

## **Withrow Home and School Council**

**Date: Feb 9, 2017**

**Time: 7:00 PM – 8:15 PM**

### **Grade 7 Pathways Discussion and Information Night**

Once students have completed Grade 6 at Withrow PS, the natural pathway is to continue to either Earl Grey Jr. School (English only, French Immersion, Extended French) or Queen Alexandra Jr. School (English Only, Extended French) for Grades 7 and 8. In addition TDSB offers several alternative schools and programming for Grade 7 and 8.

The meeting tonight featured a panel of six Grade 7 students (Withrow graduates) who shared their Junior High experiences with both parents and current Grade 6 students.

#### **Panel Members**

Addison – East Alternative School

Ethan – Queen Alexandra Jr. School (Extended French Program)

Morgan – Earl Grey Jr. School (Extended French Program)

Parker – Earl Grey Jr. School (French Immersion Program)

Grace – Queen Alexandra (English Program)

Ginger – Quest Alternative School

#### **Addison's Experience at East Alternative School**

- Addison previously attended French Immersion at Withrow.
- East Alternative School is located on the 3rd Floor of Blake Elementary school. Students at East have access to the Blake Gym and ½ of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor
- The program is an enriched program with a social justice and art focus.
- Class sizes at East are bigger than Withrow, with an equal split between girls and boys. At Withrow French Immersion the classes were smaller, with a majority of girls.
- Rotary teachers for each subject.
- All sports teams are co-ed, and everyone makes the team
- There is a significant increase in homework compared to Withrow, including exams, analysis, essays and monologues. However there are after school Homework Clubs run by teachers to help students.
- Given everyone is new to East (as students apply to get in) making friends was easy, and there is a sense of community.
- In September the Grade 7's go on an icebreaker camp – along with several day trips through the year. There is a class trip to Quebec at the end of Grade 8
- Students have the option to leave school for lunch – depending on the permission forms completed by parents.

- Walk to school is possible from Withrow area.
- The school has an anti-bullying policy that is enforced by the teachers. Addison rated the school a 9/10
- Addison picked East due to its focus on arts

#### Parker's experience at Earl Grey French Immersion

- Friendly teachers who rotate through the day for subjects
- Lots of interesting subjects offered as options – Design Tech and Family Studies
- Swim and Gym classes are not co-ed. During gym students get to play a variety of different sports.
- The school offers a wide range of sports teams including cricket and boarding ball.
- School has a great drama program – and has done productions such as Beauty and the Beast
- Students have the opportunity to leave or stay at school for lunch.
- Parker walks to school
- Key to success is staying organized
- Rated the school 8/10 for Diversity and Inclusion. Teachers are very good to ensure no bullying and other issues.
- Parker picked Earl Grey for its good French Immersion program. He was also concerned that alternative schools might focus too heavily on one subject.

#### Ginger 's experience at Quest

- The schedule at Quest is different from Withrow – lunch is an hour late, and the school day has 6 periods as opposed to 8
- Teachers rotate through the day, which can lead to lots of homework
- Biggest challenge is managing time and coping with homework, especially with other out of school activities. But key is to be organized and on top of things
- The atmosphere is very positive. It is a small community where everyone knows each other, and there is a strong feeling of trust. Most students do not need locks on their lockers.
- Making friends was easy as everyone is new, and the community is tight.
- The school has an anti-bullying policy that is enforced by the teachers. Ginger rated the school a 9/10
- Picked Quest as she wanted the smaller community. She also liked the way Quest explained how subjects are taught

#### Morgan's experience at Earl Grey Extended French

- Rotary teachers for different subjects
- Found the transition easy and smooth. Lots of fellow Withrow kids at Earl Grey, including kids from Pape, Jackman etc.
- Key is to stay organized, make sure you're on time for school/before/after lunch, come up with a good system for carrying books/bathing suit/ gym clothes.

- Morgan picked Earl Grey due to its sports programs and offerings. Often Alternative schools have less sports offerings due to fewer students

#### Ethan's experience at Queen Alexandra Extended French

- It was a big jump from English into Extended French – therefore very important to do and stay on top of school and homework. Teachers are QA are great, and very willing to help. Ethan strongly recommended asking for help if you need it.
- QA has two gyms and a Pool. Advice was to learn how to swim – however swimming is provided to all students whether beginner or expert.
- The volume of homework isn't too high, however there are lots of projects
- It was easy to make new friends. The key is to talk to everyone and get involved in as many extra curricular activities as possible. This will ensure a smooth transition.
- Twice a year there is a project known as 'The Inquiry project'. Students are given a topic, and required to come up with a question, and then answer it. The school then hosts Inquiry Night where parents attend, and each student presents their Inquiry Project.
- Students have the option to stay or leave for lunch – based on parent permission.
- The school day is shorter than Withrow, with a longer lunch and no recess
- Unfortunately unlike Quest a lock for your locker is very necessary
- Class sizes in Extended French are small with 16 students; as opposed to 33 in English.
- The school has an annual Ski Trip, as well as a trip to Quebec at the end of Grade 8
- Ethan picked QA due to its extended French program. He applied to both Earl Grey and Queen A, and was accepted into Queen A

#### Grace's Experience at Queen Alexandra in the English program

- Easy transition
- Rotary teachers
- No recess
- Key to success is staying organized, use an agenda, folders, binders
- Both Ethan and Grace found the school and teachers enforced rules around anti-bullying and ensuring diversity and inclusion is valued. Both personally had no issues with bullying
- Picked QA as it is her school district

#### **SCHOOL HOURS**

East - 8:45am -2:55pm

Queen A - 8:45am - 3:09pm

Earl Grey - 8:46am – 3:01pm

Quest - 8:45 am – 3:25pm