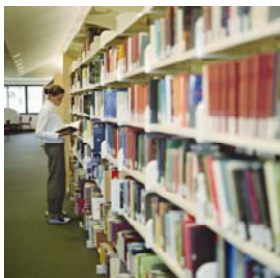


June 2010



# Education Matters



4304 Village Centre Court  
Mississauga, Ontario  
Canada L4Z 1S2  
Phone: (905) 272-3600  
Fax: (905) 272-3602  
Email: info@watson-econ.ca

## ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Our Watson & Associates (W&A) Education Sector staff members are very fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with so many education sector stakeholders on a day-to-day basis. We constantly undertake research into educational programs and building spaces required to serve this, and future generations of students. We house considerable data related to school board planning matters, demographic trends, facilities inventory and condition, capital financing, legislation and policies.

This newsletter will be published quarterly (September, December, March and June) and will provide commentary on issues and challenges facing Ontario school boards, as well as provide research-derived insights and background information that may be of assistance in your deliberations on school board planning, program and capital financing and consultation matters. We trust that you will find it informative. More importantly, we hope that you will take this opportunity to use this newsletter as a means to reach out to other school boards and share or request information. So by all means, write us and let us know what you think; suggest topics for future issues; pose questions for which you might be looking for answers.

## SAVE THE DATE!

Following on a highly successful session dealing with the Pupil Accommodation Review process that was held last October, we are pleased to announce a Fall symposium to be held on **Friday, October 1<sup>st</sup>** at the Mississauga Convention Centre located at 75 Derry Rd. West (west of Hurontario St. between Highways 401 and 407). The symposium, titled "Looking Forward" will address capital planning and funding issues/opportunities post municipal and school board elections. It is intended to be an interactive discussion with presentations from school boards, the Ministry and education sector partners. Agendas and a list of speakers will be sent out in the coming weeks.

We are also planning a social event on the Thursday evening prior. We will be forwarding information about discounted hotel rates in the area for those of you who are able to join us that evening and require accommodation. It will be a great opportunity to meet with your school board colleagues!

### Education Sector Services:

- > Long Term Capital Planning and Fiscal Impact Analysis
- > Demographic Trends, Enrolment Projections and Community Profile Studies
- > Facilitation and Advisory Services—Accommodation Review Processes
- > Capital Financing Reviews and Business Cases
- > PSAB Compliance Advisory Services and Capital Asset Management Strategies
- > Education Development Charge Studies and Ontario Municipal Board Evidence

### Upcoming Newsletters

September, 2010

- > The Future of Program/Capital Investment in Ontario Schools
- > French Immersion Enrolment Growth in Ontario
- > Secondary Enrolment Trends and Future ARC Processes
- > Reducing Surplus Classroom Spaces — a Case Study

## BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EDUCATION

On **September 13th and 14<sup>th</sup>** Premier Dalton McGuinty will be hosting, in Toronto, an international summit of educational experts at Building Blocks for Education: Whole System Reform. US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan is scheduled to participate in this event, along with Sir Michael Barber, Education advisor to former British PM Tony Blair, Michael Fullan, Special Advisor to the Premier of Ontario and many other distinguished speakers.

On September 15th and 16th, a two day summit in New York City

dealing with the “Ideas Economy: Human Potential.” This summit will be hosted by *The Economist* and will address how to educate billions of people (i.e. the world will soon have a population of more than 9 billion people) and manage their successful entry into the global economy. The nature of work and talent development must evolve dramatically, particularly in an age of high unemployment and aging demographics.

Our firm was invited to participate in this event last year and we had the opportunity to meet

with industry leaders and Ministers of Education from around the world. Last year’s event was entitled Global Education 2020 and addressed 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning challenges and opportunities globally. During dinner, our U.S. counterparts wanted to know what we did differently in Ontario in order to achieve higher secondary graduation rates than the United States.

W&A staff will be in attendance at both sessions in September and we will report on these events during the October 1<sup>st</sup> symposium.

## 21ST CENTURY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Across North America and beyond, more emphasis is being placed on defining what is often referred to as 21<sup>st</sup> Century education environments. Most education sector decision makers recognize that a highly educated work force, along with an emphasis on innovation and productivity are key elements to ensuring a strong economic future. So many educators are asking the question: what kind of learning environment do students need today and into the future in order to achieve and sustain a highly educated workforce?

A report titled: [\*Are They Really Ready to Work?\*](#)<sup>1</sup> explores employers’ perspectives on the basic knowledge and applied skills of new entrants to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce. While this report is geared to the US workforce it is equally applicable to Canada’s employer needs.

The report lists basic knowledge and skills as: spoken and written

English language, mathematics, science, government/economics, humanities and the arts, foreign languages and history/geography.

Applied skills, on the other hand, are described as:

- critical thinking and problem solving;
- oral and written communications;
- teamwork and collaboration;
- diversity (i.e. learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures);
- information technology application;
- leadership;
- creativity and innovation;
- life-long learning and self direction;
- professionalism and work ethic; and
- ethics and social responsibility.

Among the most important skills cited by employers were:

- professionalism and work ethic;
- oral and written communications, teamwork and collaboration; and
- critical thinking and problem solving skills.

In fact the five “most important” skills were almost always applied skills over basic knowledge skills.

So we find ourselves having increasing conversations about inquiry-based learning; how technology plays a role in the classroom and beyond; and how to adapt our school buildings to the evolving learning priorities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In Ontario, class size, grade structure, Early Learning programs, student support systems, size of schools, condition of schools, flexibility of program spaces, etc. all play a role in this important conversation.

<sup>1</sup> Are They Really Ready to Work? – Employers’ Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (U.S.) Workforce, a collaboration of The Conference Board, Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, Corporate Voices for Working Families and the Society for Human Resource Management, 2006

## TECHNOLOGY-SUPPORTED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A second report by Cisco Systems entitled [\*Equipping Every Learner for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century\*](#)<sup>2</sup> explores system reform, employable skills, technology and pedagogy. The Executive Summary introduces this report with the following statement:

*“The future growth and stability of our global economy depends on the ability of education systems around the world to prepare all students for career opportunities and help them*

*attain higher levels of achievement. However, despite numerous efforts to improve educational standards, school systems around the world are struggling to meet the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners and employers.*

*In both developed and developing nations, young people have become increasingly reliant on social networking technologies to connect, collaborate, learn, and create, and employers*

*have begun to seek out new skills to increase their competitiveness in a global marketplace. Education, meanwhile, has changed much less. With few exceptions, schools have yet to revise their pedagogy to reflect current trends and technologies.”*

We recommend this report and the report by the Conference Board for your summer reading.



## DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AND FUTURE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW PROCESSES

It is probably fair to say that one would be hard pressed to find any education sector stakeholder who found recent ARC processes smooth sailing. School boards invested considerable staff resources into the preparation of School Information Profiles (or predecessor information packages), preparing for and conducting numerous ARC meetings, responding to questions from ARC members, posting minutes to Board websites, dealing with parents, students, communities and municipalities. Parents, trustees, board staff and stakeholders gave of their time (usually evenings) to participate in the process. Several of the ARC processes and final decisions made by trustees were challenged by stakeholders and Provincial reviewers were asked to report to the Minister of Education as to whether the board in question followed its own ARC policy. Some municipi-

ties expressed a desire to have a greater role in the decisions school boards would make about school facilities.

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to convincing communities that ‘less is more’ is not being able to clearly demonstrate specific opportunities to enhance programs and school facilities that could occur through consolidation initiatives. School boards are deferring school closures, in part, because there is nothing to offer to local communities, given that there are limited Provincial funds available to revitalize programs and facilities at this time. The September issue of this newsletter will explore opportunities for significant capital and program investment in Ontario.

The majority of the ARC processes that have taken place to date have been focused on un-

der-utilized elementary schools. The next five years, however, will see secondary enrolment decline in many areas of the Province and will require school boards to undertake ARC processes that address surplus classroom spaces at the secondary level. In some cases, it will be the same communities that have recently undergone ARC processes directed at elementary schools, who will be facing difficult discussions about local secondary schools. However, this situation may offer additional opportunities to enhance the space available to serve the early learning environment. We will address an integrated elementary/secondary ARC process in the September issue.

<sup>2</sup> Equipping Every Learner for the 21st Century, The Centre for Strategic Education, Cisco Systems, Inc. and McKinsey & Company, April 2008

## Did you know?

In 2003, W&A published a ranking of district school boards by the number of surplus classroom spaces (i.e. elementary and secondary schools where OTG was greater than ADE). At that time, 17.8% of the Province-wide OTG capacity was surplus. Given the 2003/04 ADE enrolment, the ten (10) school boards with the highest percentage of surplus classroom spaces were:

|    | Board Name             | Brd # | Elementary Panel | % of Total Province | Secondary Panel | % of Total Province | Total Both Panels | % of Total Province |
|----|------------------------|-------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Toronto DSB            | 12    | 45,715           | 18.22%              | 23,290          | 17.96%              | 69,005            | 18.13%              |
| 2  | Thames Valley DSB      | 11    | 7,124            | 2.84%               | 8,407           | 6.48%               | 15,531            | 4.08%               |
| 3  | Toronto CDSB           | 40    | 11,939           | 4.76%               | 3,052           | 2.35%               | 14,991            | 3.94%               |
| 4  | York Region DSB        | 16    | 11,131           | 4.44%               | 2,234           | 1.72%               | 13,366            | 3.51%               |
| 5  | Ottawa-Carleton DSB    | 25    | 7,719            | 3.08%               | 5,573           | 4.30%               | 13,292            | 3.49%               |
| 6  | Dufferin-Peel CDSB     | 43    | 8,970            | 3.58%               | 3,735           | 2.88%               | 12,705            | 3.34%               |
| 7  | DSB of Niagara         | 22    | 5,078            | 2.02%               | 6,356           | 4.90%               | 11,434            | 3.00%               |
| 8  | Algoma DSB             | 2     | 5,165            | 2.06%               | 4,372           | 3.37%               | 9,536             | 2.51%               |
| 9  | Peel DSB               | 19    | 5,333            | 2.13%               | 3,438           | 2.65%               | 8,771             | 2.30%               |
| 10 | Hamilton-Wentworth DSB | 21    | 5,113            | 2.04%               | 3,028           | 2.33%               | 8,141             | 2.14%               |
|    | Totals                 |       | 113,287          | 45.17%              | 63,485          | 48.94%              | 176,772           | 46.44%              |

The same ten (10) school boards still rank at the top of the list in 2009/10; however, the order has changed given more recent school closures (i.e. 18,354 OTG has been removed for which there is no associated enrolment due to closures) and continued declining enrolment.

|    | Board Name                 | Brd # | Elementary Panel | % of Total Province | Secondary Panel | % of Total Province | Total Both Panels | % of Total Province |
|----|----------------------------|-------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Toronto DSB                | 12    | 49,042           | 16.02%              | 28,234          | 19.92%              | 77,276            | 17.99%              |
| 2  | Peel DSB                   | 19    | 13,320           | 4.37%               | 2,493           | 2.25%               | 15,813            | 3.68%               |
| 3  | Ottawa-Carleton DSB        | 25    | 9,325            | 3.18%               | 6,350           | 4.70%               | 15,675            | 3.65%               |
| 4  | Toronto Catholic DSB       | 40    | 11,585           | 3.78%               | 3,009           | 2.12%               | 14,594            | 3.40%               |
| 5  | Thames Valley DSB          | 11    | 9,809            | 3.82%               | 4,619           | 4.25%               | 14,428            | 3.36%               |
| 6  | York Region DSB            | 16    | 10,485           | 3.43%               | 3,308           | 2.33%               | 13,793            | 3.21%               |
| 7  | DSB of Niagara             | 22    | 6,109            | 2.00%               | 6,505           | 4.59%               | 12,614            | 2.94%               |
| 8  | Hamilton-Wentworth DSB     | 21    | 6,818            | 2.30%               | 3,988           | 2.81%               | 10,806            | 2.52%               |
| 9  | Dufferin-Peel Catholic DSB | 43    | 7,966            | 2.78%               | 2,257           | 2.91%               | 10,223            | 2.38%               |
| 10 | Algoma DSB                 | 2     | 5,182            | 1.80%               | 4,803           | 3.40%               | 9,985             | 2.30%               |
|    | Totals                     |       | 129,641          | 43.49%              | 65,566          | 49.30%              | 195,207           | 45.42%              |

Note: Thames Valley DSB expects to further reduce OTG as of 2010/11 due to ongoing ARC processes. This should place them in 7th position behind York Region DSB.

## Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (W&A) is one of Canada's leading economic consulting firms, serving over 200 municipal clients and 48 school boards throughout Ontario. Our firm is committed to assisting school boards in improving the quality of the education environment for students across Ontario. We are committed to assessing opportunities for school boards to revitalize programs and school facilities. We regularly meet with Ministry staff to assist school boards in presenting Business Cases designed to explain the Board's proposal for enhancement of programs and facilities, with the objective of seeking/receiving approval for additional capital funds.

W&A has completed numerous studies dealing with enrolment projections, long-term accommodation strategies, capital funding matters and education development charge studies throughout Ontario. W&A staff act as facilitator/research support for several boards undertaking Pupil Accommodation Reviews.

The firm works extensively with the Ministry of Education and is thoroughly familiar with all aspects of the Provincial education capital funding model.

### Contacts:

Cynthia Clarke  
Associate Director, Education Sector  
clarke@watson-econ.ca  
905-272-3600 x 230

Lygia Dallip, BA  
Manager, Education Sector  
dallip@watson-econ.ca  
905-272-3600 x 250

Daniel Del Bianco, BA  
Senior Coordinator, Education Sector  
delbianco@watson-econ.ca  
905-272-3600 x 242



4304 Village Centre Court  
Mississauga, Ontario  
L4Z 1S2  
Tel: (905) 272-3600  
Fax: (905) 272-3602

Visit our website:  
[www.watson-econ.ca](http://www.watson-econ.ca)

### Questions / Comments?

If you have any questions, comments or topic suggestions regarding this or any Watson Newsletter, please contact us. We welcome the opportunity to discuss your specific needs.