


Thoughtexchange™ Results


We conducted a Thoughtexchange™ with staff at John McCrae Secondary School and students currently enrolled in the High Performance Athletic Program at the school.

We asked:

What aspects of the High Performance Athletic Program are working well and what could work better?

Participation Rate:

 72 Participants: 31 Students and 41 Staff

 125 Thoughts Shared

 1,259 Star Ratings Assigned

Thoughts shared and their corresponding ratings can be explored using these links:

- [Student Thoughts](#)
- [Staff Thoughts](#)

Summary of Student Feedback

Student feedback on the program was overwhelmingly positive, with high praise for the teachers in the program. Feedback is summarized below, and ordered largely based on the ratings assigned.

What is working well:

- Flexible schedules, deadlines, and exam dates; the ability to continue with academics while away.
- Well-organized, supportive and understanding teachers in HPA.
- c, who understand each other – this also helps teachers understand them as a group.
- Students can study and train simultaneously; maintain balance.
- Location at JMSS.
- Small class sizes.
- Teachers and guidance counselor who are familiar with student athletes.
- Helps students earn competitive grades/the grades they deserve.
- The program should continue as there are Arts and IB Programs.

What could work better:

- Desire for non-HPA teachers to understand the program better.
- More HPA classes offered.
- Stricter requirements to enter/remain in program.

Top 10 student thoughts, exactly as they were shared:

“Having teachers that aren't teaching the HPA class have an understanding of why the program is important. It's important for the teachers in the school to understand

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that it's hard to do work while we're away and shouldn't get piled with work right away”

“Teachers are very organized. HPA teachers are super organized, they know what they’re going to teach in advanced so we can work around our schedule to both train/compete and learn”

“I think that the flexibility that it gives to students is really important. It also makes teachers and students more understanding of the treatment. I know that if it weren’t for Coronavirus I would have missed almost an entire month of school. I wasn’t worried because of the HPA program.”

“In my HPA classes, we’re all athletes with busy schedules and we often all work very hard at both our sport and in school. This means that we’re all a like and we’re able to help each other when it comes to our education.”

“It also allows for many student-athletes to be in the same place which makes teachers more understanding. If all of the HPA students were spread across the board we would seem more as an anomaly and maybe not get the liberties that we need.”

“It’s wonderful to have the option to do school and be an athlete and be accommodated in school to allow you to continue to do better. Without this, athletes wouldn’t be able to study and train simultaneously and would have to give up the one or the other”

“Exam flexibility. It would be heartbreaking for an athlete to miss an important competition due to not being able to reschedule an exam. No matter how supportive the teacher is, if there is no HPA program, a number of athletes would have to miss important events due to no exam leniency.”

“An example where the program really benefit my academics was when exams were happening and I was absent. Being the program gave me flexibility to write exams before I left and when I came back.”

“Flexible timelines. Helpful during our season when less work can be done on the weekends and the amount of practices increase during the week”

“I would most likely not be able to have the same marks in school if there was no HPA program. The flexibility and understanding of teachers is the key to my success academically.”

Summary of Staff Feedback

In general, the feedback from staff was positive, with agreement ratings tending to be higher for thoughts about things that are working well. Feedback is summarized below, and ordered largely based on the ratings assigned.

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What is working well:

- Having a single, knowledgeable guidance counselor dedicated to students in program.
- Flexible schedule - the opportunity to work with students to manage their schedules, which can be difficult in a regular class; athletes shouldn't have to resort to online classes.
- Students are with others who understand their world.
- Experiential learning - learning beyond academics.
- The ability for students to compete at high levels with excellent fitness goals.

What could work better:

- Admissions guidelines – HPA classes should be reserved for students whose training/competition actively interferes with regular school program; portfolio requirements should be extensive; students need to earn their place in the program and demonstrate they can be successful in this environment.
- More sports/activities should be included – students in cheerleading/dance do not get the same accommodations.
- Regular input from parents is needed.
- Information from sports associations on the various sport requirements.
- More communication from students – they need to be able to advocate for themselves, express what they need, and communicate their schedule to their teachers.
- Classes are too big to give individualized support.
- Through digital tools, students can be increasingly well served at home schools.
- Attitude of entitlement – both students and parents use HPA as “an excuse”.
- Access to facilities – need improved city transportation so that students in urban areas get more opportunities to play/participate.
- Location of the program – move it to a school with lower enrolment.
- Privilege of HPA students – desire for Board to spend money on the general student population, not a specific group of students who are already economically privileged; everyone would benefit from flexible schedules and smaller classes, not just HPA students.
- Keeping athletes together can be exclusionary for other students.
- Provision of transportation is a waste when students do not regularly attend school.
- Opportunity to combine with other classes: Co-Op and/or Healthy Active Living
- Special classes are not necessary – teachers can use professional judgement and everyone should have access to flexible deadlines.

Top 10 staff thoughts, exactly as they were shared:

“I like the fact that there 1 guidance counsellor dedicated to the HPA students. Knowledge about the different directions the students are heading into including American Universities and their application process”

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“Having a guidance counselor attached directly to the program makes it easier to deal with the program without having to include extra people. HPA students need to be given the same set of policies & procedures, therefore having one leader for the program to set parameters keeps it consistent”

“Extra time for assignments; work can be provided ahead of time; teacher works w/ student to manage schedules. This extra work is difficult in a regular class - teacher might not be planned for providing significant work ahead of time.”

“HPA students were accepted based on levels of playing sports. Students stopped playing their sport and still in program. Fairness. if a student played a lower level sport they were still accepted. There needs to be guidelines like there is at admissions”

“Working well: the extended time to complete credits as well as due date flexibility to help students who are frequently absent for their sport. The program should be restricted to those athletes for whom their training/competition schedule actively interferes with the regular school program”

“HPA students enjoy being in classes with people who understand their world.”

“only acknowledges certain recognized sports. students in cheerleading, or similarly skilled training fields like dance, may have a harder time advocating for accommodations”

“program acknowledges challenges HPA face balancing academics & their sport. adds weight to their need for accommodations (scheduling, types of tasks), so teachers can help them also achieve academically”

“Feedback from parents is crucial to ensure the program is doing its job. Surveys, questionnaires, etc need to be MANDATORY for parents every term to understand what is working and what isn't.”

“Sports associations in the city/province should be providing information to the HPA program to ensure the school understands the sport requirements. Not every sport should be treated equally, yet without knowledge of the sport commitment itself, the school cannot accommodate the student.”