

Executive Report to Policy and Priorities Committee Reimagining Alternative Education in UGDSB

To: Policy and Priorities Committee
From: Peter Sovran, Director of Education
Prepared by: Carlo Zen, Superintendent of Education
Date: April 4, 2023
Report Type: ACTION

Recommendation

THAT the Reimagining Alternative Education in UGDSB report be approved for action;

Rationale

The Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) seeks to “be recognized as leaders in creating unparalleled, agile, and inclusive learning experiences for all” (UGDSB Multi-Year Plan Vision Statement). Re-imagining alternative education in the UGDSB is a key component in realizing this goal.

Background

In order to achieve this goal, UGDSB is committed to ensuring that all students have access to courses and programs through a focus on combining literacy/numeracy skills, the highly skilled trades, and intentional purposeful pathway planning.

A key component of a new vision forward would be to ensure that opportunities exist for all students in all areas of the district through the creation of UGDSB Alternative Education Centers in three (3) key geographical areas: Dufferin County, Wellington County and the City of Guelph. This direction is a commitment to equitable outcomes for all students and breaking down barriers to post-secondary education.

A key component of the Alternative Education Centers will be the inclusion of expanded options for students as a result of learning opportunities that can include in-person, online or blended classrooms. This will allow greater access and equity of access and outcomes related to programming for all students Kindergarten-Adult across the UGDSB catchment area, which is another key component of the UGDSB’s Multi-Year Plan.

This document is available in alternative formats upon request.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Connections to the Multi Year Plan

The Alternative Education Centers model relates specifically to the MYP and its pillars and enablers. These Centers will:

- a) serve as a starting point for the secondary review scheduled to take place in 2022-2023 by providing a clear definition of alternative learning for the UGDSB.
- b) signal a strong commitment to destreaming and the equity principles driving this work at all UGDSB sites. The model also allows for the creation of opportunity and diverse programming for all students.
- c) allow for the integration of services and programs, with community support, that can be offered at multiple sites throughout the district.
- d) provide greater access and equity of access to programming for all students K-12+ across the UGDSB catchment area through the use of unique programming and delivery models.
- e) creates an opportunity for innovative and new programming to be piloted and supported in central locations across the district.
- f) allow access to tech programs and shops, as well as ongoing skills development, and can be offered to students up to Grade 12 and beyond.
- g) focus on providing students in Grade 11 and 12+ access to unique programming opportunities in conjunction with their home schools and building bridges to adult education opportunities.

2. Destreaming Context

This vision and programming comes from an equity perspective and is founded in the principles of destreaming within Ontario's education system.

Ontario's plan to destream Grade 9 is informed by research from around the world, which shows that streaming in early secondary school has significant negative and long-term impacts on students who are placed in "lower" streams, while having little to no benefit for "higher-achieving" students (OECD, 2012). The Organization for Economic

and Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommends that school systems eliminate streaming for students who are younger than 15 years of age to ensure that options are kept open for students until they have enough experience to make decisions about their futures. All UGDSB schools implemented de-streaming at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.

The original intention behind Applied/Locally Developed courses was to provide a different pedagogical approach to learning. However, over time, the Applied/Locally Developed course type has become perceived as less academically rigorous. Data shows that the students most likely to be streamed into this course type are students who are Indigenous, Black, from low-income households, and/or have disabilities or other special education needs. Students in the Applied/Locally Developed course type stream are limited in the courses they can take in later grades, which in turn limits their access to post-secondary pathways.

Destreaming allows for proactive mentoring and peer role modeling. Streaming students has been found to compound student inequality. Marginalized students are disproportionately not given access to the power of peer mentoring and role modeling from a complete school community. Destreamed/unstreamed students have greater opportunities to participate in school community involvement when connected with a community that represents all school partners. When all students work together they build similar conflict resolution approaches and learning skills and develop shared problem-solving strategies together.

3. College Heights Secondary School

For decades, College Heights Secondary School (CHSS) has offered unique, innovative and creative opportunities for all students with a commitment to equitable and inclusive learning and pathways. Given the bold new vision for alternative education in UGDSB, there are opportunities for CHSS to play a lead role in the alternative education model moving forward.

Current Context

Grade 9 programming in all UGDSB secondary schools is now destreamed with the exception of Locally Developed courses. Attending CHSS would be similar or identical with respect to students' choices in attending their home school. The intent of destreaming is to give all students the opportunity to begin their high school journey in

their home school, with a common set of compulsory courses, and with their peers. Grade 10 destreaming is very likely to follow.

In addition, over the last 10 years, most UGDSB secondary schools began, and continue to offer, Locally Developed programming (the exception is Centennial CVI, due to its proximity to CHSS). This has contributed to a steady decrease in enrolment at CHSS during this time. As a result, more and more students have chosen to attend their home schools. The introduction of destreaming is expected to continue to have a downward trend on enrolment at CHSS.

The opening of the new south end Guelph school, expected within the next two (2) years, will bring the total number of high schools in the city to five (5). This will impact enrolment at all schools in the city, potentially putting further downward pressure on enrolment at CHSS.

4. Key Components

Building on the success of programming in grades 11 and 12 at CHSS, we envision a 3-campus model with alternative education centers located in Dufferin County, Wellington County and the City of Guelph. Each center would provide access to an alternative high school that would serve students in Grades 11, 12 and 12+.

Access to the alternative education high school and learning centers would be done through an intake process and collaboration with schools, board staff, and community partners.

The Learning Centers will provide access to programs such as:

- E-learning
- Continuing Education
- Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL)
- Experiential Programs (K- 12) (open access to all students - CELP, LEAF, MADE, Beyond Borders etc.)
- Continuous Intake Co-op
- Dual Credit and Dual Credit Re-engagement Programming
- Personal Support Worker Program
- Adult English as a Second Language Programming
- Summer School Programming
- Year-Round School Options
- STEAM/STEM Rotations for Intermediate/Junior Students

- Bundled Credits in Specialty Courses (e.g., Robotics, Graphic Design, Auto)
- Partnership programs between Community Groups and Trade/ Unions/ Employers

The Learning Center model will allow for the following registers to be combined: Day School, Night School, E-learning, Adult Education, Summer School, Year Round Schooling, as well as Literacy/Numeracy upgrading. This will allow students to easily access multiple types of programming to suit their needs.

The Alternative High School will be a significant part of the UGDSB Alternative Education Plan. It will offer specialized programming for students in Grades 11, 12 and 12+, offering a combination of in-person, on-line (e-learning) and blended programs for students across the district. It would also incorporate the existing Continuing Education programs and administrative offices, as well the International Student Program (ISP).

5. Next Steps

Given the current context, input will be sought from the CHSS community, including students, staff and parents with respect to the potential role that CHSS can play in the vision of alternative education and programming within UGDSB. This will take the form of focus group discussions with students, and surveys of the parent and broader community.

Early April - consultation with students and staff

Late April - consultation with parent community

Early May - community consultation

There will be no change in the operation of CHSS for the 2023-2024 school year. A detailed report will be finalized over the summer and will be shared among all stakeholders in the early part of the upcoming school year.

There will be no change in the operation of CHSS for the 2023-2024 school year and it will continue to offer its traditional options of courses for students. In addition, with respect to any potential future changes, students enrolled at CHSS in 2023-24 will have the opportunity to graduate from CHSS.