

## Pathway Programming Descriptions

The following provides more detailed information regarding learning structures programs that actively engage authentic student voice, connecting life, learning, and pathway.

### ***Ministry-Driven Programming***

#### **Specialist High Skills Major**

SHSM programs are housed within our schools. Courses are specialized in a given sector to allow students to learn more deeply about that sector, working closely with community partners and industry professionals to explore challenges and co-develop solutions. Students participate in several certifications and a sector-specific cooperative education experience, taking their theoretical knowledge and applying it in authentic environments. Upon graduation, students receive a special seal on their diploma, signifying the unique learning they engaged in through SHSM. We are currently in a revisioning phase with our SHSM programs. Capturing student voice through discussions and enrolment trends has illuminated a needed change in direction and that work has recently begun.

#### **Dual Credit**

The Dual Credit pathway allows students to experience a college course, simultaneously earning college and high school credit. Students who may have wondered about their abilities are supported to thrive in this learning environment, helping them see their gifts and further develop their skills and self-efficacy.

#### **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program**

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program provides students participating in a trades-based cooperative education learning experience, the opportunity complete their Level 1 Apprenticeship. While earning cooperative education credits towards the completion of their OSSD, students are also completing required certifications, gaining invaluable trade-specific experience, and earning hours as they complete their Level 1 Apprenticeship. This means that they are able to continue their Apprenticeship, starting at Level 2, as part of their post-secondary plan.

#### **Prior Learning Assessment and Reporting**

Schools have continued to and are expanding their analysis of student experiences and applying the Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR) and Recognition framework and the PLAR for mature students (mPLAR) to ensure that learning from the student's life is recognized and counted towards and helps to accelerate the achievement of their OSSD. Historically, these supports have been provided in alternative educational settings. However, the moral imperative to increase inclusion in our schools is creating an environment where more of these approaches are becoming embedded as practice. The program has been available for quite some time, but the parameters have changed, making it challenging to compare year over year. The new process of PLAR/mPLAR being integrated into day school programs started in February of 2022.

In addition, students who engage in meaningful learning opportunities outside of the school environment can “Challenge for Credit” and be recognized for their authentic learning experiences. Students participated in cultural exchanges to expand their French language competencies and understanding, earning a French language credit plus an additional credit that recognized their individualized pathway options and choices.

### **OCDSB Framed Ministry-Driven Programming**

#### **School within a College (SWAC)**

Three years ago, we revitalized our SWAC program, structuring it to meet the needs of students who had left our district having yet to earn their OSSD. Recognizing that traditional school structures were ineffective for some students, we revised SWAC using the ASLE framework. Through a partnership with Algonquin College, this program is housed in a more adult environment and supports students taking several Dual Credit Courses (more info on dual credit below). By combining the ASLE and Dual Credit, students accelerate their credit acquisition, and all students in this program have graduated with a clear postsecondary path. Students have accessed opportunities at college, university, and employment with the skills and credentials they have built through the SWAC program.

#### **Experiential Learning and Junior Achievement**

Entrepreneurship and Junior Achievement experiences are embedded within Grades 5-8 learning environments. Through critical thinking on current issues within areas including the environment, global market, and manufacturing, students are planning, developing, and executing targeted plans, helping them complete course requirements while also seeing their contribution to society.

### **OCDSB Student-Driven Learning Initiatives**

#### **Authentic Student Learning Experience (ASLE) Framework**

The ASLE is an OCDSB-created framework that situates students as the drivers of their learning, connecting their life experiences and interests to their formal learning while allowing the exploration of diverse post-secondary pathway options. Although developed in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic as a student success intervention to ensure ongoing engagement with school, this framework is now embedded as practice in all of our secondary schools and is being piloted in mainstream classes. It strengthens a meaningful connection between the student and school, helping the student realize the connection between their life, learning, and pathway hopes. It further reinforces the value of their interest, work, and skills, and boosts their confidence in exploring possible postsecondary options. Many students have benefited from learning via this framework, building their confidence and opening opportunities previously disregarded. This experience teaches them that their gifts, talents, and interests matter.

Work with the ASLE framework begins with something of interest to the student (often something they are doing or thinking about outside of school). With the teacher, they explore what they know about this topic and what they are wondering. The teacher

guides the student through a plan to learn more about this topic and supports the student in determining how they want to share their learning. Through the process, the teacher captures diverse evidence of learning and connects that evidence to appropriate credits, leading to the student earning multiple credits through this experience and work. For example, during COVID-19 school closures, one student returned to his Indigenous territory and continued his learning in a culturally relevant and authentic environment. The student participated in hunting and gathering, food preparation, navigating the physical environment, and the acquisition of his native language. The student had regular discussions with the Student Success Teacher, who captured evidence of his work. This student demonstrated sufficient evidence of learning to earn credits in Foods, Geography, Outdoor Education, and Indigenous Language. When prompted by the teacher, the student began documenting and explaining the work being done, ultimately creating a cooking manual, earning the student a third credit in grade 12 English.

### **Student Success at the Family Reception Center (FRC)**

For many years, the OCDSB has welcomed thousands of families and students to the FRC, where assessments are completed to help create a learning profile to guide a student's learning program. In many cases, these students arrive with no formal education documentation, resulting in their having to begin building credits once they join one of our secondary schools. Three years ago, we piloted an SST assigned to the FRC to speak with families and students to learn more about the student and their experiences before coming to Canada. Through their stories, we learned more about who they were, what they were passionate about, and what skills they had developed in very different environments. The SST has and continues to capture their stories as evidence of learning and connect that evidence to credits while using that information to support individual pathway planning. Through this, students who have just arrived in Canada without formal education documentation start at one of our secondary schools with a few credits. This launches them into their journey towards an OSSD while communicating the value of their previous experiences, reinforcing our belief that learning can and does look differently and yet remains impactful for each student. Through this work, we are reinforcing the student's beliefs in the value of their previous experiences and the talents they have developed.

### **School within a University (SWAU)**

SWAU has grown from SWAC. It has been designed to enhance our ability to provide students with positive opportunities to experience a university learning environment. This will allow underserved students to explore a previously disregarded postsecondary opportunity and determine if university programming aligns with their pathway goals. SWAU is a collaborative initiative between the OCDSB and Carleton University as a means to experientially demonstrate to students their ability to be successful in a university model of learning, embracing experiential approaches, embedding lived experiences, exploring learning beyond the classroom, prioritizing the connection of learning to pathway goals, and experiencing success.

Ten students are engaged with this initiative, with interest far exceeding availability. Student interest in this learning experience will drive the pursuit of additional opportunities (i.e., increased offerings, additional University partnerships, etc.)