

The Award

The Student Trustee Alumni Leadership Award is a \$1,000 scholarship awarded to two (2) Student Trustees who demonstrate exemplary leadership, innovation, cooperation, and perseverance. This was established in 2012 by the OSTA-AECO Alumni Network to celebrate the important work done by Student Trustees. Recipients for this award are announced each year at the Student Trustee Alumni Leadership Gala held in conjunction with OSTA-AECO's Annual General Meeting.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to apply, Student Trustees must be in their last term as Student Trustee and successfully complete the 2015-2016 term. Scholarship funds will only be disbursed to successful applicants upon completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma and enrolment in post-secondary education. For recipients who do not commence post-secondary education upon completion of their term as Student Trustee, scholarship funds will be held for up to two academic years.

Application

The application consists of three elements:

- An original essay (no more than 500 words);
- A CV or resume (not to exceed two pages);
- A completed application form.

The Essay Question

The essay is an opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences as a Student Trustee and apply your expertise to a prominent education topic. Please limit your answer to 500 words, and directly answer the essay prompt below.

Essay Question: Comment on the attached article “Unconventional Self-Directed Learning a Hit at Hamilton High School.”

Candidates are encouraged to read the article and comment on the author’s opinions, the implemented program, and the theories of self-directed learning. Candidates may draw from personal experience, boardroom experience, and external information sources to form an opinion on the topic, which will guide the essay.

The Application Form

All candidates must answer the questions listed on the following pages, in addition to their completed essay. These questions will assess each candidate for leadership, innovation, cooperation, and/or perseverance, followed by the essay. Applications must be completed, and e-mailed to scholarship@alumni.osta-aeco.org by Friday, April 29th 2016 at 11:59 pm. The deadline will not be extended and late applications will unfortunately not be accepted.

Please attach to your e-mail **one PDF document** with the components of your application in the following order:

- CV or Resume
- Answers to the Application Form Questions Below
- Essay

Student Trustee Alumni Leadership Award Application Questions

Name:

School Board:

Role(s) Within OSTA-AECO*:

1. Outline your proudest accomplishment, in creating a positive impact on your school board, the Student Voice and/or OSTA-AECO. (250 words)
2. What have you learned throughout your term(s) as a student trustee? (200 words)
3. What advice would you give to incoming student trustees? (*What did you do well? What would you change? What are your successes and failures?*) (250 words)
4. Where do you see yourself in 10 years and why? (200 words)

**Please include any executive, cabinet, or committee roles that you have held.*

Unconventional self-directed learning a hit at Hamilton high school

CAROLINE ALPHONSO

EDUCATION REPORTER — The Globe and Mail

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Jewel White, a 15-year-old student, gathers her books and signs herself out of a routine morning math class. She is not leaving school for the day, but is off to try some more challenging equations.

This practice is not uncommon at Westmount Secondary School in Hamilton, Ont., where an unconventional learning approach is gaining in popularity.

Westmount is one of eight regular schools in the country where students work at their own pace and set their own direction, spending as much or as little time as they need on subjects. Teachers act as advisers.

With the classroom teachers' permission, students can sign out of a class to work on other material or walk into another class to catch up on another subject. And every two weeks – a so-called flex day – they dictate their own learning time, with support from their adviser.

At a time when a shrinking student population is causing boards to shutter schools, Westmount sits at 30 per cent overcapacity with 1,500 students. Its bursting enrolment led trustees last month to consider expanding the program to other locations.

“If we have the student interest, we’re going to do our best to provide that sort of programming,” said Todd White, chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

Westmount's style of learning is not for every student, and those attending the school must show they are self-starters and have time-management skills. The school's self-paced, self-directed program began in 1990, and school staff accept students based on their learning profiles, not academic grades.

A self-paced learning style means that students generally decide how to allocate their class time. A math whiz can fast-track through material and use that extra time on history. Some courses, for example, are organized into 20 units and packaged in learning guides, which students work through at their own pace.

When she is not in a classroom, Jewel White can often be found in the school's learning commons, a study area for all students. There are teachers available to help, but generally students are working on their own assignments or projects.

Jewel said Westmount's self-paced style caught her attention when she was looking at high schools. Westmount is not the school closest to her home. She said she would often get into trouble in elementary school for being too disruptive in class because she would be done her work early and not have much else to do.

"I find this kind of environment is a lot better for me," she said. "I like the thought of being able to work faster or slower if needed."

Another student, 13-year-old Andy Medjedovic, just started high school this year, but has fast-tracked mathematics and is now taking a Grade 12 data management course. He did his Grade 9 and 10 math classes through a program Westmount offers while he was still in elementary school, and he completed his Grade 11 math course last semester.

Andy said he hopes to graduate high school within three years.

"I like the idea of fast-tracking," he said. If he were in a different high school, he said, "it would be a much slower and duller year."

Only about a third of students live within walking distance of Westmount. One rides public transit for an hour to get to the building.

The challenge, trustees say, is not only to keep Westmount's student body from growing even bigger in its building but to also create a satellite location that students in other parts of the board can have access to. Board staff are expected to report their findings in the next couple of months, a first step in exploring a program expansion.

Angela Ferguson, principal at Westmount, said the school is popular because it is not meant for gifted students but rather for those who want to direct their own learning. Unlike an alternative school, which has specialized programming, caters to a small group of children or is generally meant for students who would otherwise struggle in a regular school environment, Westmount is run like a typical high school, Ms. Ferguson said.

"We run in a lot of ways like a regular high school and still meet the needs of all different students in all different pathways. We have students who are going to college, university or straight to the workplace," she said.

"It's a strange school because when I walk down the halls, there's always kids in the hall. But as long as they are purposeful and they are heading from point A to point B, there's not a lot of issues there," Ms. Ferguson added. "There's a real focus on learning. There's a lot of empowerment for the kids."