Toronto
District
School
Board

Update: Secondary Program Review

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: 16 October, 2019

Report No.: 10-19-3757

Strategic Directions

- Transform Student Learning
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

Recommendation

It is recommended that the update about the Secondary Program Review be received.

Context

In June 2019, the Secondary Program Review report was presented to the Committee of the Whole outlining the rationale for a comprehensive review of secondary school programming and related policies, procedures and practices.

The Board of Trustees approved the action plan for the Secondary Program Review, which triggered a series of next steps. These included:

- Posting/competition process and subsequent hiring of a Centrally Assigned Principal to lead the review
- Refinement of the vision for secondary programs and access (see below)
- System scan of existing secondary schools and programs, course offerings at each site, as well as facility utilization rates and enrolment
- Review of past plans for Secondary Program Review
- Identification of related policies and procedures which will require review

Vision for Secondary Program and Access

The rationale for a new vision of secondary programming was provided in the Secondary Program Review report in June 2019. Facility challenges, demographic and socio-economic changes, along with recent policy and funding decisions require a new vision for secondary schools in the TDSB.

The vision for the secondary program delivery model includes fewer schools, stronger programming, and increased access to courses that support all pathways, including apprenticeship and the workplace. Further, the vision supports the revitalization of neighbourhood secondary schools with a breadth of programs, many of which, over time, have experienced significant enrolment declines.

In 2016-17, the TDSB's Teaching and Learning Department (now known as Leadership, Learning and School Improvement) engaged in a consultation process for students to share their thoughts and opinions about secondary school programs and opportunities, the knowledge/skills and supports students need for the future, the design of school spaces and the organization of the school schedule. These included group consultation meetings as well as an online survey that was more broadly disseminated and facilitated by Guidance staff in selected grades (Grades 8, 10 and 12). A recurring theme in both the online and face-to-face components was the need for greater program choice. Of specific mention was the need for more curriculum options, more flexible experiences and the integration of specialized programs. The input from the Student Voice consultation process will be an integral component of the Secondary Program Review. A summary of that consultation process is included in Appendix A of this update report.

The vision for the secondary program delivery model is transformative in nature. Current and projected enrolments at the secondary panel do not support the number of facilities currently in operation. As of September 27, 2019 the total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) enrolment across all secondary schools was 72,868. The existing capacity within the secondary school system is currently 92,680 pupil places, resulting in a utilization rate of 78.6%, and close to 20,000 surplus pupil places.

The vision will address both under and over-utilized schools, as changes to any delivery model will have some degree of impact on all schools in a geographic cluster.

In order to achieve this vision, final recommendations may include the following:

- School closure(s)
- Relocation or consolidation of existing program(s)
- Repurposing of secondary school buildings to address other system needs, i.e. using a secondary school facility for a large elementary school
- Different models of school organization, including full-year programming and campus models

Updates to Committee of the Whole

Regular updates will be provided to Trustees at meetings of the Committee of the Whole. Each update will follow a similar format, reporting on activities in the following areas:

1. Access
2. Program
3. Location
4. Facilities

1. Access

Policies and Procedures

As identified in the Secondary Program Review report in June 2019, modifications and updates to current policies and procedures related to secondary programming are required.

On May 29, 2019, the Policy Review Plan for P013 Optional Attendance was discussed and a work plan was created. Revisions are required to ensure alignment with Governance Procedure PR501, Policy Development and Management. Content changes were also identified. A draft of a revised Optional Attendance policy is underway that will address the proposed content changes as identified in the work plan. The public consultation process is expected to begin at the end of October 2019. This will include four public meetings in November (locations and dates to be confirmed), one on-line interactive session (date to be confirmed) and focus groups with elementary and secondary students (locations and dates to be confirmed).

In the interim, until a revised Optional Attendance policy is created and approved, some changes have been recommended to existing Operational Procedures PR545 (Optional Attendance) and PR612 (Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs). These include statements that provide greater clarity on the timelines for offers of admission and acceptance dates, as well as the management of waiting lists. In addition, clarity has been provided in PR545 and Forms 545A (elementary) and 545B (secondary) on returning to a student's home school when they wish to leave a Regular program, Specialized Program/School, or Alternative School.

Following the consultation process for P013 Optional Attendance, further changes to PR545 and PR612 may be required.

Technical and Commercial Boundaries

With the closure of Bendale Business and Technical Institute in June 2019, legacy technical boundaries established by the former Scarborough Board of Education have been eliminated. However, technical and commercial boundaries continue to exist in other areas of the city, most prominently at schools within the former Toronto Board of Education. These remaining boundaries will be addressed through a study identified within the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy (LTPAS). The study is currently timed for 2020-21 but given the urgency associated with the Secondary

Program Review this work may be undertaken this school year. The purpose of the review would be to eliminate these legacy boundaries.

There are currently four secondary schools that do not have local secondary attendance areas, and manage their admissions through the legacy regional technical and commercial boundaries: Western Technical-Commercial School, Central Technical School, Danforth Technical and Collegiate Institute and Central Toronto Academy (formerly Central Commerce Collegiate Institute). These legacy boundaries impact other secondary schools that also have local secondary attendance areas like Northern Secondary School and George Harvey Collegiate Institute.

Discussions are currently underway to determine how to proceed with a review of this nature given the considerable size of the catchments involved that in some cases span the entire former municipality of Toronto. At the same time, eliminating technical boundaries may result in reduced access to technical programming for students residing in the former municipality of Toronto. In an effort to increase city-wide access, not only in the former municipality of Toronto, consultation will begin with secondary school Principals regarding a proposed program entitled "Facilitating Access to Skilled Trades", or FAST (see Program section below).

Access to Specialized Schools and Programs

As indicated in the Secondary Program Review report of June 2019, there are significant concerns about equitable access to Specialized Schools and Programs in the TDSB.

Minor revisions to Operational Procedure PR612, Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs, as described above, will clarify certain practices and align timelines for the current year. Following the approval of a new Optional Attendance policy, more significant changes to PR612 could be made.

In the interim, a meeting with Principals and Superintendents of secondary schools with Specialized Programs will be held later in October to clarify expectations and consistency in the application of PR612; review admissions practices for the 2020-21 school year; solicit feedback on changes to P013, PR545 and PR612; and confirm the accuracy and relevance of the current list of Specialized Schools and Programs identified on the TDSB website.

Following this meeting, consistent messaging will be shared with Elementary Itinerant Counsellors and Principals of Grade 8 students so that the same timelines and admissions practices to Specialized Schools and Programs are adhered to for the 2020-21 school year.

2. Program

Identification of Specialized Program Type in Trillium Database

In the system scan that was conducted of all secondary schools, it became evident that steps need to be taken to better identify the number of students enrolled in Specialized Programs. The Planning department is currently able to track enrolment figures for students in French Immersion, Extended French, and Special Education Intensive Support Programs (ISPs). However, students enrolled in secondary Specialized Programs are included in the count of Regular program students at each school. To obtain numbers of students in these Specialized Programs, individual schools are relied upon to provide the information.

The TDSB's School Information Systems (SIS) database, Trillium, is equipped to identify the program type. Discussions are now underway with Planning and SIS staff to identify the categories of Specialized Programs (e.g., Arts, Elite Athletes, etc.) that will be added to the validation table of the software. This will enable schools to properly manage and identify which students are registered in Specialized Programs and will provide Planning staff with up-to-date program information.

Facilitating Access to Skilled Trades

There are currently 111 secondary schools, including secondary Alternative schools, congregated Special Education schools, and Caring and Safe schools in the TDSB. A total of 87 schools offer at least one course in technological education. In some schools, technological courses cannot be offered because of the absence of suitable facilities within the physical plant. In schools where technological programming is offered, options vary based on the nature of the facilities available as well as the course choices students make.

As noted in this update report, a study identified within the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy will examine the legacy boundaries for commercial and technical programming. The potential elimination of these boundaries, subject to Board approval, may result in reduced access to the technical programming that is currently being accessed by students through legacy attendance areas.

The TDSB currently offers the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program in 48 secondary schools. These are Ministry-approved programs that allow students to focus their learning on a specific economic sector while meeting the requirements to graduate from secondary school. These SHSM programs support transitions after graduation into apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace. There are currently 107 SHSM programs in 17 different sectors. Of these programs, 68 are in a technology-related sector (e.g., manufacturing, construction, transportation, etc.). Although the TDSB is expanding its SHSM footprint by increasing the number of SHSM programs

each year, access to these programs is only made available to students attending the school where the program is offered.

Currently, students have the right to attend their local home school or apply to a different secondary school through the Optional Attendance process, provided there is space available. If technical programming is not available in the home school, students who wish to pursue these courses have no opportunity to do so unless they are accepted by another school under the Optional Attendance process, which in many cases, is limited. Similarly, students who wish to pursue a broad-based technology course that is not offered in their home school due to the limitations of the physical plant can only do so if accepted through Optional Attendance at a different secondary school.

Consultations will begin with secondary Principals next month to develop an admissions process to secondary schools that better enables students to access technical programming at schools that offer SHSM programs. This is referred to as the FAST or Facilitating Access to Skilled Trades process. Where specific broad-based technology programming exists in the local home school, students will remain at their local home school and not participate in FAST.

If a student would like to pursue broad-based technology programming that is not available in his/her home school, the student would be able to apply to a school that offers the desired programming through a SHSM. Although formal SHSM programming begins in Grade 11, students would be required to pursue the appropriate Grades 9 and 10 prerequisite courses for the desired technical courses that begin in Grade 11.

3. Location

As part of the system scan of secondary schools and programs that began this fall, attention is being paid to location of current program offerings, specialized programs, technical education programs, SHSM programs, French as a Second Language programs, Special Education Intensive Support programs, Adult Day Schools, and Alternative Schools and programs. As well, the scan will include the identification of schools that accommodate International Students.

The Secondary Program Review final report will include recommendations for programming that take into consideration geographical location within the city, distribution as well as proximity to higher-order public transit lines (e.g., new Metrolinx Crosstown Line along Eglinton Avenue). To strengthen neighbourhood schools, it may also be recommended that potential consolidation of schools and/or programs be explored within a specified geographical area to achieve a critical mass of students within each school building.

4. Facilities

Another important component of the final report will include an analysis of the current facilities and buildings, and recommendations will be made for any capital repairs, retrofit or renewal required to support program viability and strong programming.

In the Student Voice consultations mentioned earlier in this update, the most frequent survey comments by students in Grades 8 and Grade 10 focused on environmental improvements to the school's physical design or learning spaces (e.g., updated facilities, furniture, or amenities like ventilation, library, cafeteria; different or adaptable layouts; quiet study, student lounge or safe spaces).

The consolidation of schools and/or programs will also facilitate pooling of resources and equipment which will enhance existing facilities, thereby providing more options to students.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Over the course of the next few months, staff will be reviewing enrolment projections, facility conditions, specialized programs, optional attendance, and will be holding ad hoc meetings and consultation meetings with stakeholders to better inform the recommendations of the final report. Regular Secondary Program Review reports will be presented at Committee of the Whole meetings throughout the year.

More specifically by June 2020, the Board of Trustees will have received pertinent information on Access, Program, Location and Facilities as they support our Secondary Vision and will be in a position to approve a long term implementation plan of 8-12 years.

Resource Implications

Not applicable.

Communications Considerations

A communication plan will be developed as required.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

Policy P013 - Optional Attendance

Operational Procedure PR545 - Optional Attendance

Operational Procedure PR612 - Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs

Appendices

Appendix A: Access and Secondary School Program Review: Student Consultation
Highlights 2016-17 - Student Voice

From

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tdsb
Toronto District School Board

ACCESS AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PROGRAM REVIEW: STUDENT CONSULTATION HIGHLIGHTS 2016-17

STUDENT VOICE

TITLE: Access and Secondary School Program Review: Student Consultation Highlights 2016-17 Student Voice
AUTHOR: Sally Erling, Stefanie De Jesus, and Samuel Zheng

Cite as:
Erling, S., De Jesus, S., & Zheng, S. (2017). *Access and secondary school program review: Student consultation highlights 2016-17 student voice*. (Research Report No. 17/18-8). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

R02(Integrated Equity Framework\2016-17\Access & Secondary Program Review\Data\Qualitative Data\Results\Final\ Access and Secondary School Program Review 2016-17 Student Voice)sesdjsz.1485

Access and Secondary School Program Review:
Student Consultation Highlights 2016 17
STUDENT VOICE

In 2016-17, a number of consultation opportunities were offered by the Toronto District School Board's Teaching and Learning Department for students to share their thoughts and opinions about secondary school programs and opportunities, the knowledge/ skills and supports students need for the future, the design of school spaces, and the organization of the school schedule. These included some group consultation meetings as well as an online survey that was more broadly disseminated and facilitated by Guidance staff in selected grades (Grade 8, 10 & 12).

Four Student Voice Consultation sessions were held (one in each Learning Centre) for student training purposes, after which those students who were trained would be able to host/ conduct Speak-Up forums about these issues in their own schools. Some qualitative comments were captured from these sessions based on the same or similar four questions asked in the online survey.

- What knowledge, skills, and abilities do secondary school students need to acquire for their future in post-secondary education and/or school-to-career opportunities?

- What is the role of schools, teachers, parents, and community in ensuring that all students have access to exemplary programs?

- How would you design secondary school programs and learning spaces? What barriers would you remove?

- Schools are currently organized around "cells and bells". What changes could be made to the school calendar, the clock, and the timetable to make learning more flexible and engaging for students?

In the sections which follow, the tables and graphs summarize the survey results by highlighting the most frequent responses to each of the four student survey questions disaggregated by Grade. The survey questions were all open-ended, with no pre-determined response options suggested. After coding all the responses, the main themes or categories are included here whenever comments were made by at least 10% of any of the three grade level groups.

The order in which they are listed in the tables and graphs is based on the Grade 10 rank order. For text analysis and coding purposes, all valid Grade 10 survey responses were included. The Grade 8 and Grade 12 submissions however were much greater; therefore a 10% random sample of the total number of those surveys only was selected for direct coding in order to generate comparable numbers across grades. The rationale for sampling was that open-ended comments in such large numbers tend to reach a saturation point where further text analysis would not yield any additional thematic codes or result in major differences in the overall percentages. Manual text analysis is also very time-intensive, and from a human resource and cost perspective, further coding was not warranted in order to identify the main themes.

The coding task was shared among three Research staff and so a preliminary set of thematic categories was developed based on an initial scan of responses, along with several examples of the types of comments found within those categories. To ensure consistency and reliability, the group met in advance to discuss and clarify the coding options and processes and came to a common understanding

of the definitions. While it is not possible to totally eliminate the subjective nature of the task for precise counts, we are confident that the major themes and proportions are valid representations of student opinion.
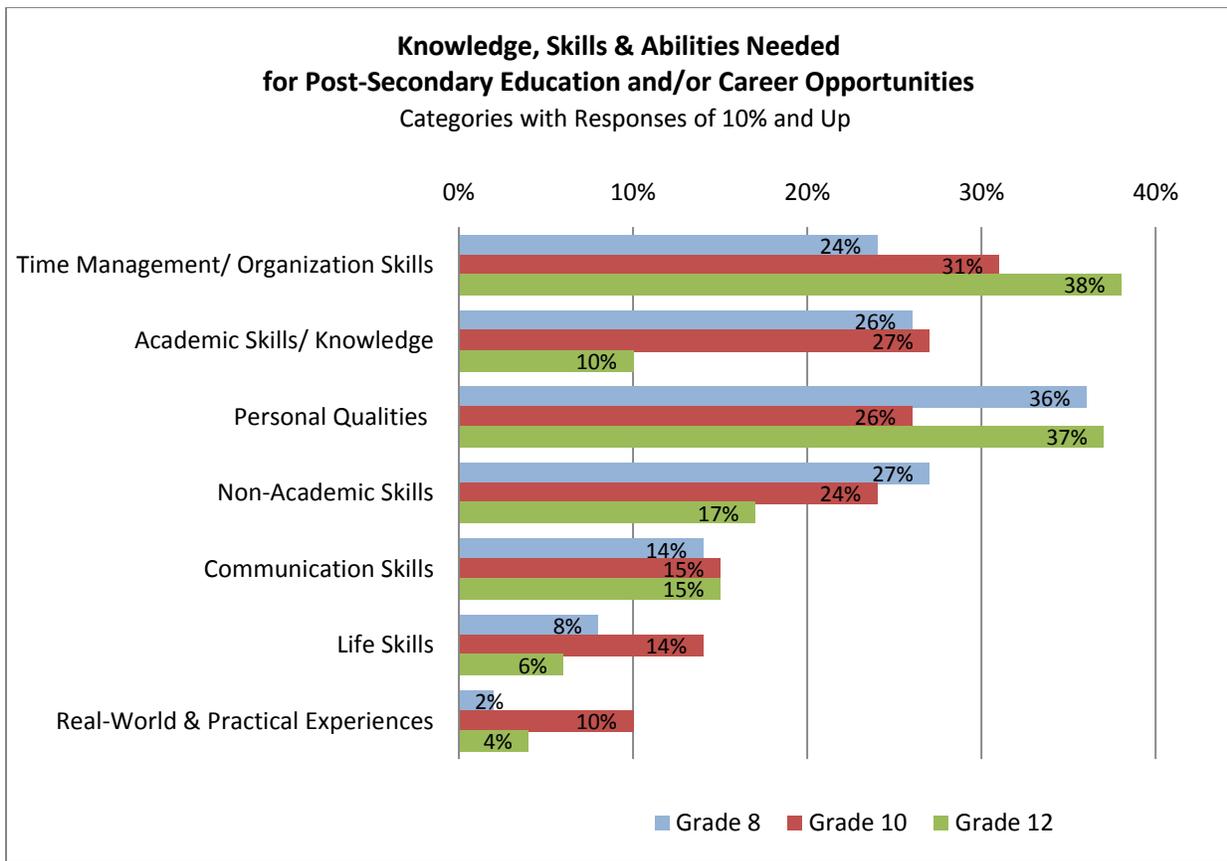
In the following tables, the top ranked comment for each question and by grade is in bold font. Some variation across grades is also to be expected, as students at different ages are at different points in their educational pathways and would have different expectations and priorities at each stage. Those variations will be discussed in more detail below.

Each section concludes with a brief reference to the top categories or themes emerging from the other in-person Student Voice consultation sessions, and any feedback that was provided by individual schools that hosted their own follow up Speak-Up forums with student groups later.

QUESTION 1

What knowledge, skills, and abilities do secondary school students need to acquire for their future in post-secondary education and/or school-to-career opportunities?

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities Needed for the Future	Grade 8 (N=244)	Grade 10 (N=327)	Grade 12 (N=383)
Time Management/ Organization Skills	24%	**31%**	**38%**
Academic Skills/ Knowledge	26%	27%	10%
Personal Qualities	**36%**	26%	**37%**
Non-Academic Skills	27%	24%	17%
Communication Skills	14%	15%	15%
Life Skills	8%	14%	6%
Real-World & Practical Experiences	2%	10%	4%

**Knowledge, Skills & Abilities Needed
for Post-Secondary Education and/or Career Opportunities**
Categories with Responses of 10% and Up

Category	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 12
Time Management/ Organization Skills	24%	31%	38%
Academic Skills/ Knowledge	26%	27%	10%
Personal Qualities	36%	26%	37%
Non-Academic Skills	27%	24%	17%
Communication Skills	14%	15%	15%
Life Skills	8%	14%	6%
Real-World & Practical Experiences	2%	10%	4%

■ Grade 8   ■ Grade 10   ■ Grade 12

According to the most frequently mentioned themes, students in Grade 8 were most likely to say that Personal Qualities such as responsibility, independence, focus, and a good work ethic were important traits that would be required for future education and/or career opportunities.
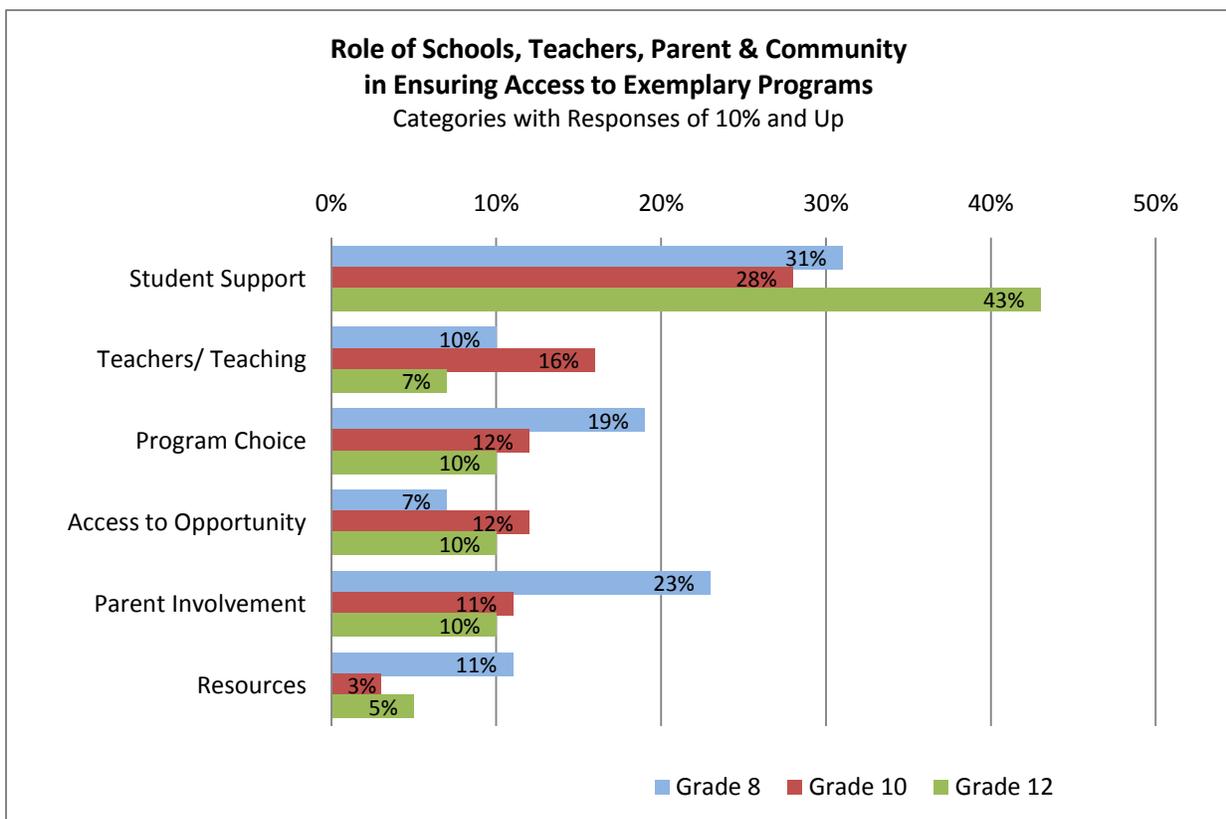
While positive personal qualities were also deemed important by older students, those in Grade 10 and 12 were more likely to think about the Time Management and Organizational skills they'll need to develop in order to balance workload expectations in the future. Both Academic skills (e.g., literacy, math, science, research skills) and Non-Academic skills (e.g., leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, cooperation, developing good study habits) were also considered important for future success by students in all three grades.

For this question about the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students think they'll need for post-secondary education or career opportunities, the broader Student Voice consultations yielded a slightly different response than the surveys. In these group sessions, the need for students to gain important Life Skills was the area most frequently mentioned. Often this referred to financial literacy and money management skills (e.g., personal finances, taxes, budgeting, mortgages, investing, etc.); but also included home economic, lifestyle, or health and wellness topics; as well as people, relationship, and social skills.

QUESTION 2

What is the role of schools, teachers, parents, and community in ensuring that all students have access to exemplary programs?

Role of Schools, Teachers, Parents, and Community	Grade 8 (N=216)	Grade 10 (N=301)	Grade 12 (N=377)
Student Support	**31%**	**28%**	**43%**
Teachers/ Teaching	10%	16%	7%
Program Choice	19%	12%	10%
Access to Opportunity	7%	12%	10%
Parent Involvement	23%	11%	10%
Resources	11%	3%	5%

Role of Schools, Teachers, Parent & Community in Ensuring Access to Exemplary Programs
Categories with Responses of 10% and Up

Students from all three grades identified Student Support as being the primary role of schools, teachers, parents, and the community in ensuring access to exemplary programs. Some specific comments in this category included supporting and helping students, giving them guidance and direction, encouraging and motivating them, and understanding their needs. Younger students in particular also felt that Parent Involvement (e.g., being informed, involved, encouraging) was quite important.
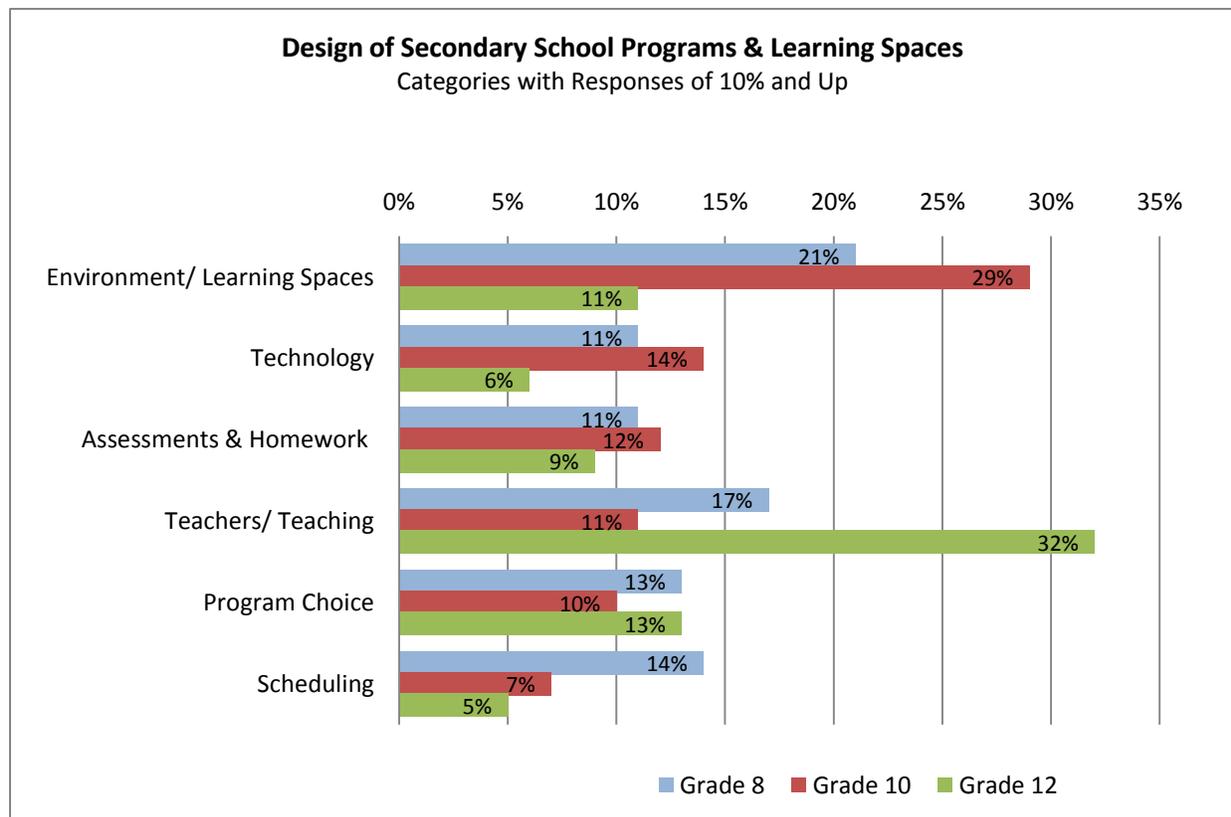
Other common themes across grades included the role of Teachers or Teaching (e.g., the quality of teaching, instructional practices, student-teacher relationships); Program Choice (e.g., having information about the availability and choice of a variety of programs, guidance about options and pathways that suit students' needs); and Access to Opportunity (e.g., ensuring access to quality programs and opportunities, for all students, in all schools)

From the group consultations, students in the training sessions also identified Student Support as the main theme (e.g., guidance, access to resources and tools for success, encouragement). Comments submitted from the in-school consultations related more to issues about Program Choice and having a variety of programs and options to cater to all groups and interests. Students in these sessions asked for up-to-date information in order to explore all available options, and also their teachers' help with course selection. They mentioned that parents need to be informed of those opportunities and options as well.

QUESTION 3

How would you design secondary school programs and learning spaces? What barriers would you remove?

Design of Programs & Space	Grade 8 (N=201)	Grade 10 (N=312)	Grade 12 (N=324)
Environment/ Learning Spaces	**21%**	**29%**	11%
Technology	11%	14%	6%
Assessments & Homework	11%	12%	9%
Teachers/ Teaching	17%	11%	**32%**
Program Choice	13%	10%	13%
Scheduling	14%	7%	5%

Design of Secondary School Programs & Learning Spaces
Categories with Responses of 10% and Up

The most frequent survey comments by students in Grade 8 and Grade 10 focussed on Environmental improvements to the school's physical design or learning spaces (e.g., updated facilities, furniture, or amenities like ventilation, the library, cafeteria; different or adaptable layouts; quiet study, student lounge or safe spaces).

In comparison, older students were more likely to make suggestions about the role of Teachers or Teaching practices, with specific references to teachers being more helpful, qualified, understanding, engaging, or consistent; more interactive teaching styles; smaller classes; access to tutoring; and pacing of curriculum and workload, among other comments.
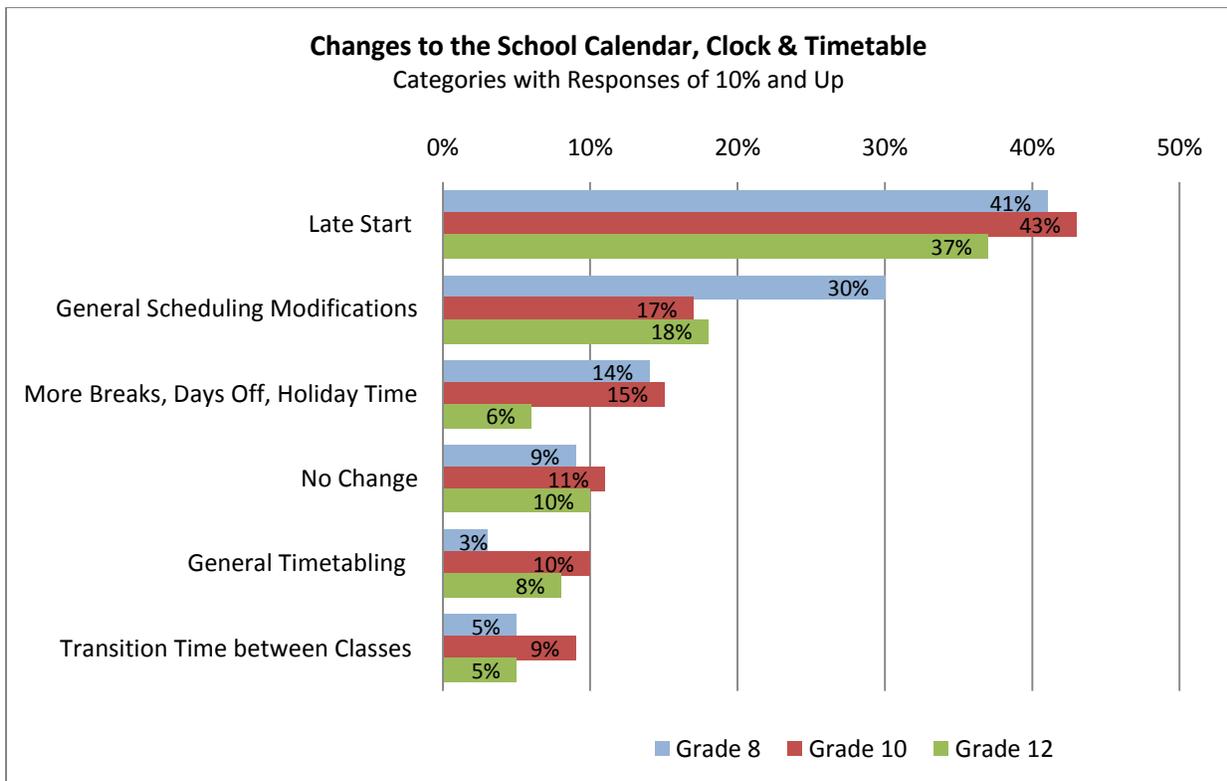
In the Student Voice consultation sessions, discussions about secondary school design revolved around physical changes to the school Environment/ Learning Spaces, similar to the descriptions above. But there were also several comments related to Program Choice with specific mention of the need for more curriculum options, more flexible experiences, integration of specialized programs, project based learning, outdoor education experiences, and reconsideration of mandatory and elective courses.

Student opinions noted from the in-school consultations were mostly suggestions for the school's Environment/ Learning Spaces such as physical changes or adaptable learning spaces and layouts for group or individual learning, relaxation spaces or student lounge areas, better furniture, lighting or ventilation, or other facility suggestions like cleaner washrooms, better cafeteria and food options, or swimming pool. Improved technology was also mentioned as a potential area for improvement by some.

QUESTION 4

Schools are currently organized around "cells and bells". What changes could be made to the school calendar, the clock, and the timetable to make learning more flexible and engaging for students?

Potential Changes to the School	Grade 8 (N=204)	Grade 10 (N=280)	Grade 12 (N=296)
Late Start	**41%**	**43%**	**37%**
General Scheduling Modifications	30%	17%	18%
More Breaks, Days Off, Holiday Time	14%	15%	6%
No Change	9%	11%	10%
General Timetabling	3%	10%	8%
Transition Time between Classes	5%	9%	5%

Changes to the School Calendar, Clock & Timetable
Categories with Responses of 10% and Up

The consideration of a Late Start to the school day was by far the most common single suggestion by students in all three grades, with close to 4 out of 10 respondents suggesting this as a potential change to the school day and timetable.

Other General Scheduling Modifications were also suggested and included several variations of modifying class time, the school day or the school calendar, like building in homework periods or shortening the summer break. Many students were also in favour of building in more mid-day Breaks or recesses; more breaks, holidays, or days off during the year; and/or longer transition times for moving between classes.

Common feedback from both the Student Voice consultation sessions and the in-school consultations focussed less on the "late start" issue specifically, and more on suggestions for either general scheduling modifications (e.g., suggestions to change length of classes, school day, or school year; 4-day week; designated spares/ homework periods; better spacing of difficult academic subjects) or about having more breaks (e.g., longer breaks/ transition times between periods, or more breaks throughout the school year, longer holidays, more spare periods, PA (Professional Activity) days etc.).

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