



Student Success



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Schools
150 years of 'Believing, Achieving, Serving'

Transition to High School

Inside this issue:

<i>Taking Gender Differences into Account</i>	2
<i>Improve Teens Test Taking Skills</i>	2
<i>Checklist for Parents</i>	2
<i>Mathematics Today</i>	3
<i>How can I support my child's mathematics learning?</i>	3
<i>Living and Working in Ontario</i>	4
<i>Pathways to Success</i>	4

The beginning of high school is a critical time for students. Research shows that making a successful transition to high school can help students form lasting attachments to school and increase students' likelihood of graduating from high school.

As students struggle to fit in socially, they also face more demanding academic requirements that can be daunting for those with poor prior preparation in core subjects. For too many students, these conditions can lead to feelings of alienation and self-doubt, and ultimately to disengagement from school (Zane, 1994; Epstein & Mac Iver, 1990). Many students who are not successfully integrated into the school community make the decision to drop out early in their high

school career, often during or immediately following the ninth grade (Bryk, 1994).

The literature on school transitions also offers insight into the myriad difficulties facing ninth graders. Research shows that times of school transition can be problematic for students as they face a new, more anonymous environment and greater social and academic demands (Roderick, 1993). For ninth graders, the pressure of making a school transition is amplified by the developmental struggles they are facing as adolescents, leading to a greater chance for negative outcomes. In her review, Legters (2000) reports that many ninth graders have a difficult time adjusting to the demands of high school, resulting in lower grades, more discipli-



"Academic failure during the transition to high school is directly linked to the probability of dropping out."

nary problems, higher failure rates, and feelings that they don't "fit in" to the high school community.

Excerpt from: *Easing the Transition to High School: An Investigation of Reform Practices to Promote Ninth Grade Success* by: Nettie Legters and Kerri Kerr, Center for Social Organization of Schools Johns Hopkins University

Students' Futures:

- 33% of students go to University
- 19% of students go to College
- 19% will graduate and go to work
- 21% dropped out
- 9% more may not graduate after 5 years

Source: Dr. Allan King Double Cohort Study, Phase IV, 2005

Effects of Parent Involvement

The research overwhelmingly demonstrates that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement.

Looking more closely at the research, there are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent

involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them

using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results.

This holds true for all types of parent involvement in children's learning and for all types and ages of students.



Taking gender differences into account



The Ontario government recognizes that strong literacy skills are the foundation for success in school and life. The government's goal is that 75 per cent of 12-year-olds reach the provincial standard on province wide testing by 2008.

All educators share the common goal of providing equitable learning opportunities for every student in the classroom. Providing equitable opportunities for girls is a familiar topic; providing them for boys is a relatively recent issue, but one that is appearing with increasing urgency on education agendas around the world.

With respect to achievement:

- Boys take longer to learn to read than girls do.
- Boys read less than girls.
- Girls tend to comprehend narrative texts and most expository texts significantly better than boys do.
- Boys tend to be better at information retrieval and work-related literacy tasks than girls are.
- Boys have much less interest in leisure reading than girls do, and are far more likely to read for utilitarian purposes than girls are.
- Significantly more boys than girls declare themselves to be non-readers.
- Boys . . . express less enthusiasm for reading than girls do. (Smith and Wilhelm, 2002, p. 10)

With respect to attitude:

- Boys generally provide lower estimations of their reading abilities than girls do.
- Boys value reading as an activity less than girls do.



Improve Teens' Test Taking Skills

Don't wait to get involved. Set up a conference with the teacher. Attend it with your child.

High school students take a lot of tests. In fact, the number of "high stakes" tests is increasing. Teens need to do well on these important assessments. Here are some ways that parents can help:

Encourage preparation. Listening, note taking, asking questions and completing

homework are critical.

Teach about Organization.

Encourage daily use of an agenda book. Discourage "test or assignment cramming".

Reduce test stress. Get a good nights sleep. Eat a healthy breakfast. Think positive thoughts.

Build confidence. Tell your

teen that you believe they will succeed. Expecting success helps them succeed.

Give test tips. Start with the easiest questions. Getting them right can boost confidence.

Make school a priority. Encourage good attendance. Keep in touch with teachers.



Reading aloud can be dangerous activity for many boys. Car trips can be opportunities for taped books.

Checklist for Parents

- Does your child see you as a reader?
- Are there reading materials lying around the house?
- Can you read the newspaper with your child, so that you can both move into shared reading and discussion about articles?
- Do you support your child's library or bookstore choices?
- Do you play board games with your children that support word play—Scrabble?
- Do you set aside 15 minutes at least once a week so that you and your child can enjoy a bit of shared text?
- Is there a time in your home when reading is valued over other media, when the whole house shuts down for half an hour?
- Do you play computer games with your child? Play based literacies promote other types of reading and writing and allow for the development of social skills within joy-filled activities.



Mathematics Today

What is taught in today's Grade 7-12 mathematics classroom?

Today, mathematics is often learned through problem solving. There are several different paths to success and more than one correct answer, depending on the assumptions made. This type of problem solving demands thinking and creativity rather than memorization and skills learned by rote.

Technology is an essential part of our world and,

therefore, plays a role in classroom. Research shows that when calculators are used appropriately in the classroom, students' arithmetic skills do not decline and students are more likely to experiment more and become better problem solvers.

Assessment of students' skills and knowledge involves more than simply assigning a mark through chapter tests and quizzes. Effective assessment is designed to improve the students' learning and adapt teaching techniques to the students' learning needs.

Teachers place an emphasis on the processes associ-

ated with learning mathematics, such as analyzing, making conclusions and exploring alternative solution strategies, as well as the products associated with learning mathematics – the answers.

Grade 9 students are required to write a provincial mathematics test, the Grade 9 assessment of Mathematics, before the end of the school year. More information on provincial testing can be found on the Education Quality and Accountability Office website, listed in the 'Where can I find more information' section of this guide.

www.equao.com



Students learn math best when they are active participants in the learning process.



How can I support my child's mathematics learning?

Everyone can learn math. Therefore, first and foremost, believe in your child's ability to learn mathematics. Just as everyone can learn to play a game, everyone can learn math and everyone can improve when provided with good teaching, coaching, encouragement and practice.

Do have high expectations for your child. Research shows that when you believe your children can learn, they

will rise to the expectation.

Do talk with your child's teacher about how you can help and support your child's mathematical development.

Do talk about mathematics in a positive way. Your positive attitude and valuing of mathematics are infectious.

Do share your day-to-day math experiences with your child.

Do encourage your child

to use a daily planner to record projects, assignments, and test dates.

Do encourage personal responsibility for learning. Emphasize that effort is as important as ability.

Do talk with your child about the importance of homework.

Do encourage persistence. Some problems take time to solve.

"Just as everyone can learn to play a game, everyone can learn math."



What not to do...

Don't tell your child that some people are just not good at math. Everyone can experience success in math.

Don't tell your child that girls aren't as good as boys at math. It is not true!

Don't think there is only

one correct way to solve a problem.

Don't be critical of an incorrect answer. Wrong answers should be corrected in a positive fashion. The goal is to help build your child's confidence and develop positive attitudes toward math.

Don't discourage your child from experimenting with different approaches to a problem. We learn a lot from our errors when we examine them.

Don't stimulate anxiety about tests and assignment. Encourage your child to do their best.



A successful problem solver questions, investigates and explores new situations.

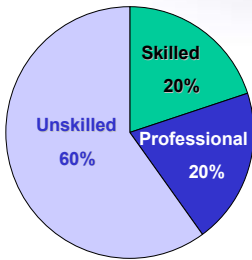
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

90 Mulberry Street
Hamilton, ON
L8N 3R9
Phone: 905-525-2930

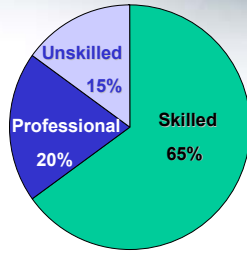


www.hwcdsb.ca

The Changing Workforce



1950

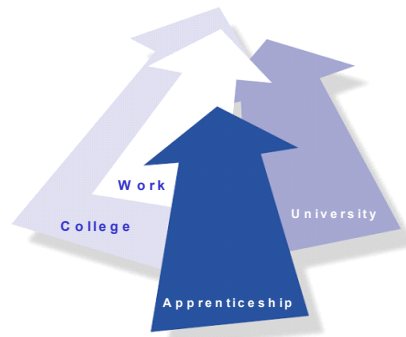


1997

Source: National Summit on 21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs

Human beings are meant to work, and so people have a right to the opportunity for gainful and useful work. This “universal call” to work flows from the fact that human beings are the “image of God”. Like God, humans – and only humans – are able to take responsibility for things. They are able to manage and develop this world, and to help bring into being a humane society. In their work then, humans are managers for God. Since the call to work is “universal”, all should be enabled to contribute their talents for the common good.

From Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Living and Working in Ontario”. February 2001



Ministry of Education website
www.edu.gov.on.ca



Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program

Pathways to Success



“The idea that formal post-secondary education is the most desirable outcome does not reflect the reality of many students’ interests, abilities, and choices.”

Pathways to Success is a multifaceted initiative designed to replace the traditional process for course selection and career education planning. The way schools serve, engage and retain students through the implementation of a comprehensive communication plan and career education continuum will begin 2005-06.

The program objective is to provide resources and supports to assist students and parents with implementing the steps to planning and building appropriate pathways while reinforcing the value of all destinations—apprenticeship, col-

lege, university and work.

A Pathway to Success is designed to lead a student to a particular destination. This does not mean, however, that the student will always end up at that destination. Motivations can change, and students should be free to make new choices as they develop new interests and abilities. The ideal Pathway has built-in flexibility, so that new choices can be made without disrupting the student’s progress. This takes careful and early planning – Grade 8 is the time to start.

The student’s Pathway to Success should reflect the

goals that motivate the student to complete his/her secondary education. Ultimately, the Pathway can be considered successful if the student makes a smooth transition from elementary school to high school, and then to his/her next stage in life, be that the workplace, apprenticeship, college, or university.

For questions, comments or suggestions contact:
mcpheec@fc.hwcdsb.edu.on.ca