with their school, teachers and classmates through a topic they are passionate about. One student noted: *"I'm super excited to come to school every day because you get to learn about hockey in every class."*

Barriers to participation

Transportation was identified as the primary barrier to participation in the program. Many students in the focus groups shared that their friends could not enroll in the program because it is "too far of a drive" and "if they live

far, it's a pretty big hassle.” From the survey data, parents with children in the Hockey Program supported the finding that transportation is a significant challenge.

Summary

The Hockey Program meets the diverse needs of students who otherwise would not be engaged in school by providing them an outlet for their energy and connecting with them through their passion – hockey. Respondent groups named transportation, costs for tuition and equipment, and lack of awareness about the program as the main barriers to participation. The program primarily serves males who do not have special education needs or disabilities, and families who are well established in Canada and who identify as white.

How is the Hockey Program making a difference in students' lives?

Academic Achievement

The students in the Hockey Program achieve at the same level or higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB in Reading and Mathematics.

Reading achievement

The students in the Hockey Program achieve at the same level or higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

School attendance

The students in the Hockey Program attend school at the same or higher rate, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the local school and HWDSB.

Perceived benefits to children of being in the Hockey Program

Parents in the Hockey Program identified developing physical skills, leadership and friendships as the top three benefits to their children of participating in the program. Students in the focus groups agreed that participating in the Hockey Program improved their skills in the sport, such as their skating skills, edgework and making quick decisions with the puck. The benefits of the program extended to students' lives off the ice. Students commonly cited growing in their leadership, maturity, and confidence through the support of their teammates and the hockey coach: *“We feel like a team in the classroom and on the ice – leadership and being a good role model [are what I am learning]...I used to be really shy but I've come out of my shell because a lot of people here are like me.”* Parents/ with children who already graduated from the program expressed similar benefits. All parents said they would recommend the Hockey Program to other parents and all of them said they would do it all over again if given the choice.

Increased engagement in school is likely to increase achievement as well. This is consistent with the school data which shows that on average, students in the Hockey Program have the same or higher grades in Math and Reading as compared to students in their cohort. Students in the focus group also described seeing improvements in their grades, and their motivation to maintain their grades because it is required to stay in the program.

Impact on school community

Tapleystown educators described the positive impact the program has had on the school community: *“The hockey program teacher is well respected at the school and in the community. There is school pride around the program knowing there are students that have the potential in taking their hockey skills further into bigger opportunities.”* However, students in the focus group commonly described other students as “jealous” of them because they have more opportunities (e.g., field trips, ice time, missing school).

Summary

The Hockey Program has benefitted students by improving/maintaining their academic achievement as compared to students in their cohort. Students also saw positive change in their engagement toward school, leadership skills, hockey skills, friendships and time management. Hockey Program students are seen as leaders in the school, although this has caused some tension between them and other students.

To what extent is the Hockey Program sustainable and feasible?

Is the Hockey Program fulfilling its original mandate?

The Hockey Program appears to be fulfilling its original mandate. Educator survey respondents (n=3) described the purpose of the Hockey Program as a mix of academic and hockey skills focus: *“Provide children with the opportunity to practice their on-ice skills. Curriculum-based learning is also towards hockey-based learning mixed with the Ontario education”*. This sentiment seems consistent across student focus groups as well.

Transportation

All Hockey Program students who live within the Tapleystown catchment area travel to school at no extra cost to the Board. For those out of catchment, parents must find their own way to get their children to school. Student Transportation Services calculated, based on current enrollment, the cost of providing transportation would be approximately \$163 000.

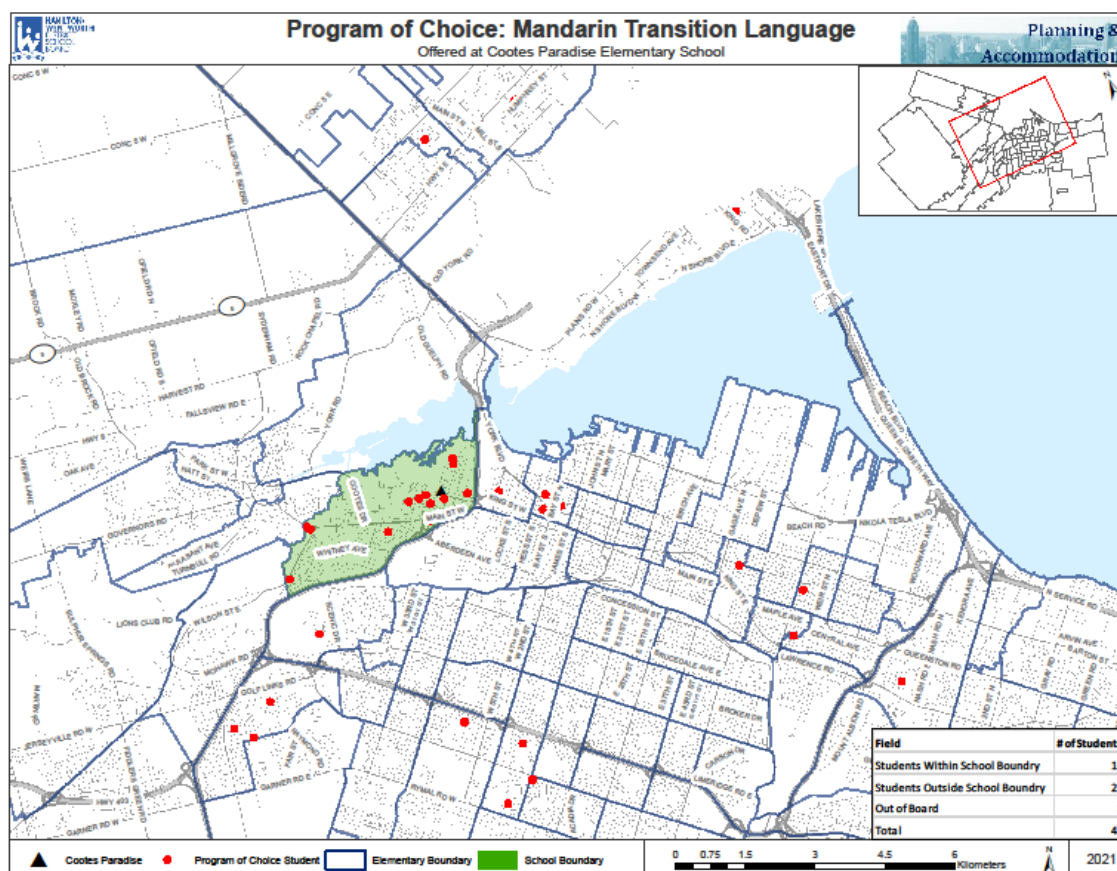
Summary

For the Hockey Program, cost of equipment on top of cost of tuition is a significant barrier to playing the sport for many families. Unlike some of the other programs, the very basis of the program: hockey, is an exclusive sport that requires significant resources to play. Sustainability and feasibility from an equity standpoint requires rethinking how to create opportunities for more students to participate in this sport.

Mandarin Transitional Language Program at Cootes Paradise Elementary School

Program Description

The Mandarin Transitional Language Program is intended to support students in developing English language skills. In this program, students use their first language as they learn to listen, speak, read, and write in English to demonstrate their achievement of Ontario Curriculum expectations. In the early years of the program the goal is to develop basic communication skills in English. As students progress through the program, their English proficiency develops so that they are able to successfully transition to enter mainstream English programming in Grade 6.



The program is open to students Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5 whose first language is Mandarin. There are 47 students enrolled (16 in catchment, 28 out of catchment and 3 from outside of board). The program has 3.0 FTE educators: (Kindergarten class; Grade 1/2 combined class; Grade 3/4/5 combined class). There are no fees.

How does the Mandarin Program accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those currently and historically underserved?

Meeting the diverse needs of students

Through the survey comments and the focus groups, it is evident that the program serves a need for many students who may not feel included in their host school. Newcomers experience a range of challenges when settling in Canada. They must find housing, find a job, access health care, and understand the Canadian education system. In a time of significant change, the Mandarin Transitional Language Program provides a place where students and their families can adjust to English learning and connect with educators who speak their language. One student said: *"It would be hard to do only in English if you don't speak English. Having a teacher who speaks Mandarin makes it easier to learn the English language"*.

The program also provides a safe space for students who may experience racial or ethnic discrimination. Some

students in the program described instances of bullying, and the Mandarin Transitional Language Program is a place where “you’ll be accepted more” and “have each other to lean on for support.” An educator also described the program as a safe space, especially during a period where anti-Asian racism has increased: *“I feel it gives the entire school to learn and include students from another culture. In these times when there is a lot of discrimination and violence against the Asian people, it is great to see that they are accepted and appreciated here.”* This program also offers an opportunity for students to feel connected to their roots, celebrate their cultural heritage, and share it with others at their school: *The program provides (more) diversity to our school, it allows others to learn from those who speak a different language than us, it allows for moments of growth in our personal cultural competence, it opens our minds and hearts to a culture that we may not have had the chance to observe otherwise.”*

Barriers to participation

A common barrier to accessing the program expressed by parents is that their child would have to switch schools to participate. This, in turn, impacts their transportation and commute time. These three barriers were common among parents who had previously heard of the Mandarin Program and parents who had just learned about it through the survey. Educators at the host school also identified transportation to be a barrier. Educators listed not speaking the Mandarin language as a barrier to participation, as only one cultural group benefitted from their own language program. In addition to switching schools and language, lack of awareness about the program may also be a barrier to participation. Parents primarily hear about the program from other parents and the program may benefit from broader outreach.

Summary

The Mandarin Transitional Language Program meets the diverse needs of students who speak Mandarin as their first language. Respondent groups named switching schools, not speaking the language, low enrollment numbers and lack of awareness about the program as challenges to participating in the program. The program primarily serves English Language Learners who do not have special education needs, and East Asian families who are immigrants to Canada but may not be recent immigrants (i.e., have been in Canada for more than 5 years).

How is the Mandarin Transitional Language Program making a difference in students’ lives?

Math achievement

Generally, students in the Mandarin Program achieve higher in math than their same cohort peers at both the local school and HWDSB.

Generally, students in the Mandarin Program achieve higher in reading than their same cohort peers at both the local school and HWDSB.

School Attendance

Generally, students in the Mandarin Program attend school at a higher rate than their same cohort peers at both the local school and HWDSB.

Perceived benefits to children of being in the Mandarin Transitional Language Program

Parents with children in the Mandarin Program identified language skills, friendships and academic achievement as the top 3 benefits to their children participating in the program. “Other” responses (n=2) include better manners, culture representation and less discrimination. Educators at the host school identified language skills, friendships and school engagement as the top three benefits to students in the Mandarin Program. In the focus groups, students reinforced improved language skills as a primary benefit of the program. Students described how the program has helped them to better communicate: *“[Without this program] I would have struggled in English and not passed EQAO.”*

The program has also helped students feel closer to their roots and support people who are new to Canada. This benefit is illustrated in the following quote from an educator: *“Helping those students who are overwhelmed in the English/Canadian context to ease into our school settings, significantly reducing anxiety and helping them to engage in their learning and not ‘shut down.’”*

Impact on school community

Survey responses from educators are a mix of positive and negative sentiments that can be summarized by the

following points:

- There is a large population of Mandarin speakers in the community; the program celebrates the rich and varied cultural and language experiences in our community.
- It increases diversity at the school and fosters learning and tolerance.
- The students and program would benefit from greater interaction and inclusion with the wider school community.

Summary

The Mandarin Program benefitted students by improving their language skills, forming friendships with others who accept them, and engaging them in school through connections to their cultural heritage. Having the Mandarin Program in the school is seen by some as a celebration of diverse cultures, and by others as inequitable because it is exclusive to one culture.

To what extent is the Mandarin Transition Program sustainable and feasible?

Is the program fulfilling its original mandate?

Survey respondents described the purpose of the program in various ways. Some described the program in a way that aligned with its original purpose – a transition program for newcomers: *“To support Mandarin-speaking ELLs in acquiring academic English language skills, using their first language to support academic skills’ progress while learning English, with the goal to release them into mainstream English-only classes further along in their academic years.”*

However, others described the program as a Mandarin *immersion* program for Chinese families:

- *To fully immerse students in the Mandarin language so that, upon completion of grade 5, they are fully bilingual in Mandarin and English. (educator)*
- *Everyday first thing we learn Mandarin. It is good for learning Mandarin. It is important to learn to speak Mandarin so we can help people translate. (student)*

While the program is still having a positive impact on students and their families, it seems to have shifted from its original mandate.

Transportation

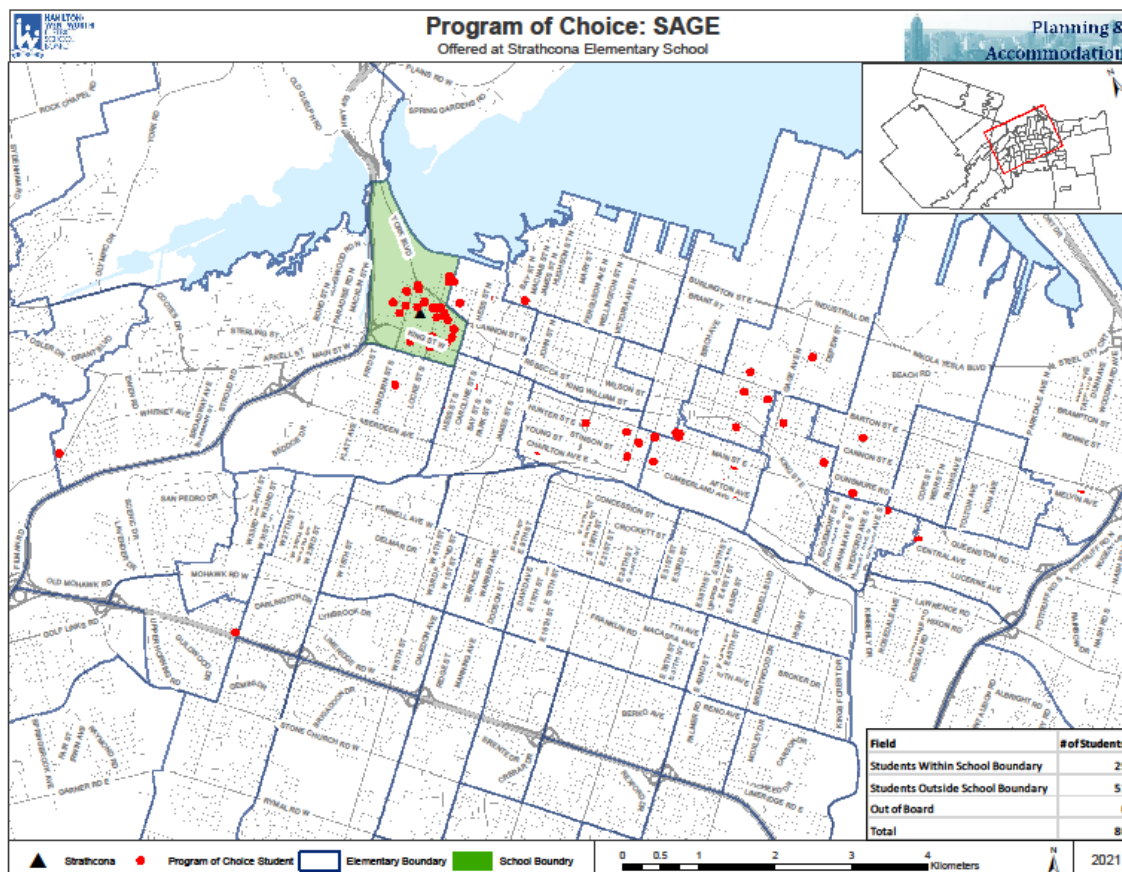
All Mandarin Program students who live within the Cootes Paradise catchment area are come to school at no extra cost to the Board. For those out of catchment, parents must find their own way to get their children to school. Student Transportation Services calculated, based on current enrollment, the cost of providing transportation would be approximately \$147 000.

Summary

The programs appears to have moved from its initial mandate of being a bilingual transitional language program designed to use Mandarin as a resource to learn English. The practice of students using their first language to support English language learning is one that should be evident in English as a Second Language programs across the HWDSB with the use of dual language materials and multi-lingual approaches. Returning to the program’s original mandate will be part of the feedback provided to the school, as will increasing opportunities for integration with English and French Immersion track classes.

Scholastic Arts and Global Education (SAGE) Program at Strathcona Elementary School **Program Description**

SAGE (Scholastic, Arts and Global Education) is built around family participation and community building. Teachers and families work in cooperation, using innovative teaching methods to deliver the Ontario curriculum in an interactive, child-centered manner that emphasizes global education, arts and recreation.



The program is open to students Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5. There are 80 students enrolled (29 in catchment, 51 out of catchment and 0 from outside of board). The program is staffed with 4.0 FTE (Kindergarten class; Grade 1 class; Grade 2/3 combined class; Grade 4/5 combined class). There are no fees.

How does the SAGE Program accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those currently and historically underserved?

Meeting the diverse needs of students

What we learned through the survey comments and the focus groups is that the program serves a need for safety and belonging for many students. Several students described the SAGE program as a safe space. Some students, who did not have a good experience in their host school or outside of the SAGE classroom, felt they were in a school “filled with bullies,” and SAGE provided a new environment where they can feel accepted and make friends: “If you have trouble making friends, it relieves the stress of having to make friends each year...It feels safe knowing that we know who will be in our class in SAGE”. The SAGE program has been particularly characterized as a safe space for members of the Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ community. SAGE is also seen as a place where students can get one-on-one support. Students expressed that “we get more help than if you are in the main school” because “we have a much smaller class than main and so if we need help, we get help.”

Barriers to Participation

Students described some of the reasons their friends could not join SAGE were because the program was full, the

school was too far away, or that the program wasn't the right place for them. Parents who decided not to enroll their child in SAGE expressed concerns about the program's lack of diversity, particularly ethnic and socio-economic diversity: *"I have concerns about the program's focus on parent involvement - already that availability requires a level of economic privilege. Ultimately my question is why this group of kids will benefit from art and experimental pedagogy, and not the rest of the kids in the school board? Why is this program located in an affluent and mostly white neighborhood?"*

From the survey data, parents with children in the program identified only two issues that have caused the difficulty: transportation and commute time. One educator named transportation as the one significant barrier while other teachers in the host school thought commute time was more of an issue followed by transportation, cost, and switching schools. For parents who knew about the SAGE Program and considered enrolling a child, transportation was a major barrier but also equity and the homogeneity of the program. One parent said that their child was not accepted, another said that the selection criteria was confusing. Another cited French Immersion as the reason they would not switch to Strathcona for this program.

Summary

The SAGE Program meets the diverse needs of students who require extra support for their learning, and for students who identify as part of the Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ community. Respondent groups named transportation, switching schools, full class sizes and lack of diversity as the main barriers to participation. The program primarily serves students who do not have special education needs or disabilities, and families who are well established in Canada and who identify as white.

How is the SAGE Program making a difference in students' lives?

Math achievement

The students in the SAGE Program achieve higher in math than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

Reading achievement

The students in the SAGE Program achieve higher in reading than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

School Attendance

The students in the SAGE Program attend school at a higher rate than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

Perceived benefits of being in the SAGE Program

Parents with children in the SAGE Program were asked to identify how being in the program benefited children. Leadership, friendship and engagement in school were the top three, closely followed by academic achievement. Other responses included community participation, the accepting environment and benefits to parents of being able to engage with other parents. In contrast, other educators at the host school did not seem to understand the benefits of the program and differed in their thinking. In "other" comments, an educator stated that SAGE is an opportunity for students from across the board to have their learning needs met while another educator said it was difficult to tell the difference between students in and out of the program.

According to students, participation in the SAGE program has increased their feelings of safety, sense of belonging with a group of peers, and as a result, engagement in school: *"When I was in main school, I didn't have a good experiences there. When I got here it was a lot better and I wanted to go to school more."*

In terms of learning in the program, students enjoyed "free choice" time where they are able to pick their own activity; crafting and arts; and discussing current events and world issues. The following quote illustrates a parent's perspective on how their child has benefitted from the program: *"I do strongly believe this program should be incorporated in EVERY HWDSB SCHOOL. It is incredible to see our children grow in not only academics understanding but in communication, empathy, understanding inclusion of everyone, knowledge about current world events especially our own country political events including environmentally issues."*

Impact on school community

The SAGE program has had a positive and negative impact on the school community. On one hand, students are seen as leaders and the program has raised additional funds that benefit the entire school: *“The students in this program are positive role models for the rest of the student body. They are the epitome of leading by example.”* On the other hand, the program has also caused divisions in the community: *“I think it affects the school and community negatively, in that it creates division between staff, students and parent communities. It is a privatized system within a public system. It is not equitable for the students.”*

Summary

The SAGE Program benefitted students by improving/maintaining their academic achievement as compared to students in their cohort. The program also helped students to make friends, and increase their leadership skills, engagement in school and autonomy. SAGE students are seen as role models in the school, and to others, the program is seen as unfairly privileging a small group of students.

To what extent is the SAGE Program sustainable and feasible?

Is the program fulfilling its original mandate?

The SAGE Program may have moved from its original mandate. While the program began because of parents' advocacy efforts, the program and the current context has changed. Some parents and educators expressed that they could *“not see much difference between [SAGE] program and regular classes”* and expressed that the *“program’s differentiations are outdated and have been integrated into the curriculum.”* COVID-19 restrictions altered programming as SAGE students have not been able to access excursions, and opportunities for community and parent participation.

Transportation

Currently, all SAGE students who live within the Strathcona catchment area come to school at no extra cost to the Board. For those out of catchment, parents must find their own way to get their children to school. Student Transportation Services calculated, based on current enrollment, the cost of providing transportation would be approximately \$154 000.

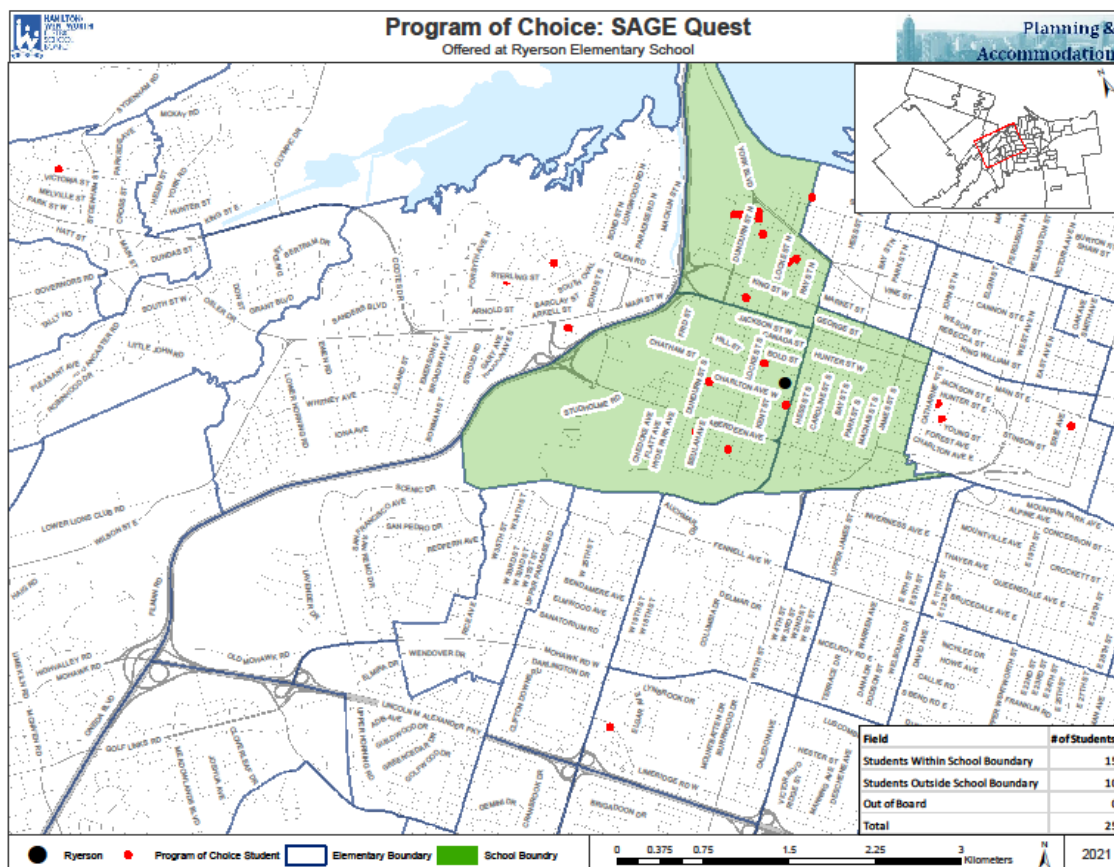
Summary

The SAGE Program will receive feedback on returning to its original mandate and ensuring that the classroom programming is clearly different from that of a similar grade class within the school. The existing SAGE Guide will be a support in implementing the feedback.

Scholastic Arts and Global Education (SAGE) Quest Program at Ryerson Elementary School

Program Description

SAGE (Scholastic, Arts and Global Education) Quest is an innovative specialized learning program. The goal of SAGE Quest is to foster a culture of inquiry amidst a community of care, with a particular focus on critical thinking and the global issues facing our world today. Students are motivated and committed to learning about justice in the world around them; collaborating with peers; achieving their academic potential and being kind community members to everyone in their school community.



The program is open to students in Grades 6 to 8. There are 25 students enrolled (15 in catchment, 10 out of catchment, and 0 from outside of board). There is one teacher assigned to teach a grade 6/7/8 combined class. There are no fees.

How does SAGE Quest accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those currently and historically underserved?

Meeting the diverse needs of students

Through the survey comments and the focus groups it appears that the program serves a need for many students who may not fit in when attending their host school outside of the program. Like the SAGE program, SAGE Quest has been characterized as a safe space: *“SAGE Quest has promoted and fostered a safe and inclusive space for my children to learn in. More than ever, environments like these should be continued and supported by the HWDSB. If anything, this program should be made available at more schools to offer alternative, progressive and safe spaces for students.”*

At the same time, students expressed that one of their least favourite parts about being a part of the program is the stigma they experience, stating that other students view them as “weird” and stereotypically believe all program students are part of the Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ community.

Barriers to participation

Transportation and switching schools were identified by parents as the main barriers preventing them from enrolling their children in SAGE Quest. For parents with children already in the program, these barriers are less of a concern. Parents who just learned about the Focus Programs when they saw this survey identified transportation as their main challenge followed by switching schools and commute time.

None of the nine community agency representatives who participated in the survey had heard of SAGE Quest. Comments from parents across programs brought up the question of equity and the perception that these special programs are not accessible nor diverse, which is a disincentive to enroll their children.

Other barriers having to do with the quality of the programming relate to the program size which results in a class with three grades combined. In addition, it was recommended by one educator that hiring take place at the system level to ensure the most qualified person gets the position. Hiring from the staff team or placing from the staff team is seen as not adequate to meet the needs for expertise in this program. This was echoed by other educators in the survey.

Summary

The SAGE Quest Program meets the diverse needs of students who identify as part of or belong to a family who is part of the Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ community. Respondent groups named transportation, switching schools, full class sizes and decline in the quality of programming as the main barriers to participation. The program has a high proportion of students with an IEP, and primarily serves students with families who are established in Canada and who identify as white.

How is SAGE Quest making a difference in students' lives?

Math achievement

The students in the SAGE Quest Program achieve higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

Reading achievement

The students in the SAGE Quest Program achieve higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

School attendance

The students in the SAGE Quest Program attend school at a higher rate, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the local school (Ryerson Middle) and HWDSB.

Perceived benefits of being in SAGE Quest

Parents with children in SAGE Quest identified leadership skills as the main benefit to their children participating in the program. Friendships and engagement in school followed by academic achievement were also perceived as benefits. Educators at Ryerson Elementary School also identified leadership, friendships and engagement in school as benefits to children. They also emphasized improved attendance while parents did not, and fewer of them saw improved academic achievement as a benefit of the program compared to parents.

SAGE Quest students emphasized how the program helped them to make friends. Another main benefit to the program is that students have an opportunity to discuss current events and world issues which gives them “a better understanding of the real world” and encourages them to consider different perspectives. Students also benefit from the inquiry-based learning approach: *“The way we learn here has broadened ideas on how to take on information, the way we approach learning here helps us in all subjects.”*

Impact on School Community

The SAGE Quest program has had both positive and negative impacts on the school community. On one hand, students are seen as leaders and the program has raised additional funds that benefit the entire school: *“The students in this program are positive role models for the rest of the student body. They are the epitome of leading by*

example.“ On the other hand, the program has also caused divisions in the community, with SAGE Quest being seen as a privileged program.

Summary

The SAGE Quest Program benefits students by improving/maintaining their academic achievement as compared to students in their cohort. The program helped students to make friends, and improve their leadership skills, empathy, and awareness of social justice issues. SAGE Quest students are seen as role models in the school, and to others, the program is seen as unfairly privileging a small group of students.

To what extent is SAGE Quest sustainable and feasible?

Is the program fulfilling its original mandate?

Like SAGE, the program began as a result of parents' advocacy efforts, the program and the current context has changed. Some parents and educators expressed that they could “not see much difference between the program and regular classes” and expressed that the “program’s differentiations are outdated and have been integrated into the curriculum.”

Transportation

Currently, all SAGE Quest students who live within the Ryerson catchment area come to school at no extra cost to the Board. For those out of catchment, parents must find their own way to get their children to school. Student Transportation Services calculated, based on current enrollment, the cost of providing transportation would be approximately \$80 000.

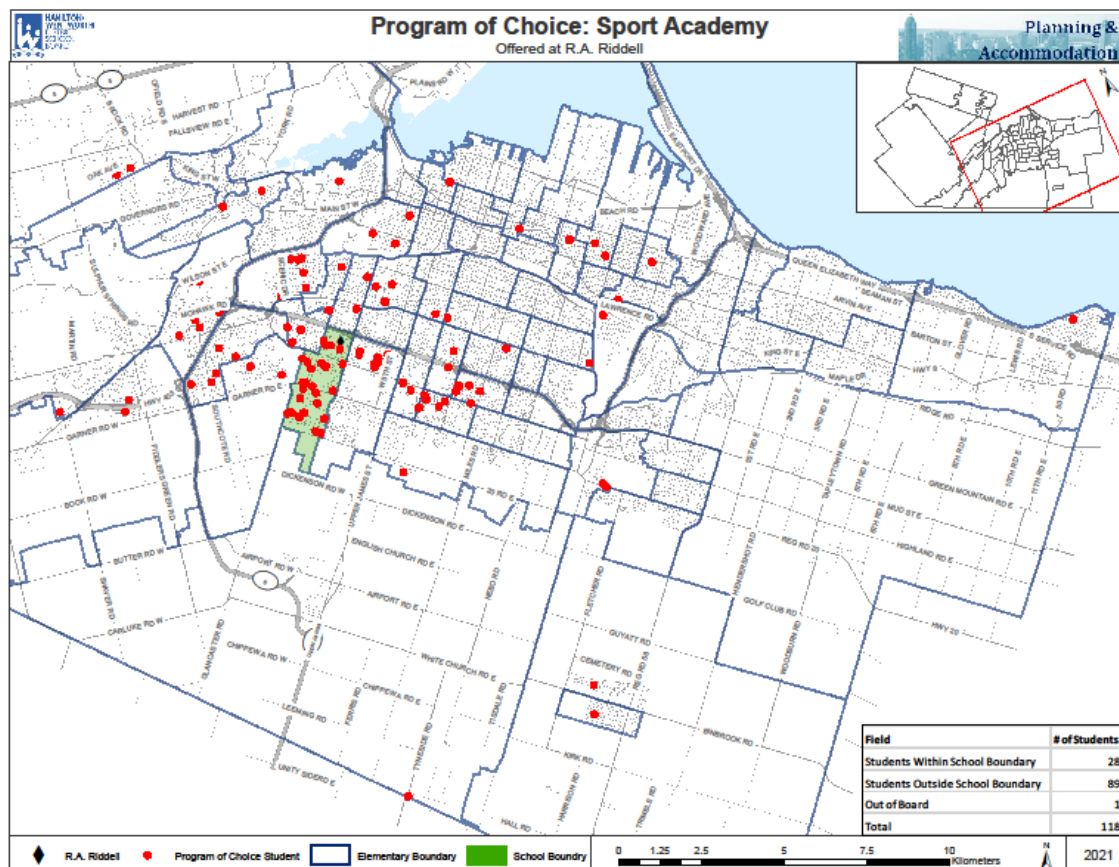
Summary

There are questions regarding the fidelity of the SAGE Quest program and its original mandate. Considering how to differentiate its programming from that of other classrooms will be part of the feedback provided to the program. The program appears to be an inclusive space with student voice indicates that many find students find the program to be a safe space.

S

Sports Academy: Basketball Program at R.A. Riddell Elementary School **Program Description**

The R.A. Riddell Sport Academy consists of 2 streams: High Potential and Basketball focus. This innovative learning program was created in 2006 to engage HWDSB student athletes by meeting their unique academic and athletic needs. Student athletes from all over the district are welcome to apply to the R.A. Riddell Sport or Basketball Academy. The program supports the visions of all students achieving their full potential, and of all students graduating.



The program is open to students in Grades 6 to 8. Enrolment is 70 students in the Basketball Academy (catchment data was provided for both Sports Academy programs together: 28 in catchment, 89 out of catchment, and 1 out of board). There are three teachers in the program and a \$150 fee.

How does the Basketball Sports Academy accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those currently and historically underserved?

Meeting the diverse needs of students

We learned through the survey comments and the focus groups that the Focus Programs offer belonging for many students. In the case of the Basketball Academy, the program fills a gap for students who identify as female or girls. Traditionally, girls have fewer opportunities to participate and stay in sports. The program provides a space where students identifying as female can connect with others who are passionate about sports: *"The females in my class didn't play a lot of sports. The females made me feel left out. I wanted to be around kids like me."*

Barriers to participation

The primary barrier to participation named for Basketball Academy was transportation. Many students stated that their friends could not enroll in the program because they live far away. Other barriers identified include not

being able to “get in” to the program and lack of awareness about the program. Families primarily hear about the program because their older children took part in the program or through word of mouth from other parents, coaches, or board employees. Families who do not belong to the network around the program may never know it exists. In describing barriers to Sports Academy as a whole (which includes Basketball and High Potential), educators believed the program was only accessible to students who already played elite sports: *“From my observations it seems that most of the kids in the program already play rep sports and have many opportunities to play. If it were to continue, I would like to see kids who do not otherwise have these opportunities in the program.”* Parents who knew about the Focus Programs and considered enrolling their children in Basketball Academy identified issues such as transportation, switching schools, having to leave French Immersion, that Basketball Academy students cannot play on the school basketball team, that they did not have enough information to make a decision at the time, and that there is elitism and no help in the resource room for program students.

Community organizations also felt that cost, transportation, commute time and switching schools would be barriers to the populations they serve. They questioned why there was a cost for this program when the facilities being used are ones we already have. In addition to transportation and program costs, lack of awareness about the program was a significant barrier. When asked how they heard about the program, respondents across all groups cited word of mouth from other parents, HWDSB staff, friends, coaches and students. Outreach beyond the network of parents around the program is needed to serve a more diverse group of students.

Summary

The Basketball Academy meets the diverse needs of students identifying as female who may not have opportunities to participate or stay in sports. Respondent groups named transportation, cost of tuition and equipment, lack of awareness about the program, and perceived elitism as the main barriers to participation. The program has a high proportion of female students as compared to other sports-focused programs (hockey). It primarily serves students who belong to families well established in Canada and who identify as white.

How is Basketball Academy making a difference in students’ lives?

Math achievement

The students in Basketball Academy achieve higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

Reading achievement

The students in Basketball Academy achieve higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

School Attendance

The students in Basketball Academy attend school at a higher rate, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

Perceived benefits of being in Basketball Academy

Parents were asked to identify the benefits to their children of being enrolled in Basketball Academy. They believe that their children benefitted from improved engagement in school, improved physical skills, and the development of leadership skills. Educators at R. A. Riddell who do not teach in the program were asked the same question about benefits to students in the Sports Academy Programs and we see slightly different perceptions than from parents. Educators underestimated the benefits to leadership, achievement, attendance, friendships and engagement as compared to the parents. In contrast, educators who taught in the Sports Academy programs all named leadership, physical skills, friendships, academic achievement, engagement in school and improved attendance as the main benefits.

Being a part of Basketball Academy has helped students of all levels improve their skills in the sport (ball handling, shooting, defense, etc.). Unlike the other sports-based focus programs, students in the focus groups described being able to *learn* basketball through the program rather than *improve* in a sport they already were a part of. This contrasts with the perception that Sports Academy is only accessible to elite athletes.

The main draw for enrolling in the program was being with like-minded people who enjoy physical education. Students compared their experience in the program to their old schools, where Physical Education was “just silly games” and “fooling around.” In the program, they are improving their skills and having fun. Sharing a similar interest with their peers has improved students’ teamwork, social skills and sportsmanship. Several parents commented that it has increased their child’s engagement in school, which has led to improvements in their academics: *“This program has benefitted our son so much. He [has wanted more] to go to school than he has ever been before, and his school engagement and marks have improved.”*

Impact on school community

The Basketball Academy has had both a positive and negative impact on the school community. On one hand, the program has attracted families to the school and students are seen as leaders. However, many students, parents and educators described the program as “elite,” privileging only a few students at the expense of others at the school. Basketball Academy students commonly said that other students were “jealous” of them because they think the Basketball students get “special treatment” and “don’t get in trouble when we do something.” This has caused arguments between Academy and non-Academy students.

Summary

The Basketball Academy has benefitted students by improving/maintaining their academic achievement as compared to students in their cohort. Students also saw positive change in their engagement toward school, basketball skills, and friendships. The program was characterized as having a competitive energy which challenged students in positive and negative ways. Basketball Academy students are seen as leaders in the school, although this has caused some tension as others believe the program is too elite.

To what extent is the Basketball Sports Academy sustainable and feasible?

Is the program fulfilling its original mandate?

Basketball Academy was created to support students with a keen interest in basketball and enriching their school experience by making the sport central to their learning environment. Considering the benefits of the program outlined above, it seems the program is fulfilling its purpose. However, more work must be done to determine what type of athletes the program serves – athletes at the elite level and/or all students who are passionate about the sport?

Transportation

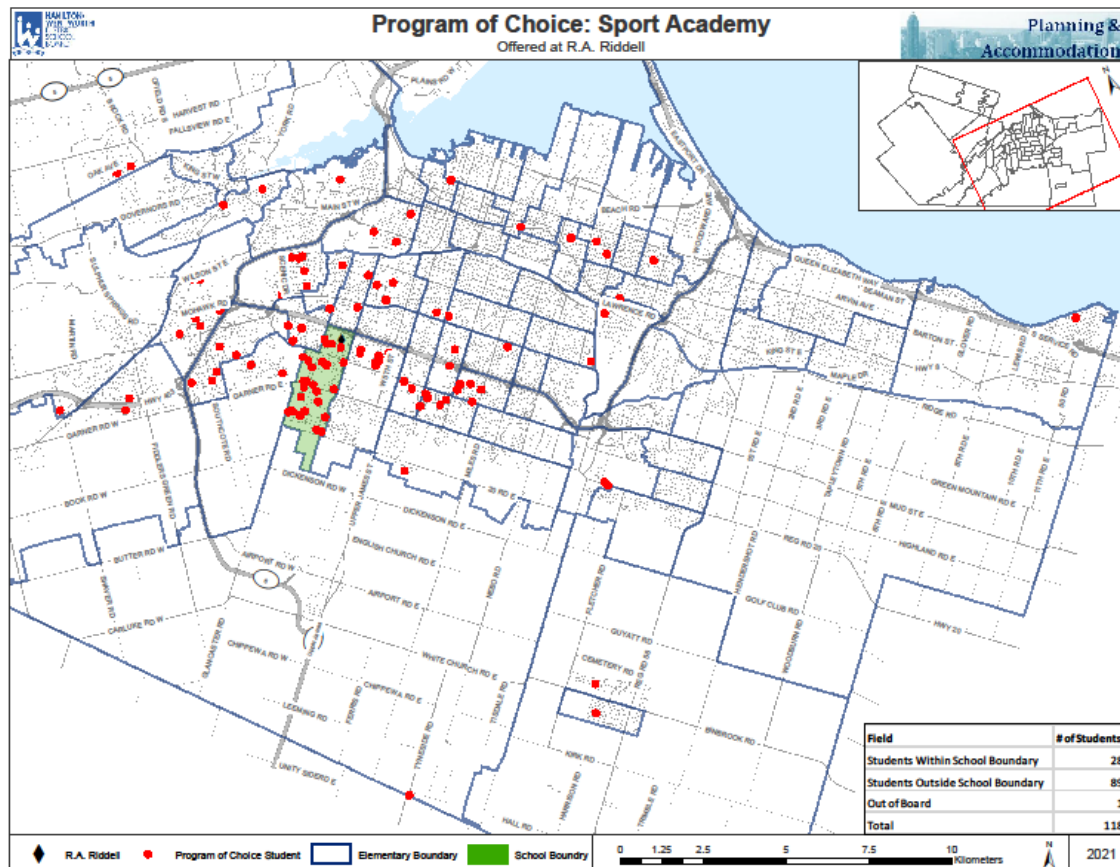
Currently, all Basketball Academy students who live within the R. A. Riddell catchment area come to school at no extra cost to the Board. For those out of catchment, parents must find their own way to get their children to school. Student Transportation Services calculated, based on current enrollment, the cost of providing transportation to both programs at R.A. Riddell would be approximately \$325 000.

Summary

The Basketball Programs appears to follow its original mandate. The program is well attended with 70 students this year. There would be a significant cost to providing transportation.

Sports Academy High Performance Program at R.A. Riddell Elementary School **Program Description**

The R.A. Riddell Sport Academy program consists of 2 streams: High Potential and Basketball focus. This innovative learning program was created in 2006 to engage HWDSB student athletes by meeting their unique academic and athletic needs. Student athletes from all over the district are welcome to apply to the R.A. Riddell Sport or Basketball Academy. The program set forth by the HWDSB which supports the visions of all students achieving their full potential, and of all students graduating.



The program is open to students in Grades 7 to 8. There are 46 students enrolled in the High Potential Academy (catchment data was provided for both Sports Academy programs together: 28 in catchment, 89 out of catchment, and 1 out of board). There are two teachers in the program and there is a \$150 fee .

How does the High Potential Sports Academy accommodate diverse students from across the system and remove barriers for those currently and historically underserved?

Meeting the diverse needs of students

We learned through the survey comments and the focus groups that the Focus Programs provide a sense of belonging for students. In the case of the High Potential Sports Academy, the program fills a gap for students who identify as female or girls. Traditionally, girls have fewer opportunities to participate and stay in sports. The program provides a space where they can connect with others who are passionate about sports: *“For my daughter.... to be surrounded by other females with her crazy sport schedules and for her to not be the only girl playing with the boys at recess anymore.”*

Barriers to participation

Parents with children in the program were asked to identify issues or hardships they experienced to keeping their child enrolled. Transportation and switching schools are common barriers across all programs.. Parents also stated

concerns about the perception that the Sports Academy programs are elitist. One parent said that their child could not have attended if they lived outside of catchment as they are a low-income family. Out of the nine community agency representatives responding to the survey, four had heard of the High Potential Sports Academy at R. A. Riddell. They identified costs, transportation, commute time, and switching to a new school as barriers to the families they serve.

Educators questions about the Sports Academy program citing that many students are already playing competitive sports outside of school and that other, less advantaged kids who don't have access to competitive sports are less likely to get into the Sports Academy. Other barriers named by educators include transportation to the school; equipment costs (e.g., shoes); family responsibilities (e.g., walking siblings home); and a lack of awareness about the program. When asked how families heard about the program, it is primarily through word of mouth from other parents, knowing another student who participated in the program, or Board employees.

The combination of these barriers means that only certain groups of students can participate in Sports Academy and contribute to a lack of diversity in the program in terms of socio-economic status, skill level, and learning types. One student also commented on the lack of racial diversity: *"There is a lot of the same race in here. People would feel more open to coming here if they saw more diversity."*

Summary

The Basketball Academy meets the diverse needs of students who identify as female who may not have opportunities to participate or stay in sports, and students who have trouble paying attention in class. Respondent groups named transportation, cost of tuition and equipment, lack of awareness about the program, and perceived elitism as the main barriers to participation. The program has a high proportion of female students as compared to other sports-focused programs (hockey). It primarily serves students who belong to families well established in Canada and who identify as white.

How is the High Potential Sports Academy making a difference in students' lives?

Math achievement

The students in the program achieve higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

Reading achievement

The students in the program achieve higher, on average, than their same cohort peers at both the host school and HWDSB.

School Attendance

The students in the program attend school at a lower rate, on average, than their same cohort peers enrolled in the local school but attend at a higher rate, on average, than the same cohort across HWDSB. This could be because many of these students travel for sports competitions.

Perceived benefits of being in High Potential Sports Academy

Parents with children in the High Potential Sports Academy were asked to identify program benefits. They identified improved physical skills, development of leadership skills, and engagement in school. Other responses include self-esteem, less bullying, improved mental health, time management, and engagement with like-minded children.

Educators at the host school were also asked to identify benefits to students in the High Potential Sports Academy. Their responses were similar to the parent responses. From the student focus groups, one of the main benefits of the programs is the flexibility it allows students athletes to accommodate their busy schedules (e.g., travelling for competitions, practices, etc.). Students described that this flexibility could include completing work online, asking for extensions, and understanding teachers who will help them catch up. The parent below summarizes the impact this flexibility has allowed their child: *"The Sport Academy was essential is allowing my son to experience all the benefits of in class learning while still training rigorously and competing Nationally and Internationally."*

In addition to flexible schedules, the program also provides students with opportunities to learn how to be a better athlete; not only in advancing their skill and technique, but also how to rest, recover from injury and live a healthy lifestyle. Students have access to McMaster Coaches once a week who help them with strength and conditioning.⁵

Students have also benefitted from increased teamwork and leadership by participating in the program. Students described that being with like-minded peers who are excited about sports has allowed them to work as a team, rather than act independently. Parents saw changes in their child in terms of their leadership and confidence.

Last, the focus group data supports the finding that students in the High Potential Sports Academy have higher academic achievement. Students described that having an outlet for their energy, having a sports-focused curriculum, and being around other student athletes and coaches has improved their academics.

Impact on school community

Like the Basketball Program, the High Potential program has had both a positive and negative impact on the school community. On one hand, the program has attracted families to the school and students are seen as leaders. Many students, parents, and educators, however, described the program as “elite,” privileging a few students at the expense of others at the school. Students commonly described that non-Sports Academy students were “jealous” of them because they have special privileges.

Summary

The High Potential Sports Academy has benefitted students by improving/maintaining their academic achievement as compared to students in their cohort. Students also benefitted from the program’s flexible schedule and opportunities to work with McMaster coaches. Students also saw positive change in their engagement toward school, athletic abilities, and teamwork. Program students are seen as leaders in the school, although, this has caused some tension as others believe the program is too elite.

To what extent is the High Potential Sports Academy sustainable and feasible?

Is the program fulfilling its original mandate?

Sports Academy was created to accommodate the unique needs of student athletes, such as flexibility with their academic work and daily physical activity. Considering the benefits of the program described in this report, it seems the program is fulfilling its purpose. However, more work must be done to determine what type of athletes the program serves – athletes at the elite level and/or all students who are passionate about sports.

Transportation

Currently, all High Potential Sports Academy students who live within the R. A. Riddell catchment area come to school at no extra cost to the Board. For those out of catchment, parents must find their own way to get their children to school. Student Transportation Services calculated, based on current enrollment, the cost of providing transportation to both programs at R.A. Riddell would be approximately \$325 000.

Summary

The High Potential Sports Academy is a program that provides flexibility for athletes to pursue their sport, missing school time in the process, and still have the support of their teacher to ensure they get caught up, have work to take with them, and have the one-to-one attention required to stay on track to graduate. The perception of elitism is a challenge to be addressed.

⁵ This programming will be discontinued beginning in 2022-23 as McMaster and the HWDSB develop a new partnership program to provide students from High Priority Schools access to McMaster Athletics staff and facilities.

Appendix B: Review Data**Enrollment Status**

Program	In-Catchment	Out-of-Catchment	Out-of-HWDSB
Mandarin	34%	60%	6%
SAGE	36%	64%	0%
Hockey	25%	75%	0%
SAGE Quest	60%	40%	0%
Sport Academy*	24%	75%	1%
Basketball*	24%	76%	0%

Student Profiles

Program	Students with Individual Education Plans	Students who are English Language Learners	Students Identifying as Males	Students Identifying as Females	Students Identifying as Non-Binary
Basketball	18%	4.5%	64%	36%	0%
Sports Academy	14.5%	8%	63%	37%	0%
Hockey	12.5%	0%	83%	17%	0%
Sage Quest	46%	0%	52%	48%	0%
SAGE	13%	3.8%	42%	58%	0%
Mandarin	0%	100%	59%	41%	0%
HWDSB	*16% (grades 1-8)	*30% (grades 1-8)	51%	48%	0.13%

Impact on Students

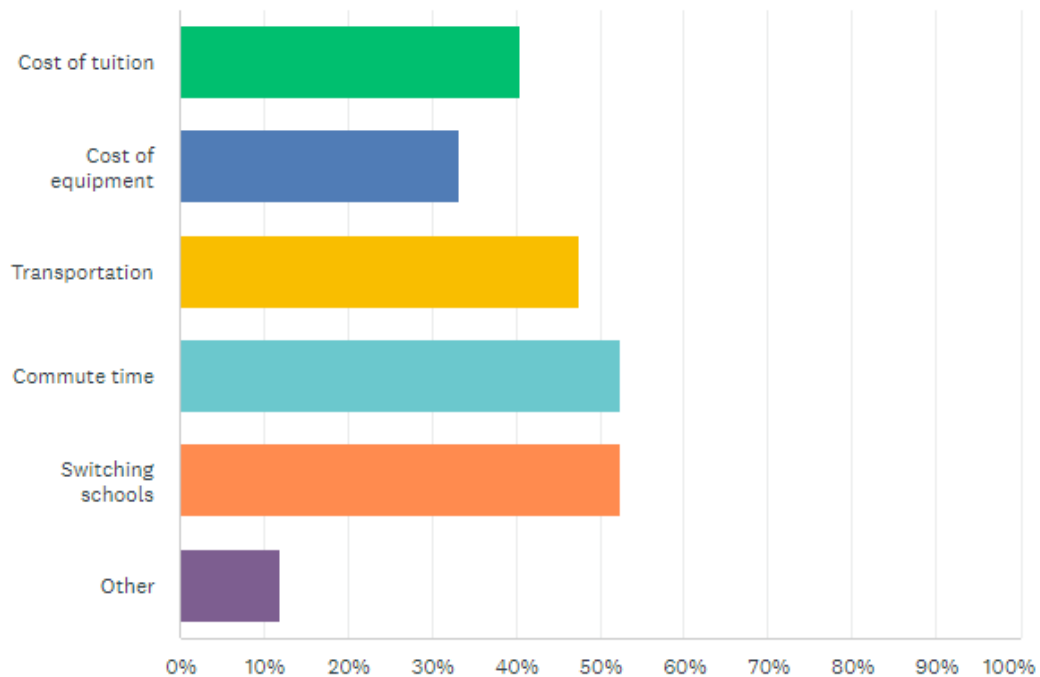
Program	Math*		Reading*		Absence (Days) *	
	Focus Program	Host School	Focus Program	Host School	Focus Program	Host School
Basketball	84.9%	79.9%	80.2%	76.8%	6.63	7
Sports Academy	84.3%	80.1%	80.7%	76.8%	8.92	6.9
Hockey	79.4%	76.1%	76.2%	74.3%	8.56	8.4
Sage Quest	88.3%	80.6%	88.4%	78%	9.51	10
SAGE	76.4%	73.4%	76.8%	73%	12.18	15
Mandarin	76.9%	75.5%	78%	74.8%	3.53	9.3

Transportation Costs Based on Current Enrollment

Program	Costing
Tapley Town	\$163,361.24
SAGE Quest	\$80,016.60
Mandarin Program	\$147,261.78
SAGE Program	\$154,547.52
Basketball and High Potential Academies	\$324,039.68
Total	\$ 869,226.82

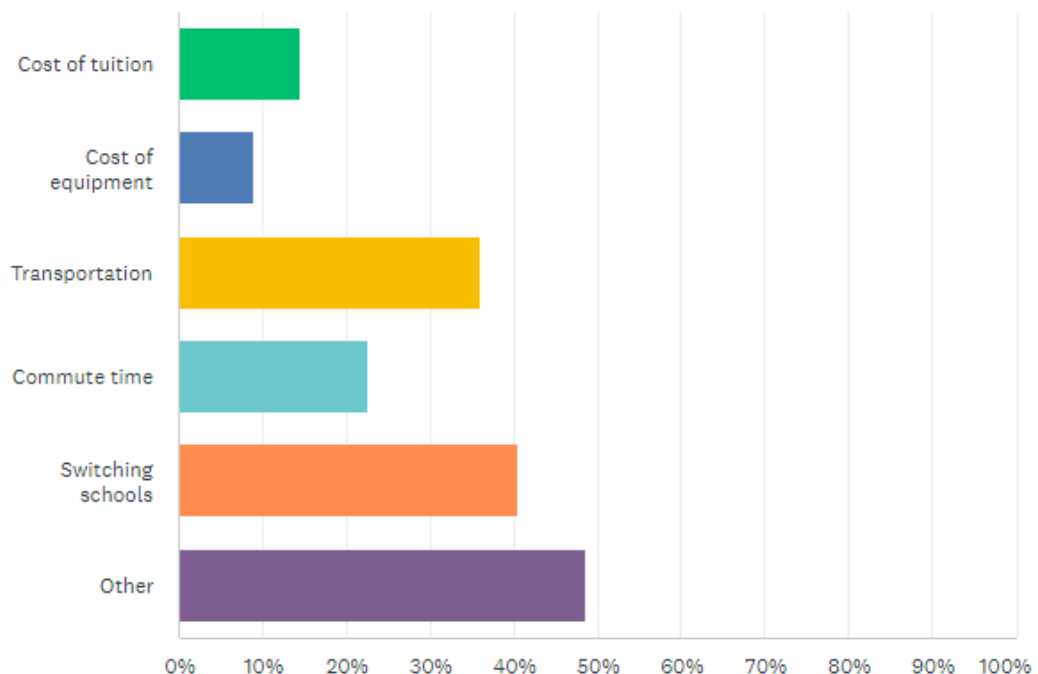
Barriers that would prevent a parent from enrolling their child -- identified by parents who just learned about the programs through this survey and expressed interest

Answered: 42 Skipped: 424



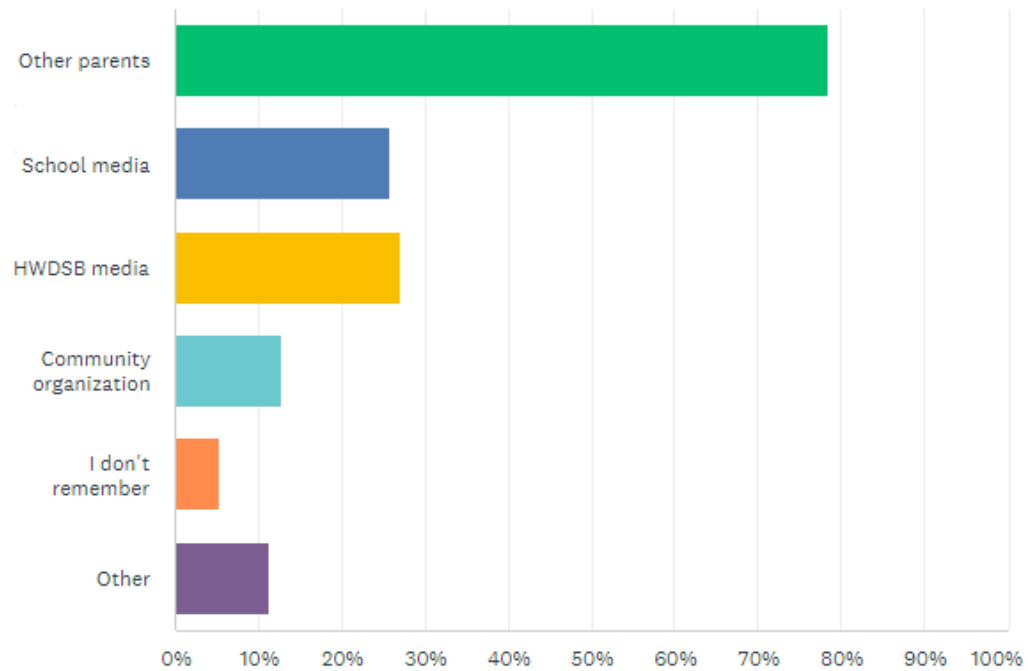
Barriers identified by parents who already knew about the programs but have never enrolled a child (2/3 of these parents did consider enrolling their child)

Answered: 111 Skipped: 355

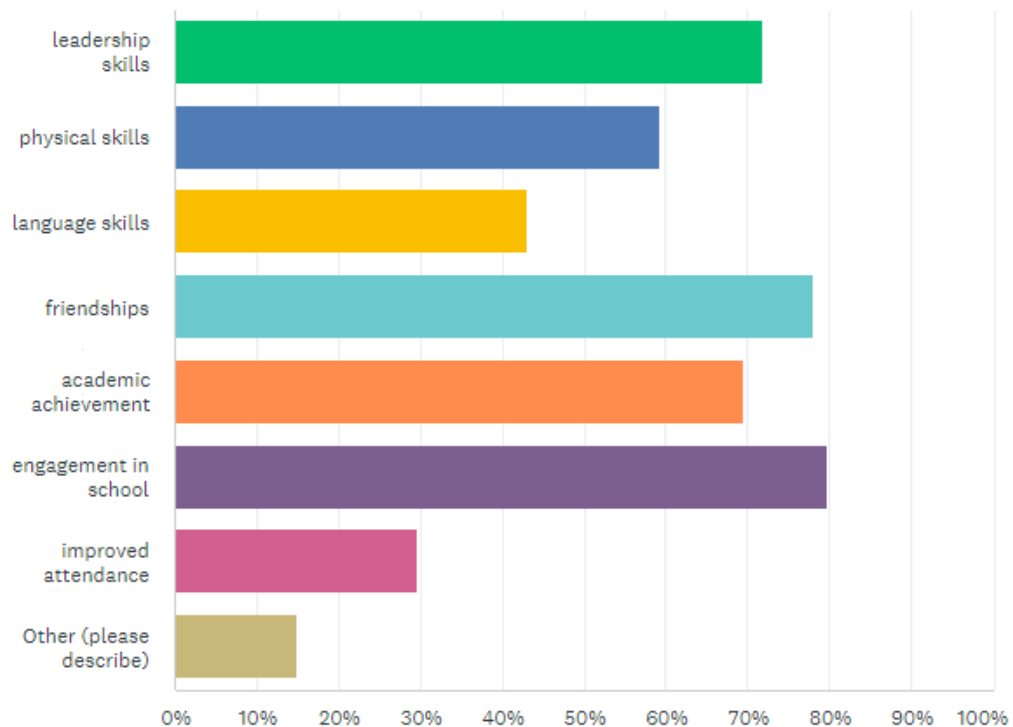


How Parents Became Aware of the Program

Answered: 344 Skipped: 122

**Main benefits to being in a program according to parents with children in programs**

Answered: 128 Skipped: 338





HWDSB Annual Plan Report

Name of Report: Positive Culture and Well-Being Report (Update)

Date: June 2022

This report provides an update on the Positive Culture and Well-Being Strategic Direction Priority since the primary report in March, 2022. This is a Monitoring Update.

Positive Culture and Well-Being Reporting Schedule

- September 2021 – Safe Schools Action Plan
- November 2021 – Board Annual Plan
- March 2022 – Suspensions, Expulsions and Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) Data and Safe Schools Action Plan
- **June 2022 – Safe Schools Action Plan and Community Mapping**

Priority: Positive Culture and Well-Being

We will build student and staff well-being through positive climate strategies and supportive relationships.

Goal: Improve the well-being of all students and staff and close the gap for those currently and historically underserved.

Target: At least 80 per cent of students and staff who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+, and people requiring special education supports/services self-report feeling safe, supported, accepted, and affirmed in their diverse and distinct identities.

Refining Measures of Progress

Strategy #2: Develop and implement a *Safe Schools Action Plan* to respond to the recommendations from the Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel.

The *Safe Schools Action Plan* addresses three fundamental areas related to bullying:

- Prevention
- Intervention
- Responding

Work within the *Safe Schools Action Plan* during the 2021/22 school year has supported each of the three fundamental areas. In working with the Advisory Committees, it has been helpful to identify where various initiatives are focused (recognizing they can be in more than one area). Going forward, the Report Updates will also identify the area of the work.

curiosity • creativity • possibility

Given that this is the fourth Update in the 2021/22 school year, this Report will go deeper on four areas undertaken this year as part of the *Safe Schools Action Plan*. A chart summarizing additional initiatives can be found in Appendix A.

PREVENTION: ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the 2021/22 school year, staff have had a relentless focus on working alongside those impacted by bullying through the implementation of the *Safe Schools Action Plan*. This commitment was shared as part of the *Safe Schools Action Plan* (Appendix B). The voice structures (Appendix C) to support this work include:

- Student Advisory Groups
- Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Advisory Group
- Community Advisory Group
- Organizational Advisory Group (internal departments and unions)
- Working Groups to support each of the nine priority areas within the Plan.

Staff have built and modified the structures to be responsive to participants and the invitation to join groups is ongoing. This work has reinforced that:

- authentic co-creation results in more fulsome outcomes;
- those with lived experience bring a unique and valued perspective to the work;
- barrier removal and the collaborative creation of safer spaces are essential;
- co-creation requires leadership learning;
- the process is part of the outcome and authentic engagement takes time.

Currently staff are working through a two-phase process of engagement on the DRAFT *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy*. Phase One focuses on hearing the voices of those most impacted by the Policy and those who experience the highest incidences of bullying. Phase Two focuses on broader community input. Further details will be provided to the Policy Committee in the 2022/23 school year.

PREVENTION – PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The *Safe Schools Action Plan* includes a focus on professional learning for staff in support of bullying prevention, intervention and responding. The following learning took place during the 2021/22 school year:

- Setting the Conditions for Safer and More Inclusive Classrooms – Administrators
- On the Horizons Document – Classroom Conditions – all staff
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention – all staff
- Progressive Discipline Policy and Procedures – Administrators
- Effective Use of Log Notes and Documentation – Administrators
- Guidelines for Responding to Incidents Requiring Suspension or Expulsion – Administrators
- Desktop Resource – Safe Schools Suspension, Expulsion and Reporting - Administrators
- Desktop Resource – Investigating an Allegation of Bullying – Administrators
- Student Safety Planning - Administrators
- Conducting Effective Investigations – Administrators
- Anonymous Reporting of Bullying – all staff
- Cyberbullying – all staff

INTERVENTION: NURTURING SAFE SCHOOLS – A SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

Nurturing Safer Schools: A Social Work Intervention is a six-session therapeutic treatment program for middle school students (grades 6-8) who have engaged in or been impacted by peer-victimization (more commonly referred to as bullying). The primary goals of this intervention, for both impacted students (those who experience bullying behavior, witness bullying behavior) and students of concern (student who demonstrates bullying behavior), are:

- Decrease feelings of distress
- Support the development of positive relationships with self and others
- Increase feelings of connection to the school community
- Secondary goals may include: increased empathy, hope, and behavioural intervention

Nurturing Safer Schools is rooted in evidence, and is informed by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and is designed to be delivered in schools, acknowledging that this is where the bullying behaviour has likely occurred. As mental health practitioners in schools, social workers are well positioned to provide treatment programming for both students with concerning behaviours and those impacted by bullying. This Intervention is one component of a larger systemic response to peer-victimization (bullying).

The intervention is designed to be delivered face-to-face which resulted in implementation beginning in March, 2022. There were five schools in the Pilot and three students (Grades 6 – 8) referred to the Pilot during April and May. One student of concern (e.g. displayed bullying behaviour) declined involvement. Two impacted students are being supported through the Pilot. Material has been developed to support administrations in discussing the program with students of concerns and their parents/guardians/caregivers.

Key learnings from the Pilot which inform next steps are outlined in Appendix D. Recruitment for Pilot schools for the 2022/23 school year will begin in June, 2022.

RESPONDING – STUDENT SAFETY PLAN

When an incidence of bullying has occurred or concerns of bullying-like behavior are reported, it is imperative that principals and vice-principals work alongside students and families throughout the responding process. Creating clear communication guidelines and expectations for reporting and response ensures parents, guardians and caregivers (especially those connected to the impacted student) are kept informed at every step of the bullying reporting and response process.

This includes:

- notifying families at the time of a reported bullying incident (or even earlier when concerning behaviours are identified);
- ensuring parents, guardians and caregivers are invited into the problem-solving and safety planning process

The *Student Safety Plan* (Appendix E) is a tool which is completed collaboratively with the family and the student (where appropriate). It is a working document that is reviewed and updated and is in place as long as the student requires it. *The Student Safety Plan*:

- provides consistent approach to planning for student safety across schools;
- supports students and families as co-creators of the plan;
- ensures staff who need to be aware of the plan are aware of the plan

The *DRAFT Student Safety Plan* was shared with principals and vice-principals in March, 2022. It has been used in a “pilot” manner and feedback is being gathered in June, 2022. In addition, the following Safe Schools Advisory Groups have/will provide feedback into the draft:

- Student
- Parent/Guardian/Caregiver
- Community
- Executive Council
- Organizational Advisory Table (June, 2022)

Emerging themes from the feedback include:

- Create family friendly resources to support (e.g. videos explaining each section, handbook) use
- Make available online as a fillable document
- Add greater detail around texting and internet safety
- Clarity on who has access to the Plan (in school and outside of school)
- Confidentiality, storage and how long the Plan is retained statements
- Helpful document that supported a shared understanding of what was in place and schedule for follow up and check-in with the student and family

COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING

Background

In June, 2021, HWDSB Trustees received the **Final Report – Safe Schools Mapping Out Community Supports**. This report outlined the community-driven process which identified an approach to inviting speakers into the classroom, including speakers for topics that previously were part of the now terminated Police Liaison Program. This approach follows a tiered process to determine how to invite speakers. This includes use of a checklist/guideline used by staff and students to determine whether the presentation would be classified as Tier 1 (non-triggering content) or Tier 2 (triggering content). In both approaches, staff will prepare students to participate in the activities/presentation. This entails providing students with an overview of the presentation to be delivered, who the speaker will be and how it connects to their learning in the classroom. Teachers will always intentionally plan for safety, before, during and after presentations.

As mandated by the Education Act, police continue to be involved in the planning and execution of emergency responses. Hamilton Police Services’ (HPS) involvement is limited to safe and secure schools as outlined in the Police/School Board Protocol (currently under revision to reflect the termination of the Police Liaison program) and as mandated by legislation. At a minimum, the police **must** be notified of the following types of incidents:

all deaths; physical assault causing bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner; sexual assault; robbery; criminal harassment; relationship-based violence; possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm; using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person; trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs; possessing an illegal drug; hate and/or bias-motivated occurrences; gang-related occurrences; extortion; non-consensual sharing of intimate images; bomb threats. lockdowns bomb threats; *Youth Criminal Justice Act*; and imminent risk of student harm to self or others.

In addition, HWDSB is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). Under MFIPPA, student personal information can be shared with police under limited circumstances, particularly when it is legally required by a court order (warrant or production order). Apart from this legislatively mandated involvement that supports safe schools, HPS is not providing any other programs and/or services to HWDSB.

Timeline of Actions by HWDSB Staff since the June 2021 Report:

Timeline	Action
Sept. 2021	Training for principals and vice principals on Safe Schools, privacy of information, and police involvement in schools
Sept. 2021	Implementation of Safe Schools human resource supports for schools: additional Child and Youth Care Practitioners (CYCP) for Families of Schools; CYCP in Gateway for elementary support; increased use of AIM programs as preventative supports for students;
Sept. 2021- present	Redefining interactions with police and working toward a shared understanding of the legislated role of police in HWDSB based on Safe and Secure Schools
Sept. – Dec. 2021	1:1 coaching of principals and vice principals regarding police involvement with schools and management of Safe Schools incidents by superintendents and system principal
Sept. 2021 - present	Launch of the On the Horizon Document including administrator and educator learning
Nov. 2021	Re-release of memo to school administrators for when to involve police in schools
Dec.2021- present	Development of HWDSB Community Asset Mapping Process and Next Steps as presented in this report

The **Final Report – Safe Schools Mapping Out Community Supports** (June, 2021) recognizes that future partners /groups/organizations who provide programming to students must undertake their work using an anti-racist anti-oppressive (ARAO) and anti-colonial lens. This ensures that programming/supports provided are done in a way that is safe, supportive, inclusive to all students, especially considering the needs of Indigenous, Black, racialized, students receiving special education supports and students who identify as Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+. The report made recommendations, based on community consultation, around the criteria to consider in selecting partners/groups/organizations to support classroom activities or presentations. The report identified a tiered approach to selecting individuals:

Tier 1

Tier 1 speakers would be those that are not presenting content that could potentially cause harm to students. While speakers would still need to use an ARAO anti-colonial lens in their presentation, teachers could make decisions on bringing speakers without the input of others. This process would need to be documented.

Tier 2

Tier 2 speakers would be chosen from a committee made up of students, community members/parents (if possible), and teachers. Teachers in consultation with students would discuss in detail the purpose of the presentation, how it connects/builds students learning, the skills and qualities speakers would need to have, alternatives to the presentation for students unable to attend the talk and establish feedback and supports for students. In essence, this approach would need to be taken for presentations that would be

triggering and/or harmful to students. This approach uses an ARAO anti-colonial framework before, during and after the presentation.

For both Tier 1 and Tier 2 activities, the report recommends that teachers fill out a ***Process Template***, and a ***Reflection Form***, provided in the report, to determine whether the presentation would fall under Tier 1 or Tier 2.

On the Horizons Resource

In support of creating the classroom conditions for presentations that might be triggering for some or facilitating challenging conversations, the *On the Horizons* resource was developed. Principals, vice-principals and school staff were trained on the document at various times during the 2021/22 school year. This document supports educators in planning for safe student entry and exit into challenging conversations. It supports the understanding and creation of safe and inclusive classrooms as well as an understanding of an ARAO approach.

Community Asset Mapping Process

In December 2021 and January 2022, an Ad Hoc Committee (comprised of staff from Human Rights; Safe Schools; Communications; Community Engagement; Program; and Research and Analytics) identified the following considerations that support recommendations of the June, 2021 report as well as the Board need to share resources across the system. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 topics will be included in the process. Some of the work has begun this year, with the remainder to be completed in 2022-23.

Collecting Information From Schools

Staff will complete an environmental scan with students, school staff and administrators to identify Board, community and global assets linked to topics and programs that are being accessed in our schools. This would include human resources, community groups and speakers. The *HWDSB Community Resource Guide* will be included in this scan.

Vetting/Filtering

Staff will use an HWDSB Decision Making Tool to ensure an anti-racist anti-oppressive (ARAO) and anti-colonial lens. This would also take into consideration safety for students before, during and after any programming. This will be developed from the community-developed *Guidelines to Inform the Selection of Partners/Organizations for Presentations*.

Storage and Communications

Staff will develop a process to share Board and community resources across the system that will include digital location, access and a communication plan.

Other Considerations

Examples of other considerations might be remuneration/honoraria, reciprocal partnerships, or a commitment to share knowledge.

Next Steps

Due to the pandemic and changes in the Senior Leadership Team, the overall work did not progress according to the original timelines. The foundational work completed in 2021/22 will be built upon according to the following:

Stage 1 (September, 2022 to February, 2023)

This stage will focus on the application of the Guidelines, processes and reflective of the themes, for the selection of partners for the presentations identified in *Appendix E*. This includes system-wide, Tier 1 and Tier 2 speakers/topics.

Implementation steps include:

1. Establishing a student, parent, community vetting/review table including:
 - Two students from each HWDSB student voice table including CC:ROSE, Black, Racialized, Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+, Students Accessing Special Education Supports, Safe Schools Voice Networks
 - Two students from Student Senate
 - Four representatives from the *Community Mapping Working Group* representing parents and community partners
 - Co-chaired by a student and parent/community member
 - Board staff assigned to provide support
2. Development of a simple application form aligning with the Guidelines. Submissions may be made, online, paper or through an oral submission.
3. Development of feedback tool for students to provide feedback after presentations.
4. Gather feedback on the application, selection and implementation process to inform development of school and system procedures and supports

Stage 2 (February, 2023 – June, 2023)

1. Develop a procedure and supports for staff to use related to presentations in the classroom which are non-triggering including:
 - a. ARAO and anti-colonial lens to the presentation
 - b. Things to consider before, during and after a presentation
 - c. Definitions of key concepts in the Guidelines
2. Determine system-wide accessibility standards for presentations
3. Implement the Framework for Ethical Engagement of the Indigenous Community with the Indigenous Cultural Safety Team
4. Update Guideline based on Stage 1 learning

Stage 3 (September, 2023 to January 2024)

1. Develop a procedure and supports for staff to use related to engaging student voice in the identification of potential presentations and selection of presentations in the classroom which are potentially triggering including:
 - a. ARAO and anti-colonial lens to the presentation
 - b. Things to consider before, during and after a presentation
 - c. Including student, parent and community input
 - d. Planning for student safety during presentations
2. Update Guidelines based on learnings

Appendix A – Initiatives Overview

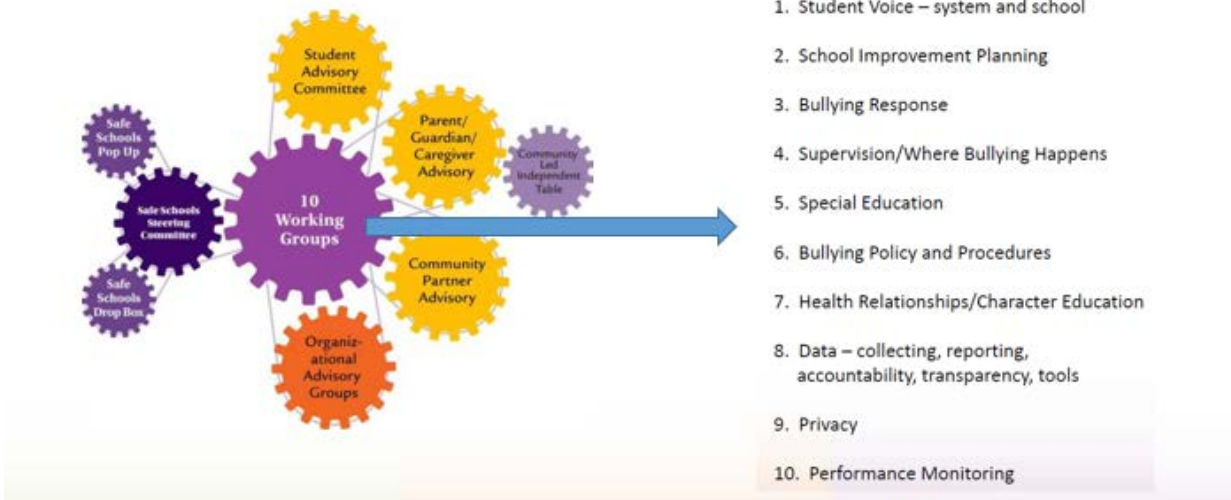
	Initiatives												
	Responding - Bullying Tip Sheet	Student Safety Plan	Understanding Cyberbullying	Where Bullying Happens	Bullying Policy and Procedure	Learn.Disrupt.Rebuild.	Reimagining Wellness	Kids Have Stress Too	Nurturing Safer Schools	Responding - Suspension and Expulsion	Responding - Incidents of Bias, Hate	Social Emotional Learning	Keeping Students in School
Students													
Recommendation #1													
Increase student ownership & seek out and listen to student voices	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Parents/Guardians/Caregivers													
Recommendation #2													
Involve parents, guardians, caregivers in bullying prevention & response in meaningful ways	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Schools													
Recommendation #3													
Develop multi-tiered supports and programming	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x
Recommendation #4													
Support schools so they can establish their own bullying prevention and intervention plans	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Recommendation #5													
Examine special education practices from a student-centred learning perspective						x	x			x		x	
Recommendation #6													
Review policies and procedures from equity, ARAO perspectives	x	x			x	x	x			x	x	x	x

	Responding - Bullying Tip Sheet	Student Safety Plan	Understanding Cyberbullying	Where Bullying Happens	Bullying Policy and Procedure	Learn.Disrupt.Rebuild.	Reimagining Wellness	Kids Have Stress Too	Nurturing Safer Schools	Responding - Suspension and Expulsion	Responding - Incidents of Bias, Hate	Social Emotional Learning	Keeping Students in School
Recommendation #7													
Ensure policies and procedures are followed consistently	x				x				x	x	x		
<i>System</i>													
Recommendation #8													
Set the foundation for a culture of caring					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Recommendation #9													
Strengthen the leadership skills needed for culture change	x				x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
<i>Community</i>													
Recommendation #10													
Work with a wide range of community partners					x	x				x	x		x
<i>Ministry</i>													
Recommendation #11													
Ask the MOE for support									x				

Appendix B – Commitments to Students, Parents/Guardians/Caregivers and Staff

- being transparent with students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff and community about the Safe Schools Action Plan – what we are doing to be shared regularly – website, reporting to Trustee (4 times a year)
- create structures to ensure student, parent/guardian/caregiver, staff and community voice inform school and board plans and that these plans are publicly shared and reported on;
- improved engagement with attention to working with those impacted by decisions;
- building relationships and trust through our actions – listening and responding and being accountable at the school and system-level for improvement in student safety and well-being.

Appendix C – Voice Structures

HWDSB**Working Groups**

Appendix D – Nurturing Safer Schools Key Learnings

- Initial impressions of the materials for students appear to be age-appropriate and applicable
- Administrators expressed appreciation for being included in the pilot and have been open to providing feedback of their experiences of the pilot
- Administrators expressed confidence that school staff and school council are ready for alternatives to suspension and open to discussions regarding different approaches to bullying interventions
- Administrators have indicated that there is increased awareness around the discrepancies that exist for marginalized students regarding the responses to incidences of bullying.
- Administrators have expressed varying views about whether students of equity-deserving groups are over-represented as *students of concern* or as *impacted students*
- Prior to the pilot starting, administrators anticipated that receiving consent to move forward with the program would be challenging from the students of concern and their parents/caregivers. As such, developing and providing material for administrators to use that introduces and describes the program in a way that would encourage students and their parents/caregivers to consider the program is necessary
- Administrators have expressed concern regarding the utilization of a first suspension as a threshold for eligibility
- There is significant hopefulness that the NSS intervention and other interventions/programs will work closely together in order to provide a larger systemic strategy as it relates to bullying intervention. There is concern that if the NSS intervention moves forward in absence of a collaborative approach that combines all other interventions, the impact will be limited
- Administrators indicated that NSS intervention should consider a strategy that includes targeting students in grade 4-6 as there are observing emerging concerning bullying behaviours in this population
- There is a need for the development of support and intervention for parents/caregivers
- There is a continued need to broaden the scope of bullying interventions to include incidents occurring between students and education staff

Appendix E – DRAFT Student Safety Plan

HWDSB Student Safety Plan

(Co-created with the student, parent/guardian/caregiver and administrator)

This Student Safety Plan should delineate steps and the roles the impacted student, their family and defined school staff will take in order to try and prevent further bullying behaviour and/or limit further exposure to harmful behaviours. It may include strategies such as walking/sitting with supportive peers, identifying and accessing safe places throughout the day, as well as expectations regarding communication and follow-up. It is hoped that through the collaborative development and measured review of this Student Safety Plan the impacted student and their family feel safe, supported and included in their school community.

Student Safety Plan for:		
Homeroom Teacher	Rotary Teacher(s)	Caring Adult(s)
Student/Family Feeling Positive About...		Student/Family Feeling Concerned About ...
Members of the Student Support Team (can be internal/external to school):		
Important things to Review:		Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/> staff will be made aware of the plan and will make every effort to implement it <input type="checkbox"/> Caring Adults/Key Contacts (i.e., regular check-ins) <input type="checkbox"/> School and Classroom Supports <input type="checkbox"/> Student not to have face to face or online contact <input type="checkbox"/> Arranged time(s) for Student, Parent/guardian/caregiver and/or Administrator to communicate as “check ins” on the plan <input type="checkbox"/> Times before and after school, during lunch, recesses, transition times <input type="checkbox"/> Internet Safety <input type="checkbox"/> off site review (e.g., travelling to/from; lunchtimes) <input type="checkbox"/> class review (e.g., reviewing student timetable, class lists, seating plans, discrete way(s) to leave class to see caring adult) <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom structures controlled by teacher (e.g., seating, groupings, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Support(s) to further nurture response skills (e.g., leaving the situation, seeking help from an adult or peer) <input type="checkbox"/> Support(s) to enhance self-esteem; build leadership		

<input type="checkbox"/> Connections to school/community activities/clubs/teams (i.e., competence, interests, highlight talents) <input type="checkbox"/> System supports (staff and/or programs)	
Important Responsibilities:	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/> Any school staff who witness/made aware of bullying behaviour directed toward the student will intervene immediately and report the behaviour to the principal <input type="checkbox"/> Student to report any incidents of bullying <input type="checkbox"/> Parent to monitor online interactions and report any concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Student and/or parent to report any bullying behaviour on or off school property	

SCHEDULE FOR FOLLOW UP AND COMMUNICATION (as recommended by PREVNet)	
WEEK 1: Daily for the first week	
Date: Time: Person Responsible: People in Attendance:	Details/Follow-up (if any):
Date: Time: Person Responsible: People in Attendance:	Details/Follow-up (if any):
Date: Time: Person Responsible: People in Attendance:	Details/Follow-up (if any):

Date: Time: Person Responsible: People in Attendance:	Details/Follow-up (if any):
Date: Time: Person Responsible: People in Attendance:	Details/Follow-up (if any):

WEEK 2: Every other day	
Date: Time: People Present:	Details/Follow-up (if any)::
Date: Time: People Present:	Details/Follow-up (if any)::
Date: Time: People Present:	Details/Follow-up (if any)::

WEEK 3 +: At least once; intermittent check-ins as needed or requested	
Date: Time: People Present:	Details/Follow-up (if any)::