

## Kent/Alpha II Staff Model Proposal: *Moving Forward*

- Relocate Kent SPS and Alpha II Alternative School to the retrofitted Brockton HS; along with Bloor CI
- Bloor/Kent/Alpha II schools to continue as three separate schools under one roof.
- The retrofitted Brockton HS will provide the labs, specialty rooms, and communal spaces that will support rich, progressive, and diverse instructional practices.
- This state of the art facility will be shared by the students of all three schools; and will be well-suited to meet the developmental needs of adolescents.

### **Rationale**

- It has been recognized since the beginning of contemporary public schooling in Ontario that a specialized education for students going through puberty is in their best interest. As a primary concern of this ARC is what is best for students; making a decision that provides Kent and Alpha students with access to facilities and staffing that support specialized instruction will fulfill this mandate.
- If transferred to Brockton, Kent SPS will be able to retain specialist teachers and continue to offer programming specifically geared to the intellectual and developmental needs of adolescents.
- Kent will be able to provide learners in grades 7 and 8 with an even wider range of opportunities (state of the art science and tech labs, family studies room, design studio, theatre space, fully-staffed and well-stocked library, experiential learning opportunities, career education) than are currently being provided.
- Access to such a diverse array of resources and expanded learning opportunities will better prepare Kent students for the intellectual and organizational challenges of the secondary school program.
- This model will demonstrate the board's commitment to implementing a seamless continuum of Student Success programs and to providing a diverse array of strategies and resources for grades 7-12 students, as directed by the Ministry of Education.
- Kent's current EMSAT Program (Enriched Math, Science and Technology Program) will be better positioned to accelerate preparation of interested grade 7 & 8 students for acceptance into the TOPS on Bloor program.
- Strengthening the relationship between the TOPS on Bloor program and Kent, will help to establish EMSAT as a "Middle Magnet" program; attracting a variety of aspirational students from other Boards and programs to the TDSB and the SW6 family.
- Having Kent, Bloor, and Alpha II in the same building will allow the schools to do some cost-sharing around items such as arts and character education presentations in the auditorium; to continue to run common events such as the Terry Fox Run; and to collaboratively pursue community service and humanitarian opportunities such as Me to We Clubs and the recent efforts to raise funds for Haiti relief.
- Some parents have expressed skepticism and concern about housing students from grade 7 to 12 in the same building. Implementing some sensible protocols with respect to the day-to-day operations could alleviate these concerns, and even improve aspects of the interactions between students (from where they stand now):
  - There could be staggered start, lunch and end times for the school day which would result in less unsupervised contact between the Kent/Alpha II students than is currently the case.
  - With all staff and students in the same building, there is more collective knowledge amongst staff about students who present safety concerns.

- The schools can be housed in separate areas of the building for most of the day. By staggering the timetable, Kent students may use the shared facilities (auditorium, gyms, art rooms etc), either when Bloor classes are not in session, or when Kent staff is available to escort a rotating class.
  - An earlier study of a possible Kent/Bloor shared facility (2003) suggested that a retrofitted Brockton site could easily have separate entrances/exits for the schools.
- Alpha II is a 7-12 Alternative School. As an Alternative School it draws its students from throughout the city and needs to be as close to the subway line as possible.
  - Alpha II is a student-directed school where students spend much of their time becoming familiar with the diversity of learning opportunities in Toronto. The Bloor-Dufferin area is a highly diverse area of Toronto, with respect to a range of learning opportunities.
  - As a small Senior and Secondary school, Alpha II secondary students need to have the opportunity to associate with other secondary students and have equitable access to facilities appropriate for secondary students.
  - Alpha II has shared its administration with Kent since it opened the Senior program in 2007, and the administrative relationship between Kent and Alpha II is developing into a strong and effective alliance for recruiting students. Transferring Kent with Alpha II will allow this bond to continue and help to expand both the Senior and the Secondary programs.
  - A good portion of the ALPHA II students have strong interests in science and technology. The EMSAT, TOPS on Bloor route will serve as a further draw for Alpha II students.

## **Alignment of Proposal with Accommodation Review Criteria**

### **1. Minimal Grade Transitions**

Although students will make a move to Kent School from Grade 6; by the end of their two years in the larger building, with a modified Rotary program; they will be well-prepared for the transition from the elementary to the secondary panel. Presently, over half of current Kent students elect to attend Bloor as their secondary school. Those who do not select Bloor are looking for a very specialized art or tech program, or are in the ISP classes and are offered a placement in a Special Education class in a secondary school (not presently available at Bloor CI).

### **2. School Size**

None of the K-6 schools have the physical space to meet the minimum size (450 students) desirable for elementary schools, as outlined in the criteria. None can accommodate the entire cadre of Kent's additional 220 students; thus each school would be obliged to retain only enough students for one or two classes in their senior division. If intermediate students in the area remain in their feeder schools; their access to specialist instructors, and to engaging and challenging programs; will be severely diminished.

### **3. Utilization**

The retrofitted Brockton HS building will consistently be at capacity, and will draw new students into the area for the enhanced learning environment and enriched opportunities on offer.