



# Transition Guide

for Students  
and Parents



# Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) Requirements

## 30 Credits

### Compulsory Credits (15 Credits)

- 4 credits in English (1 credit per grade)
- 3 credits in Mathematics (at least one in Grade 11 or 12)
- 2 credits in Science
- 1 credit in the Arts
- 1 credit in Canadian Geography (Grade 9)
- 1 credit in Canadian History (Grade 10)
- 1 credit in Health and Physical Education
- 0.5 credit in Career Studies
- 0.5 credits in Civics
- 1 credit in French as a second language

### Additional Compulsory Credits (3 Credits)

- 1 credit in Group 1  
English, French as a second language, classical languages, international languages, Native languages, Canadian and world studies, Native studies, social sciences and humanities, guidance and career education, cooperative education
- 1 credit in Group 2  
French as a second language, the arts, business studies, health and physical education, cooperative education
- 1 credit in Group 3  
French as a second language, science (Grade 11 or 12), computer studies, technological education, cooperative education

Note: The following conditions apply to selections from the above 3 groups:

- A maximum of 2 credits in French as a second language may count toward an additional compulsory credit; 1 credit from Group 1, and 1 credit from either Group 2 or Group 3
- A maximum of 2 credits in cooperative education may count toward an additional

### Elective Credits (12 Credits)

## Literacy Requirement

The purpose of the secondary school literacy requirement is ensure all students can demonstrate the required skills in literacy as determined by the Ministry of Education. All students are required to meet the secondary school literacy requirement in order to obtain an OSSD. The requirement is meant to address reading and writing curriculum up to and including Grade 9. Generally students will write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in their Grade 10 year.

## Community Involvement Hours

Students must complete 40 hours of community involvement activities as part of the requirements to obtain an OSSD. Students in Grade 8 may start accumulating community involvement hours in the summer before entering Grade 9.

## Welcome to High School...

The Waterloo Region District School Board welcomes you to Grade 9.

Moving from elementary school to high school can be one of the most exciting times of your life. Starting in Grade 9 you are going to be able to make some choices about the courses you like and want to take. You will also be able to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities.

Going to high school means new opportunities and new responsibilities. That is why we have designed this Transition Guide to help answer questions you might have today or over the coming months as you get ready to start Grade 9.

The Transition Guide is only one of the supports that will be provided as you prepare to move on to high school. Know that your teachers will be there to answer questions and your high school will be planning activities, so that you can learn more about your school and all the wonderful opportunities that it has to offer.

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# Parent Engagement

Parents are encouraged to continue to be involved in their child's schooling.

## School Council

The school council is a cooperative effort between parents and staff focused on improving and supporting the activities and learning opportunities available at the school. Talk to your school or look on their website for more information.

## Volunteering

Parent volunteers in a secondary school take on various responsibilities; most often volunteers play an important role in supporting extra-curricular and other activities.

## Communication

Communication with your child's school is important. The school will use various means to communicate with you including phone calls, report cards, notes sent home and the school website. If you have any questions about your child's progress please call the school and speak with the classroom teacher. If you have questions about school activities or opportunities please call the school.

# Homework Help

Homework Help provides assistance to students in Grade 7 to 10 in completing Mathematics homework. The service includes 1 to 1 tutoring, online tutorials on different concepts and access to a scientific calculator. The service is provided free of charge to students registered in a publically funded school. To access the services follow these steps:

1. Go to the website: [www.homeworkhelp.ilc.org](http://www.homeworkhelp.ilc.org)
2. You will be asked for your OEN Number and your birthday. (You can retrieve your OEN number from your report card, timetable or from the office. Your teacher may also have a list of OEN's printed for the whole class)
3. You will be asked to enter additional information. (name, username, password etc.) Write down your username and password.
  - It is strongly encouraged that you choose a Username that allows you to remain anonymous.
  - The Username entered will be your Username for future years. You should pick something memorable.
  - Entering an email address is optional.

# The First Days

## WHAT TO BRING

Obtain general school supplies (e.g., pencils, pens, paper, binders) during the summer. Teachers will let students know the specific course supplies required on the first day of class.

## FEES

Each school charges for a student card that is required for participation in many student activities planned throughout the year. Fees may also be charged for course enhancements and for participation in clubs and school teams to cover extra expenses. You will find out about these fees over the first few days or by checking your first day package. See your guidance counsellor with questions about fees.

## STUDENT CARD

The student card contains the student's picture and personal student number. It is used for entry into school activities, participation in clubs and sports and offers discounts at some merchants in your community. It will also allow you to pay special student rates with Grand River Transit. Keep it confidential and do not lend it out to others.

## LOCKS, LOCKERS AND BOOKS

Students will be assigned a locker and may bring or purchase a lock at the school. Be sure the lock you purchase is a combination lock. Keep the lock combination confidential to protect the belongings stored in the locker. Depending on enrollment, some schools may require students to share lockers. Students do not need to carry all their books for the day in their backpack. Store some books in the locker and visit during the day to exchange books. Although combination locks provide security it is never a good idea to bring expensive items to school.

## PLANNERS

Secondary school students are encouraged to use planners or electronic organization tools to record assignments, important meetings and test dates.

## TRANSPORTATION

To determine eligibility for transportation, visit the Student Transportation Services Website [www.stswr.ca](http://www.stswr.ca)

## RELATIONSHIPS

Building positive relationships with teachers and classmates will make school a great place and one that is more than just books and classes. Build new friendship by joining clubs and teams. Get a class buddy so that he/she can pick up notes or homework for absent days. Know when teachers offer extra help or ask them for help when needed.

# Supports for Grade 9

Entering secondary school is an important milestone in the life of a student. Students should never feel like they are on their own. Every student is assigned a guidance counsellor and administrator who are available to address concerns and provide assistance. There are a number of supports listed below that are available at all of our high schools to support student success.

**Administrators (Principals and Vice-Principals)** are responsible for ensuring safe and secure schools. They are available to assist students and parents.

**Guidance Counsellors** are available to assist students with planning their educational pathways, personal career plans and course selections. They are also available to assist students with personal concerns and refer them to other professionals for specific assistance.

**Special Education Teachers** monitor and assist students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Students, parents and the Special Education teacher will work together with other school staff to support a student's individual learning needs.

**Student Success Teachers** are an additional support to students who are struggling at school or who may be thinking of leaving school early. They work with students to help them be more successful in achieving their educational goals.

**Subject Teachers** provide instruction and support to a student's daily learning and are available to assist students needing extra help.

**Settlement Workers (ESL/ELD Magnet Schools)** provide support to students and families who are adjusting to life in Waterloo Region. Settlement workers are trained to help newcomers work with the school system, and they can also make referrals to health or community resources.



# Specialized Programs

## Fast Forward

Fast Forward is a unique school-to-work program offered at designated secondary schools. Through the Fast Forward program students have an opportunity to earn recognized certificates and learn the skills to build rewarding careers. Fast Forward is designed to support students who require at least two essential type courses. Students will have the opportunity to work toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to move successfully from the classroom to the workplace.

## French Immersion and Extended French Programs

French Immersion and Extended French are available to those students who have completed the Elementary Immersion program and who wish to continue with more intensive French instruction. Please speak with the student's elementary guidance contact to find out which Extended French program your child would attend. Please note that parents of students attending extended and immersion programs from areas outside of their designated home school boundary are responsible for their own transportation.



## English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) Programs

English Language Learners should consider their options for secondary school carefully. At the magnet ESL/ELD secondary schools, courses are offered with English language and literacy support, and students will have a choice of appropriate and engaging programs. Students who speak English may still require support in the areas of reading and writing for academic purposes. Students may also be eligible to receive accommodations for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. A student's best guarantee of success in secondary school is to choose the appropriate program and course type for success.

## International Baccalaureate, Instrumental Strings and Integrated Arts Programs

These programs are system designated specialized magnet programs that are offered at some of our high schools. For more information talk to your elementary school's guidance contact. Please note that parents of students attending International Baccalaureate, Instrumental Strings or Integrated Arts Programs from areas outside of their designated home school boundary are responsible for their own transportation.

## Other Grade 9 Programs

Each secondary school offers students opportunities for enhanced learning. To find out what your school will be offering you can attend their information night, look on their website or contact them directly.

# Decoding a Course Code

Courses are identified using a 6-character course code. The first 5-characters of the course code are determined by the Ministry of Education. The 6th character is used by the school to identify a specific focus of the course. For further details, refer to the secondary school's course calendar supplement.

ENG1PI

This indicator is used to distinguish different areas of focus or delivery methods .

This character identifies the course type.

Grade 9- 10	D= Academic	P= Applied
	L = Essential	O = Open
Grade 11-12	U= University	C= College
	O= Open	M= University/College

This character identifies the grade or level.

1= Grade 9	2= Grade 10	3= Grade 11	4= Grade 12	
A= Level 1	B= Level 2	C= Level 3	D= Level 4	E= Level 5

These three letters identify the subject.

The first letter in the course code denotes the subject area.

A= Arts

B= Business Studies

C= Canadian and World Studies

E= English

F= French

G= Guidance and Career Education

H= Social Studies & Humanities

I= Computer Studies or

I = Interdisciplinary Studies

L= Classical and International Languages

M= Mathematics

N= Native Studies

P = Health and Physical Education

S= Science

T= Technological Education

HIF1OI



# Choosing your Courses

During Grade 8 students will be asked to select course types (e.g., applied, academic) for each of the five Grade 9 compulsory courses (i.e., English, French, Geography, Mathematics and Science).

It is possible to blend the choice of compulsory course types (e.g., academic English and applied Mathematics).

To help students choose the course type that best suits their learning style and academic ability, they will work with their Grade 8 teachers, guidance contact and parents.

Students experience success in a course type that best suits their learning style and academic ability.

## Course Types in Grade 9 & 10

### Academic Courses “D”

- Emphasis will be on theory and abstract thinking as a basis for future learning.
- Students will learn the essential concepts of a subject and explore related materials.
- Students should be working consistently at a level 3 or 4 in the corresponding Grade 8 Course
- Strong learning skills are important to student success in every course type, but are key indicators of success in academic course types.

### Applied Courses “P”

- Emphasis will be in the practical and hands-on application of the concepts.
- Students will focus on essential concepts of a subject .
- Students should be working consistently at a level 1 or 2 in the corresponding Grade 8 Course
- Strong learning skills are important to student success

### Locally Developed Compulsory Courses (Essential) “L”

- Emphasis will be on practical applications that will help students to improve their skills for functioning in everyday life and in the workplace.
- Students in this program are at least two years out of phase and have struggled with literacy and numeracy for a significant period of time.

### Open Courses “O”

- These courses are designed for all students.
- Students will learn concepts and skills designed to prepare for the further study in a subject area.

# Get Involved in the School Community

One of the best ways to feel a part of the new school is to participate in the school's extra-curricular activities (e.g., join a team or a club). All high schools have a wide variety of extra-curricular activities to meet the interest and abilities of their students.



## Clubs

- There are many different clubs that are offered at the secondary school.
- To be part of a club a student card must be purchased, then sign up for the club, attend meetings and take part in the activities.

## Sports

- Intramurals are activities that anyone can join and usually run during lunchtime. Some examples are: volleyball, basketball and badminton.
- Competitive school teams are offered where students attend tryouts and coaches make their decision based on athletic ability, commitment and sportsmanship.
- Tryout information is available through school announcements and posters.
- Competitive school teams require players to buy a student card and pay a fee to assist in the costs associated with the sport.
- In most cases, competitive school teams are offered at both the junior and senior level.

## Student Council/Leadership Opportunities

- All high schools have student councils that represent the students in the school.
- Student councils provide student leadership and organize various student activities throughout the school year.
- For students who want to contribute, be actively involved or have leadership skills, contact the student activities office at the secondary school for additional information.



# Sports, Clubs and Activities

## Get Involved...

Every secondary school offers different activities, these are just a few samples.



## Explore your Options.

What activities are running at your school? Find out during your secondary school visit.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **How do I apply to secondary school?**

In grade 8, students will complete a course selection process for their designated secondary school. The elementary school makes sure that that process is complete and helps to communicate important information to the high school.

## **How do I know which secondary school I will attend?**

The elementary school guidance contact will be able to advise students as to the secondary school that they should attend. This information can be accessed on the Waterloo Region District School Board's website, [www.wrdsb.ca](http://www.wrdsb.ca)

## **How do I find out information about secondary school programs?**

Students and parents may attend Information Nights that are advertised through the elementary school, consult with the elementary school guidance contact or review the designated secondary school's course calendar.

## **Can I change course types after Grade 9?**

Students may change course types without additional upgrading between grades 9 and 10 with the exception of mathematics. Supplementary upgrading in mathematics would need to be completed prior to making course changes.

## **Do all the compulsory courses I select have to be the same type (i.e., academic, applied)?**

Students are encouraged to take the type of course that best suits their interests, academic ability, goals and learning style. For example, a student could select academic English and applied Science.

## **Is there somewhere or someone I can go to for help if I have question about course selection?**

The students' elementary classroom teacher and/or guidance contact may assist with selecting the courses that best suit the students' learning styles and academic ability. Students may also call their designated home secondary school for more information and assistance.

## **What will happen if I am unsuccessful on the literacy test?**

Students will be given opportunities to repeat the test or take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy course to meet the diploma's literacy requirement.

## **Can I complete my 40 hours of community involvement at any time?**

Students may start accumulating community involvement hours in the summer before entering grade 9.

## **The school is so big! Will I get lost?**

The first couple of days might be a little bit confusing, but just remember that everyone works it out very quickly. Many schools have orientation activities to familiarize students with the school layout and programs.

## **How so I find out about important dates at my school (e.g., report cards, PD days, Parent Nights, exams)?**

Check the school's website, start up package, school calendar and listen to the auto-dialer.