

## Special Hearing of the Committee of the

#### South Area Review

#### **Delegation Night**

Tuesday April 10 2012 at 6:00 pm Boardroom, Education Centre

| 1.   | Welcome  | R. Barlow |
|------|--|-----------|
| 2.   | Approval of the Agenda                             | n. barlow |
| Pres | sentations:  |           |
| 3.   | E. Kneisz and R. Sharma                            | 10 min    |
| 4.   | G. Verrier and A. Reid                             | 10 min    |
| 5.   | L. Hicks and F. Susic                              | 10 min    |
| 6.   | C. Mori and K. Castell                             | 10 min    |
| 7.   | K. Castell and C. Mori                             | 10 min    |
| 8.   | F. Susic and L. Hicks                              | 10 min    |
| 9.   | R. Whitelaw  | 10 min    |
| 10.  | J. Davis   | 10 min    |
| 11.  | K. Wall and D. Wall                                | 10 min    |
| 12.  | G. Conroy, J. Reese and N. Downer                  | 10 min    |
| Spea | akers List:  |           |
| 13.  | J. McQueen, Hill Park Alumni Association           | 10 min    |
| 14.  | C. Frankum and S. Barham                           | 5 min     |
| 15.  | D. Cowling and A. Sweeney                          | 10 min    |
| 16.  | L. Beckham, K. Gough and S. Ouk                    | 10 min    |
| 17.  | M. Campbell  | 10 min    |
| 18.  | C. Martin  | 5 min     |
| 19.  | H. Tyrrell   | 10 min    |
| 20.  | S. Dungavel  | 5 min     |
| 21.  | H. Milan   | 5 min     |
| 22.  | M. Bixby   | 5 min     |
| 23.  | S. Wear and S. Horton                              | 10 min    |
| 24.  | E. O'Donnell and S. Horton                         | 10 min    |
| 25.  | S. Horton and S. Baschiera                         | 10 min    |
| 26.  | S. Wear, E. O'Donnell , S. Baschiera and S. Horton | 10 min    |
|      |  |           |



## Special Hearing of the Committee of the

#### Correspondence:

- 27. S. Potter
- 28. Letters from Westmount Parents
- 29. Letters from Westmount S2G Students (Alternative Education)
- 30. Adjournment

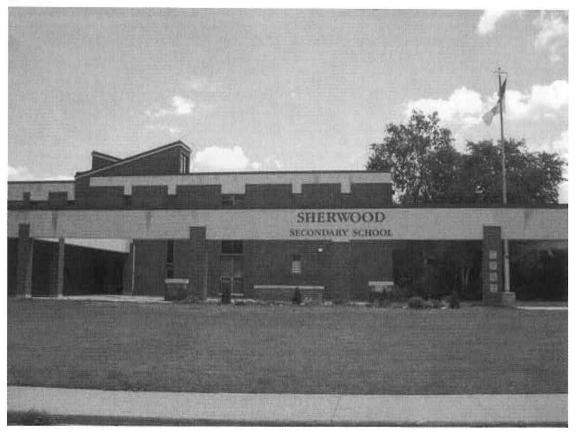
E. Kneisz+R. Shame

#### 3-1

## **Sherwood Secondary School**

"Home of the Saints"





#### Atmosphere at Sherwood Secondary

Hello, my name is Erin Kneisz and this is Rahul Sharma. We are students of Sherwood Secondary School. I will begin by telling my personal story.

We have all heard the saying, "If these walls could talk" ....and how very true that is of Sherwood. I came to Sherwood during a time of personal challenge and what I found walking the hallways of this school is how Sherwood encompassed being a friend, a mom, a dad, a sister, a brother....a family.

There is nothing stronger than family, nothing more inspirational than those who teach, nothing more comforting than true friendships, nothing more remarkable than self-discovery. Through it all, the tears, the laughter, the secrets, the uncertainty, the good, the bad and the ugly, Sherwood has stood beside us, believing in our capabilities, never abandoning us. We in turn will not abandon Sherwood. Sherwood is not a destination, it is an incredible journey. For 7 hours a day, 5 days a week for 3 years Sherwood has been my home.

Listening to Erin, I began to wonder about Erin referring to Sherwood as "a home". What exactly makes it feel this way? Many things come to mind. Sherwood feels safe and welcoming. We feel respected by teachers and other students. People have taken the time to get to know us and we can tell that they care. We are constantly challenged by our school work, but surprisingly, when I

think about this, this too shows that our teachers care. Who knew that learning could be this much fun?

I think about the hallways of Sherwood and the places we hang out. In the hallways, there is laughter but a sense of calm. Our auditorium is a magical place. It holds over 700 of us at once to cheer on our friends in the bands or join Sherwood idol. It is a busy hub in our special school. Our Guidance Office is always open and there is always someone to talk to. Our gyms are never empty. People care about us; they want us to be active and healthy.

So what does all of this really mean? Atmosphere. Sherwood has an atmosphere that is contagious from the moment you enter its' doors. It has taken time and effort and a lot of special people to create this feeling. We are cared for, safe and excited to come to school each day.

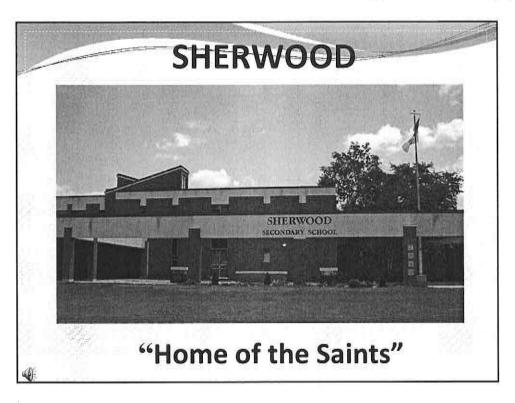
Research shows that the atmosphere within a school contributes as much to the success of a student as the curriculum does.

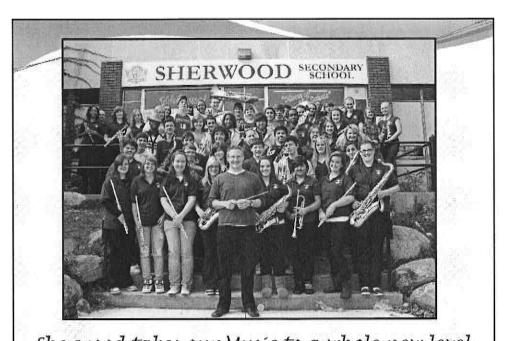
We will close by having our friend, Tanvi Patel come forward and tell her story.

| W. |  |   |
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#### G. Verner + A. Reid





Sherwood takes our Music to a whole new level because...

## The Repertoire Ensemble



65 students in Repertoire earn music credits

#### The Enrichment Band



65 students in Enrichment already earning credits

#### DID YOU KNOW?

That Mr. Baker started the Enrichment Program 3 years ago with only 20 students

This program Mr.
Baker created for
our Grade 7 and 8
feeder students

These students were so intrigued with Sherwood's music programs, they requested we build a program just for them

This program is so
successful in its
3<sup>rd</sup> year, we now
have 100 students
in Enrichment, including
35 Sherwood
Mentors!

Every Monday night the halls of Sherwood are alive with the sound of music from 100 kids

Come feel the rhythm for yourself!

... And as an extra incentive the Enrichment students earn themselves 1 credit before they even start high school

Where will they go....

If Sherwood closes.

This program has been built to meet the needs of this community and these young students

# Golden Horseshoe Musicfest 2012



Hamilton/Halton/Niagara

# Sherwood Jr. Band won Gold!

Both the JR. Band and the Jazz Band were given invitations to attend the Musicfest Nationals in Ottawa this coming May!

We were the ONLY
Hamilton Mountain school
to receive a \$10,000
Award from "Musicounts"
to buy new instruments.



We were then able to replace the 30 year old instruments we were using, with brand new ones.

Q.P

... But unfortunately, the CARAS contract says if a school closes, the instruments must be returned and...

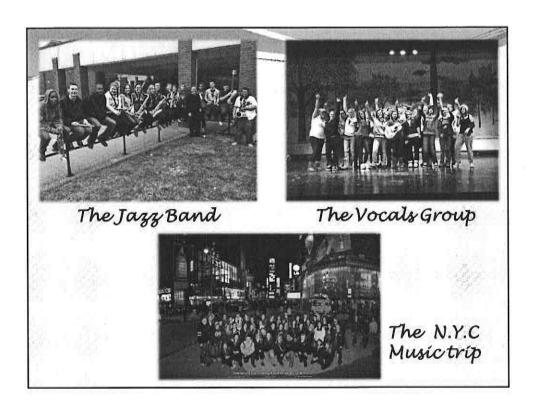
they <u>WILL NOT</u> go to another school in the HWDSB. They would all be lost. What a shame after all the hard work and perseverance from our students and Mr. Baker, who have earned them

Are you going to let this happen to our music community?

Students are still choosing to come to Sherwood because they want to be in our Music Program.

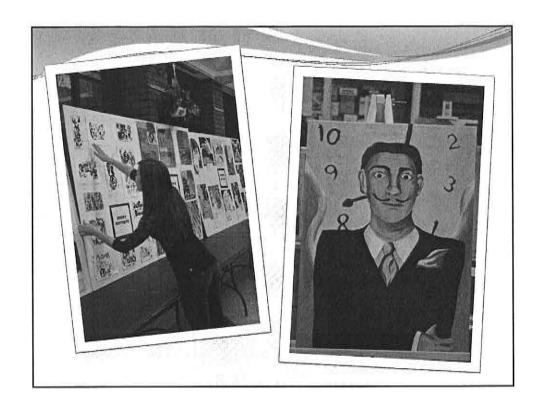
This program can <u>NOT</u> be relocated.

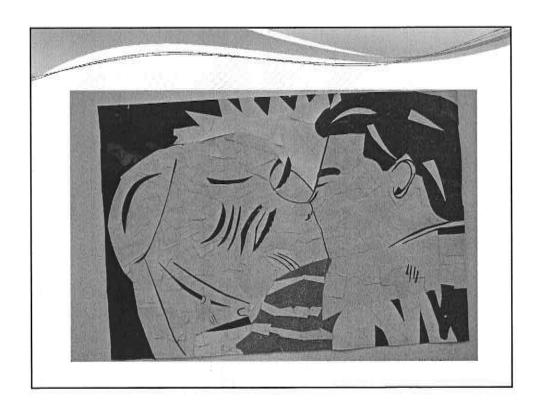
Save Sherwood Music!

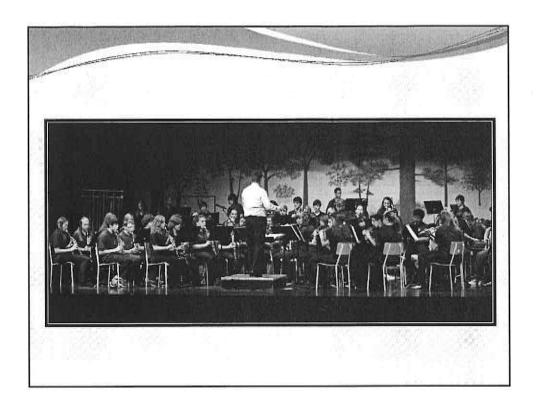


## Music & Arts Nights

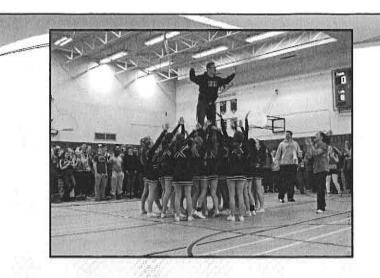
We showcase our talents twice a year at our "Sherwood Music Nights." Our most recent event had over 600 people in attendance











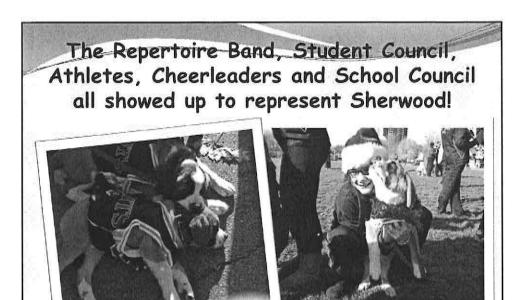
Here Mr. Baker had the Best seat in the house to conduct the band!

#### Hamilton Santa Claus Parade 2011



The <u>only</u> Public High School in the HWDSB to have a Marching Band participate





Including 5 of the most loyal "Saints"....
The 4-legged kind

# SHERWOOD MUSIC & ART STUDENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

Past and Present...





# HWDSB Students among Rising Star Finalists

HWDSB students made the cut
to join finalists at a "Rising Star
Search." This showcase was
dedicated to aspiring music talents
as part of the 2010 Hamilton
Music Awards Festival

Our very own "Sherwood Finalist" was...

#### Edward Young Hill

This talented young student has performed at both Rotary and Kiwanis Music Festivals, earning himself many 1st place awards.

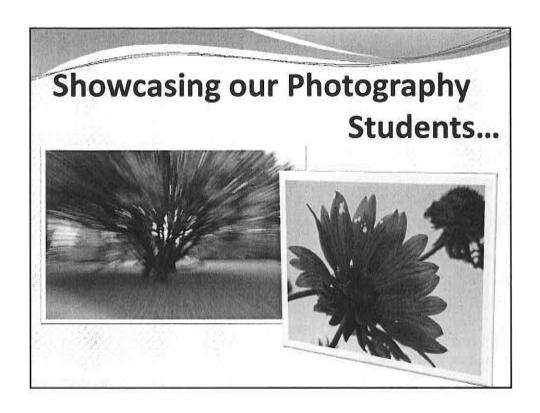
"The thing that makes this school different is the freedom. We get to make our own decisions and now, I want to go to school everyday."

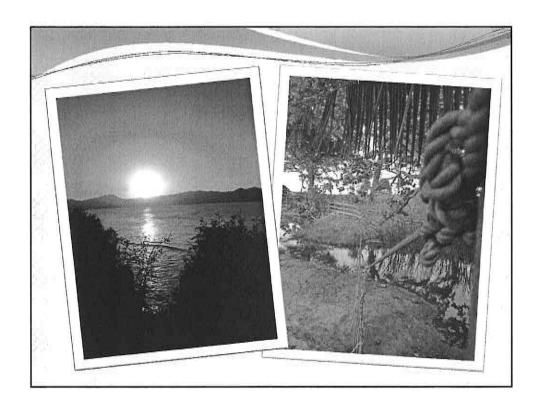
K. Archer, student

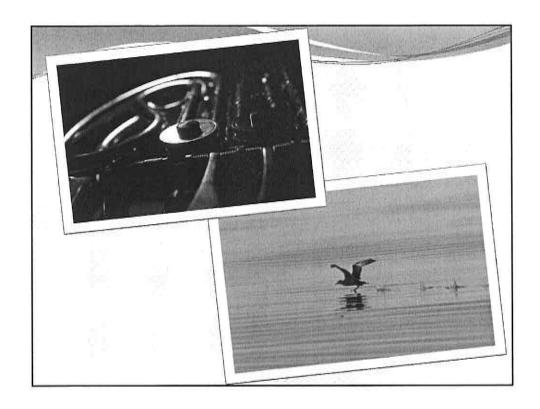


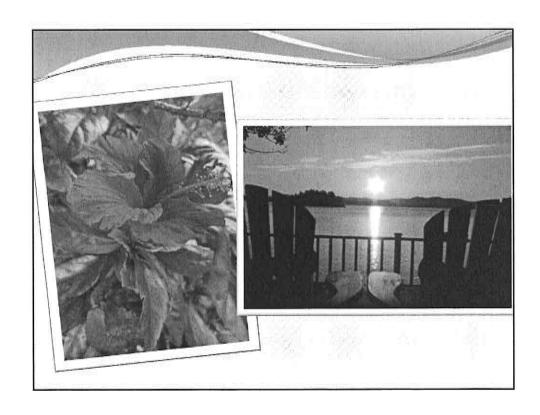


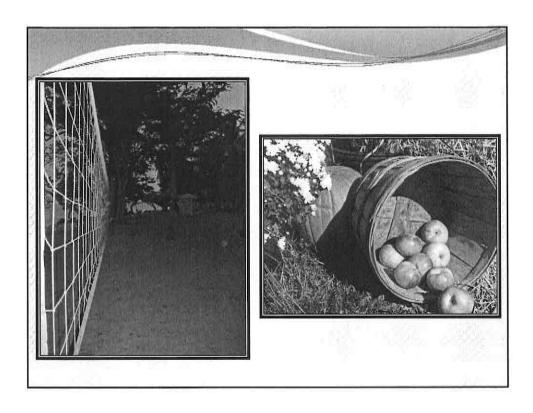


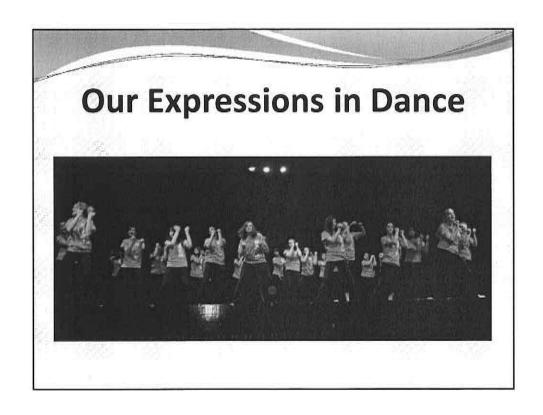












"Sherwood Music is a very busy place full of strong and dedicated students who are a great credit to both their school and community"

"To each and every one of these students congratulations for all your hard work and dedication to help make this one of the strongest music programs we could ever hope for!"

Mr. Ryan Baker, Head of Music

A School Information Profile is designed to help the ARC and the community understand how well a school meets the objectives and the criteria outlined in the ARC terms of reference. A SIP includes school data for each of the following four considerations:

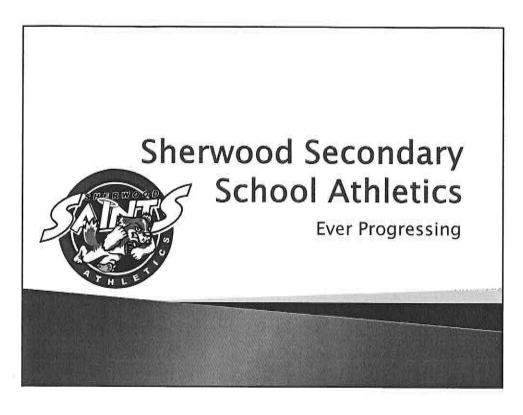
Value to the student
Value to the school board
Value to the community
Value to the local economy

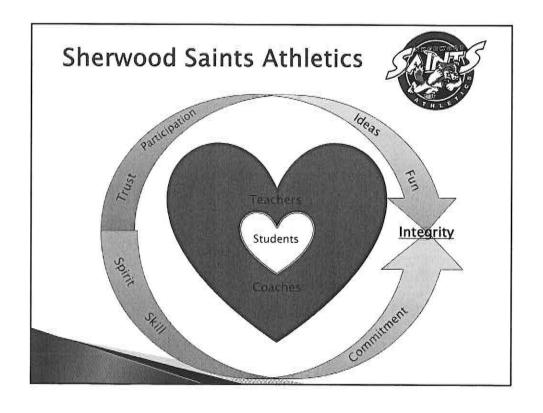
We recognize that the school's value to the student takes priority over other considerations about the school.

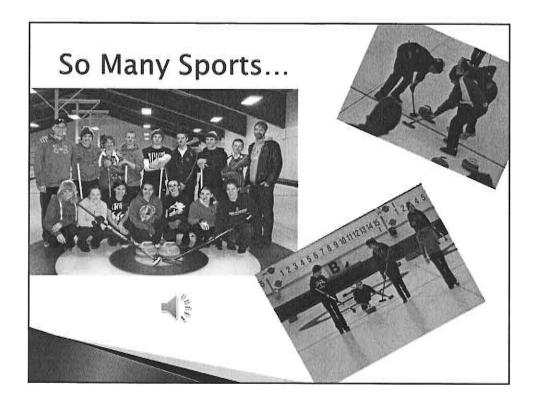
# The MOST important thing we VALUE is our HOME

#### **SHERWOOD**

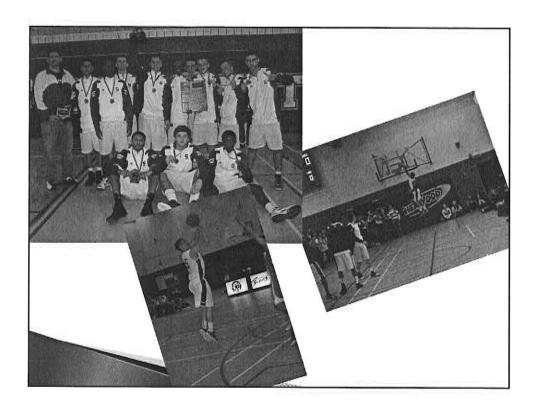
What's valuable right now at SHERWOOD is the Student VOICES

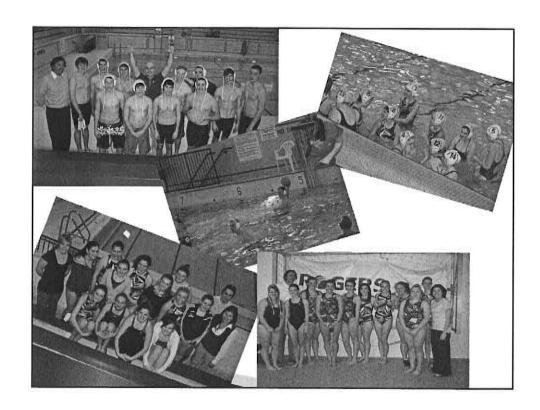


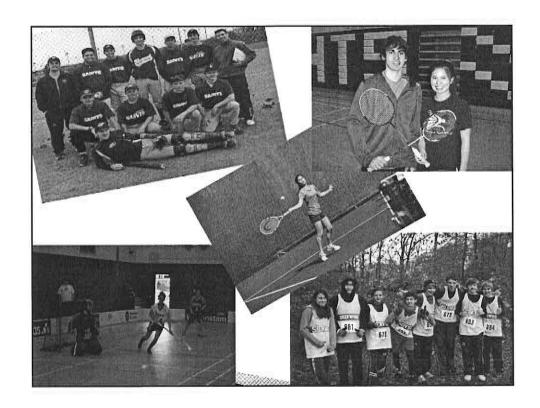


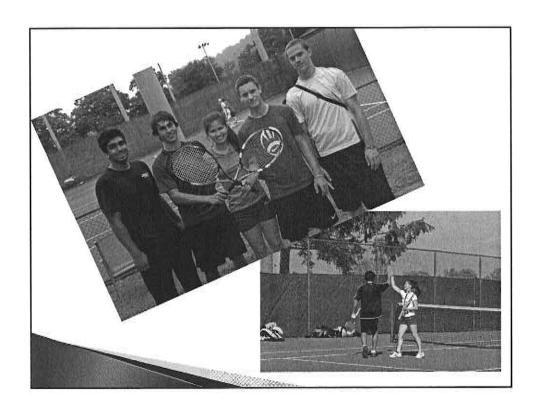


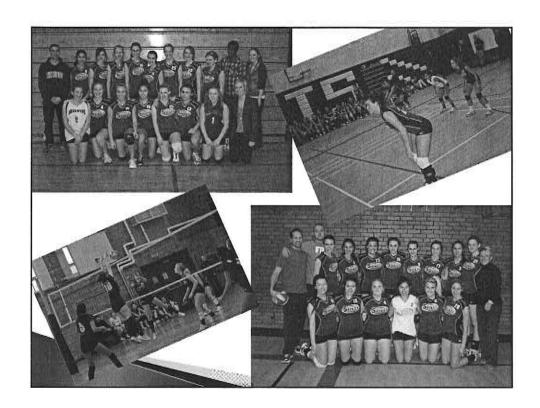


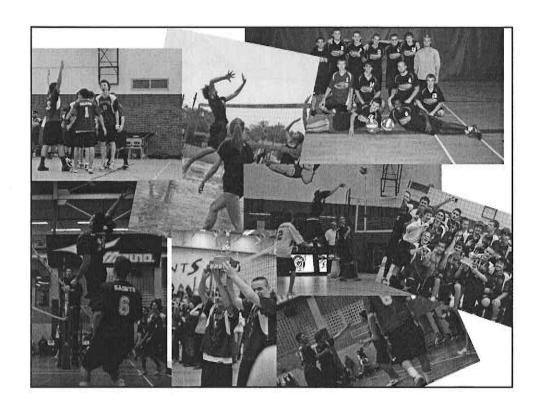


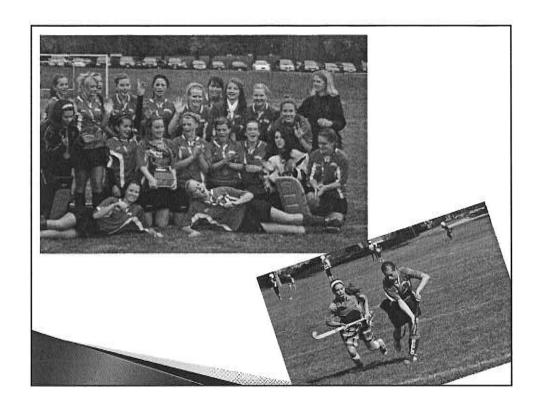










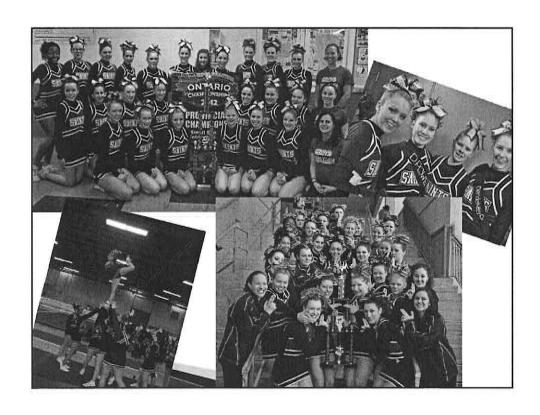




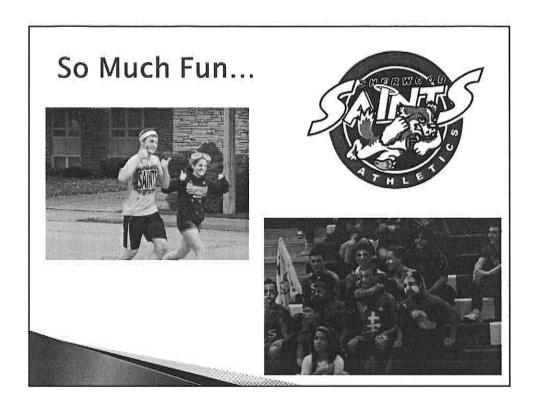






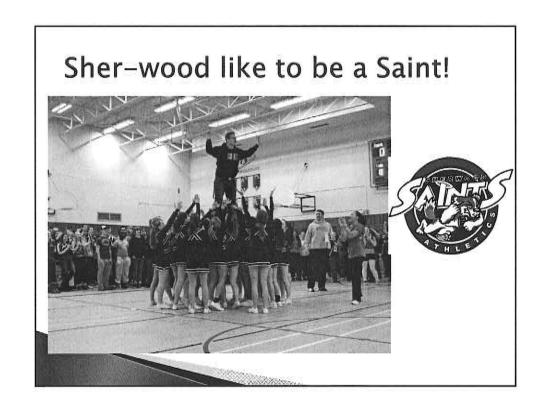


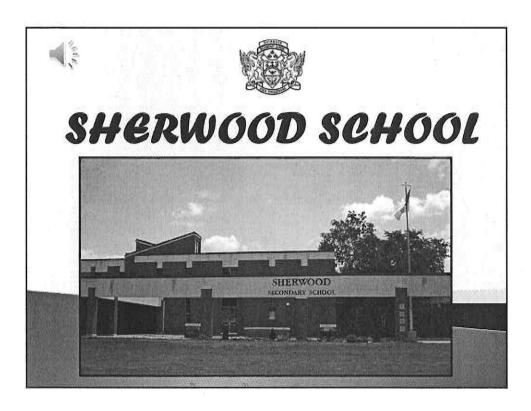








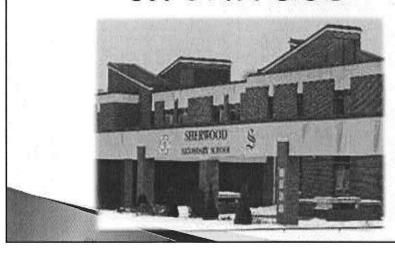




The HWDSB says "Imagine a school of the future – and what it could do for our students. Our commitment is to create these schools now"

That School is **ALREADY** here....

SHERWOOD



## THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

If you want to do it, Sherwood has it for you

Me To We Let Me be Me

**Grad Committee** 

Co-Op

S.T.A.T.

Art Committee

Yearbook Committee

H.A.C

Y.A.Y.

S.A.C.

S.P.R.I.T.E..

S.A.I.N.T.S.

Environmental

Club

Student Council

**Spirit Committee** 

Caring Adult Program

Math Society

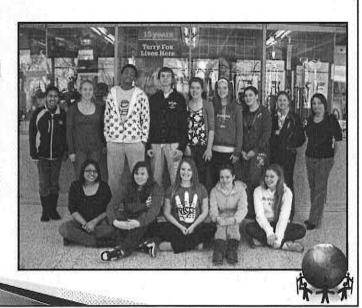
Communication Committee

Social Justice Stage Crew

Anime & Manga

#### Social Justice Committee

Sherwood IS committed to raising funds and awareness for local and global poverty.

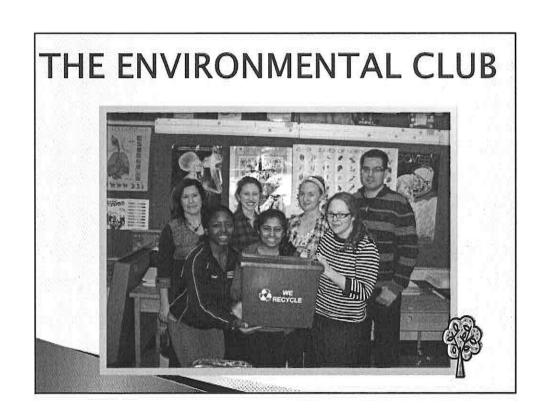


After receiving an email from the Children's Aid Society about their Toy Room and Sponsorship Programs, we knew this was a very important cause and we immediately stepped in to help!

We created and distributed a DVD to every homeroom in the school, so students could see just how significant poverty issues are to people in our communities.



with the \$1,500 we raised and toy donations, we helped provide wonderful Christmas gifts and memories to 435 families in Hamilton

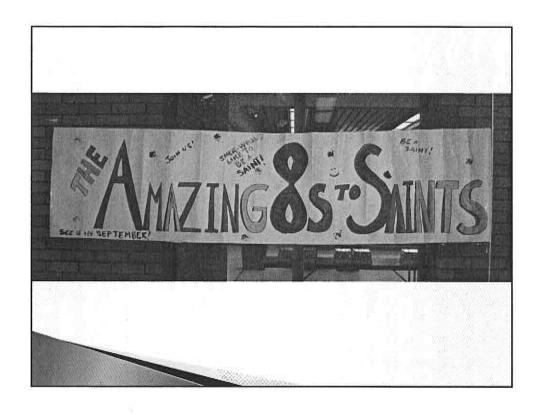


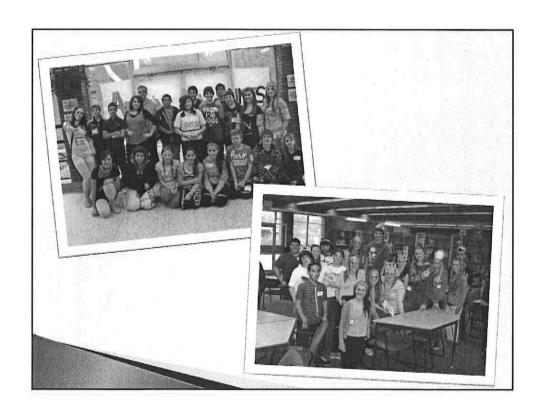
On Earth Day, the students were on the Kenilworth stairs doing our "Climbathon" Fundraiser for the Jurvanski Cancer Clinic.

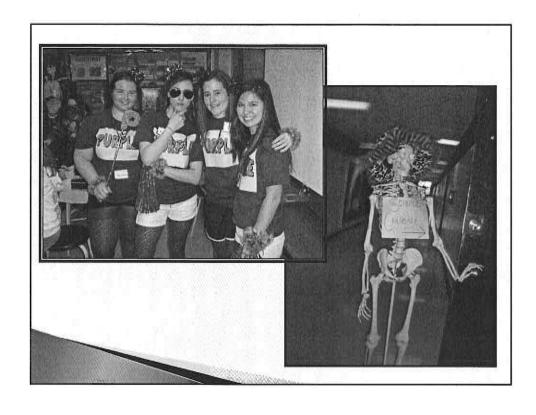


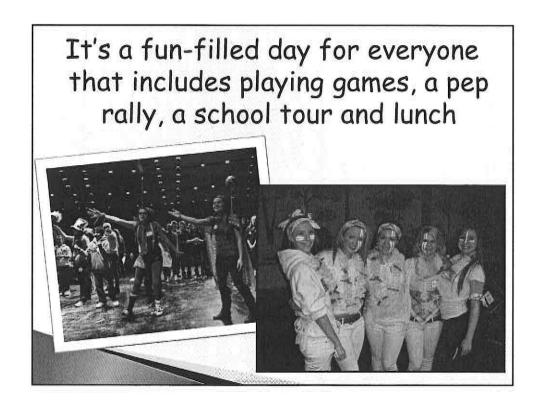
#### THE SPIRIT COMMITTEE

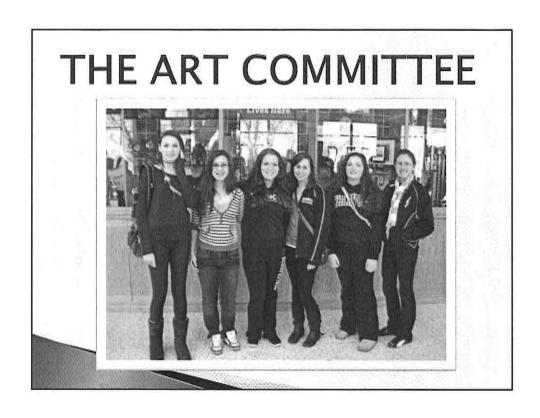


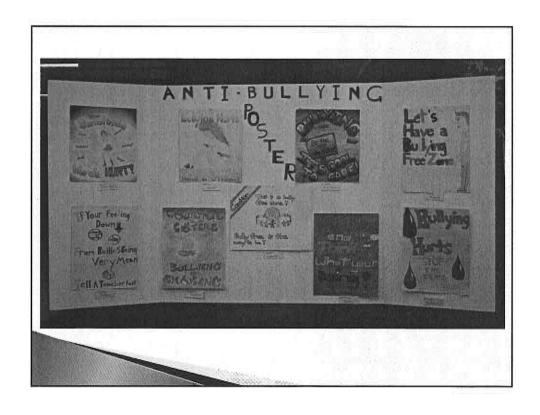












"Put students where they want to be, where they learn best and they will succeed."

HWDSB teacher

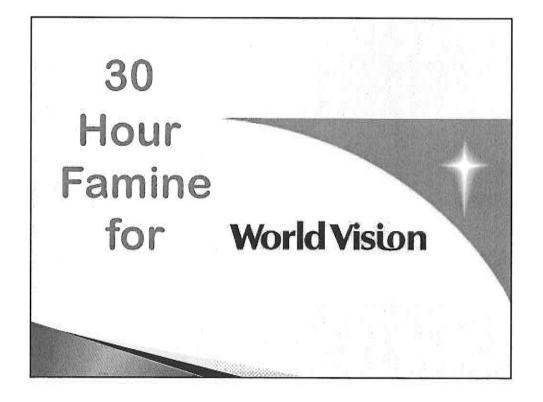
#### **LMBM**



This is our "Let Me Be Me" group at Sherwood where we offer peer support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or still questioning friends and students (LGBTQ)

Our "Caring Adult Program" helps at-risk, struggling students, to mentor and support us. We have 20 dedicated teachers as role models and to be by our sides for the school year.

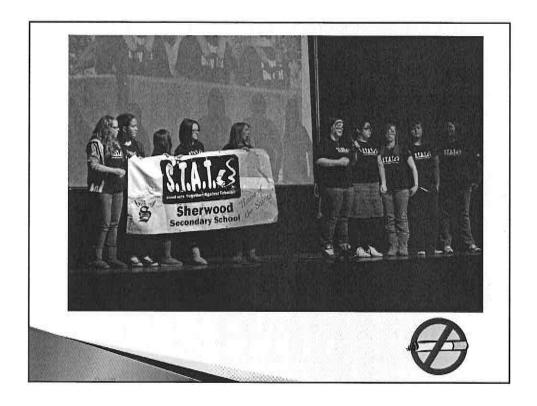
We don't know what we'd do without them?



More than 100 staff and students took part. We didn't eat from 11 a.m. Thursday until 5 p.m. Friday. We continually encouraged each other to stay focused on our mission

To take away from our growling stomachs we participated in Karaoke, listened to rock bands and watched movies.

Our amazing efforts raised awareness plus over \$3,200.

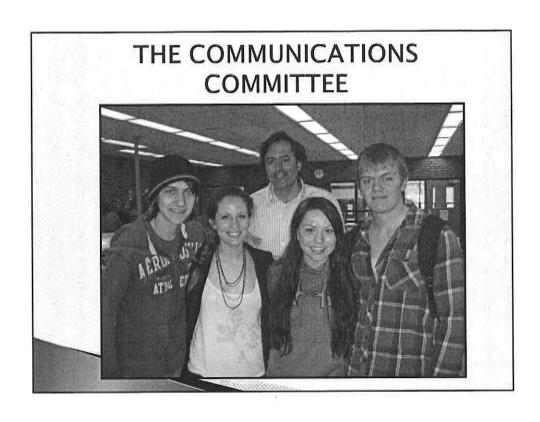


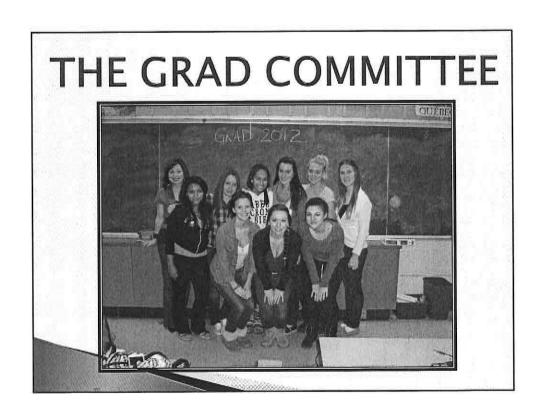
#### Students Together Against Tobacco

We have visited elementary students in grade 6-8 and presented our "anti-tobacco messages"

We have raised \$1,500 for the Heart & Stroke Foundation

We even created our own S.T.A.T. pamphlet, provided tobacco industry information that we can hand out to students







# Youth Aiding Youth

"Y.A.Y." is the senior students at Sherwood volunteering to help our junior students through different teambuilding and leadership activities

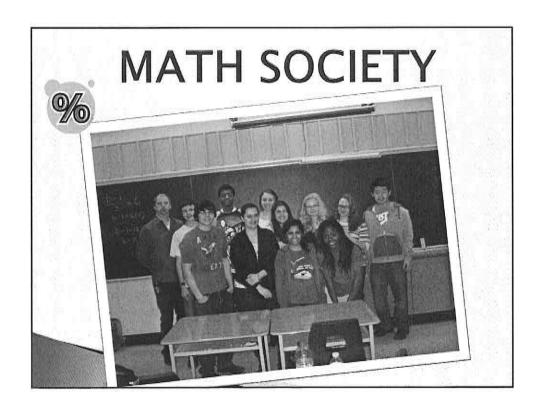
#### Health Action Council



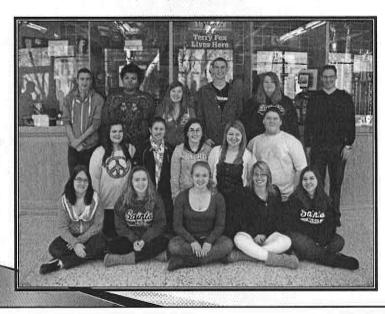
(H.A.C.)

We try to get involved in improving all things health related such as anti-tobacco campaigns, drug and alcohol abuse, nutrition issues, and physical fitness

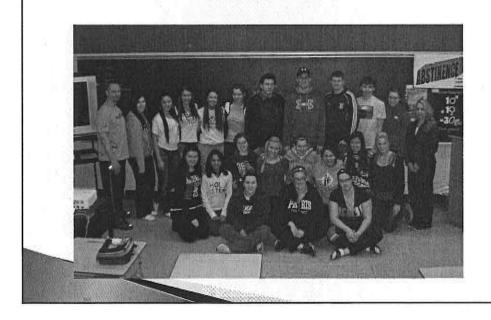


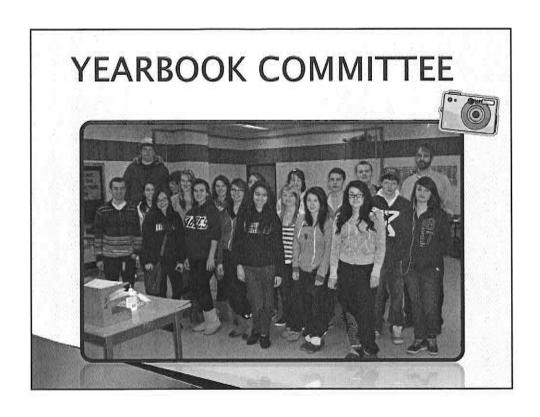


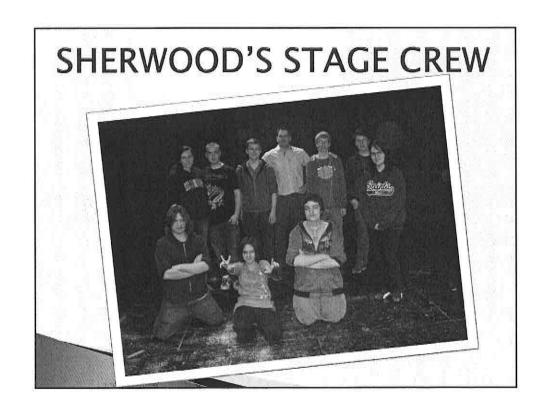




#### STUDENT ATHLETIC COUNCIL







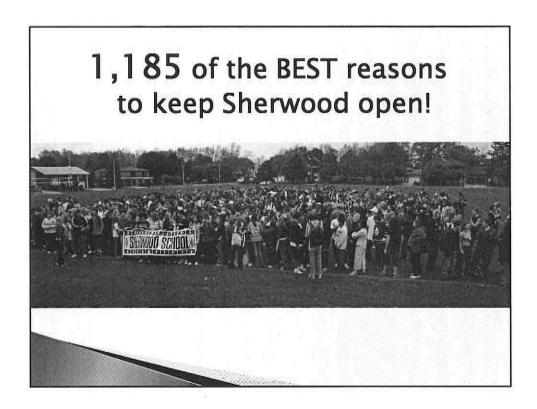


Join this creative team of student artists and have fun learning about anime and manga. You can also go on the annual fieldtrip to Toronto!

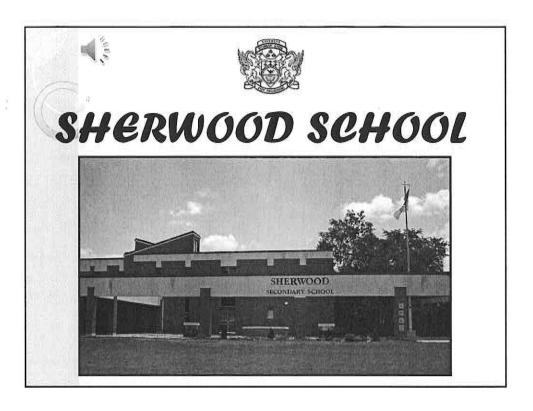
"All students need a sense of self-worth and a strong sense of belonging"

(Source: Education in HWDSB)

That already exists for us....



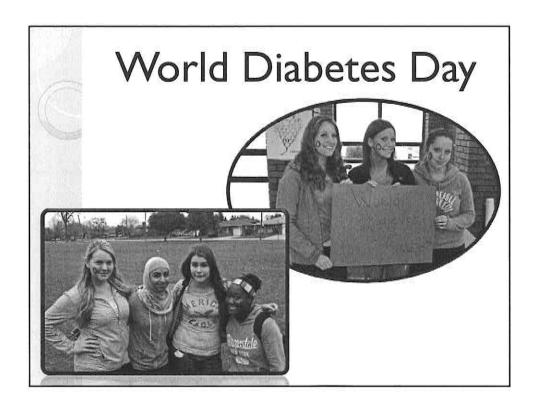
#### K. Castell + C. Mori

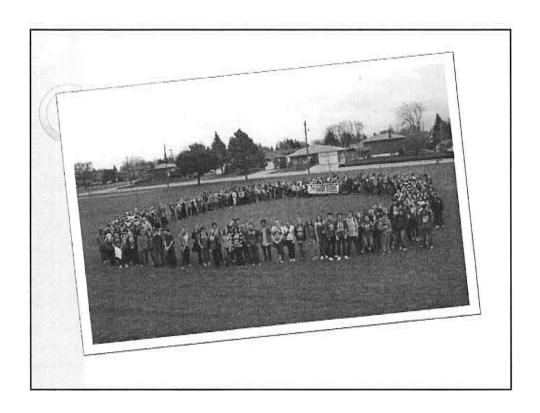




"School is supported appropriately by all members of the community. School communities exist beyond school walls. They are increasingly defined by the population inside and outside of the building"

(source: Education in HWDSB)





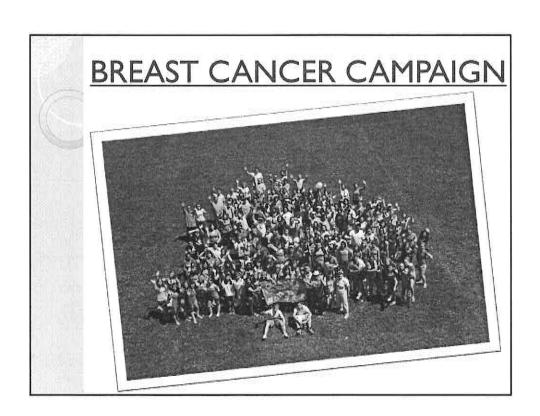


#### M.S.G. Campaign



We collected over 900 brand new mittens, socks and gloves that were all donated to inner city kids, and the Salvation Army.

We wanted to do our part in keeping people warm this winter!





#### AND



The Tiger-Cats and the Hamilton Police Service have always done the "Cops & Cats Basketball Program". They join forces and compete against the local high schools.

We had both our boys' and girls' competing. There was a great turn out and we raised almost \$800 for McMaster Sick Kid's and St. Joseph's Hospital.

In addition to raising money,
we strengthened our community
relations and developed
friendships with the
Ti-Cats and Police Officers

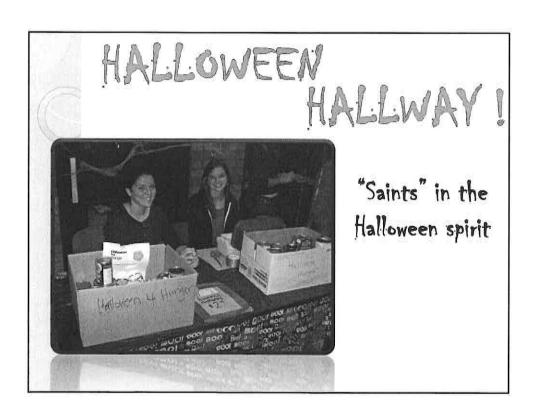
lt's been so successful, it's now an annual event!

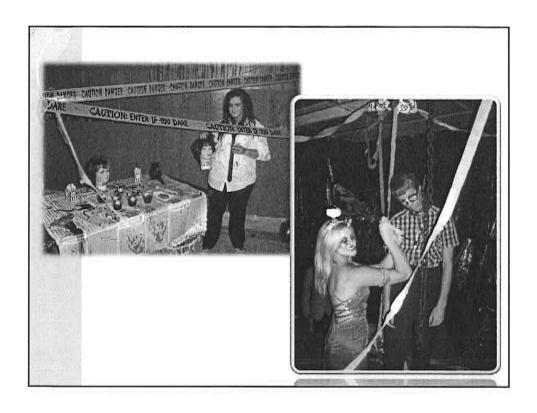
We had a "Student vs.
Teacher" hockey game where
the teachers played our girls'
and boys' teams. This game
raised money for a fellow
Sherwood student who was
battling cancer.



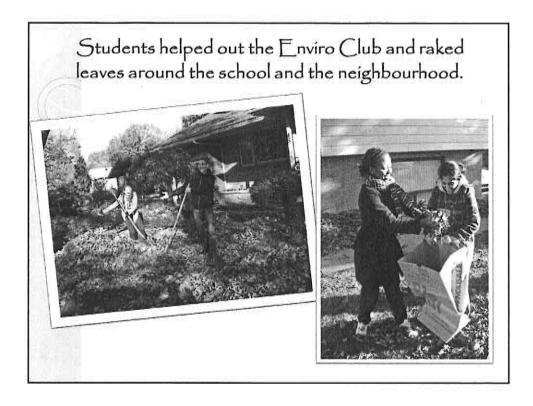
We rose to the challenge and did what we could to help a Friend in need!

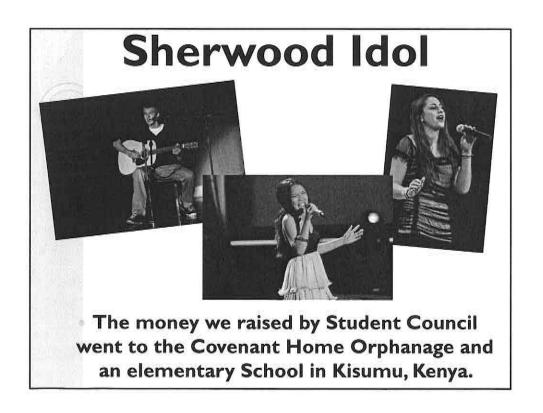
Not only did we make a financial donation, he was also presented with an autographed jersey by Mario Lemieux which he can cherish always.

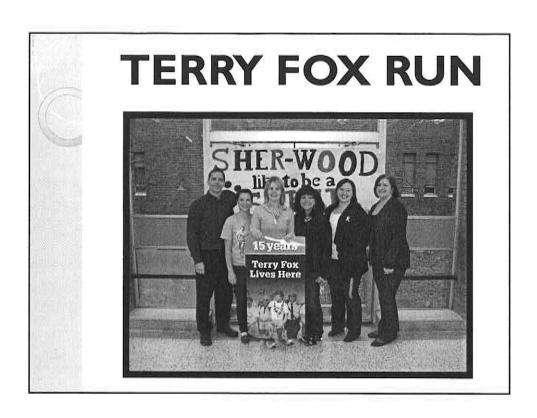


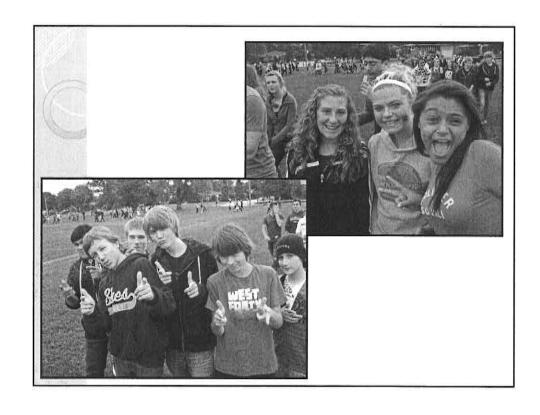


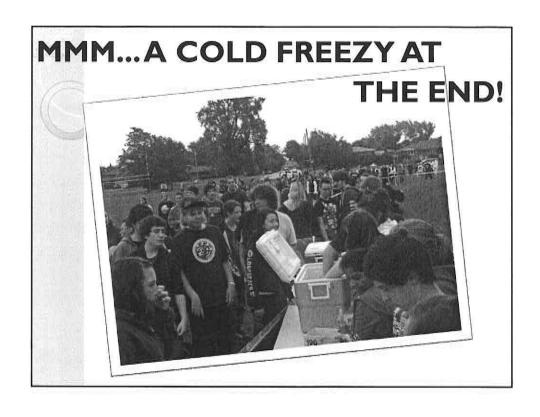


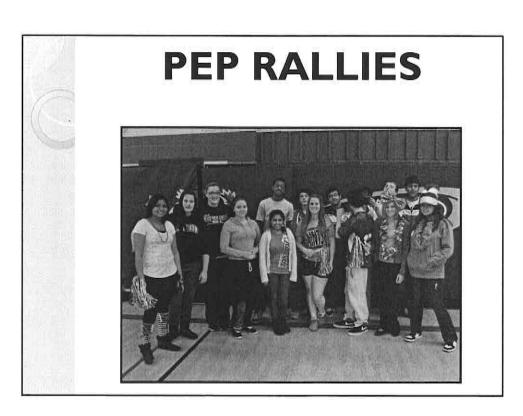


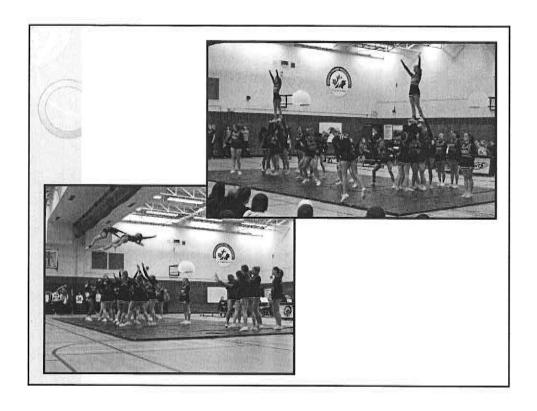


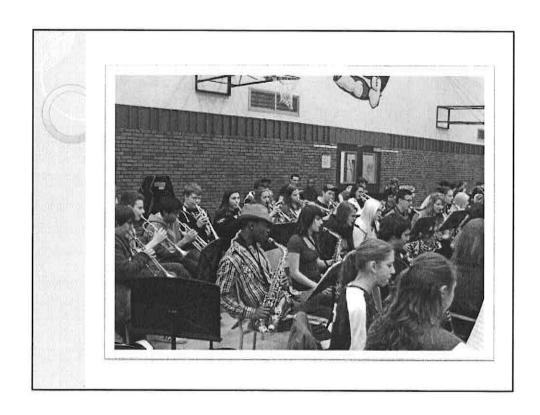




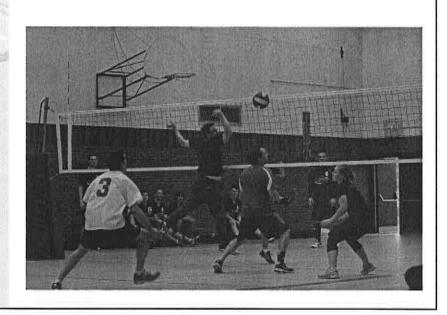








## Teacher VS. Student Game!

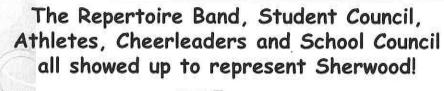


# Hamilton Santa Claus Parade 2011



The <u>only</u> Public High School in the HWDSB to have a Marching Band participate

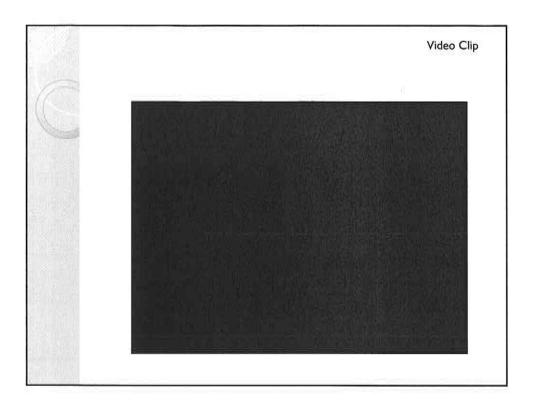






Including 5 of the most loyal "Saints"....
The 4-legged kind

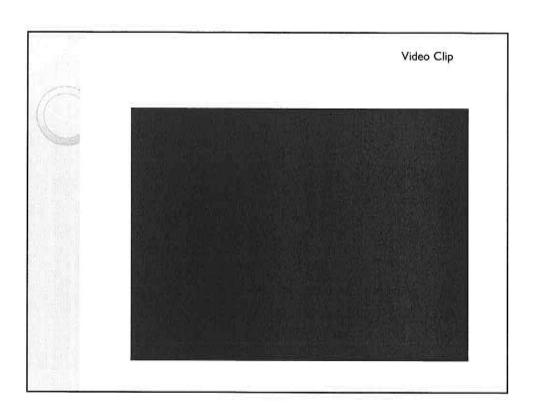
# "HOMELESS FOR HAMILTON"



Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis, former Liberal MPP for Hamilton Mountain riding, and former Ontario Minister of Revenue.

This is her Member's Statement to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding "Sherwood High School" on May 14, 2009.





# "AMAZING SAINTS"

# **School Information Profile**

- □ Value to the student
- □ Value to the school board
- ☐ Value to the community
- ☐ Value to the economy

# **Key Information**

"It is recognized that the school's value to the student takes priority over other considerations about the school."

From the: Ministry of Education

Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline

# Value to the Student

- The learning environment at the school
- Student outcomes at the school
- Course and program offerings
- Extracurricular activities and extent of student participation
- The ability of the school's physical space to support student learning



#### continued

- The ability of the school's grounds to support healthy physical activity and extracurricular activities
- Accessibility of the school for students with disabilities
- · Safety of the school
- Proximity of the school to students/length of bus ride to school

# **Important Question**

What factors did staff look at when they recommended the closure of Sherwood?



#### A 21st Century Learning Environment

Embraces 21st Century Fluencies

- 1. Solution fluency (problem solving, adaptability)
- 2. Information fluency (information processing, reasoning, synthesis)
- 3. Creativity fluency (creativity, innovation, artistic proficiency)
- 4. Media Fluency (technological literacy, critical thinking, graphic literacy)
- 5. Collaboration Fluency (collaboration, teamwork, global citizenship, self awareness)

#### A 21st Century Learning Environment also:

- Recognizes that student voice NEEDS to be acknowledged and student needs drive the program.
- Believes that students want relevant, responsive education.
- Recognizes that students need to feel connected to their teachers and their school in order to have high achievement.
- Recognizes that a lot learning in the future may happen outside of the school building



# **FYI.....**

We got all of this information from the HWDSB site.

If these are your priorities ......

Why did you assess our school based on the facility condition index and the location of the building????

Looking at your priorities and our school "learning" profile......

Sherwood is the top school in the South ARC.



# Value to the Student

- ✓ indicates Sherwood meets this criteria
- ✓ Great learning environment at the school
- ✓ Student outcomes are the highest of the east mountain schools
- √ The highest ranking of any high school in our ARC in the Fraser Report
- ✓ Excellent course and program offerings
- ✓ Extensive range of extracurricular activities
- ✓ Excellent participation rate

### continued

- √ 1200 students attending Sherwood
- √ The school's physical space is able to support the learner \*
- ✓ The school's grounds supports healthy
  physical activity and extracurricular activities
- ✓ Accessibility for students with disabilities
- \*Sherwood school building is in need of repair
- \*bussing may be slightly farther for some



# The Fraser Report 2012

The Fraser Report is a Report Card of Ontario's Secondary Schools. It examines EQAO grade 9 math results and the OSSLT grade 10 literacy results.

**Sherwood** outscored all of the schools within the South ARC and has done so for the last **5 years.** 

# **HWDSB Programming Priorities...**

# SHERWOOD is.... SUCCESSFUL!

- √ Strong achievement
- ✓ Flexible learning environment driven by student needs
- ✓ Engaged students and staff
- √ Student voice prioritized
- ✓ Teachers KNOW their students WELL
- ✓ High participation and attendance rate
- ✓ Embraces 21<sup>st</sup> century learning of the future



# The BIG Question......

# Why would you close the MOST SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL in the South Arc?

#### An Invitation.....

Place:

**Sherwood Secondary School** 

Date:

soon but not on a weekend

Time:

during the school day and after

school

Event:

come see what Sherwood really looks

like!

Everyone Welcome!

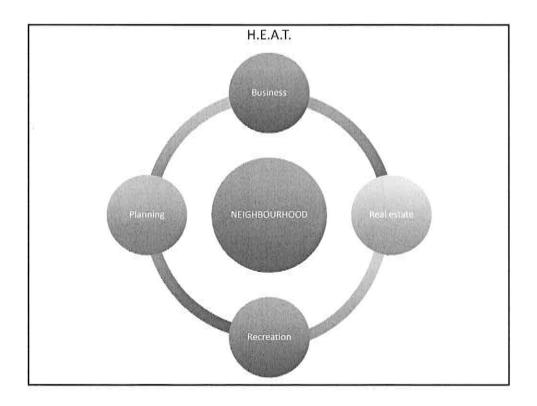
# H.E.A.T.

# Hamilton's Education Accountability Taskforce

HEATforschools@gmail.com

#### **Sherwood closure**

April 4, 2012





#### **Business**

- (h) Accommodation Review Process: Community Consultation, Public Information and Access
- "Once an accommodation review has been initiated, the ARC must ensure that I
  wide range of school and community groups is invited to participate in the
  consultation. These groups may include the school(s)' councils, parents, guardians,
  students, school staff, the local community and other interested parties".
   (From Terms of Reference for the South ARC)

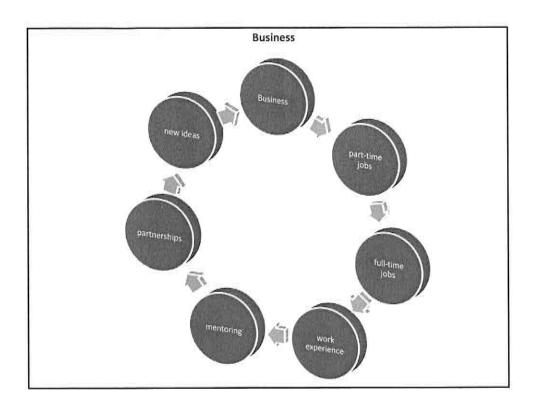
Question: did the Hamilton Wentworth District school Board ensure a wide range of local participation in the neighborhood/community?

 So I completed Sherwood Business/Community questionnaire and manage to accumulate approximately 40 local businesses to participate.

#### Business

#### Some of the results from the questioner:

- Q1. The average length of time in business was 11 years.
- Q2. Sherwood was the reason for locating their business in the neighborhood 27% of the businesses.
- Q3. Did the HWDSB or South Arc Review Committee contact your business, 100% said no communication whatsoever regarding the school closure.
- Q4. Promotional sales/gift certificates with the high schools, 14% of the businesses.
- Q5. The closing of Sherwood high school, affect your business, 65% said yes.
- Q6. What percentage of your business would be affected by closing Sherwood high school next year, average was 14% but significant number of stores will have 20% to 40% loss in sales and 2 think they will grow a business.
- Q7. If you had been informed/invited early in the process, would you have participated more, 82% said yes they would have gotten involved.
- Q8. Do you feel/believe closing Sherwood high school will hurt the neighborhood/ local economy/community, 95% said yes.



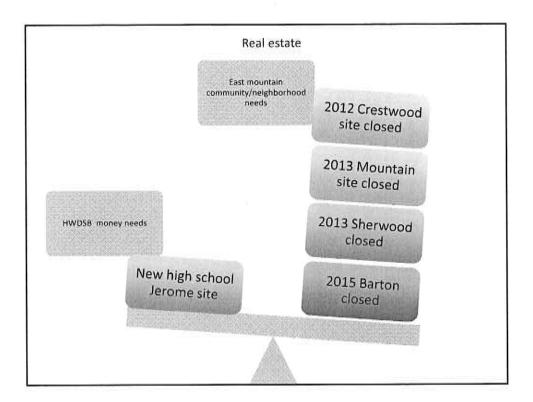
#### Real estate

Over the next 30 years, the city of Hamilton's population is projected to reach 700,000 persons. In February of 2003, the Hamilton city Council adopted a balanced growth strategy called GRIDS ( Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy).

Hamilton's future neighborhoods will be different. In order to balance social, economic and environmental considerations there has been a trend to reduce the amount of development land in new neighborhoods to protect and enclose environmental features. This has resulted in land being developed more efficiently. New neighborhoods will be more dense, more compact and contained a variety of land uses to facilitate transit linkages and to provide opportunities for life, work and play. A range of density will increase over time with less lower density and more prominent medium and high density residential uses. ( from planning and engineering initiatives limited "PEIL")

The GRIDS are example of long-term planning, is cyclical, what goes around comes around and East Mountain neighborhood/community is changing.





#### Real estate

- Analysis of Residential Urban Growth: Distributed Development 2001 to 2031 the demand for low density 41,000 units, medium density 23,000 units and high density 36,000 units for a total of hundred thousand units. (source city of Hamilton planning department 2007)
- Mr. Whitehead indicated that his ward has the largest senior population. He felt that new families will be moving into the area as the senior population move out and wondered if this has been taken into consideration (WEST ARC).
- Ms. Laura Peddle, in an e-mail "I have discovered that there are only 3 growth areas:-Ancaster (slightly)- Waterdown (still growing)- South East Mtn/UPPER-StoneyCreek" (March 2012).
- Neighborhood real estate growth (high density): on Fennell Avenue, Mohawk Rd., Upper Kenilworth, Upper Ottawa, Upper Gage, Upper Sherman, upper Wentworth and let us not forget Concessions with its 12 to 15 old apartment buildings from the 40s, 50s and 60s and it's time for renewal.
  - Low and medium density housing opportunities are found all throughout the East Mountain neighborhood/community.
- Solid Secondary Neighborhood Plan: is required for the East Mountain, this should be completed before the sale of Sherwood high school to anyone.



#### Recreation

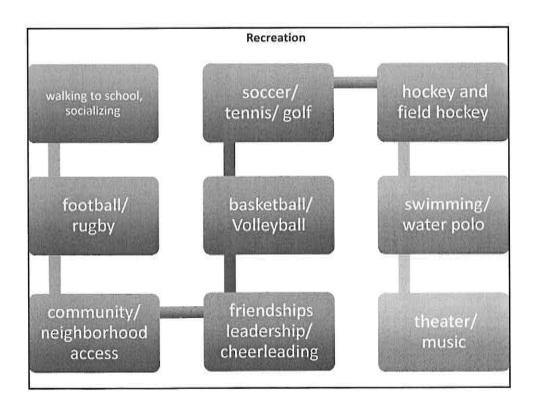
Peterborough doctors, psychologists say closing high schools will affect students health and mental health: in an unusual move, a group of some 200 doctors and mental health specialist argue it can- and they've written letters to the Premier and the minister of education asking them to stop the shutdown of Peterborough Collegiate and Vocational School.

Most vulnerable (Mountain school): these laws of the walk to school that has such a safe and supportive culture - especially for those at risk and gay teens - will have some negative effects, they say.

PCVS is attended by some of the most normal students in our community... if they can't walk, many won't attend, says one letter and signed by 148 doctors

In lots of communities, especially those in needy areas, the school " is the foundation of the community/neighborhood, a place that people really feel keeps them together as a community, connecting them and their connecting generations to generations. (published on March 12, 2012 in the Star.com)

Pointing out the effects on health is an interesting argument, and one that makes sense, said Prof. Jeff Kugler of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.



#### Recreation

| Healthy activities   | problems with completion   |
|--|--|
| walking to school  | in the future most will be bused                                       |
| activities which starting early in the morning i.e. before 8:00 am           | students won't get involved because of the busing issue                |
| after school activities such as sports,<br>clubs and other social gatherings | again these activities will be influenced by student busing            |
| long days at school  | most of the bus rides will be 45-60 minutes, adding two hours each day |
| cultural changes for the students  | losing their neighborhood/ school                                      |

#### Planning

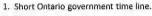
Local Economy: Sustainability principles are still not well understood in the economic development neighborhood/community and therefore the opportunities they create are not appreciated. Often sustainability issues are seen as obstacles or restraints to economic development. The task for this theme area is to highlight the opportunities so that economic development activities i.e. business areas, universities, hospitals, stadiums, arenas and high schools are starting points for Sustainable Community as growth continues in Hamilton.

#### Planning points:

| Building of                                 | Years of planning        | Approx.,# of people                                | Approx. Cost                  |
|---|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| City Hall                                   | many years of planning   | lots of people                                     | lots of money                 |
| New stadium                                 | many years of planning   | 25,000 people                                      | 120 + millions                |
| Board of Education                          | started 2007, five years | 600 people or less                                 | 31 + millions                 |
| one high school                             | ARC 2011, about 1.3yrs   | 1000-1200 students                                 | 31 + millions                 |
| 2 elementary school ARCs 3 high school ARCs | ARC 2011, about 1.3yrs   | 20,000 + elementary<br>and high school<br>students | who knows<br>how<br>much????? |

#### Planning

#### Time



- 2. McMaster University new building, using up a lot of resources.
- 3. Timeline for new educational Center, same time as the ARCs.
- 4. Timeline for all-day kindergarten
- 5. Insufficient time for ARCs to meet together and discuss borders.
- 6. Meetings always ran out of time and scheduling problems.
- 7. The board time wasted with internal problems.
- 8. Transparency issues wasted a lot of time in board meetings



- 1. Building of a new educational Center, started in 2007.
- 2. Infrastructure for all-day kindergarten
- 3. 2 elementary school ARCs and 3 high school ARCs are too much!!
- 4. Terms of reference were unfair to a number of the ARCs.
- 5. And no hands-on estimating on cost of repairs for each school.
- 6. High schools being protected from the ARC process was not required.
- 7. Parkview and Mountain needed more work/time.
- 8. Transparency issues were problematic throughout the process.
- 9. Individual business plans should be made for each high school.

#### Close Sherwood high school

- 1. This board has bit off more than they can chew, when 2 elementary school ARCs and 3 high school ARCs started at the same time and became one of the largest ARCs attempted in Ontario.
- 2. The introduction of all-day kindergarten.
- 3. Enrollment is not a problem at Sherwood.
- 4. East Mountain is growing in wards 6 & 7 , have 100,000 people.
- Detailed on-site analysis of each high school was not done.
- New Education Center, used large amounts as of staff's time.
- 7. No school should be sold until the new school is built in ward 6.
- 8. Secondary plan establish for East Mountain should be completed.
- 9. East Mountain neighborhood future recreational needs?
- 10. Close Sherwood High School? (NO!)

BYROBERT WHITELAW





# Westmount School Council South ARC Delegation Presentation

April 10, 2012

#### 21st Century Learning

The self-paced, self-directed program at Westmount is a prime example of 21st Century learning in the HWDSB. It is learning in the manner and timeframe that makes sense for each individual student. Our students complete their Secondary School education with superior time-management and organizational skills that give them an enormous advantage as they move into their next stage of life, be it University, College, Apprenticeship or a career.

Westmount is an award-winning example of forward thinking in education that is one of only six like it in the Country. Educators and Administrators from around the world came to Westmount in 2011 to see exactly how a self-paced, self-directed program can be successfully provided in a system school model.

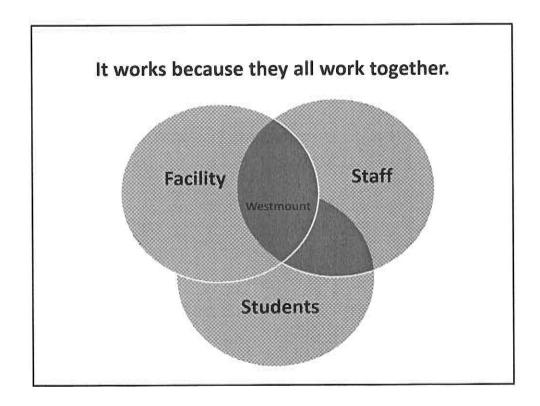


#### **Global Reputation**

"What you have done here is you have almost leap-frogged the colleges and universities," Don Baxter, CEO and president of Mohawk College Enterprise Corp. "What you're doing (at Westmount) directly matches what companies need."

"Westmount is doing extraordinary things attracting international attention." Brian Brennan, an Australian consultant with 30 years of teaching experience, visiting Hamilton "It is the future of education."

Westmount Administrators have answered inquiries and hosted visits by educators from as far away as Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and the United States as well as most of the Canadian Provinces and the Yukon. The global reputation of the self-paced, self-directed program is tied to the Westmount name. One must not be separated from the other.



#### **School Culture**

#### The culture of a school determines the level of student success.

The 2012 Westmount Program survey conducted by eBest gave us the following results:

- √ 95% of Westmount students are satisfied to very satisfied with the relationship with their teacher
- √ 95% of Westmount students are satisfied to very satisfied with the relationship with other students
- √ 98.5% of Westmount students feel safe at school
- ✓ 98% of Westmount students like going to this school

The survey was completed by Westmount students across all streams, with and without IEPs.

#### Westmount Bricks and Mortar Adapted to Self-Paced, Self-Directed Program

Over the past 10 years the bricks and mortar of Westmount Secondary School have been adapted to house the self-paced, self-directed program.

- Quiet Area/Test Centre Self-pacing means that students are at various parts of the curriculum at
  any given time. This makes for noisy, discussion filled classrooms every day. Students who need quiet
  space for independent reading, study, writing or test completion must have a quiet, staffed space,
  available for their use.
- Science Dispensary Students at various parts of the curriculum may need very different lab supplies in any given period, on any given day. A dispensary area is necessary to enable students to check out the science kit they need.
- Rec Centre the proximity of the new rec centre will greatly enhance the Phys. Ed. program
  especially for Sports Academy students. These are athletes that travel to compete all over the world
  and so must make use of the self-paced program that allows them to take time away to train and
  compete when necessary. The addition of the new rec centre will reduce travel time for many training
  programs.
- Studio B this is a cutting edge training facility that allows for many types of uses such as yoga, speed/agility/quickness, strength and conditioning space as well as classroom space. Other schools do not have this facility.



#### Westmount Bricks and Mortar Adapted to Self-Paced, Self-Directed Program

- HPA (strength and conditioning room) allows us to put our student athletes through many types of
  training sessions including modelling those sessions that we do at McMaster. Having the Lifting Racks is
  crucial to the programming we are doing for these student-athletes. Other facilities do not have this type of
  equipment available. This has been a 5 year program to purchase all of this equipment.
- Music Practise Rooms and Auditorium Individual and group practise rooms have been added to regular Music rooms to enhance opportunities for competitive Music students who make use of the selfpaced program to allow for competition and performance travel schedules.
- Field Space the variety and amount of field space we have enables our program to do a number of
  different activities for our student-athletes. This allows us to modify our training sessions for the different
  type of training we are in.
- Layout & Availability of Tech Wing Because of the cross curricular nature of many of our tech courses the ability to access other tech shops in a safe manner is very important. Having all shops in close proximity to each other to allow students to interact with other tech teachers at any given time is crucial. For example: students from grade 9 course use the manufacturing room to turn wheels on the lathe, manufacturing students use the wood shop for their Tic Tac Toe board, Auto students weld in the manufacturing shop etc. The wood finishing room layout is essential to the program. It has a good flow, a great storage area for lumber, and a separate finishing room. It is separate from the Grade 9 and Home Repair program which could cause a problem with lines is not physically separated. This layout and availability does not exist in the other shops in the city.

#### Westmount Bricks and Mortar Adapted to Self-Paced, Self-Directed Program

- Interconnected TV/Design/Sound Studio This interconnected studio allows some students to work
  on their TV studio guides, while other students can work at computers on graphic design or digital sound
  guides. It also houses an area for tables where students can work on group projects or planning. The layout is
  very integral to the delivery of the Westmount units. Students are at various places within the 20 unit
  courses, so the multiple learning areas of room 95/studio allow Westmount students to use the appropriate
  places to further their learning in their course guides.
  - This concept also applies to all of the Technology rooms at Westmount which allow students at different places in the course to use the equipment and facilities as appropriate to where they are in the course. The rooms have been designed and modified to fit the Westmount learning model.
- Library The Library physical plant has been modified to meet the physical needs of the program, it is also
  one of the few libraries in the city big enough to meet our needs. Book collection purchases have been
  tailored to meet the needs of Westmount students and learning guides, Westmount has purchased a large
  number of computers to build a large computer area in the library. Many of these computers were
  purchased using our own funds to augment the ones supplied by the Board.
- Information Technology Westmount has paid for, out of our own budget, extra wireless and network
  upgrades to meet the needs of our students. Westmount has purchased and installed Smartboards
  throughout the school to meet the needs of our program.



#### Location, Location, Location!

Westmount Secondary School's location is ideal for a system school.

Westmount is located just 3 minutes from Hamilton Mountain's main traffic artery –The Lincoln Alexander Parkway. The Linc is easily accessible from the West via the 403 and from the East and lower City via the Red Hill Valley Parkway.

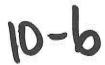
The community surrounding Westmount is also served by the HSR along major routes including 41/41A Mohawk Road, and route 35 which travels around 3 sides of Westmount on Garth, Limeridge and West 5<sup>th</sup>.

Moving the Westmount program would result in longer travel times for the almost 60% of parents that drive their children to Westmount each day because the other school locations being proposed are further from the Linc.

#### Westmount Administrators and Teachers are Vital to Self-Paced, Self-Directed Program

Many hours of training and professional development are necessary to ensure that Teachers and Administrators are able to provide the self-paced, self-directed program. Westmount's Teachers have become program specialists developing and using:

- Flex days to provide greater opportunities for students to self direct their learning
- Conference sites which provide course information and resources for students in and out of the regular classroom for various reasons
- Podcasting to enhance the delivery and monitoring of our program
- 20 unit guides and method of curriculum delivery to facilitate self-pacing



#### Westmount Administrators and Teachers are Vital to Self-Paced, Self-Directed Program

80% of Westmount teachers have been at Westmount for at least 5 years, taking part in the development and subsequent honing of the self-paced teaching model. They stay because they believe in the benefits of this teaching/learning model.

It has been made clear in Board meeting minutes and responses to Trustee questions that "There are currently no provisions in our Collective Agreement with OSSTF that would support the combined move of staff with programs." \*

The loss of any number of our staff due to a relocation would set the selfpaced, self-directed program back years in terms of staff training and development.

#### Westmount's Self-Paced, Self-Directed Program is a Globally Recognized Success

The Trustees of the HWDSB approved the inception of the Self-Paced, Self-Directed program at Westmount Secondary School more than ten years ago in an extraordinary decision to propel learning in this Board into the 21st Century.

Over the years you have supported, encouraged and rewarded the growth and success of the program and it's reputation at Westmount Secondary School.

We are asking you to please continue that support today as the Board spearheads the 21st Century learning model. Do not consider moving the Self-Paced, Self-Directed program out of the building that has been adapted to house it, or away from the Administrators and Teachers that have molded it into the globally recognized success that it is.

<sup>\*</sup>http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/arc/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/HWDSB\_Trustee-Questions-and-Answers\_Final.pdf

HWDSB Special Hearing - South Area Review - April 10, 2012

Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School– a tradition of excellence, a school of champions by Karin and Don Wall, West 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Hamilton, ON

My husband and I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School. First, let me introduce ourselves. We are west mountain residents who have sent two children through the public school system. Emily is now 22 years old and is graduating from McGill University this spring with a Bachelor of Science, combined Honors Math and English degree. She will be continuing on to study towards a Masters at McGill. Our son Chuck is 18 years old and a first-year Social Sciences student at Western University and on the Western football team. Both kids attended Holbrook and Chedoke elementary schools and went to Sir Allan MacNab for high school.

Our children had excellent experiences at MacNab with lots of successes in math contests, the school band, winning football championships, making strong friendships and receiving excellent mentoring from teachers and coaches with whom they maintain contact to this day. But I am not here out of sentimental or nostalgic reasons but rather on principle and to show support for our west mountain community. We firmly believe in the principle, that our community needs Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School to keep being successful and that simply put, you should keep a good thing going. Speaking as west mountain residents and community volunteers, we think when you have a successful institution in your community it should be allowed to continue fulfilling its essential role in community-building and not be shut down.

The west mountain community that feeds Sir Allan MacNab is very diverse, with all socio-economic levels represented and lots of new Canadians. When our daughter Emily was deciding on which high school to attend back in 2003, we considered Westmount briefly, with its self-paced learning program because she was an excellent, straight-A student. We wondered whether she could prosper at the local school, which back in 2003 did not have the greatest reputation. We had heard about suspensions, schoolyard fights etc. But we believed strongly in supporting the local high school, in the public school experience, in participating in and building what we have in our local community. We told her she should go to MacNab because it was in our neighbourhood and it would be better for her to develop friendships with the people and teachers in her own community – we assured her that she could thrive at her local high school. The diversity of MacNab was thought by us to be an asset – attend classes with students from all nations of the world, all religions, and all levels of academic accomplishment. shoulder to shoulder with neighbours to achieve success together. Learn inclusiveness and broaden your world view.

I mentioned MacNab had a substandard reputation almost a decade ago. From 2003, when Emily started, through to 2011 when Chuck graduated, and continuing this school year, MacNab has enjoyed a tremendous turnaround in just about every way measurable. Today when you think of Sir Allan MacNab, you think of excellence, a winning tradition, and superlative achievement in all areas including academics. It started off a few years ago when the school administration sought to establish a culture of success. One of the most direct ways to do that was through sports success - because it gets publicity. You read about MacNab winning athletic championships, and it becomes a destination for students and teachers who want to be associated with a winning attitude. MacNab established special sports programs and academies in several sports including football and basketball and it soon became a destination for students across the city who wanted to excel and train under the excellent teacher/coaches such as Ron Lancaster Jr. and Dwayne Washington, to name a few.

This was done. MacNab has since won 14 city championships - and that builds pride throughout the community as you see people walking around wearing MacNab championship jackets and we see MacNab students on TV and in the newspaper. So MacNab has become the school of champions, and that attracts people of high character and dedication, and keeps good people in our community.

The next steps, complementing the sporting successes was to establish more unique programs that meet the needs of the community in other ways. I will name three programs that have made MacNab a destination school for other reasons. The **Advanced Placement program** is designed for gifted students who want to go on to university and it is clearly working as devised. Last year, 40 per cent of students had an average of 80 per cent or higher. Hamilton Magazine recently called Sir Allan MacNab the most improved school in the city. Among the new batch of Grade 9s, three quarters are in the academic stream, and 25 per cent are gifted. Math results on a graph are off the charts, and literacy rates are superb. You may have read in the newspaper that nine MacNab students finished in the top 100 in the national Maple Leaf Math Challenge as the school placed third at a national level. Sir Allan MacNab's ranking in EQAO results is very high and last year the school received the provincial Bette Stephenson award as one of the most improved schools in the province. The Fraser Institute also commended MacNab's overall improvement. A tremendous number of MacNab grads are university bound – as statistics show. So MacNab's athletic excellence is now accompanied by tremendous academic success. It's all been documented.

Then there is the **Collaborative Teaching program** that assists students who are not high achievers when they enter high school. The CT program sees two teachers working with a class of 20 students providing the extra attention they need to improve. MacNab's CT program has become a model for other schools to follow where children need special academic attention.

Another program, the **East Meets West**, offers insights into religion and culture from a Muslim perspective. I mentioned that as parents we sent our children to the local school in part to support the local institution and community and to take part in the diverse Canadian experience. We have ample evidence of how that worked successfully. Our son took a religion course in Grade 11 where every day he worked with a student from the Middle East as a partner and every day they debated the Israel-Palestine question. He would come home nightly and say, my partner says this about the Palestinians and Syrians, and so we would discuss the issues from an Israeli point of view and he would go back with further ideas the next day. After two weeks, the two boys both had gained a much greater understanding of this important world issue and respect for other points of view and each other. That is an example of the value of having an enlightened public school that supports inclusion of all neighbourhood children through programs such as East Meets West. Chuck's best friends became kids named Maneesh and Karem – and in fact, he continues to pursue his interest in international studies at Western.

All the data I have seen supports MacNab as a success story in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. And success breeds success. Teachers see MacNab as a teaching environment that lets them be the best they can be as professionals, and the same is true for parents of elementary school students looking for the best place for their children to achieve their potential. The proof is in the latest enrolment statistics. MacNab is projected to have approximately950 students in the next school year, continuing a recent upward trend that reflects how the school has become a magnet -because of its achievements in all areas.

As I say, in many measurable ways, Sir Allan MacNab is first class. Bullying data shows that MacNab students have a higher sense of belonging than the Canadian norm. Fifty three (53) per cent of students participate in interscholastic school sports, which is 10 per cent above the national average, and that means many more students involved in events after school, practising, learning teamwork and how to work hard, listening to and following the leadership of their coaches. If MacNab's doors close that participation rate will diminish.

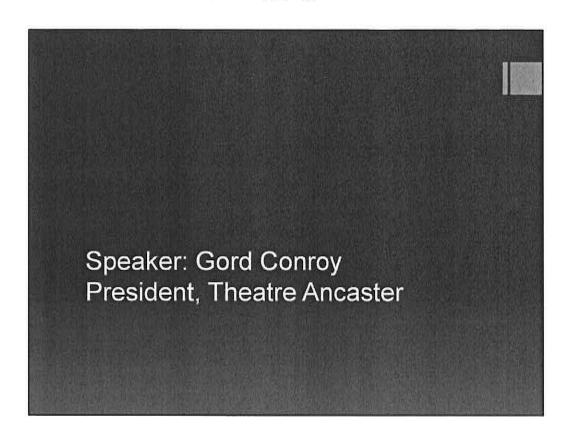
A community that supports its children in our midst is a better functioning community. This is especially true on the west mountain where we have this excellent institution, Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School that is functioning at such a high level and on so many fronts.

In summary, we ask the Trustees to make a decision that allows us all to continue the job of community-building that we take so seriously, with Sir Allan MacNab playing a key role in the community structure on the west mountain. MacNab has seen tremendous improvement over the last decade and we believe it's very important to keep this good thing going.

Thank you.



# Introduction Programs currently running: Art Smart SHSM in Performing Arts Program of Choice Reach-Ahead band program Summer Reach-Ahead Performing Arts Program Partnerships with: Theatre Ancaster Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts Student representation from all secondary schools in HWDSB (excluding Parkview)



# Benefits to Art Smart Students

- Unique program and curriculum open to all students in the board
- Affordable live theatre experience for students
- Workshops and resource sharing with community partners
- Scholarships with HCA
- Opportunities to explore many arts skills, including writing, direction, choreography, and technical roles



## Benefits to Students Outside the Program

- Outreach to elementary schools:
  - Student attendance of 25,000 over three years; upcoming shows in May are sold out (an additional 7,000)
  - Providing integrated teaching resources and curriculum packages
  - Summer and full-year reach-ahead programs
  - Arts Days: Workshops for elementary students
- Outreach to Hill Park Students
  - Opportunities for non-Art Smart students to participate in stage design, costume design, and other production roles

## Benefits to community

- Centrally located
- Wheelchair accessible
- Newly renovated facility with air conditioning to facilitate yearround programs
- A theatre/meeting space frequently in use by community groups



## Benefits to Future Students

- Dance Studio completed
- Projects in development through board and private funding, including recording studio, photography lab, and media arts (Mac) lab
- Full Production Experience

## Why does this program work?

- Staff who are able and willing, and work collaboratively in a proven working model
- Individualized, differentiated instruction
- Working toward personal excellence for students and staff
- Re-engagement of at-risk students
- Effective working partnerships
- Central location
- Students bond quickly, are engaged, and develop sense of belonging

## The Future

- 2008-2018 Snapshot: 15% growth in arts, entertainment, and recreation, compared to 11% across all other industries (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics)
- Other boards are using HP's model
- Currently attracting and retaining students from Catholic system (16% of current Art Smart students), home schooled students, and out-of-region students (Grimsby, Guelph, Caledonia)

# What do we need to keep this sustainable?

- Program requirements:
  - Auditorium
  - Collaborative arts team with proven record of facilitating growth
  - Central location

#### Art Smart testimonials

"My name is Sarah Gysbers. I graduated from Hill Park in 2010 but stayed an extra year at Hill Park so I could be a part of the Art Smart program. I have been a part of the Art Smart Program since it started, ushering for Into the Woods, playing in the pit band for Seussical, and singing as a chorus member for Once Upon a Mattress. I have also been very involved in various activities in the music department as well such as vocal and band. So many students have benefited from this program and have went on to continue theater programs for University. The program allows students with the opportunity to explore their interests and their passion for the arts by putting on a musical. This is a great way to learn in a diverse environment. Students have many opportunities to learn about set design, costumes, dance, drama, lighting and sound, as well as the opportunity to gain confidence in themselves to not be afraid to try something new while doing something that they enjoy. Students also gain two coop credits towards their graduation and have the opportunity to graduate with a Specialist High School Major in the arts. It would be a great loss if this program is stopped as many students have a special place for it in their hearts and would love to see future students benefiting from this program. If Hill Park is closed, the Art Smart program should continue in a different school or the new school that is being built. I, as well as many others, have made great friends from this program and I would hate to see that future students completing their high school experience are not given the same opportunity to participate in such a positive experience. "

Sarah Gysbers, 2010 HillPark Graduate

"My name is Dawn Delio and I am a parent of one of the students who participated in the ArtSmart program for 2 years. It will be an absolute shame if this program was to be cancelled. This programs allows those students who have a love of the arts to experience something that no other school can offer. It provides a true theatre experience from designing sets to acting, singing and dancing. It allows a student who might not necessarily find high school a positive place and turn it into one. The experience that was given to my son was something he will never forget. He met many different students from other schools and relationships were form that have last over the years. If Hill Park should close, this program needs to continue so others that follow have the same positive theatre experience that was given to my son."

Dawn Delio, Parent of Participant

"My name is Elise Meyer. I am writing this on behalf of the past, present, and future students of Hill Park's ArtSmart program. While I was never directly involved in ArtSmart (as the inception of the program occurred after my graduation) I did participate in the Musical Theatre class and other arts programming that existed at Hill Park prior to the ArtSmart program's existence.

My early high school years were tumultuous ones, I had few friends and little interest in academic endeavors. I spent a good deal of time abusing substances and getting myself into trouble of all sorts. I initially attended another local Secondary School, however in 2005 I made the decision to attend Hill Park for the remainder of my high school career. That decision is one that I believe was a pivotal moment in some significant, positive life changes. Through the music programs (Musical Theatre, Repertoire Band, Instrumental Music, Vocal Ensemble) I was able to gain a deeper sense of connection to myself, my instructors and my

peers and I gamed many new mends in the process. I was given significant amounts of support and encouragement by the arts and drama facility, all of whom were and are amazing men and women who dedicate their lives to going above and beyond for their students. Little by little I gained confidence in myself and the drive to excel academically (within the music programs at first, and then in other areas). I went from failing most of my classes in 2005 to graduation with an 85% average grade in University level courses in 2007. It would be a shame to lose a program such as ArtSmart, which to my understanding has expanded upon the great environment provided to me during my time at Hill Park. I would be extremely disappointed to know that future students may potentially lose something which can inspire them to become more than what they could ever imagine. I am certain that without the arts programming and amazing instructors within Hill Park's arts department that I would not have the career I have today.

It would be a travesty to cancel a program that is so valuable to students' whole beings-from academics, to self-esteem and interpersonal skills-such programs foster so much good in the lives of so many teens.

If the decision is made to close Hill Park's current facilities, I sincerely hope that the HWDSB ensures that there is a space for musical theatre and other arts programming to continue to change the lives of students for many years to come. "

Elise Meyer, 2007 HillPark Graduate

"My name is Rachel Baldry and I graduated from Hill Park in 2009 and was in the first year of the ArtSmart Program. I know there is rumour of the school being shut down, and the program not being switched to another school in the district. I feel this would be a very bad idea as it has affected dozens, if not more, of students at this point. It is a very inspirational program that gets kids to love the co-op they are apart of, and to become closer with classmates from different schools. It becomes a family. It not only has had a huge impact on me, but I know for a fact it has had an impact on not only people that were part of the musical I was involved in, but many others from the other years it has been running. It's a great program to show kids that you shouldn't be embarrassed to be part of an arts program! Please consider keeping the program alive, and even the school if possible, because it's affected more people than you know and has the ability to affect so many more. Thank you for taking the time to consider our point of view."

Rachel Baldry, 2009 HillPark Graduate

"My name is Ghia Escoto and I graduated from Hill Park on June 2010. I was never part of any music program or Artsmart for that matter but I was involved with working on the set when it was first running along with my Grade 11 Art class. It would be really sad to lose such a great program and because of this program running, many students who participated in it had discovered what they can do, be able increase their confidence and discover their interest through this program. It's not just the performers, the people behind the set as well. I see this when I go watch the plays that were put on by Artsmart. There are many opportunities that were open to students and honestly it can be a benefit for any students who are moving on to college or university. They gain more experience and learn more not just from sitting in class."

Ghia Escoto, 2010 HillPark Graduate

but in addition, losing the Art Smart program would the attemendous loss to the students in hamilton because it was so much more than a drama/acting project. It involved students in sound production, set building, prop decoration and etc. When I was at HP, our art class helped paint the set, and that was an amazing experience for me. It was an opportunity to be involved in a project that brought students together and although I don't know what the state of the program is now, it was fun to be a part of it then. Now that I've moved on to university, I understand that high school students need to gain more experiences than just textbook learning, and Art Smart was one of the many options for them to do so, so let's not take it away."

Abir Abdulla, 2010 HillPark Graduate

"My name is Jessica Escoto, and I will be graduating from Hill Park in 2013. In June 2010, I auditioned for the Art Smart 2011 cast, and to be honest, it was the best decision I ever made. Entering high school was a difficult experience for me, as my new surroundings gave me the assumption that fitting into a group where I can feel comfortable in will help me thrive through high school. However, I found it difficult to feel content as to where I truly belonged because I did not really know who I was. Becoming a part of Art Smart helped me to realize my full potential, and it built up my self-esteem and confidence to the point where I stopped worrying about what the other kids at school thought about me. Art Smart helped me to learn that in order for me to take the next step, I have to step outside of my "comfort zone". Although my insecurities may hinder me, I know that in the end, I'll feel accomplished because I took that risk. Realizing all of this for myself was satisfying, but I could not have done it without the people in it. Art Smart unites different students with various backgrounds, but all share the same love for theater. Although the variety in strengths and weaknesses caused the inevitable "behind-the-scenes drama", we encouraged each other, and I personally feel grateful for the cast that helped me break out of the shell I was hiding myself in. They saw the best in me, and I saw the best in them. If Art Smart wasn't around for anyone with a love for theater or simply just for anyone, I don't know how a person can truly learn about themselves and finally feel content in a place like high school the way I experienced it. "

Jessica Escoto, Current HillPark student

"My name is Christina Aikey, and this up coming June I will be a proud graduate from Hill Park Secondary School, which wouldn't have been possible without the Art Smart program. Within the past three years I've had the oportunity to be within the program, and in total I've participated in three Musicals. Before I joined the program, I seldomly went to class and lacked interest in academics, which made my first highschool years unproductive ones. When I joined the program, I found myself actually wanting to get up and go to school everyday not just because of the oppurtunity, but because of my peers and teachers who highly influenced me in a positive manner. It wasn't just about going to school, it was about being a part of something greater with amazing people. In retrospect, I can say in all honesty, that wihout being a part of the Art Smart program, I would not be graduating. Being a part of Art Smart has changed my entire view on education, and I'm excited to continue my education at Mohawk College in the fall. In conclusion, Art Smart isn't just a program, it's an oportunity for students and teachers to come together and

involved."

12-14

Christina Aikey, Current HillPark student / 2012 Graduate

"My name is Max Falletta-Ehler. I am a Hill Park graduate and have been part of the Art Smart program twice in my high school career. The Art Smart program has been an essential part of my life and has been an essential part of many other people's lives, as well. Without this program, I would never have known how much potential I had to be a great performer, and by disintegrating this program and the fantastic people involved, many students will never know their own potential. Furthermore, Hill Park, over the course of its 60 years, has collected a very positive and vibrant ambiance which makes it a completely irreplacable location to host this valuable program. Hamilton would never be the same without Hill Park and the Art Smart program. I will use the skills I have gained through this program all throughout my life as I pursue careers in both performing music and being an on-air radio presenter."

Max Falletta-Ehler, Post-Grad Student, Hill Park

My name is Jessica Sweeny. I was born and raised in Guelph, Ontario. I had a difficult home life since the age of twelve when my parents divocred. My father eventually moved to Hamilton. When I was sixteen I was forced to move out of my mother's house because it had become such a toxic environment. At my school in Guelph I was bullied and sexually harassed on a daily basis, most of the ridicule centred around my involvement in the arts department at my school. When I decided to move in with my dad, we started looking for high schools with good arts programs where I would not face the same type of bullies, and have a strong arts community where I would be accepted. Finding Hill Park and ArtSmart was an answered prayer. I had never felt like I truly belonged anywhere until I came to ArtSmart. I was accepted and able to thrive, take chances, learn freely, and take leadership roles inlcuding teaching dances to the class and designing costumes. ArtSmart teaches so much more than singing and dancing. You learn to work as a team, to collaborate, to deal with issues maturely, to treat your classmates fairly, to look for the good in each person and so much more. Without ArtSmart my high school life would have been much more difficult and I would not be the person I am today. I know the program has improved the lives of so many people that I know, and many I do not know. I will be attending University in the fall for theatre at either Brock or Ryerson, thanks to the ArtSmart program.

Jessica Sweeny, Current Hill Park student / 2012 Graduate

#### **Email Correspondence**

Received February 22 2012.

**Dear Trustees** 

The news is out that Westmount's self paced program is being evaluated for a possible move to another school. We would ask that this not be taken under consideration for the following reasons.

The Westmount community have not been involved in the ARC process from the beginning and now, in the final hours, the self paced program has entered the talks. We were told we did not have a place in the ARC, that Westmount was not involved in the closures. Trustee Orban spoke at the February 13th meeting and said, "when the terms of reference for the ARC were set, it was understood that when they said Westmount was not included in the ARC they meant only the closure of the building itself was included. If the Director wanted to keep the program safe, he should have been more clear". No where in the process, was the program to be discussed, only the buildings. It seems now, we have been caught in a "loophole" of language. During the ARC process, an investigation by an independent was done. After this investigation was complete, Ms. Bishop stated that the trustees should have been more transparent about discussing the reasons Westmount was not included, from the start. I believe that the trustees are put in place to make tough decisions, and the decision to leave Westmount out of the ARC was made for valid reasons, but should have been presented openly at the beginning. We feel this statement that Westmount was "safe" from closure but not the program is another example of not being transparent. If the program was being considered to move, this should have been stated very clearly at the start.

Moving the program involves moving 1400 students. No other program in the HWDSB contains an entire school population. All the other schools that have been up for discussion have had a place at the table from the beginning, and so they should because it involves their entire school population. Moving "the program" moves the entire school population, and Westmount school community should have had the same considerations as the other schools involved in the process from the beginning.

Do the Staff go with the program? We understand this to be a Human resource/union issue. The Program, in Westmount has put the HWDSB on the map internationally. They have hosted other educators from around the world to look at what is being done there. If the educators do not move with the program, what will the impact be? We would have to reconsider, as many Westmount parents were voicing the same concern at our last school council meeting, whether to send our children there. It would involve potentially new educators, all learning how to teach to this program. What the board of education and the teachers have worked so hard to attain, may very well be jeopardized. This is a program the board can be proud of, that parents and students are proud of, but it has taken a number of years to get to where we are now. If moved, with new staff, We feel that it would have to start at ground zero. We are in no way stating this method of learning is better than a composite school. It is however different, not suited to all types of learners, but, it is a choice that is open to all HWDSB students who feel they can learn in this manner. Not better, not elitist, just an option.

Laura Peddle stated at the Feb 13 meeting " now that Westmount has had so many improvements, it would make a great composite high school". The 1400 students from the HWDSB that are already there, will also appreciate the improvements. A new composite High school built south of the link will be state of the art and will also make a great composite school.

Trustee Orban's statement at last meeting Feb 13th "when we talk about moving 1400 Westmount kids that is really incorrect since half of those kids live closer to Hill Park anyway". This is entirely irrelevant. Yes, you are indeed moving these students, regardless of where they live, because their school is Westmount, not Hillpark.

Moving the program is in effect moving the school. If a motion is brought to consider this, We feel we are not alone in saying that an entire new ARC process would have to start from the beginning with all communities that will be effected having a seat at the table.

Please, remain transparent. Leave Westmount's self paced program out of the process as we were all led to believe from the beginning.

Sincerely,

Steve and Kathi Potter Sherwood Alumni Westmount Parents Wednesday Mar. 28, 20/2 To Whom att May Concern:

My son is currently in grade eleven at Westmount. He picked this school because of it's unique propers. There are currently 1400 + students of many people. It works for many people. It works for many people. It works for many people. It waster extra time if needed. This trusted well for special needs the received with the my younger son, who will be attended this coming september. The teachers at Westmount were present because they agreed with the direction of the self paced program. They are an analyzy faculty, dealing with the published of students that attend everythy, drather concept at Westmount is the idea that the teachers give lessors two days a week and devoit the other days to trudent's underty a water and devoit the other days to

Irving to put this program at another school is not so easy! All of the staff would have to be on board and trained in order for agreement as well. This could no overright! It would take a lot of time to put in place. All of this already happened at Westmant! as the motto goes " if where students can get projects or labs. It also has a where students can go wherever they need a fait, superirsed place to write a test, would this, be put in place at another. Darling away a program tomount Ichool is a hu non Westmourt Ichool is a huge mistake would lave a laye void with the studen and the entire community! Leave it where it is and where it March 31, 2012

RE: Westmount S.S. and the Self-paced program

To Whom It May Concern,

After extensively researching high schools in Hamilton while still living overseas, we chose

the Self-Paced Program at Westmount S.S. because of it's reputation and moved close to the school for convenience. We are presently in the middle of our 2nd year here and can say we are very impressed with how the teachers and administrators are running this program.

However, we are concerned that the quality of the Self-Paced Program would be jeopardized if it were to be moved to another location and we would not be sending our children to a new location which did not have as excellent a system in place.

Hopefully the program will be able to remain at Westmount and continue to thrive there.

Sincerely

Alida Vantvoort

March 27, 2012

#### To HWDSB Trustees:

As a family with two students at Westmount Secondary School, we feel the self-paced program should not be moved out of Westmount. The bigger question is: Why would anyone consider moving it? It is reasonably central on the mountain and very accessible to bus routes. There will soon be a brand new recreation centre finished next door which will provide a brand new pool for the Westmount Waterpolo teams who have been displaced for a number of years. Sports Academy students will benefit as well from having this new recreation facility right there.

My children are very involved in the Music Department programs and make regular use of the Music practise rooms before and during all their playing tests. The Music 'Bar' is a regular hang-out spot for my daughter during lunch. This is much preferable to standing around in the parking lots and grounds.

Our greatest concern regarding even entertaining the movement of the program would be that this would not necessarily include moving the excellent teaching staff there. This group of teachers are there because they want to be involved in this type of self-paced atmosphere. They have experience in running this type of program and excel at doing it. Students at Westmount do not deserve to have teachers who are put into the self-paced program just because it is being run at their school and they need job security. It takes special individuals to administer this type of unique teaching situation and Westmount, for the most part, has these individuals NOW.

If something is working so well now, why would a change be considered?

The Champion family

April 1, 2012

To the School Trustees Of the Board of Education Hamilton

Dears Sirs:

Re: Westmount Secondary School

We are the parents of two sons who have graduated from Westmount Secondary School and a daughter who is presently in Grade 10 at Westmount. Our eldest son graduated in 2006 and other son graduated in 2011. Our experience with the staff and the program at Westmount has been a remarkable one. When our eldest son started at Westmount there was still a great misconception with the program and therefore there was a small population in the school. By the time our middle son graduated and our daughter started in grade 9, the program had significantly increased. Both children knew of friends and fellow students who had started their high school terms at other schools and then switched over to Westmount because of the positive things that happen in the school.

Over the course of our experience with Westmount, many of the same teachers have remained with the program and it is comforting to know that many have taught all three of our children. The teaching staff and administration have refined and strengthened the program to make it a successful one. To move our students into a school and have teachers who are not familiar with their program would be unfair and not beneficial to our students at all. As parents, as taxpayers, as supporters of the Westmount self pace program, we would expect the same teaching quality to teach our students. We would expect the current teaching staff would have to be included in any consideration to move over to another school location.

Westmount is home to the sports academy program and with the opening of the new recreation center, the students specializing in swimming programs will benefit from having the new pool at their disposal. Westmount has an excellent gym program and again having access to the recreation center will be of benefit to the students.

We are at a loss to figure out why the Board would consider a request to move the program to another high school when the program has become so successful and is only getting better over the years. There does not seem to be any problem with the way the program is running from the current Westmount location.

It seems pointless to uproot the current school population and move them out of their familiar and safe surroundings. The students respect their school, especially with all of the new improvements, and the surrounding community.

The size of the program running at Westmount is in need of every space at the current school. The staff and the administration have worked very carefully to see that there is enough space for everyone. Therefore, there does not seem to be any good reason to move the program to Hill Park, which is a much smaller school. How could that possibly work when the Westmount people have worked so hard over the last few years to make it work at Westmount with the test center, library areas and Studio B just to name a few. It is undoing everything that they have achieved.

We are of the belief that if something is successful and working well, why is there a need to consider uprooting and upsetting everything. Students need consistency and balance in their lives. They have enough to worry about with grades, their futures and their studies and they should not have to worry about whether their program may be moved.

Thank you.

Yours very truly,

Chester and Kathy Wszol

David and Diane Tyrrell 180 Stone Church Road West Hamilton, ON L9B 1A3

April 2, 2012

The Trustees
Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
100 Main Street West, Hamilton

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please accept this letter as our sincere appreciation for running the Westmount selfpaced program. This program has met the educational needs of our four children, three who are now in the post secondary phase and beyond, as model workers and citizens.

The fourth is thriving in the Sport Academy where he is challenged physically and mentally, and is considering how the training he is receiving and the inspiration he gets will fit into his chosen career in religious ministry.

We saw the value of the Westmount program before it was a system school and actually moved into the neighborhood to allow our children to be a part of Westmount. We have seen the program grow and the facility grow with it, in order to facilitate the special needs of the program. I, Diane, have also worked on committees for a number of years, to ensure that parents would be involved through specialized agendas and through examining self-directed schools across the country(and world) to identify their unique physical plants.

The program and the facility of Westmount need to work in tandem. If you cannot see that, then you need to re-evaluate your personal understanding of the system. This is not a program for everyone, but it is a valuable learning model which has helped our students excel in post-secondary studies. Please make sure you understand that a great deal of effort has been given to ensure a certain place on the West Mountain is the place to house that program. Please do not undercut that effort.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Tyrrell Family

April 4, 2012

To the Trustees of the HWDSB,

We are a family that has chosen Westmount and the self-paced program. We are writing to ask you to not consider moving the Westmount program to another school.

Our son was identified as gifted in Grade 4. Once that happened, the HWDSB provided us with transportation to gifted programs for the rest of his school career. We lived in Stoney Creek and he was taken by taxi to Dundas Central in Grade 5, and then by school bus to W.H. Ballard for Grades 6 to 8 in order to attend a gifted program. He spent hours going back and forth to school but it challenged him and afforded him opportunities that he may not have received at his home school. The downside was that travelling so far from home made it really hard to socialize and form lasting friendships.

Once it was time to begin Secondary School we looked at many programs of choice to find something that would continue to interest and challenge him, while providing an opportunity to make some friends. Westmount was our answer.

From the first time we visited the Westmount facility, it was clear to us all that this was a school like no other. Every teacher and student we saw was engaged in active teaching or learning. Groups of students were working together on projects outside of regular classrooms; in hallways, resource rooms and the library. They were happy to explain what they were doing and to answer questions about the school and their program. They were welcoming and friendly. In spite of the activity everywhere the school was very tidy. Here was no garbage on floors or graffiti on walls or lockers. It was a bright, noisy, active place that students clearly cared about. There were also places specifically set up for quiet study, writing essays and tests. The school had clearly been adapted to fit this very different learning style. There was no question that our son wanted to go to school at Westmount.

We sold our Stoney Creek home and moved to the Mountain to a home on a bus line so that our son would have a single City bus ride to and from Westmount each day. He is now completing Grade 11 at Westmount. He has made use of the self-paced program to work ahead, enabling him to take time away when needed to organize and run volunteer

initiatives. He has been encouraged by teachers at Westmount who have given him the courage to run with his ideas. He has met and befriended a group of like-minded students, fully engaged in their own learning paths. He has a plan for his future that knows no bounds.

At Westmount our son has experienced a culture of acceptance and encouragement, and through the self-paced program, has been allowed to put together a schedule that has provided the opportunity to become an active member of the community, working hard to make a difference.

The Westmount building, its teachers and the self-paced program are an incredible package that, together, offers an unlimited future for students. It teaches the curriculum, sure, but it also provides a platform of acceptance, understanding and opportunity. To separate this program from the building or the teachers would be to do a great disservice to every one of the 1400 plus students currently enrolled as well as the thousands of students yet to come.

Please keep the Westmount program intact, with the teachers and staff who have worked so hard to develop it and in the building that houses it so well.

Sincerely, The Davies Family

#### To Whom It May Concern:

It's a difficult time for students, parents, teachers and administrative staff all across the Hamilton Board of Education. As we await decisions in regards to which schools will close with the ARC reports and recommendations, we can't help but worry; we don't want to lose the schools in our own neighbourhoods, the schools our children are attending or may be slated to attend. We want our kids close to home, close at hand; it feels more known and it feels safer.

But we've come to a place financially where having a high school in each neighbourhood is no longer feasible. To ensure the best quality of education for our kids - all kids - we need to make better use of the limited resources across our board.

Our family already knows personally what it is to have to trust the education system to serve our child well; since he entered grade five, due to his Individualized Education Plan, our son has been bused, sometimes up to an hour and a half each way to be in a school that could best meet his needs. It was hard having a child so young go off to schools that felt unknown to us. Still, it was the best way our educational system could meet his needs, and so we all did what we had to do to make it happen.

Our son is now in grade nine at Westmount; the transition all parents worry about - the transition from grade school to high school - was virtually seamless for our son. The Headstart program offered at Westmount allowed him to be introduced to his new school and teachers for two weeks during the summer; it enabled him to familiarize himself with the setting and the routines of high school with a smaller number of students present, and enabled him to complete ten units of the twenty units necessary to achieve his grade nine math credit. His introduction to high school could not have been more positive, and for that, he, and we as his parents, are grateful.

Attending Westmount does not, however, cut down on his travel time; he is still in on a bus, now a city bus, at least an hour in each direction. He would tell you, however, that it is "way worth it". In addition to his regular classes, our son is involved in the Westmount Symphonic Band; it requires that he is at school by 7:20 a.m. two or three days each week - quite a feat for a teenager! But he loves it and accommodates for his early mornings and travel time by having earlier nights and less free time than the average teen; it takes commitment, but it's important to him, so he commits. On his "flex days", days specifically set aside for students to do extra work in subject areas they choose, he uses some of those periods to spend extra time with others in his band section to practice together in a specialized practice room; he would tell you all the early mornings and extra practice time are also worth it.

By June, just ten months into high school, because he could accelerate his studies in math and participate in Symphonic Band, our son is on track to achieve ten credits toward his OSSGD; he is thrilled with his progress, as are we. Our son is a bright, dedicated student, yet even so, without the flexibility of the Westmount program and dedication of the Westmount staff, he would not be so successful nor so challenged to do his best academically.

Some people believe a school is only bricks and mortar and that any building which might meet specific physical plant needs would therefore meet the needs of the students within it; that is simply not true. A school is the synchrony of its students, its teachers, its administrators, its parents and its community - all within an appropriate physical plant.

Westmount Secondary School is the wonderful program it is because of all those things - together. The physical plant has been adapted to meet the specific needs of the students who attend. Specialized practice and studio space have been adapted to serve the young musicians who attend. Specialized gym and sports areas accommodate the diligent athletes of the Sport Academy. Dedicated spaces for individualized testing and quiet work areas provide space where students can accelerate through courses in which they excel or receive extra instruction and support in courses which challenge them. Perhaps, most important, is the industrious and persevering staff of teachers, administrators and support staff, who have shown themselves over the twenty-plus year history of the self-paced program at Westmount, to seek out impressively innovative ways to help students be the very best they can be.

When you consider the recommendations put forward by ARC, I hope you will consider the synchrony that is specific to Westmount: the physical plant, the students' strengths and needs, the teaching, administrative and support staff, the parents, and the community; none of these things are "portable" enough to work as well in a different place.

As well, I make a bold challenge to other secondary schools, students, staff, and parents: instead of expending energy to keep a school building in your neighbourhood or lobbying to move a program that has shown itself, for more than twenty years now, to be highly effective, channel your energy into sorting out how best to serve your children and neighbourhood students and begin, as a community, to build that reality, wherever you students end up attending school. Your children and our future community, will thank you for it.

Thank you for your time and consideration, Dawn & Trish Vanson

#### Dear Trustees

Just a simple note to express my love for the Westmount program. When my daughter was ready to go to high school we thought long and hard to get her the best program that would suit her needs and Westmount was our choice. My daughter is in grade 9 and she loves the sports academy program, her friends and the new rec centre that is being built.

The teachers and the special programs offered at this unique school make it so successful. Please remove this school from any list to have it move elsewhere.

Why ruin a great thing?

Regards

Erin May

I feel very passionate about Westmount's self-paced learning programme. This programme has made all the difference for my daughter's high school education.

My daughter, unsatisfied with the unchallenging education she was receiving at a former high school, sought out and researched what secondary school education there was available in the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board and selected Westmount Secondary High School. Her three years at Westmount have made all the difference.

Entering high school at the grade ten level can be very challenging, however, the culture, the teachers, the support staff and the students at this school, right from day one, have made every day a positive experience.

Where once I heard daily complaints of intellectual boredom from a teenager who loves to learn, I have had the privilege to listen to an enthusiastic rundown of how each class that day was amazing. This style of learning, Westmount's self-paced programme, is very much something to get excited about. Where once I feared that this very bright teenager would stagnate and totally shut down any interest in all things high school, we have arrived at a place where, at the fruition of her high school years, this same teenager is not only excited about university, but well-prepared and ready to face the university challenge head on. All university requirements have been met and surpassed, as not only the required 30 credits have been earned, but 35, all because of the scope of course offerings at Westmount, and the self-guided learning taking place within these walls, that have been too good to pass up.

There are things about Westmount, you should know, that breathe beyond the classrooms of this school. The environment created by these eager well-stimulated teenagers, the dedicated and motivated teachers and support staff, the rooms and areas created to enhance the self-directed the 21st century learning style at Westmount, have brought into existence a place where there is complete acceptance for each individual. The results of a recent survey within the school reflect this fact, and that is that 98.5% of the student body likes to go to school each day. Therein lies the proof in the unique life of this school.

Kudos to the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board for melding the self-directed, self-paced learning programme with Westmount Secondary High School, and choosing this high school and enabling it to be the flagship for 21st century learning.

Benedit

This letter is to voice our support, as parents of children at Westmount, to have the program remain in its current location, and not even consider a motion to evaluate relocation.

I have 2 children at Westmount currently and another who will hopefully be there in a couple of years (she is in Gr 7). We just actually just made a **significant** investment in our kids' education at Westmount and moved from Carlisle into Hamilton so that our kids could be closer to the school and not spend 2 hours a day on the bus. Our chosen location was strategically thought out based on easy access to the school (one single short bus ride). Living in Carlisle, my son had spent 5 years travelling to Hamilton on the bus to get to school (he was in the gifted program at Dalewood and then went on to Westmount). Our chosen new location completely took into account that he needed to not have to spend all his time commuting so that he could become more involved and get more out of his high school education.

Aside from my personal reasons though, I am aligned with other parents that it really just makes no sense to mess with the program. It's working; kids love it and are thriving. The kids at Westmount are some of the most successful in HWDSB, and with a high rate of post-secondary success, will be the next generation of citizens to contribute and keep communities thriving. These are the kids who are motivated and able to successfully manage a program that requires organization and dedication to a process that they take ownership of. Disrupting these students who are in a good place with no really strong reason other than assumptions that it will ease school life for other kids does not make sense. Westmount's building is set up to work with the program – there are spaces that are unique to the program that have been carved out and are well utilized (e.g. science dispensary, test centre, studio B). The board will end up spending more money to set these up somewhere else, as these unique components are vital to the program and will need to be established. The existence of Sport Academy within Westmount is also reason to keep the program in its current location. It makes total sense to have the Sport Academy program of choice paired with the self-paced program. The kids who are enrolled in it are managing elite athlete training and competitive schedules that require them to often miss school and so the self-pacing allows them the flexibility they need. The facilities that are there now, and the new recreation Centre going in next door are both well aligned to the Sport academy program. There is benefit to the SA program staying where it is, but it wouldn't work if it were thrown into the regular school system where missing classes could be detrimental to an athletic student's success.

Westmount kids are at Westmount because they choose to be part of the program and the environment. It is unique in both of those aspects. There is a feel within the school that cannot be matched, and I would bet that every student in that program would tell you that. My daughter and her friend were chatting they commented "there's a friend for everyone at Westmount, no matter who you are". This says a lot about how they feel about being there and the positive experience.

### 28-15

Finally, my last concern is about the fact that there might be risk in losing teachers if the program were to be moved. The teachers at Westmount are part of what makes the program so great. I can only imagine that it is a challenging program to teach and not just any teacher can manage it. Westmount teachers are specialized and losing any of them would certainly be detrimental to the program.

Let's leave the Westmount self-paced program alone — it is one of the most successful programs in the board and kids are lining up to get into it. It is turning out great kids who have promising futures. Making changes to this does not make sense or hold the promise of long term value to the community. It's kids like the ones at Westmount who are going to be the adults who give the most back to the community in the future. Let's give them a helping hand and support them for their effort. Give them credit for being the ones who will break out of the mold and be the innovators and the agents of change. We spend a lot of time helping the kids with the obvious needs but too often forget to help the ones who will be the contributors to everyone's future.

Sincerely,

Janet and David Cameron

#### Dear Trustees,

My daughter is a grade ten student at Westmount. She did one semester at Waterdown High and was unhappy with the school environment. On her own accord she toured the school and applied to get into the school for the semester and lucky for her she was accepted. She is a very self-directed and shy student and loves the environment at the school which gives her freedom to concentrate on her studies and feel comfortable in the student social body as well. As a parent that had two students already graduate from Waterdown, I commend her attempts to create a positive change in her academic as my two other older students did not graduate from Waterdown with a great attitude towards education and socially did not enjoy their experience.

For myself as a parent of child three I am grateful my daughter is having a better high school experience on all fronts. It's a much more pleasant experience for all. For this I have been driving from Carlisle twice a day when bussing was not available and enjoy the days when it is available to her. When I see where the proposed change might go to, I know that will extend my driving time and add gas charges to my bill as well as lessen the time it takes to get to evening activities. This is my third child through the high school system and it seems fair to enjoy what we signed up for.

We all know the changes for students, whether it be location, staff or just the daily routine can be disruptive to their studies which could be detrimental to the students who have invested a lot in choosing Westmount so they could do their very best. In addition to this taking this steps makes it difficult for me to work and as I plan for the upcoming year to perhaps be working I require that stability of my daughters education situation stable so that I may make plans. As a parent of three young adults on one salary, it certainly is time to be able to contribute financially to all that entails, but this instability makes it difficult to make family plans.

In short, we are very happy with the way things are. This could be very disruptive to a lot of families who create other major plans around their children's' schooling, such as working and other important scheduling. Please leave things the way they are. I have plans to make and am in the midst of making more that are very important to my family.

Joy Galloway

#### Hi

I am a grade 9 student at Westmount and I love my school. I am in the sports academy program and I am really enjoying it. It is great to have so many different places to workout and I am looking forward to the new rec centre. We will be adding swimming to our gym sessions. I love Westmount and the people and Westmount.

Please do not move my school. I feel accepted here and I do not want anything to change. Kendall May

Westmount Secondary School is the most magical educational facility in the entire Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Originally, the school was not built to house the unique self-paced program, nor was it built to accommodate 1500 students. But, over the years, teachers and students have adapted and grown to love the building we call "school."

Now, school isn't just a place to learn. School is a place where you learn valuable life skills - social interactions, the concept of teamwork, time management and responsibility. The self-paced program at Westmount Secondary School allows all of us students to learn these and more. We spend nearly 28 hours in our beloved building each week, and each day you just grow to love it more. There is the Test Centre, always open and available for students to write any test they need to help keep us on track. We have the Science Dispensary, where students are handed everything they need to perform numerous labs, and is so well thought out that it defies description. There are computer labs that are easily accessible for all students. The music rooms are equipped with soundproof practice rooms to enable musicians to hear themselves play and desk spaces to do theory. The music area is so well thought out that there is even sound equipment to record the music being created. The central location of the library is equipped with thousands of books and rows of computers to give students quiet space to focus and work, which is so integral to the individual learning module. Each and every corner of Westmount Secondary School gives the Self-Paced program all of the tools and supplies it needs to be carried out optimally. Even the teachers are the perfect fit for the Self-Paced program at Westmount; they know exactly how much teaching we need (the more structured, guiding type for the juniors and the less structured, more free-reign for those seniors and students that are high-achieving). Their experience guides them to encourage and motivate in just the right amounts in order to have us perform at our best and to achieve and meet the deadlines on an individual basis. I have found that new teachers from other, regular learning style schools – are often lost and confused and have not yet learned the ways of the Westmount teacher; the new teachers feel the need to teach too often and the need to push all students to work at the same pace. But there is a beauty in the self-paced program at Westmount Secondary School, and that is the opportunity to work at one's own pace, and the teaching style that is just the right amount of guidance from the perfect-fit teachers.

What I have experienced here within the walls of Westmount Secondary School, the strengths that I have developed to set my own pace, to acquire self-discipline, to be acknowledged as an individual, and to achieve the tasks set before me, will be with me my whole life. I hope that there will be many more fortunate enough to have this exceptional experience.

Mary Benedict

#### Good morning,

As parents of a Westmount Secondary student it is imperative that he remains at the current location. Our son benefits from a self-paced learning environment and moving to another location will affect the learning experience as the teachers will not have the expertise at the current level. The current facilities would have to be incorporated into the new school. I.e. The Test Centre, Music Practice rooms, the Science Dispensary and the current flex day schedule. It is our hope that there is not a move to a new location for the reasons above.

Sincerely, Penny Angel As a parent of a student of Westmount Secondary School, I would like to commend the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board for their foresight in implementing the self-paced programme at this school. I feel confident that my daughter has gained the learning skills, time-management skills and had the opportunity to engage her self-discipline to a level that will bear her well through University. The teaching and support staff at Westmount dedicate themselves to preparing youth to meet the challenges at any level of education pursued at the post-secondary level. The confidence with which she has pursued the opportunities now available to her is something that has been positively influenced by the staff, support staff, and the facility which have created a culture specifically honed to promote and surpass the expectations of high school education in preparing youth for post-secondary education.

Rulph Farrelut

#### To whom it may concern:

As a parent of one current and one future Westmount student, I feel very strongly that the program should remain 'as-is' in the current location for the reasons stated below.

Westmount offers a unique program with teachers who have worked for many years to develop their skill set to deal with a self-paced, self-directed learning environment. They are a key part of the success of the students in this program. This program could not be delivered in another environment without them, regardless of how dedicated the 'new' teachers are – there would be a significant learning curve to mount, and the students would suffer greatly.

My daughter has been self-paced learner for every year but one of her academic career. A self-paced program has given her the ability to work independently, to prioritize, to set goals, and to execute her learning plan. She has had to deal with the consequences of her planning and execution – i.e., success at achieving what she set out to do, or learning how to be more efficient if her planning or execution did not meet her goals. This has been very valuable and will stand her in good stead going forward. This is individual accountability at its best, and Westmount's culture of accountability distinguishes it from other schools. That is not to say it is better or worse than others, just that it meets the learning style needs of a large group of students. It would be unfair to those students to gut their program by moving it, radically changing teachers, and totally disrupting them – particularly flowing out of the recommendations of the seriously flawed, incredibly biased, and improperly run South ARC.

I attended a South ARC meeting and viewed Trustee Peddle scripting and directing the South ARC as to what issues to raise, explore, and how to word their report. I was shocked at the blatant interference in what should have been a democratic process. By my reckoning, more time was taken up by Trustee Peddle's directions to the ARC than by the ARC members' own unscripted deliberations. I found a lack of correct factual information and malicious statements concerning Westmount at the South ARC meeting I attended and in my opinion this seemed to reflect serious bias on the part of many South ARC members.

The process was, in my opinion, seriously flawed and I attach an email I wrote to Trustee Wes Hicks setting out my reasons for stating same. For the reasons stated therein, in my opinion it would be a total injustice if the Trustees rewarded the back-door manner in which Westmount was worked into their agenda by the South ARC, particularly given that:

(a) Westmount students constitute approximately 25% of the mountain high school students, and they had absolutely no representation whatsoever in a process that was, from the get-go, manipulated by certain people with an agenda to detrimentally affect the rights of some 1400 Westmount students;

- (b) Westmount was excluded by the Trustees from the scope of the South ARC's focus, and from representation on the South ARC. Yet the process was manipulated by one or more prominent people with their own agenda such that the South ARC ignored the exclusion and crafted recommendations that displaced Westmount. For the Trustees to act on such trickery would frankly make them look like fools who were hoodwinked by the most vocal enemy of the Westmount program, and the Board as a whole would lose public respect, trust and confidence;
- (c) Many of the members of the South ARC are employees of the Board of Education, and to have a Trustee such as Trustee Peddle speak so long, loud, and in such a directive manner to these subordinate employees respecting what to put in their report was a total usurpation of their power. I saw little resistance from the Board employees to the constant directions from Trustee Peddle, presumably out of a desire to not contradict someone of superior authority in the chain of command.

I support maintaining Westmount 'as-is' in the current location and cast a huge 'thumbs-down' on the South ARC process and accordingly respectfully request you do not put onto your agenda any consideration of Westmount's future arising from the South ARC process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Randall E. Walford MBA LL.B., Esq.

#### HWDSB Trustees,

The self-paced program is a well-developed and experienced program. The program requires instructors who are capable of teaching (and want to teach) such a program, as well as administrative, support and even custodial staff who are willing and able to work in such an environment. Also, the program requires students who wish to learn in such an environment, as well as the parents who support those students.

I do not believe this is a program that you can just "pick up and drop into" an existing school structure. The whole school must be on the same program.

The staff (all staff, as noted above), I'm sure, has developed into a cohesive and supportive group working together for the benefit of all the students. This takes time to develop. I realise you do have staff coming and leaving; however, it's much easier for fewer "newer" staff to adjust, than it would be for an entire school of staff to gel together.

My daughter is in grade 9 now, and she loves the supportive and inclusive atmosphere of Westmount. This, too, I'm sure, took years to develop.

In reference to the two previous paragraphs, as much as this dynamic may take years to develop, unfortunately it can be broken down in mere moments. Moving the program could expose it to such devastation. What happens to our students in the interim? Are the Trustees saying, "Oh well, we'll just right off the next couple years' of graduating classes". That is something which is intolerable!

Perhaps it is capacity which is the main issue, and that students are being turned away due to lack of capacity. If that is the case, then why not expand the program and make it available in an ADDITIONAL location(s)? We have more than one high school offering Sports programs; I'm sure we could offer a self-paced program in additional locations also.

It is my opinion that more schools should offer such a program, especially with high school ending at Grade 12. The adjustment to post-secondary academic life is "huge". All of a sudden, we are "on our own" when it comes to work completion and advocacy. This is a large reason why I wanted my daughter to attend Westmount, and why I had her in SageQuest for grades 7 and 8. If she is to struggle with being responsible for her work, learn how to manage her time, set and accomplish goals, speak up for herself and many other academic, social and life skills, then let her begin to learn NOW. It is also my opinion, but I do believe that many more schools should offer instruction in this manner.

Rather than move the program from an already successful location, why are the Trustees not looking to expand the overall self-paced program structure into ADDITIONAL schools?

Keep the program at Westmount, I urge you.

Susan Misener Parent March 28, 2012

#### To HWDSB Trustees:

As a new family at Westmount Secondary School, we feel the self-paced program should not be moved out of Westmount. The bigger question is: Why would anyone consider moving it? It is reasonably central on the mountain and very accessible to bus routes. We live in Ancaster and we are on a bus route. The trip to Westmount is not far but I wouldn't want my son to travel any farther. I feel it would really be difficult for him to go back to a "normal" school after starting at Westmount. He has been challenged more than I ever expected.

My son is involved in the Sports Academy at Westmount. The self-paced program and the Sports Academy were the reasons why he did not go to Bishop Tonnos in Ancaster but chose to go to Westmount. The building at Westmount has been modified for the Sports Academy children, like the new Studio B. Why would the trustees want to spend additional monies to modify another building? Times are tough right now and money is not available. So why spend more money? Many classrooms would have to be modified for the self-paced students like the test centre, and science dispensary just to name a few. What a waste of money when a facility already exists that offers these modifications to support self-paced students. Also, there will soon be a brand new recreation centre finished next door which will provide a brand new pool for the Westmount Water polo teams who have been displaced for a number of years. Sports Academy students will benefit as well from having this new recreation facility right there.

Our greatest concern regarding even entertaining the movement of the program would be that this would not necessarily include moving the excellent teaching staff there. This group of teachers are there because they want to be involved in this type of self-paced atmosphere. They have experience in running this type of program and excel at doing it.. It takes special individuals to administer this type of unique teaching situation and Westmount, for the most part, has these individuals NOW.

If something is working so well now, why would a change be considered?

The Kasprzyk family

## To whom It may concern,

My name 95 Cole Daoust and I am Currently in grade 12 attending Westmaint Secondary School. This letter is concerning the warm, possible atmosphere atour school, and how Westmount has helped me through High school. Westman t has a self pacins environment to learn, it allows me too multitask multiple classes and is beneficiary if there is a class and I have a lot. of work load, the self pacing can help me balance all subjects in my Semester to ensure I hand in work on a timely fashion. Self pacins also prepares me for post secondary education because Westmount's program is similar to that of a University/college student, if you don't do the work, it's really comins back at you because an College Whersty the professors mentality is if you don't do the work, you don't pass, there are no due dates at restmount, it clearly allows you to develop iniative, and a source of Responsibility. At Westmount we also carry a unique freedly, inviting almosphere that can provide any person the feeling of being Welcomed, and being accepted.

Sincerely, (de Dooust

March, 30th, 2012

To whom it may concern,

My name is Danielle Frater and I am currently attending Westmount Secondary School. I initially chose this school because of the location but being here gave me the opportunity to enter programs, such as SZG. Not to mention the self-pace program and the amazing staff that make it easier for you to keep up with it.

Westmount is an outstanding school! Being a student in Westmount has helped me out so much. There are many great things about this school. To start, the number one thing that makes this school great is the fact that it is self-pace. Having the self-pace program here allows you to learn even more and understand the work that is given to you without having to rush. You will be able to hand in your work without feeling like it's not good enough, because they give you that extra time to make it better.

Secondly, cuestmount is really great because of the programs. A specific program that has helped me out personally is SZG. SZG helped me earn extra credits and finish up any classes from previous semesters. The reason why I was able to have success in SZG is mainly because of Ms. Proulk, Ms. Moffat and Mr. Eckart, These teachers have been a huge factor towards my steps to graduation.

Westmount also carries wonderful staff that are always willing to help you, whether it's coming early or staying late after school to help better understand your assignments or to just finish them up. The staff isn't just here to see you succeed, they are also great

at listening to your problems and giving back appropriate feedback. This school helps you build up your convidence, and helps you prepare for your future and achieve your goals. The staff that helped me out a great amount during my school years are Ms. Prouk, Mr. Eckart, Mr. Ardron, Mr Miller . Without that extra help and support from these teachers I would not have been where 12m now!

In conclusion, Westmount is an amazing school because of the self-pace program, the SZG program and the support from the staff. I should also mention that the location is fairly close and reasonable.

Sincerly, Danielk Frater

Paniel Robles
To whom it may concern:

my name is Paniel Robles and I am in grade II at westmount and I am in SZG. The reasons why I am in SZG. The reasons why I am in SZG is because I am behind in my cledits because of skipping class and not completing, my work, That was in grade a aims 10, but now I am try to folkers my career by getting my diploma. Westmount as some programs that are helping me get back on track. These programs are SZG and co-op as well as Auto.

co-of has helped me cass- formers because it is a good entiring experience. Also it you complete sor many hours you have thre apportunity to gain a credits and it will half you credit count. I choop expresenting westmount.

Auto has helped me aswell because I ensory
the Auto foom and it encourages me to early
on and becoming a meaning.

Finaly, S2G IS one of the best grogisms here at Lestmoving for me, S2G has helped me get back on thack with my credits. At the beginning of this teal I had to credits and now at the end of this teal I am going to heave 22 credits. The tealing environment in S2G is amazing and for to be in.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Daniel Robles

To whom it may concern,

I am a student in grade 12 at Westmount Secondary School. I am writing to explain the importance of Westmounts program, The culture is different from any other Schools. It is a calm atmosphere. Self paced didn't affect me really, but falling behind is exceptable because Westmount gives you the ability to fall behind and catch up or speed ahead and finish courses early. If you need an extra semester to finish a credit, you carry that class over without howing to restort it. If you are behind in credits, \$26 is a good program to take. Earning 3 credits for being in \$26, it is possible to curm more from the second penied class you have at from carry overs. Mrs. Proulx does a good job working with the shedows in that does. These are the reasons has helped me be successful.

Sincerley,

Eric Barns

March 30th, 2012

To whom It may concern,

I am currently in Grade 12 attending Westmount Secondary School has been beneficial because the Belf-pacing program. The Staff are great because they help me to embrace my Skills as well as enhance them. They have programs in order to ensure that we graduate Successfully.

Westmount has helped me In my steps to graduation because of the Self-pacing program. It has allowed me to show down on work submission. In order to fully understand what I am doing so that I can complete my work with complete understanding. The self-pacing program also allows me to fast track on units I already know well, allowing me to have more time to study for test, assignments and exams.

Not only has the Self-pacing helped me but there are Staff that continue to help me with issues regarding School and outside of School. Mr. fersaud has taken the time to work through units to help me understand and carryout problems with all aspects of math. Mrs. Couk and Mrs. Hogger have also taken time to assess my work and give advice as to how I can improve. The Staff have played a role in my years at Westmount to Improve my Skills in acedemics, sports and future plans.

Lastly, Ms. Provix has played a major role in my steps to graduation because she is the one who gave me the apportunity to join SZG. SZG allows me to gain my last credits. The SZG atmosphere is great because the students and the teacher are welcoming and open minded. SZG allows me to complete courses successfully and talk about anything related to school and home or health issues. Ms. Froulx has personally helped me with my work. She has encouraged me to push myself and become better and has given advice and just listened if I needed to talk.

In Conclusion, Westmount 1s a great School to be In because of the Self-pacing giving students the opportunity to understand what they are working through. Westmount staff are great to work with because they open-minded, welcoming and very encouraging. In the end, SRG has helped

the most because this program as well as Ms. Proulx have given me the chance to complete my credits and earn experiences that are beneficial In and outside of School.

Sincerely, Ginel Frater

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To whom it may concern,

I am a student at Westmount Secondary School. I feel that westmounts self pace environment is the best because you don't need to stress about work being due Br a speciesse time you can finish at any pace you preter wether that being slow of tast. Another great thing about westmount is Alexadays. Flex days are when you go to any class you choose to get caughtup on your work. At westmount some people may think its bad to have all the Areedom you want in grade 9 but it's not really all freedom because you have to know self control and actually get the work done. If all your work ign't completed on time though that's olcan because you can just corryover into the next serrester and few track through it.

Sincerely Jake Edwaley

Morch 31 2012,
My name is Denny lenny and I am a grade 12 student at
Westmant I currently have 13 credits but I want to
graduate. Of the 13 credits I have I carried over most
of them. If I'd been at a school that wasn't self-paced
I might have failed the courses instead By allowing carryove
I am in a better position now. The SDS course has
helped with improving my attendance and work habits. I come to
class because I have the time and help to get my carses
there.

Sincerely,
Denny lenny

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kris Cawricz, in my fifth and final year attending Westmount Secondary. Recently, several schools have been targeted for closure under the Southern ARC program, and as far as I am aware, Westmount is not slated for closure. However, I am aware that there are certain elements that are pushing for Westmount to be closed, moved, or have its unique program moved to another school.

I'm voicing my opinion as a long time student of Westmount, leave our school the way it is! The staff, program, and culture here at Westmount have helped me, and others, get through some tough times.

The staff here are great (most of them, but nowhere is perfect) and are willing to accommodate all types of situations to help students succeed. A good example of a teacher going above and beyond is Jamie Vallance. He taught me Gr11 U Physics and he really pushed the class hard to stay on track with the course. His teaching style kept the class engaged and prepared us well for all course work. He would sit down 1 on 1 if needed with any student and formulate plans to help them succeed. There are lots of teachers like Mr. Vallance here at Westmount who help students succeed in the unique self pacing program.

Getting to Westmount may be a long journey for some (an hour of city bussing), but I still feel it is in the best location to accommodate the students that come here from Hamilton and surrounding areas as it is easily accessible by multiple bus routes that leave students a block or two away from the school. Westmount's central location is good for the majority of students here.

Westmount has forged a reputation as an inclusive and laid back (in the good sense) school for students. I've personally never seen any meaningful bullying and can count on one hand the fights that I've only heard of. The atmosphere here is really unlike other high schools. I don't feel like the atmosphere and attitude in other high schools would fit well with the self paced program.

I'd like to finish off by thanking whoever takes the time to read this and hope that my input was useful to any decision making.

Sincerely,

Kris Cawricz

Hello, my name is Kelsey Debathe and I am currently in Grade 12. The Self-pace system has helped me a lot. The Westmount self-pace system isn't for everyone, and there are people that enjoy it and do well, while others like me are not too fond of the idea but it still helps to get credits done. I personally have had many experiences where the self-pace system has helped me finish a class on time. Last semester I missed a lot of classes for my auto class and because I work well in that class, enjoy the class and the teacher (Mr. Cule) helped me out a lot to finish the course on time. If this wasn't a self pace school I probably would have failed the class. The self pace also helps because it gives you the option to carry over the class if you are taking your time with a class or struggling to get the work in on time, which has happened to me a few times here at Westmount. Many teachers at Westmount have adapted to the self pace system and have helped me personally to finish courses while dealing with family troubles. Ms. Younes, one of my favorite teachers, taught me English while my family was having some troubles. She helped me finish the course on time and she offered me assistance in my personal life.

March 30, 2012

To whom it may concern,

There are multiple reasons why Westmount works where it is, how it does, and the friendly atmosphere as well as a peaceful work environment that it provides. Self-pacing, the culture, the S2G program, as well as the building and facilities are what helped me to succeed in the school.

First of all the self-pace program has allowed me to take some extra time on courses to improve my marks. Everybody in the school knows the program and facilities which improves it even more, when things can be dealt with quickly and efficiently because of the familiar building. Not to mention that Westmount in this location has built up a reputation that this school has a very accepting and easy to work in environment, more so than any other school in the city.

In addition S2G is also a very creative program only at Westmount, where there are very supportive staff members, who are always trying to help us students who need it. Without it, I would not be on track to get my diploma within the timeframe of only one extra semester. Personally I prefer the layout of the program, as opposed to other schools. The way that I can see all of the work that needs to be completed for the credit helps me a lot with planning and completing it.

As well Westmount gets tons of students coming each year from all over the city specifically for this program and its location. Changing the location of the school would lead to a drastic decrease in the number of students who attend. Westmount's location is also very good for students who take public transit, as it is right on a bus route. To add to that Westmount has just had multiple renovations to improve the school, and have just added a new recreation centre that is currently being built, that would never see use of the deserving students, who have waited patiently for this new resource.

All of these are important factors to consider when looking into Westmount as a good school where many students are lining up at the door to attend. It is important to realize that without the helpful staff, location where Westmount is right now, and a supportive work environment. Westmount could not be duplicated anywhere else.

Sincerely, Ryan Boyd