



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Academy Expansion

New programs added to improve student engagement

(Windsor, Ontario, Friday, Jan. 19, 2018) – The number of academy programs being offered by the WECDSB will expand in September to help students improve learning by focusing their attention on the activities and disciplines they're most passionate about.

"We've found that attending an academy program just makes school so much more exciting and fun for our students," said Dan Fister, Executive Superintendent of Innovation and Human Resources. "When students are focused on what they really love, they're more engaged with their education and their academic performance improves. We've seen this happening ever since we began offering these academy programs several years ago."

The WECDSB is adding 13 new academies at eight different schools this year, bringing to a total of 33 academy programs offered. New sports academies offered this year include basketball at Assumption, squash and basketball at Catholic Central, hockey at St. Anne and Villanova, and volleyball and martial arts (aikido) at Corpus Christi Middle School. Hockey programs are even offered now at two elementary schools: Holy Cross in LaSalle and St. William in Emeryville.

"The skills experts we've chosen to help our students improve their capabilities in their disciplines are some of the best in the business," said Kevin Hamlin, Principal of WECDSB Academies, noting that Chantal Vallée, five-time national champion coach of the University of Windsor women's basketball team is among the group of specialists. "They completely understand that these programs are part of an academic strategy to improve learning through a common love of sport."

Students enrolled in sports academy programs earn the equivalent of a physical education credit, but rather than playing a variety of sports throughout a semester, are allowed to concentrate completely on getting better at the activity of their choice. For some academies, the board partners with facilities such as Central Park Athletics, the Atlas Tube Centre, the Vollmer Recreation Complex, the Leamington Kinsmen Recreation Complex and Windsor Squash & Fitness to run the programs.

Sports, however, are not the sole focus of the board's academies. In addition to the new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Academy launched at Holy Names last year, two new STEM Academies will be added at St. Anne and St. Thomas of Villanova, as well as a new Manufacturing Academy at Assumption

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College Catholic High School this year.

“We are profoundly aware of the skills gap that still exists in manufacturing and trades,” said Fister. “We have an obligation to help sustain the economy of this region, and we can do that by convincing our students that they can find meaningful, lucrative occupations in these sectors.”

Fister said the board will be looking for partnership opportunities with more local manufacturers and industry associations who might support the academy through cooperative education and experiential learning opportunities.

Two parent information nights are being held this month to help students and their families learn more about these academy programs. The first will be held at **Central Park Athletics on Jan. 24 at 7 p.m.** The second will be held at **Cardinal Carter Catholic Secondary School in Leamington on Jan. 30 at 7 p.m.**

For more information on all academy programs, visit catholicboard.ca

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