



# School Council Report

Elementary Campus  
September 21, 2022  
Hal Curties, Principal

September 2022

### Welcome Back!

We are optimistically off to a good start!

As many parents/guardians will know, last spring, all mandatory COVID restrictions were removed from schools, so we have started this school year in the same way we did during the years prior to COVID. We are saying, “We will not go back to normal but forward towards a new normal.” With that being said, we are still pushing proper hygiene, in particular hand washing. Some students are choosing to wear masks, which is very normal now, and students don’t seem to notice whether or not classmates are wearing masks.

Classes are no longer cohorting, so music, PE and Learning Commons classes are all proceeding as they did in the latter part of last school year. We will resume regrouping for Language Arts and Mathematics this year. Assessments in both subject areas will be conducted throughout September with the aim of having regrouped classes begin in October. In both subject areas, Grade Group Teams regroup into groups whose knowledge and skills are emerging, at grade level and above grade level. In Mathematics, we will have one class of students whose assessments show them at two or more grade levels beyond their current grades. Please watch for further information about regrouping in the upcoming days and weeks.

The EC will no longer have staggered recesses. All grades will have recess at the same time. An afternoon recess has been added to the timetable this year as well. This provides maximum time for physical activity throughout the day.

### Professional Development

Teachers were back on August 29 to begin setting up classrooms in preparation for students. On the mornings of August 30 and 31, we were fortunate enough to work, in person, with Dr. Bruce Shore, Professor Emeritus from McGill University. Dr. Shore has researched and written extensively in the area of high ability learners. He co-authored Best Practices in Gifted Education, with Dr. Ann Robinson and Dr. Donna Enersen.

With Dr. Shore, our staff members looked at various ways of compacting curriculum.

*“Curriculum compacting is a technique for differentiating instruction that allows teachers to make adjustments to curriculum for students who have already mastered the material to be learned, replacing content students know with new content, enrichment options, or other activities.*

*Researchers recommend that teachers first determine the expected goals of the unit or lesson in terms of the content, skills, or standards students must learn before assessing students to determine which ones have already mastered most or all of the specified learning outcomes.” (NAGC, <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices/curriculum-compacting>)*

Given the adjustments we had to make to accommodate the realities of COVID over the past two and a half school years, we felt the need to transition away from trauma based teaching and learning and back towards best practices in gifted pedagogy. Additionally, we are now required to follow Alberta Education’s new curriculum in the areas of Language Arts, Mathematics and Physical Education.

Enthusiasm and engagement levels were very high. Here are some key takeaways from teachers following Dr. Shore’s sessions:

- *“The NUMEROUS ways to actually “compact” and have the bravery to try methods that I don’t normally lean towards. Compacting leads to opportunity for more meaningful, teachable moments!”*
- *“Time is more flexible than I realized. Compacting allows for a more efficient use of time. I will teach curriculum in a more purposeful way to create more time for student enrichment/engagement.”*
- *“Throw out the complex [idea or theme] rather than building up to it. Listen to the students.”*
- *“Decide what you want to do with your free time from compacting BEFORE you compact. This will give me a reason to find fun/passion/purposeful projects for my students.”*
- *“Compacting can facilitate intrinsic motivation in students, which can drive life-long learners well beyond the school year.”*

Dr. Shore will work with the EC staff again – virtually - on October 21 focusing on the topic of effective group work with students, and again in brief virtual “catch up” sessions on November 18 and December 9. In January and February 2023, he will cover inquiry based learning. Finally, in June, Dr. Shore will introduce the concept of letting go of control in the classroom. We hope he will continue with this in 2023-2024. Our goal is to continue moving away from direct instruction and give students more autonomy and influence over what they learn and how they learn it. As Dr. Shore advised, students will learn more from each other than we think! Special thanks to School Council for their help in funding Dr. Shore’s visit.

Many of the EC staff will take part in a 3-part series called Autism for Educators, beginning on September 20.



### Numbers

We have met our student number targets for 2022-2023, and are currently at capacity with 420 students. Our numbers break down this way:

<b>Westmount Charter School - Elementary Campus</b>				
<b>Student Enrollment as of September 15, 2022.</b>				
Grade	# of Classes	# of Students Per Class	Total Number of Students	Targets per Grade
Kindergarten	4	19, 19, 19, 19	76	76
Grade 1	4	20, 20, 20, 20	80	80
Grade 2	4	21, 21, 22, 20	84	84
Grade 3	4	22, 21, 22, 23	88	88
Grade 4	4	22, 23, 23, 24	92	92
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>420</b>	<b>420</b>

Some students registered in June 2022 have withdrawn as families move and reconsider long bus rides. We currently have enough students on our waitlists to fill any vacancies. At the end of September, when our official count goes to Alberta Education, we will end the waitlists.

Our Kindergarten to Grade 4 average class size is 21.

There are currently 27 full and part time teachers on staff at the EC, along with 6 teaching and learning assistants (TLAs), 4 support staff and 20 full and part time lunch supervisors.

### Parent Involvement

Our first informal meeting with parents took place on September 6, with a quick, standup gathering in the courtyard to introduce new parents and reintroduce returning parents to our office staff, admin team, student services coordinator and School Council parent liaison.



Meet the Teacher, scheduled for September 13, was postponed due the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It will be held on September 26. In the interests of health and safety, we are foregoing a large assembly in the main gym where we would typically introduce all of our teachers. Instead, will have parents tour classrooms according to the first letter of their last names: A – L from 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm and M – Z from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Also, instead of group presentations in homerooms, grade group teams, individual homeroom teachers and specialists will share information about their programs and classroom routines virtually via links prior to the Meet the Teacher evening.

Our first School Council meeting was also postponed and is taking place right now!

Coffee Talk, an opportunity for parents and the EC admin team to speak informally about school matters, will take place virtually on September 23.

Parent-Teacher interviews will be held using a hybrid model combining opportunities for in-class and ZOOM conversations in November and February. Student led conferences will be held in classrooms in May 2023.

Parents are, once again, welcome in the EC. Honestly, it is an adjustment seeing parents in the building, but we are delighted to have you back. All volunteer parent requirements are back in place, IE. Police clearances, so please make sure you have received your police clearance if you plan to volunteer in the school.

## Student Activities

In addition to their “regular,” exciting classroom activities, the following are on our students’ agendas for September:

- Terry Fox walk/run and fundraiser is scheduled for September 23
- Westmount Wear Fridays
- House Colour Days
- Fire Drills and Lockdown Drills
- A virtual celebration of International Dot day on September 15. (Gr. 1)

