

**report to  
Board of Trustees**

**Recommendation to Commence Public Input to Consider the  
Closure of Start Outreach - Bowness and Westbrook Outreach  
Programs for the Purpose of Relocation**

Date	April 26, 2022
Meeting Type	Regular Meeting, Public Agenda
To	Board of Trustees
From	Christopher Usih Chief Superintendent of Schools
Purpose	Decision
Originator	Dany Breton, Superintendent, Facilities and Environmental Services
Governance Policy Reference	Governance Policies GC-3E: Closure of Schools Procedure  Operational Expectations OE-2: Learning Environment/Treatment of Students OE-3: Instructional Program OE-4: Treatment of Employees OE-5: Financial Planning OE-7: Communicating With and Support for the Board OE-8: Communicating and Engaging with the Public OE-9: Facilities
Resource Person(s)	Prem Randhawa, Education Director, Area 1 Kevin Howell, Education Director, Area 1 Michelle Howell, Education Director, Area 6 Don Barbor, Principal, Discovering Choices Conor McGreish, Acting Manager, Planning Karen Drummond, Manager, Communication and Engagement Tanya Scanga, Manager, Corporate Planning and Reporting

## 1 | Recommendation

---

It is recommended:

- THAT the Board of Trustees is satisfied that there is cause to commence the public input process to consider the closure of the Discovering Choices Start Outreach - Bowness and Westbrook Outreach Program sites for the purpose of relocation in accordance with GC-3E Closure of Schools Procedure.
- THAT the Board of Trustees approves the public input period to consider the closure of the Discovering Choices Start Outreach - Bowness and Westbrook Outreach Program sites for the purpose of relocation be shortened from 60 calendar days to 56 calendar days in accordance with GC-3E Closure of Schools Procedure.

## 2 | Issue

---

The CBE currently offers outreach programming, known as Discovering Choices, at four leased facilities. The leases at two of these sites, namely the Bowness and Westbrook outreach sites, will expire in 2023. This fact, combined with recent changes to government funding for outreach programs, and the elimination of the government requirement to house outreach programs outside of school buildings, means it is now possible to support outreach students in different ways.

Two alternate school locations in close proximity to the current Bowness and Westbrook locations are proposed. These locations would allow Discovering Choices students to participate in enhanced learning opportunities while also continuing to provide the individualized programming and supports available at the current sites.

With the proposed location moves, student access is maintained at four Discovering Choices sites, one location still in each quadrant of the city. There is also the opportunity to provide flexibility and choice for students to choose the location that best meets their needs.

Under the Board's GC-3E Closure of Schools Procedure, the move of a program to another location requires a formal closure process for the purpose of said relocation.

## 3 | Background

---

The province is currently revising its guidelines for outreach programs. As it stands, outreach programs are intended for students who find that regular school programs

and services do not meet their needs. Alberta Education provides funding for these programs to encourage high school-aged students at risk of dropping out of school or facing various challenges, to continue and complete their education. The CBE currently offers outreach programming at four leased locations, one in each quadrant of the city. These are as follows:

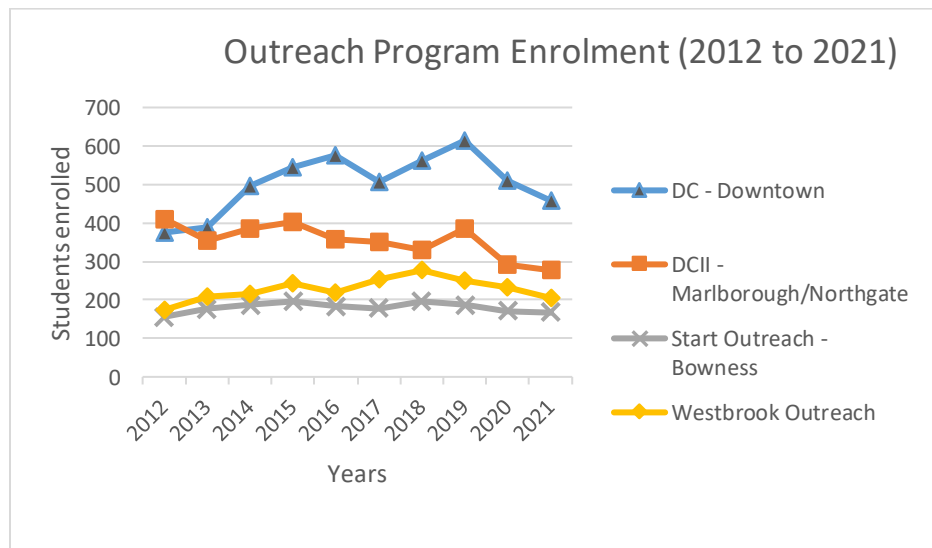
1. Discovering Choices I - Downtown in the S.E.
2. Discovering Choices II - Northgate Mall in the N.E.
3. Start Outreach - Bowness in the N.W.
4. Westbrook Outreach - Westbrook Mall in the S.W.

The Discovering Choices program is designed to meet the individualized needs of outreach students. In addition to the Alberta Programs of Study, outreach programs also provide students with educational supports and services. These include, but are not limited to, personal and career counselling, time management, study skills and learning strategies.

Students enrolled in regular high school programming may transition into Discovering Choices through conversations led by the student’s current high school administrative team. The staff at Discovering Choices engage in an intake process to fully understand the profile of a student and how support and services of outreach can meet their needs. Students and parents/guardians are part of this intake process and must agree to the transition to Discovering Choices. During the school year, ongoing registrations are processed with a focus on continuum of programming for high school students.

Except for the former Marlborough location, which operated at full capacity for several years before moving to the new site at Northgate in 2020, enrolment in other outreach programs has increased since 2012. However, Discovering Choices I & II have more students enrolled than Start Outreach - Bowness and Westbrook Outreach combined. In addition, enrolment at the Bowness and Westbrook locations has been declining since 2018. Diagram 1 below shows the change in student enrolment at all four sites from 2012 to 2021.

*Diagram 1: Outreach Program Enrolment (2012-2021)*



Additionally, funding for the program changed for the 2020-21 school year. The CBE now receives a fixed grant of \$150,000 to operate all four sites. Under the previous outreach grant funding formula, the CBE received a grant of \$62,500 per outreach site for a total of \$250,000 per year. With the decrease in funding, the cost to operate the program at all four locations exceeds the government funding the CBE receives to an ever greater degree.

The provincial requirement to house outreach programs outside of school buildings was also eliminated in 2021-22, and AR 3090 – Outreach Programs is currently being updated to reflect this change.

## 4 | Analysis

---

CBE Administration is proposing a change in location for two of the four sites for the Discovering Choices outreach program for the 2023-24 school year and beyond. It is recommended that the current Start Outreach - Bowness site move to Robert Thirsk High School and the Westbrook Outreach site move to Alternative High School. There are multiple reasons for these moves to be recommended, including the following:

- Student access can be maintained at four Discovering Choices sites, one location still in each quadrant of the city.
- There is space available in close proximity to the current program locations.
- The leases at the Bowness and Westbrook sites are expiring in 2023.
- The moves provide Discovering Choices students with access to enhanced learning opportunities while also continuing to provide the individualized programming and supports provided at the current sites. Students can be placed into sites based on their programming and support needs, ranging from sites that have isolated building sites to those housed in larger schools with sheltered programming with access to engage in optional courses, as per individual student need and interest.
- The government requirement to house outreach programs outside school buildings no longer exists.
- Government funding for outreach sites has changed.

If the proposal is approved, the CBE will continue to operate four outreach locations across the four quadrants of the city with the proposed moves as follows:

- a. Discovering Choices I (Downtown) - will continue at the current SE location;
- b. Discovering Choice II (Northgate) - will continue at the current NE location;
- c. Start Outreach (Bowness) - will move into Robert Thirsk High School in the NW; and
- d. Westbrook Outreach (Westbrook) - will move into Alternative High School in the SW.

### **Enrolment and Impacts**

As of Sept. 29, 2021, 1,108 students were enrolled in outreach programs across all four sites. Over 60 per cent of the students are enrolled at the downtown (41 per cent) and the Northgate (25 per cent) locations. The downtown location had 457 students enrolled, while Northgate had 277 students. These locations will continue

to operate from the existing leased sites. Table 1 shows the students enrolled at all the outreach sites for the 2021-22 school year.

*Table 1: Enrolment in Outreach Programs 2021*

<b>Programs</b>	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>	<b>% of total Enrolment</b>
Discovering Choices I	Downtown	457	41%
Discovering ChoicesII	Northgate	277	25%
Start- Outreach	Bowness	168	15%
Westbrook Outreach	Westbrook	206	19%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1108</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: School Enrolment Report 2021-2022*

With Start Outreach and Westbrook Outreach having less than 40 per cent of the students enrolled in the program and considerable flexibility in attendance, it is estimated that approximately 50-60 students will be at each school location (Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School) on any given day. As a result, the impact on students at Robert Thirsk and Alternative High schools will be minimal.

### **Space, Capacity and Utilization**

Robert Thirsk and Alternative high schools have available space and are close to where Bowness and Westbrook students live. It is estimated that two to four classrooms will be required to accommodate outreach students at both schools.

Projected enrolment will remain the same for both Robert Thirsk and Alternative high schools. However, utilization rates will increase for each of the schools when the outreach programs are relocated to their buildings, given the space they will occupy.

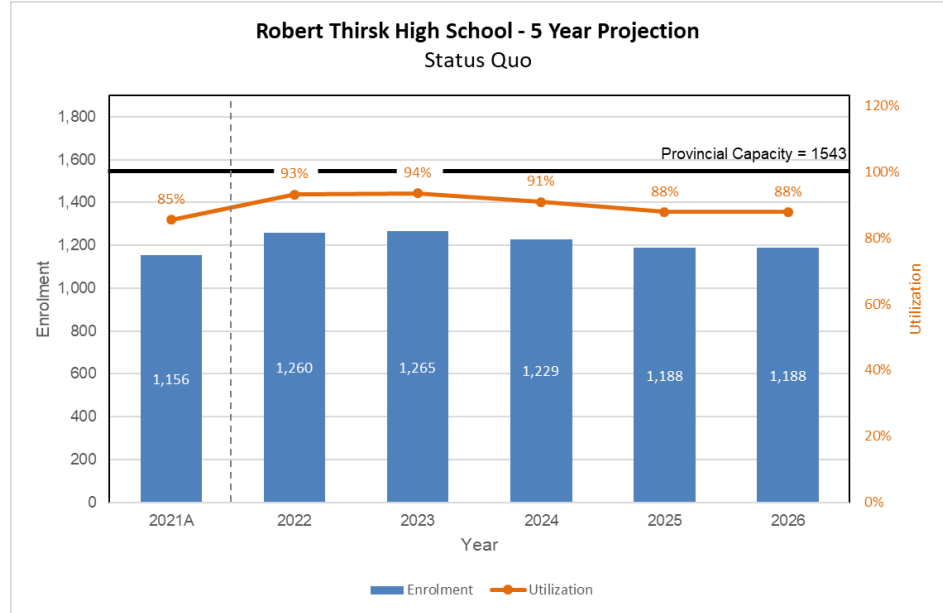
Utilization is a calculation of weighted enrolment divided by the provincial capacity. Weighted enrolment is a calculation that weighs severe complex learners as using three times more space than a non-complex learner. The provincial capacity is based on the amount of instructional space in a building.

Both the formula for weighted enrolment and capacity for schools are provided by the provincial government.

**Robert Thirsk High School**

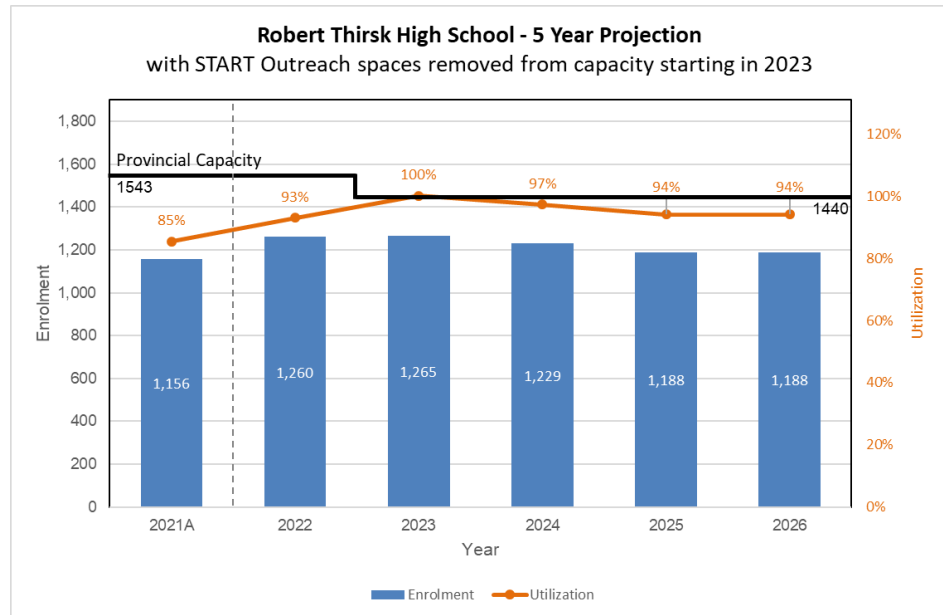
Student enrolment and utilization at Robert Thirsk High School is projected to increase through to 2023. From 2024 onward, enrolment and utilization is projected to decline.

*Diagram 2: Robert Thirsk without Start Outreach (2021-2026)*



With the Start Outreach Program added, there will be a reduction in the provincial capacity from 1,543 to approximately 1,440. As a result, the school will be at capacity in 2023 with a utilization rate of 100 per cent but will decline slowly after that.

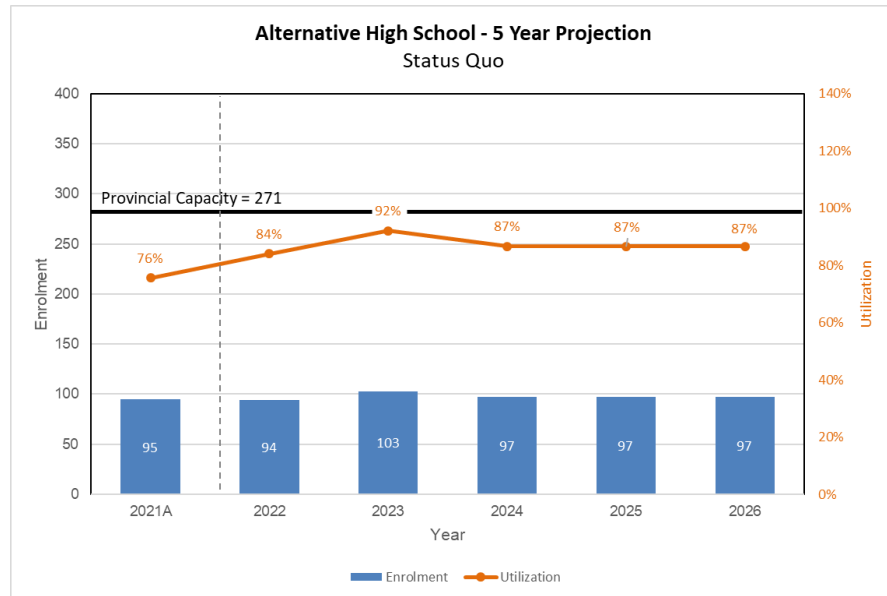
*Diagram 3: Robert Thirsk with Start Outreach program (2021-2026)*



### Alternative High School

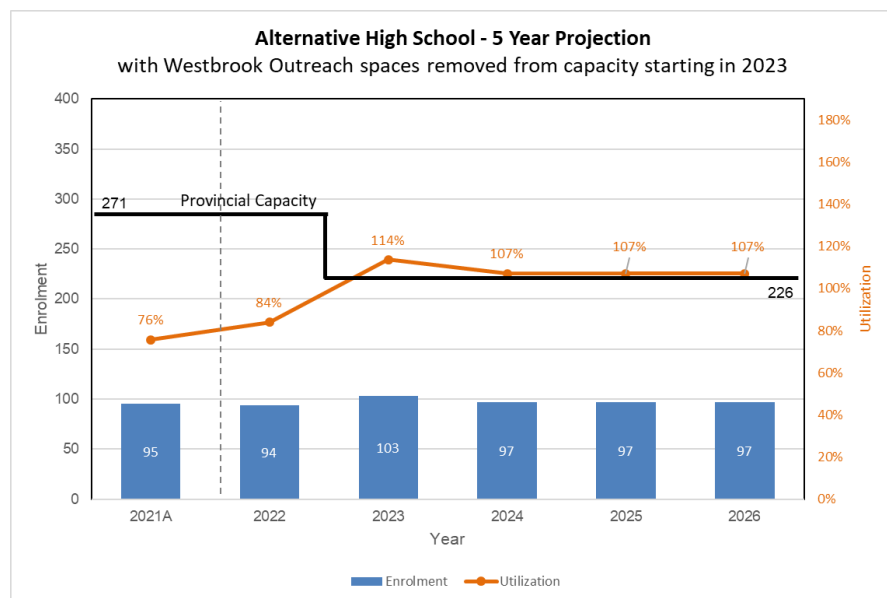
Student enrolment and utilization at Alternative High School is projected to remain stable. Without a change, the school's enrolment and utilization rate is projected to be at its highest in 2023.

Diagram 4: Alternative High without Westbrook Outreach program (2021-2026)



With Westbrook Outreach Program added, there will be a reduction in the provincial capacity from 271 to approximately 226. As a result, the school will be above capacity in 2023 with a utilization rate of 114 per cent but will decline in 2024 and stabilize slightly over 100 per cent. This higher utilization at Alternative High School can be managed through the flexible nature of student schedules, and by the fact that not all students are present at any given time in a high school.

Diagram 5: Alternative High without Westbrook Outreach program (2021-2026)



### **Proximity, Access and Transportation**

A consideration of the proposal for relocating these two outreach sites is that students continue to have access to good transportation to these programs. The majority of the students attending at the current Bowness site are from the Bowness community and surrounding areas in the northwest. Robert Thirsk High School is located approximately 10 minutes away from the current location and is accessible via the Crowfoot LRT, bus, bikes and cars. For Westbrook Outreach, students enrolled are from across the city. To access the program from Alternative High School, students can use various means, including public transit, biking, walking, and private motor car. Of note, current students who attend Alternative High School also come from all over the city and many successfully use Calgary Transit to get to and from school.

### **Learning Opportunities at New Locations**

Under the proposed relocation, outreach students at Bowness would move to Robert Thirsk High School and Westbrook to Alternative High School. There is an opportunity to provide enhanced learning opportunities for students while also continuing to provide the individualized programming and supports provided at current sites.

Many components of outreach supports for Discovering Choices students would remain the same and this includes: individual and flexible programming, access to core courses and well-being supports. Discovering Choices teachers would continue to teach core subjects to Discovering Choices students only. In this way, the programming would be provided in a manner that is consistent with what is currently offered at the Bowness and Westbrook leased sites even though the program would be delivered within a high school building.

Additional opportunities would also be available for outreach students relocating to Robert Thirsk and Alternative high schools and this includes: access to Career and Technology Studies (CTS) and optional courses, opportunity to engage in extra-curricular offerings, access to larger guidance and student services staff. Discovering Choices students would participate in CTS/option courses and extra-curricular activities along with other students at Alternative High School and Robert Thirsk High School.

Alternative High School students take some option classes at their school and also take CTS and other option courses at the Career and Technology Centre or Central Memorial High School, which is across the street.

Students attending Discovering Choices will continue to have flexibility to choose their program location, within spaces and resources available.

The Nexus Program that currently operates out of Bowness will relocate to the Northgate location and this process will be aligned with the specialized placement process led by the CBE's Inclusive Education team.

### **Hearing From Affected Communities**

On March 2, 2022 students, staff and parents at Discovering Choices, Alternative High School and Robert Thirsk High School were advised of the CBE's plans to move the current Westbrook and Bowness locations for the Discovering Choices Program. There were meetings with staff at Discovering Choices, Alternative High



School and Robert Thirsk High School to share information and answers questions March 2. Direct emails were sent to parents March 2 and March 11. Schools also had additional discussions with staff, parents, school councils and students. In these communications, the following opportunities to share perspectives and feedback were highlighted:

- March 14 virtual information session for Discovering Choices families.
- March 15 virtual information session for Alternative and Robert Thirsk families.
- Four March 15 sessions (two virtual and two in-person sessions) for Discovering Choices students currently attending at Bowness and Westbrook locations.
- March 2-17 online surveys for Discovering Choices parents, students and staff.
- School-specific opportunities for input and feedback at Alternative and Robert Thirsk high schools.

For the March 14 session, CBE staff presented information to seven attendees, including trustees. The March 15 session had six attendees, including trustees. The sessions provided an opportunity for families to learn more about plans and ask questions. There were multiple questions and comments shared in the March 14 session related to supporting Discovering Choices students in transitioning to a high school setting. No questions or comments were provided in the March 15 session. Recordings of the presentations are posted on the CBE website for any families who were unable to attend.

There were 24 students in attendance at the March 15 sessions. The comments from students at these sessions reinforce the need for an individualized approach to transitions for students at the Bowness and Westbrook locations. The comments also acknowledge the importance of continuing to provide core programming that is tailored to the needs of Discovering Choices students.

Discovering Choices staff and families were also invited to share their perspectives through online surveys that were available March 2–17, 2022. There were 36 responses on the student and parent survey and 19 responses on the staff survey. The staff results are posted on Insite and the student and parent results are posted on our public website.

In addition, Alternative High School and Robert Thirsk High School provided school-specific opportunities for staff and families to share their feedback on these plans. At Alternative High School, the staff, students and parent community are pleased that their school will remain open and operating in the future. At Robert Thirsk High School, the staff, students and parent community are satisfied to hear that current and future Robert Thirsk students will continue to have access to strong, robust programming, supports and services.

Through all of these opportunities, we have heard a range of perspectives expressed. The most prevalent theme or question from the sessions and surveys is related to transition plans and the ways in which Discovering Choices students can be successful with two locations being moved into high school buildings/settings. Below is more information about how that can be accomplished.

### **Transition Plan for Current and Future Discovering Choices Students**

Student transitions will be coordinated, purposeful and outcomes-oriented. Transitions will be carefully and deliberately planned as they require a holistic approach which is multi-faceted, timely, on-going and responsive. If the proposed relocation is approved, a detailed implementation plan will be created in October 2022 that will include feedback and perspectives gathered from students, parents, staff and school administrators. It is important that transitions are student-focused and are inclusive of the social-emotional needs of each student.

The transition plan will include, but will not be limited to:

- Discovering Choices school administration team and staff working with each student in a personalized approach to support programming, flexible schedules and well-being supports.
- Discovering Choices staff, students and parents being provided an opportunity to tour both Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School during the 2022-23 school year.
- Creating warm, welcoming and conducive learning spaces for Discovering Choices students that include separate classroom spaces, break-out spaces for quiet learning, entrances and exits that are accessible, flexible entry and exit times.
- Current and future Discovering Choices students continuing to have choice as to which outreach location they would like to attend: Robert Thirsk High School, Downtown, Northgate or Alternative High School. By offering the programming in both leased spaces and high school buildings, there is the opportunity to be more responsive to the various needs and interests of different Discovering Choices students. Students can be placed into sites based on their programming and support needs, ranging from sites that have isolated building sites to those housed in larger schools with sheltered programming with access to engage in optional courses, as per individual student need and interest.

### **Existing Leased Sites and Capital Plan Impact**

If approved, the leases at the existing leased sites will be allowed to expire. Accordingly, these sites will not be repurposed for other school jurisdiction purposes, thereby allowing the lease savings to be reinvested within the system in support of student learning.

Additionally, the proposal to relocate outreach sites into Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School is anticipated to favourably impact CBE long-term capital. The primary reason for this is due to how increased system utilization rates are viewed favourably by the government in deciding upon new high school construction requests from school jurisdictions.

### **Abbreviation of the 60 Day Public Input Period**

This report also recommends the abbreviation of the 60 day public input period laid out within GC-3E Closure of Schools Procedure to a 56 day public input period for two reasons. First, shortening the period by 4 calendar days still provides ample time for the holding for public input to be received and the full impacts of the proposed closure for relocation to be understood by the Board. Secondly, bringing this matter for decision to the regularly scheduled public Board meeting of June 21,

2022 maximizes the opportunity for public input while still allowing for communication of the decision before the end of the school year.

## 5 | Financial Impact

---

There will be a cost savings to re-locating outreach programs to Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School. The Bowness and Westbrook locations are currently the two most expensive outreach lease costs, which the CBE would not be paying into the future. The table below highlights the annual lease costs and the cost per student at each outreach location.

*Table 2: Lease cost, enrolment and cost per student at outreach sites*

Location	Annual Lease Cost	2021-2022 Enrolment	2021-2022 Cost Per Student
DC- Downtown	\$ 126,000.00	457	\$ 275.71
DC -Northgate	\$ 110,293.00	277	\$ 398.17
Start Outreach	\$ 184,500.00	168	\$ 1,098.21
Westbrook Outreach	\$ 132,732.00	206	\$ 644.33

In addition to the lease cost, there are other associated costs to running these programs. A total of \$38,000 per annum will be saved between the two sites in custodial contracts, security/alarm, mat rental and water costs.

The financial impact remains limited and is not a driving factor in the short term. Operations and Maintenance (O&M) grants are calculated based on weighted moving average enrolment calculations as well as school utilization. Both Robert Thirsk and Alternative high schools remain above 85 per cent in the forecasted future as noted above, and therefore obtain full O&M funding currently. The leased outreach facilities would not have received O&M funding as prescribed in the funding manual. Therefore, there is no impact on the O&M funding as a result of the moves.

In regards to long-term planning associated with the Resource Allocation Method (RAM) of the outreach programs within the existing schools, there will be little change in the near future. However, as resources are shared between the programs at Alternative and Robert Thirsk high schools, there will be opportunities for overall savings that will be explored. This is further explored in the implementation consequences below.

## 6 | Implementation Consequences

---

In the first year of implementation (2023-24), it is not anticipated there would be any changes to staffing for the Discovering Choices Program, Alternative High School or Robert Thirsk High School directly resulting from the moves. Adjustments are made in school planning and staffing on an ongoing basis in any given school year in accordance with goals and priorities identified in school development plans and the Resource Allocation Method (RAM) schools use for budgeting.

There will be time throughout the 2022-23 school year to provide a smooth transition for students, staff and families.

There will be opportunities for Discovering Choices staff to explore ways to offer outreach programming in new and innovative ways with two leased sites and two school locations. These discussions will be ongoing throughout the 2022-23 school year. There will also be opportunities for Discovering Choices staff to come together with staff at Alternative High School and Robert Thirsk High School to collaborate and share ideas on how to operate the outreach programs alongside the existing school programs in ways that best support all students.

A personal and individualized approach will be taken to transitioning students from the current Bowness and Westbrook locations to the location that best meets their needs. An implementation plan will be communicated by October 2022, which will provide flexibility to adapt to individual student needs.

## 7 | Conclusion

---

There is an opportunity to enhance learning opportunities for Discovering Choices students by offering programming at leased sites, Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School, while concurrently enhancing financial sustainability of the outreach programs. This recommendation would maintain student access to four locations in each quadrant of the city close to where students live. It also allows the CBE to continue offering the same individualized programming and supports at these locations. In addition, transition planning will be highly individualized and students will have the opportunity to choose the location that best meets their needs.

Changes to the funding model, the upcoming expiration of existing leases, and space availability at the two high schools have made this possible.



CHRISTOPHER USIH  
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

### ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment I: Discovering Choices Student & Parent Survey Results Report
- Attachment II: Discovering Choices Staff Survey Results Report

# Discovering Choices Student & Parent Survey Results Report

March 18, 2022



# Background

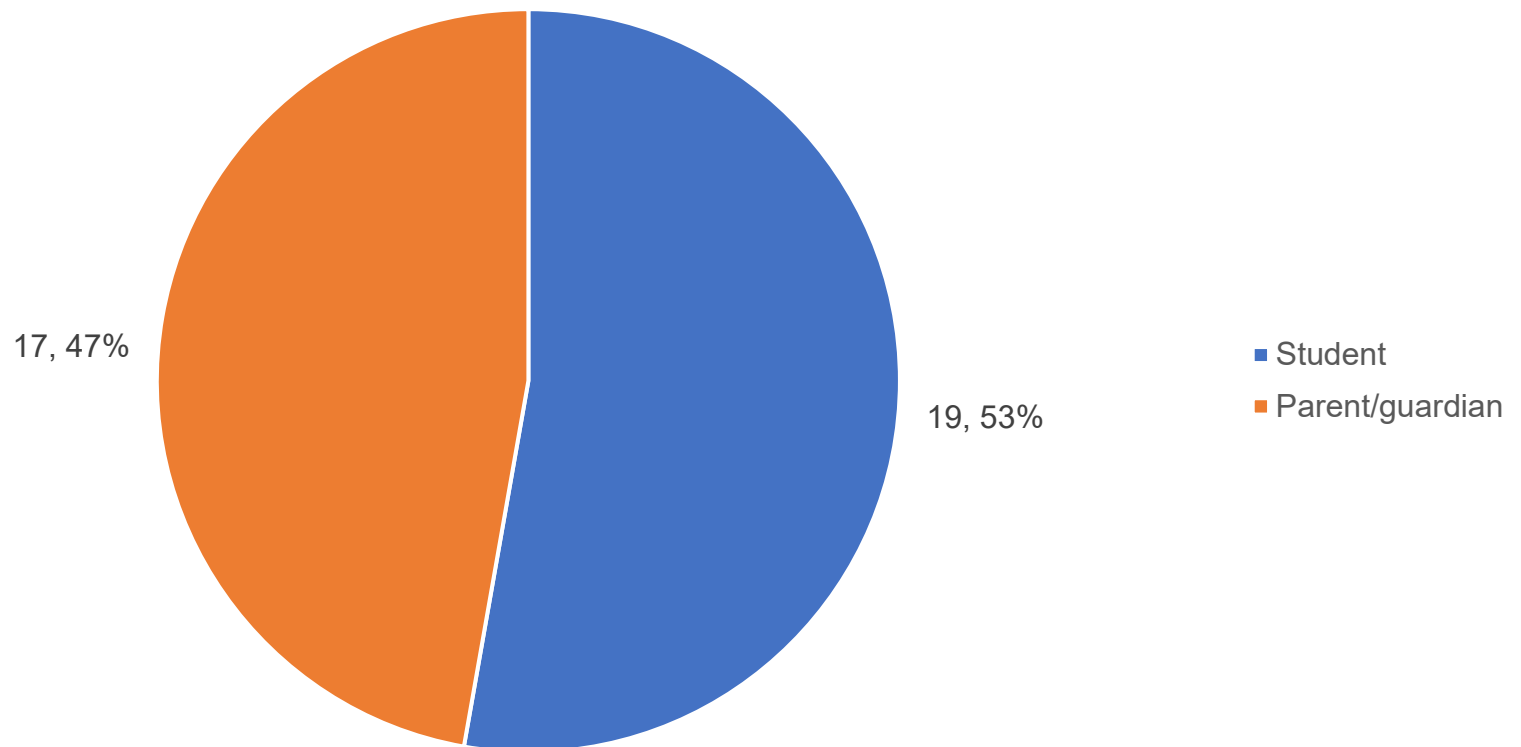
---

- This online survey is available to students and parents March 2-25, 2022. This report captures responses to March 17, 2022.
- The purpose of the survey was to gather input to inform the implementation plan that will support a smooth transition for affected staff and families should the board approve moving these programs. The implementation plan will be communicated publicly by October 2022.
- The level of response to each question varies and is noted for each survey question.

# Please indicate if you are a student or parent/guardian.

---

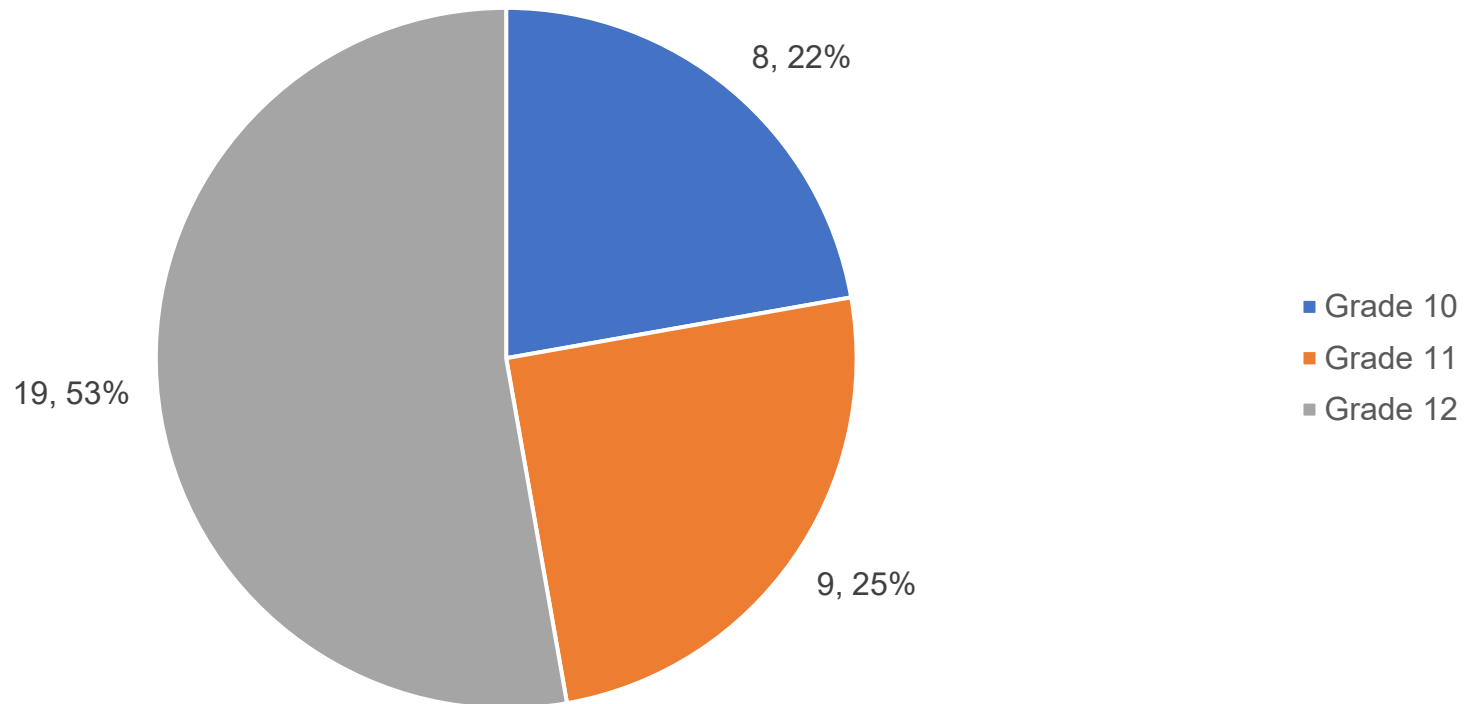
Responses: 36



# Please indicate current grade of Discovering Choices student.

---

Responses: 36

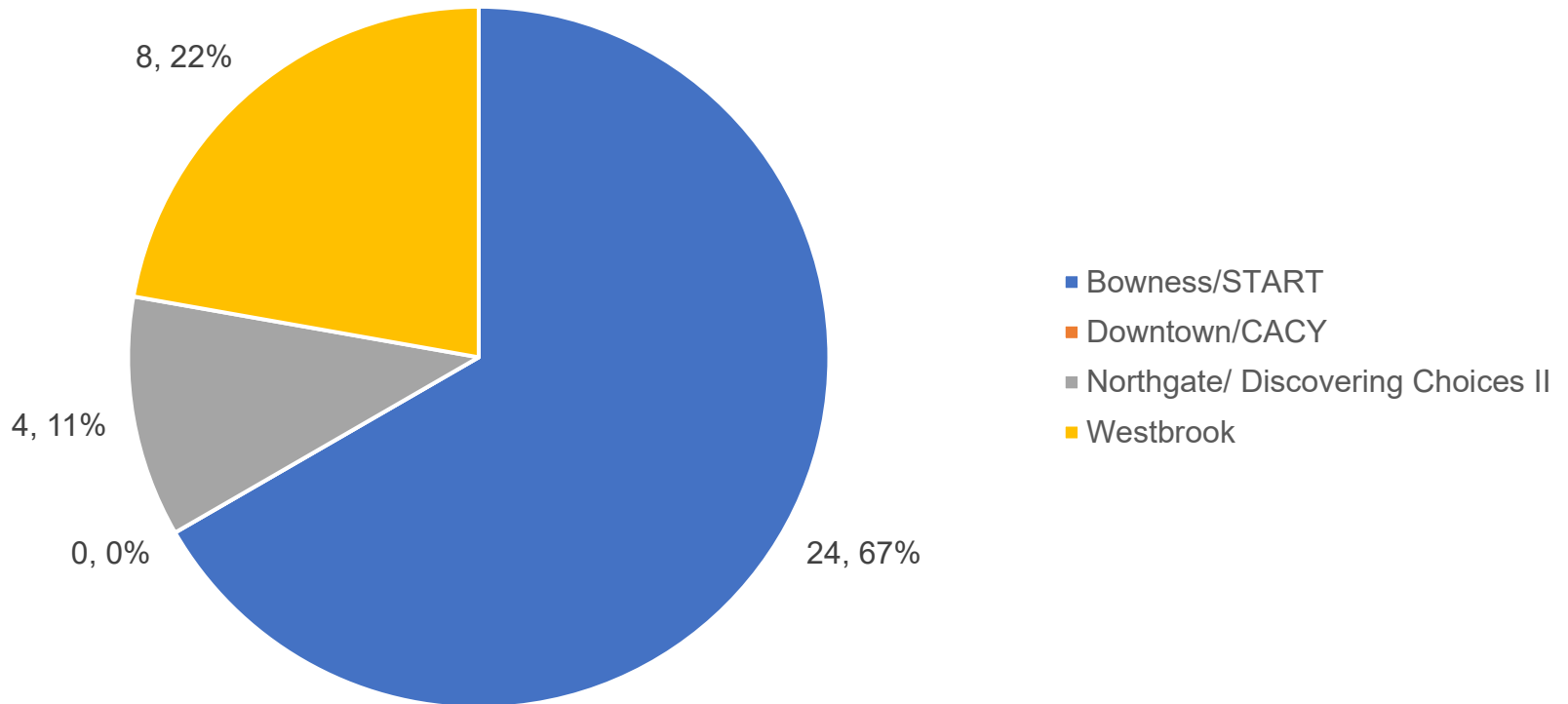




# Please indicate current program location.

---

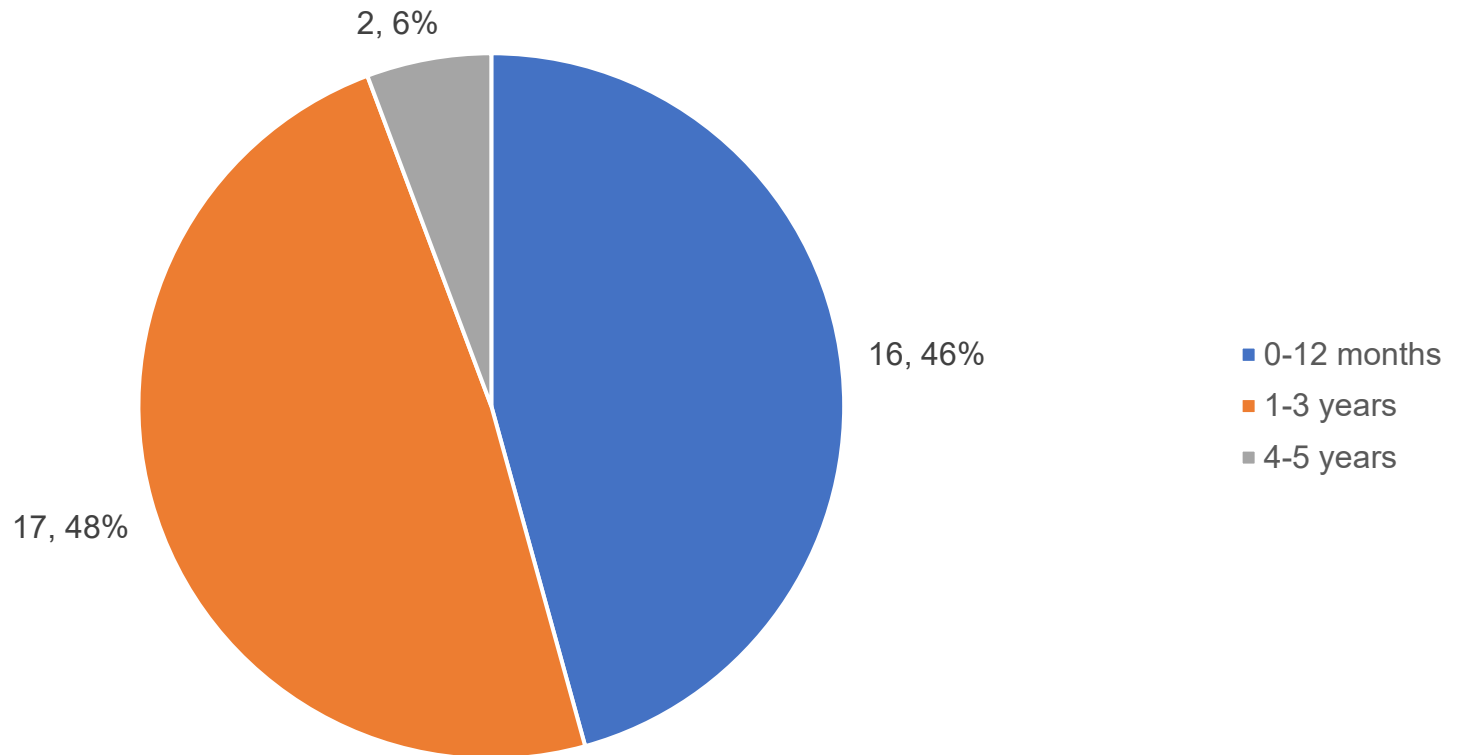
Responses: 36



# Please indicate the number of years attending Discovering Choices.

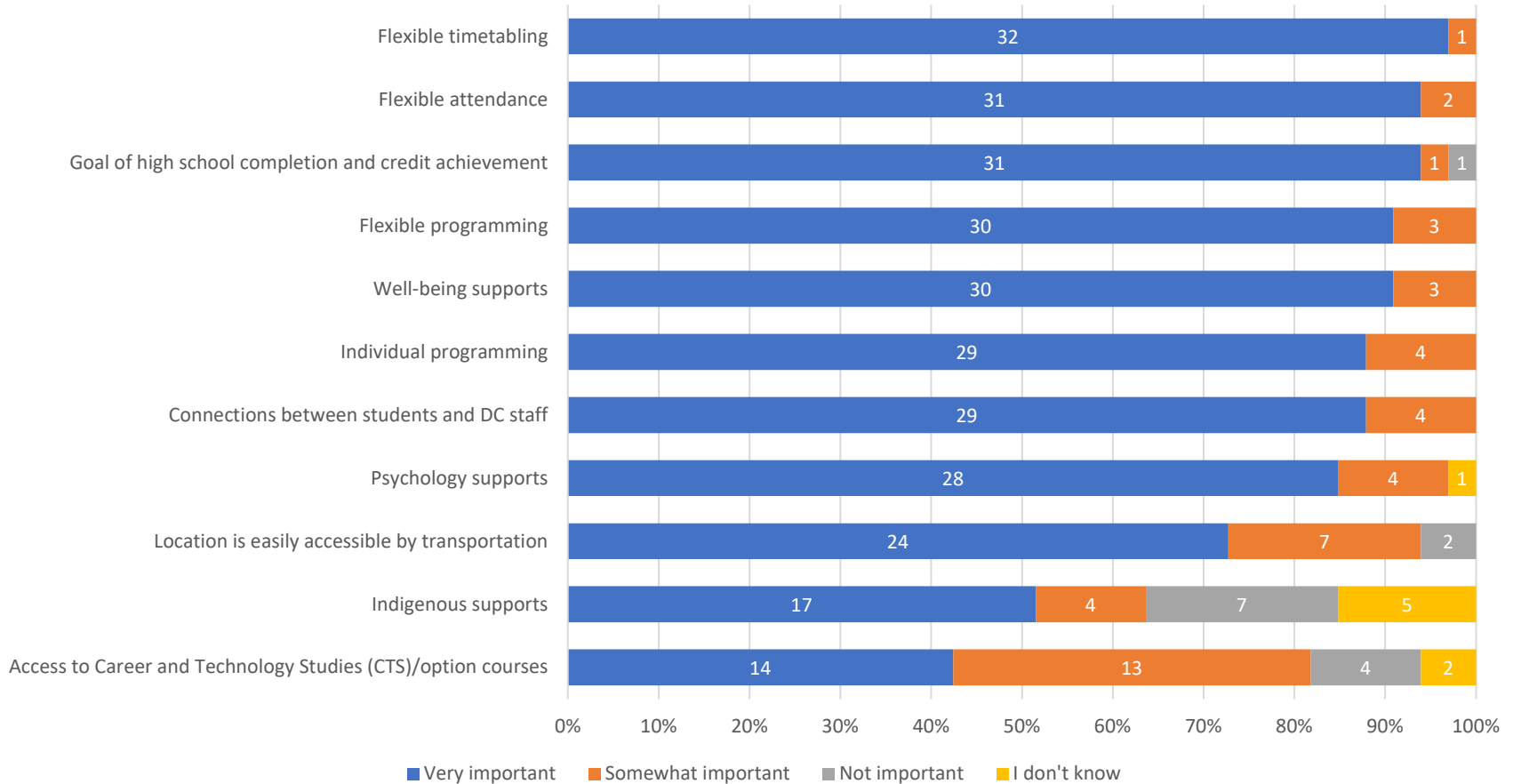
---

Responses: 35



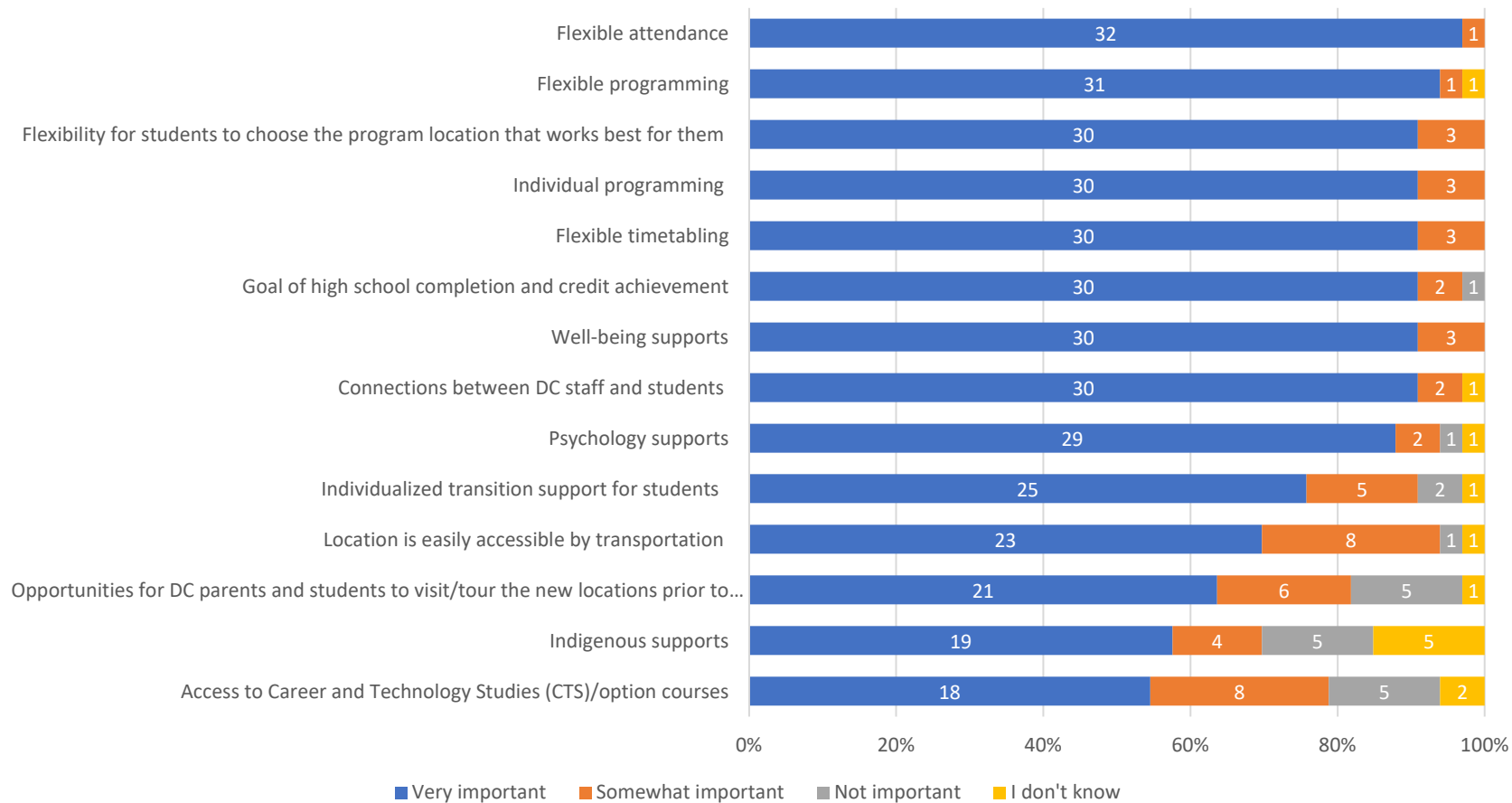
# Please indicate how important the following aspects of the Discovering Choices Program are to you at your current site.

Responses: 33



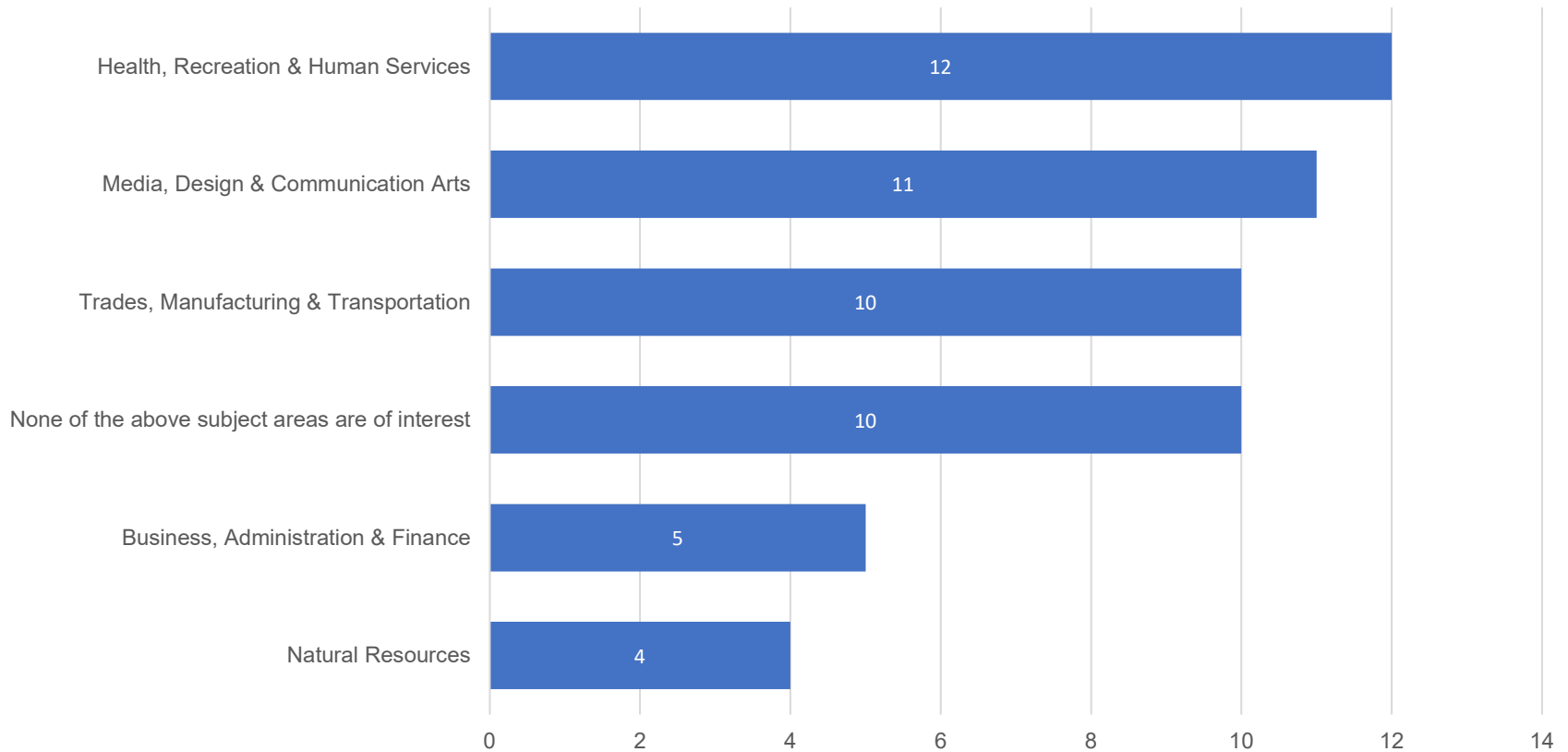
# Please indicate how important the following aspects are to you in ensuring a smooth transition for students and families at a new location.

Responses: 33



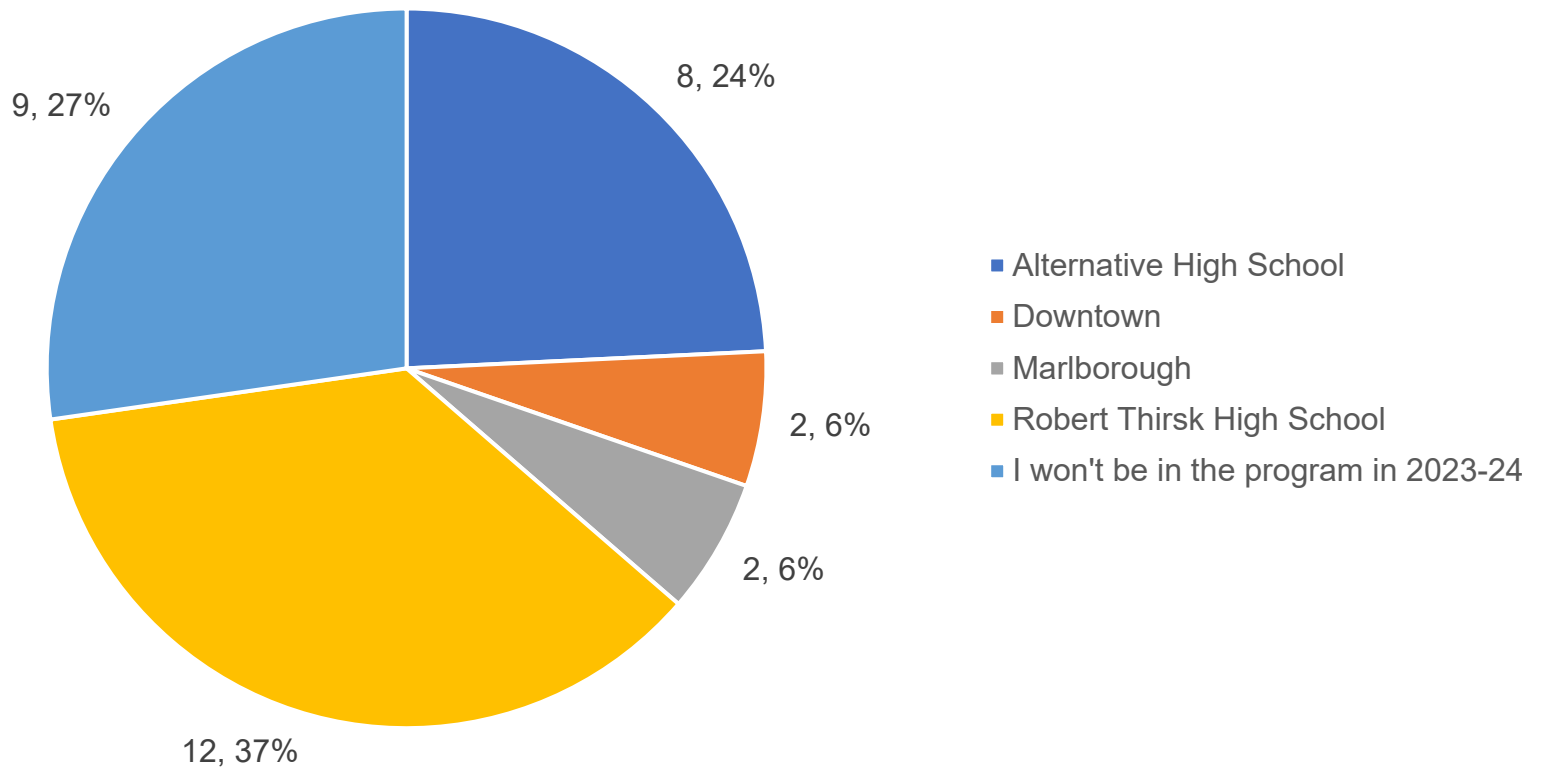
At the recommended locations of Alternative and Robert Thirsk high schools, students will have the opportunity to participate in CTS and other optional courses. At Alternative High School, some of these courses are offered at the Career and Technology Centre or Central Memorial High School, which is located across the street from the school. Please select the subject areas that would be of interest to you at these locations

Responses: 33



If the Board of Trustees approves moving two Discovering Choices locations, which location would be your preferred location in 2023-24? (This won't count as your final choice as that will be confirmed in fall 2022.)

Responses: 33



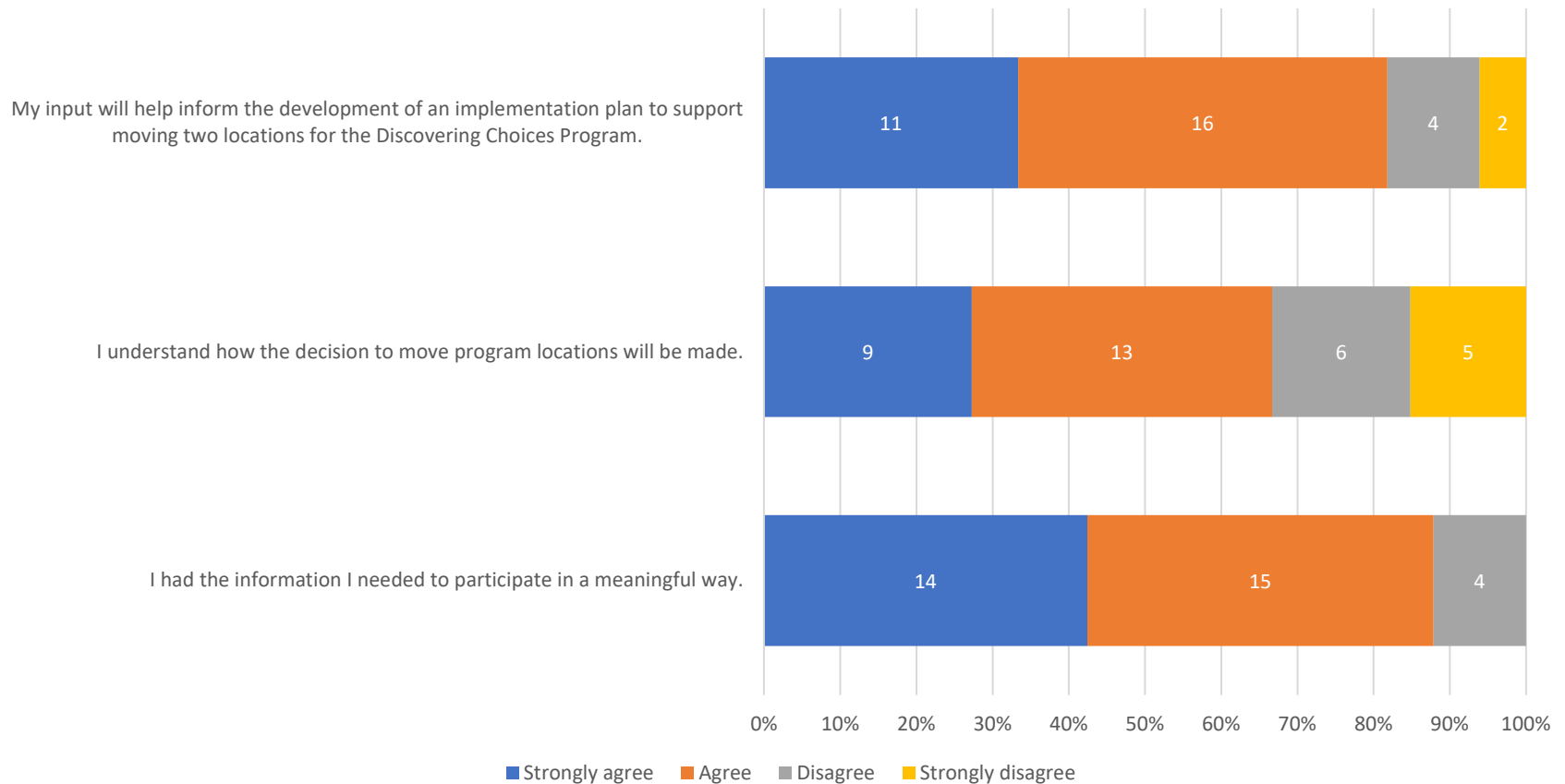
If you have any additional thoughts to share about how we can provide a smooth transition for Discovering Choices staff and students, please share them below.

---

- See page 13 onward for verbatim responses

# Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Responses: 33







**If you have any additional thoughts to share about how we can provide a smooth transition for Discovering Choices staff and students, please share them below.** *(Comments are provided as they were written. Comments have not been edited for accuracy, spelling, grammar, sentence structure or otherwise. Comments have been edited to ensure anonymity. We also edited for omitted abusive, discriminatory and otherwise inappropriate comments.)*

DO NOT CLOSE DC BOWNESS! If your going to close Bowness site, why don't you move this school to Northland mall? Transportation is super easy to get to Northland, rather than going to Crowfoot for Robert Thirsk. This is why there is a special school just for kids who comes from DOMESTIC VIOLENT, HOMELESSNESS, MENTAL HEALTH, SEXUAL ASSULT, GANG LIFE, SUICIDE LIFE, JAIL. That's why this school, Discovering choices, it gives each student hope. This school made me feel welcomed, less pressured, but not when walking in a traditional high school. We don't want to move to a traditional high school where there are more kids, fights, loud and wild students, teachers asking you what are you doing in the hallway, interruptions, bullying, etc. Many kids at this school are VERY individualized, and NEEDS a quiet room, quiet space, not an area where all kids are crowded in one same room, we don't work like that. Some kids has mobility issues, and many can't walk up stairs, or speak, or learn the same way. If the school is closing, GIVE THE STUDENT A VOICE AND GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO HELP KEEP THIS SCHOOL OPEN!! Another note, you shouldn't be closing Bowness, you should actually consider closing DC DOWNTOWN. If you want to move students to a new place, give them a tour around the new place, make them feel like this is an OK school, feel welcomed and make them feel like they can transition smoothly, not just suddenly move them without their consent of feeling comfort. I really do hope you take EVERY STUDENTS OPINION INTO CONSIDERATION AND FIGHT TO KEEP THIS SCHOOL GOING... so thanks!

The change that is coming to our school in 2023-2024 and how this affects us students. I know that this is a difficult decision for those involved with the change that will happen, but I believe that this affects the students at Bowness more than people would assume. Bowness outreach is a school where kids feel acceptance and not have to fear that their differences will make them stand out and be prone to the mean things others do to each-other. I personally have never felt accepted in a school until attending this school, it has been the first time in my entire education journey where I am actually able to say I am happy to attend a school and build relationships with those around me. I am filled with concerns when it comes to this change and talk of change, there is not a main thing I worry about rather the worries vary so I will be covering the main issues I see and I hope to be given honest answers and not promised with things that won't m bet. Coming to this school my parents were met with no school fees, which was a weight lifted off of shoulders because money can become tight for my family. With this change we will be expected to start to pay fees because we'll be in a normal high-school setting. I wouldn't see this as fair for those who are not in financial positions to pay for education. I live in an area of the city where I don't live close to schools and many things such as bus stops which result in me having to take buses that are very far away and etc, so my question is are we guaranteed a way of transportation to this school. I know that many kids are of age to drive themselves but me being 15 and having two parents who work I have no way of getting to the new school.



Will we be promised to be away from other students? For many students the main thing we love about the school we are at at the moment is that we are no longer with thousands of students. I want to know if we will be promised to still have the treatment we have right now at our school. For the second courses that we are being promised, my main concern is how we would be taught in them. If we choose to pick up second courses we are expected to be in classes with other high-school students who already attend that high-school. because at that point it takes away the point of the separation from the other students. I saw this question being brought up but no true answer was given to it but I see it as a big concern, how will we be treated. Let's say a teacher in the normal public school came up to us, do they have the right to tell us to go to class or to not walk around the school if we needed a break. I personally can not deal with teachers who treat kids disrespectfully and expect nice treatment back. Another thing is will we be forced to attend assemblies, gym, etc. Many students in this school have left normal schools for those main reasons that they were not able to participate in those specific things due to mental health or health reasons. So are we being guaranteed that we will not be forced into these extra curricular activities. My main last concern is that other students won't be dropped into our class. I understand that many kids right now don't have a voice in public school to say that their environment isn't correct for them but I do not see how this is fair to students like us, if they were to be placed with us. I find the amount of students we have right now perfect but I feel like once we enter a public high-school many teachers will try to dump their bad behavior students into our environment and I feel as if this will just end with more students getting knocked off course rather than building relationships etc. And lastly I believe that the cbe is in this for themselves. Never once had someone come up to the students and ask if this was not a wise idea rather it was just how to transition into a new school, and half of the questions that were asked were not met with full on answers it seems like nobody has a plan and that the cbe sees us students as dollar signs rather than students who have needs that truly do need to be met or else we are just back to square one where most of us don't know if we will be able to make it to graduation. I really hope this message finds its way to someone who has care towards us students and our well-being and I hope things will change. thank you for your time.

My daughter does not want to attend if DC gets moved to a regular high school. A regular high school is large and busy, which creates anxiety for her. She likes the smaller building with fewer students and the flexibility and support DC offers her.

I am a little concerned as I recently moved my son out of a high school environment for a less stressful and more supportive one. So putting him right back there next year defeats the purpose of moving him in the first place. Also his teacher/student relationships are highly important - I wouldn't want to see him lose those relationships. Having a supportive environment and supportive staff is essential to his success. He requires a lot of flexibility and supportive interactions from his teachers, this is why we sought an alternative program in the first place. Happy to discuss further.

How are you going to make space for students? how will separate exit doors, washrooms, hallways, work? There should be a separate exit so that students in the discovering choices program don't have to go through the Robert Thirsk student crowd to get into the school. Maybe take the whole basement up for this



change as there is another exit door at the back and has washrooms and its own hallway where the Robert Thirsk students aren't allowed. How will you deal with fire alarms? I am sure discovering choices students would not want to be in the big crowd in with all the Robert Thirsk students. Before even moving all the students a tour should be given about how things will work and what the place looks like. I think the problem is students don't want to be in a school with other kids if it's a separate building near the crowfoot station and near Robert Thirsk high school it would be better (separate building not in the school) The students in this program are not ready to join a normal high school.

It would be great if my son could have at least one familiar face transitioning with him. He will not be able to continue with Nexus as it will be moving to Marlborough and transportation is an issue. He has always wanted to join a "regular" high school so this may be good for him if the proper supports are in place and he feels comfortable going to Thirsk. He would benefit greatly from visiting the new school and getting to know key support people as soon as possible.

I cannot function in a public school environment. I prefer learning here at DC Bowness. To transition smoothly, I will need my own space to work with nobody else and no distractions, I will need a separate entrance/exit, I will need to be able to have one on one connections with my teachers when I need it, I will need to have a smaller and dimmer space to function properly.

I don't believe the school should be moved, there is a reason kids want to attend DC and not a regular high school, less and less kids will attend if you move it for the fact of being a place where they could have had traumatic events occur, cause them stress or anxiety. Students need a Place to lean without the anxiety caused by a real high school.

What if the building (Thirsk) presents a challenge of anxiety for a student? There was a lack of support and compassion and that's why the student left

We left Robert Thirsk because a traditional school setting was not compatible with our learning style and situation. The Bowness location is perfect... it's away from the normal setting and gets my child away from the bad memories / pressure of that school. Hearing that we will be moving back to RTHS next year is the worst thing that could happen.

All of the new locations are a 20 min or longer drive from my house, and public transit is only longer. I don't consistently have access to a vehicle and I don't have a lot of time to waste on transit. This move would make it significantly more difficult for me to attend school.

My Son has mental health diagnosis and additional issues. Moving Bowness Nexus Program away from Bowness area which we consider a very safe location to Marlborough location is absolutely will result in his drop off from School. Despite his mental health issues he is intellectually unimpaired and absolutely able to finish school yet he does need special supports to do so. Bowness school was a saviour for my Son and



provides him a very positive baseline not only for education reasons but for learning to be engage in society at large. I hope the board will find the way to continue Bowness Nexus Program in its current location and not move it to Marlborough with known major issues where kids unavoidable will be exposed to crime and drugs. Bowness further away from Calgary Downtown problems is a perfect safe location for these kids.

My son attends discovering choices because he could not physically stand to enter into the bigger high school after being humiliated by a couple of teachers in front of peers- he mentioned that the smell, crowds of students and overall stress of being in a high school setting stopped him from attending classes. If he was to have to go back into a large population of high school students he would probably stop attending. The location of the NE discovery choices is amazing as he goes in and feels supported without the trauma of being in the building that was causing him stress and anxiety.

I want to keep my programming in the northwest area of the city because it is where I feel the safest and is most accessible to me via bus. I am in the nexus program which gives me the supports I need when I'm having a tough day or need support with my mental health, as well as having a smaller classroom within discovering choices. -With Nexus being moved to Marlborough, I do not feel safe in that area, I have bad memories. I will struggle to make the commute there. I have had substance use challenges in my past and am sober right now. I don't want to expose myself to that risk again in that area. I don't want to see people using as that is a trigger for me.

I am a staff member at DC Northgate. I know our space was designed for both hosting a Nexus classroom and a smaller population due to years of declining population. Unfortunately, this was due in part to an epically small space inside Marlborough Mall, and Covid/online education reducing our numbers even further. That has changed since we moved to our new space. Northgate is growing by leaps and bounds. We are currently sitting at 292 students, with over 40 registrations since Feb 1. We are seeing an average attendance of 70 kids a day, most of whom are regulars. We are already struggling finding space for registrations when groups are happening. We are seeing a high population of high anxiety students join us lately. There has been a large influx from other schools who are sending these students to us as they can't serve their needs in mainstream. Many of them work in the 3rd classroom as their needs are met more effectively in this space. If we move Bowness, we will be moving that Nexus classroom into Northgate, into the designated space currently occupied by Classroom 3. The students currently utilizing this space, the ones with high anxiety, will be required to work in the other classrooms. My biggest concern is we will lose the connection we have worked so hard to make with these students. As we go through the rest of 2021 school year and work through 2022 school year, we may see students with less anxiety as they get used to being around people again. Then again, we may not. I'm concerned we will lose the opportunity to help these kids reintegrate.

Do not move students into a regular high school with their own "special space". This will make students feel alienated in their own space as they have to go to their specialized program. As young people the anxiety of being differ or being seen as "stupid" is extremely stress inducing. Having to see our peers go into a regular



system could be embarrassing for some students. To add on if I know that my friends are right next door and they have a break nine times out of 10 I would leave class to join them or if they know that my school schedule is extremely flexible they are more likely to skip their classes and leave school. I believe that the students that attend discovering choices need to have they're separate safe space where they do not feel the confines of regular high school.

keep the bowness building please. The environment and atmosphere it provides cannot be recreated in a different setting. The integration of 2 schools will significantly impact students learning and their interaction with staff, due to the new factors such as unwanted attention from other students and a busier crowd. Although I'm a graduate student of 2022, the bowness site has definitely brought me back onto my feet through the amazing support from the staff. For the first year at bowness outreach, it was the spacious rooms and a tall ceiling within this building that got me through schooling. The individual rooms offered to students gave me comfort and security for me to be successful in my academics while my mental health was recovering. I just want you to know I want future students to have the same opportunity that I was given, and have them experience it for themselves. Please give this plead some thoughts.

dont move it we need are own building. i cant agree with this. the point of start is to not be at a normal school.

# Discovering Choices Staff Survey Results Report

March 18, 2022



**Calgary Board  
of Education**

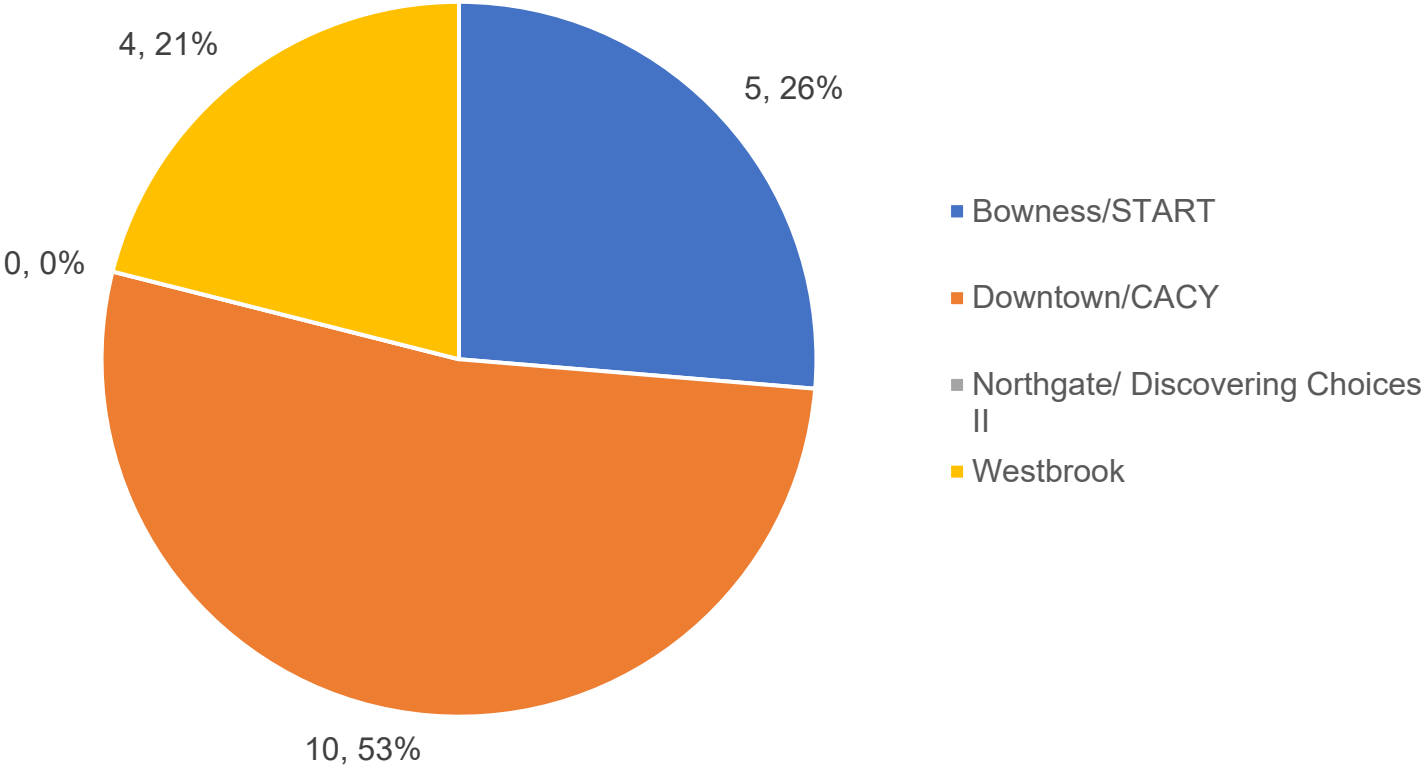
# Background

---

- This online survey was available to staff March 2-17, 2022.
- The purpose of the survey was to gather input to inform the implementation plan that will support a smooth transition for affected staff and families should the board approve moving these programs. The implementation plan will be communicated publicly by October 2022.
- The level of response to each question varies and is noted for each survey question.

# Please indicate your current program location:

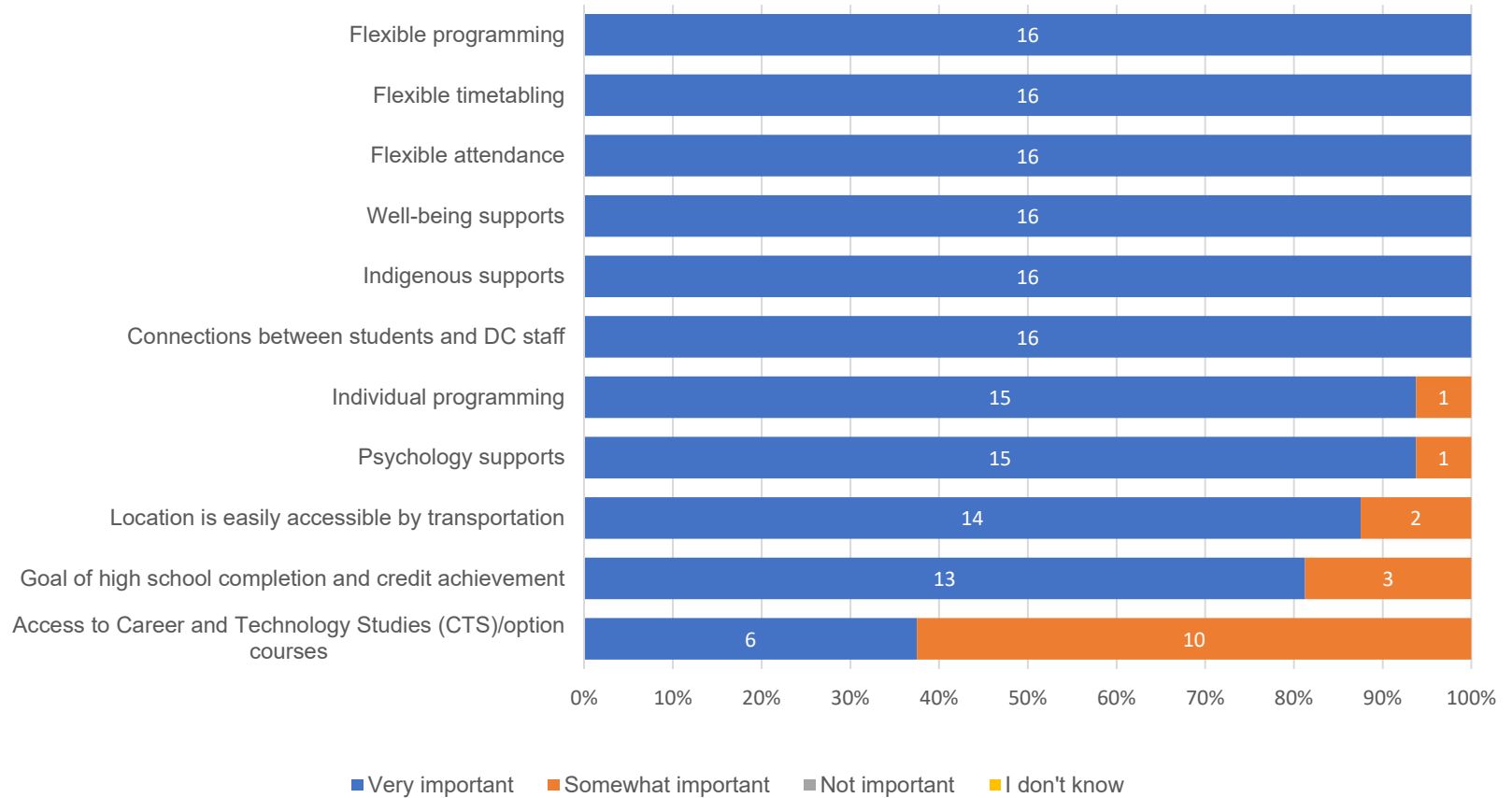
Responses: 19





# Please indicate how important the following aspects of the Discovering Choices Program are to you at your current site.

Responses: 16



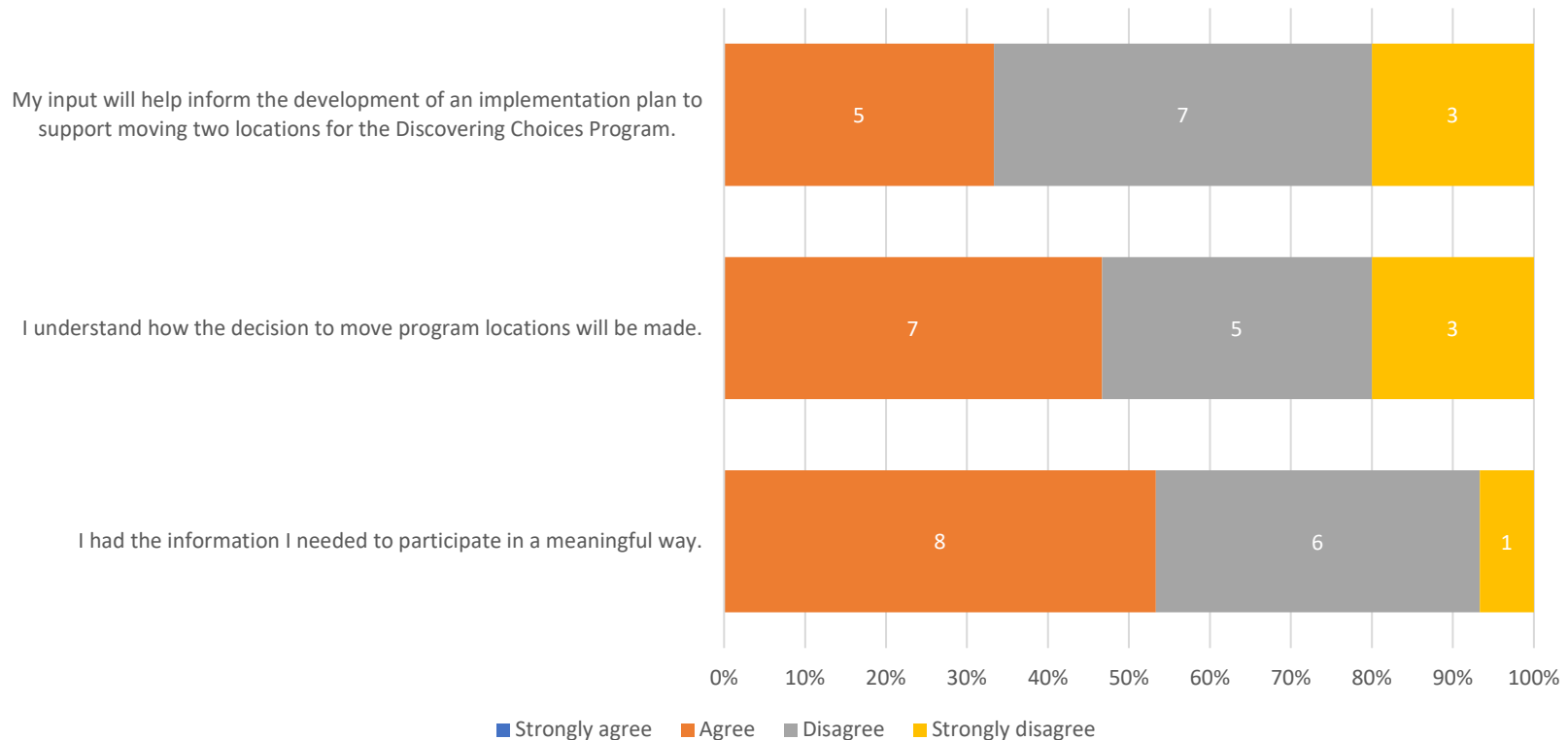
If you have any additional thoughts to share about how we can provide a smooth transition for Discovering Choices staff and students, please share them below.

---

- See page 7 onward for verbatim responses

# Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Responses: 15





**If you have any additional thoughts to share about how we can provide a smooth transition for Discovering Choices staff and students, please share them below.** *(Comments are provided as they were written. Comments have not been edited for accuracy, spelling, grammar, sentence structure or otherwise. Comments have been edited to ensure anonymity. We also edited for omitted abusive, discriminatory and otherwise inappropriate comments.)*

Outreach is based on individual programming, meeting at student where they're at, individualizing what success looks like, flexibility, personalization, ongoing enrollment and being non-semestered. It's about supported failing and promoting growth opportunities, comprehensive supports and student and staff collaboration. At its core, it's based foremost on relationship building and hope, thus to ensure a smooth transition, funding, resources, collaboration, inclusive decision making, student voice, transparency and maintaining the essence of these characteristics are critical.

It is paramount that students, staff, and community members have input into the pending changes. Feeling heard and included in the process will translate into a more successful transition. Not simply completing a survey with very limited room for "input". A real conversation that honours the values and beliefs which have evolved over time to create a school of choice for over 1200 students a year. As staff, we aren't opposed to change and understand the need for fiscal responsibility. We also know our students and what will help set them up to be responsible citizens. During registrations, MANY of our students cite their primary reason for leaving a traditional high school is feeling anxious in the building itself and by large numbers of students and staff in the same space. What will be offered to these students as an alternative? Had we been asked, I believe that many staff would have been on board with closing Bowness and welcoming students and staff into the 3 other sites. It is clear from the language in this survey that our expertise was not important enough to be included.

In the meeting it was suggested that an academic program would continue, but it was also stated students will have access to CTS, and other programming in their new location. With our program having continuous enrollment and not being semestered, as well as the inability of many of our students to meet the requirements of traditional programs, I want to advocate for programs such as PhysEd and CTS to still be accessed through Outreach programming or that our students will have access to a flexible program. In the new program locations, having access to a few classrooms was mentioned. We have many students with mental health and social/ emotional challenges. Our programs regularly use break out rooms to provide privacy for students to talk with staff, or to work quietly if they are feeling particularly anxious. Having the space to meet these ongoing needs would help students stay in the school building and help them to be successful in their learning. An intentional plan around managing school expectations for students would be incredibly helpful. Again, students who have struggled with the structures of a traditional program often find success with us. How can we ensure that students will be able to continue to focus on learning when they come to school, not the structures that previously didn't work for them? In terms of staffing, in



conversations between staff I've heard there is a lot of uncertainty about the future of Outreach. As things start to change what is the commitment of the CBE to these programs? It would go a long way if staff understood system intentions. Most staff are connected to this program because of their commitment to the type of work we do with students. If staff are placed in an Outreach program in a high school, how long does the board intend to keep this as an Outreach program? Is there a further plan to absorb these programs into their host schools? Is there a timeline on when we will know where staff will be placed? With redundancies in staffing at new locations will positions be lost? I would say staff are highly committed to Outreach and the success of its programs, but this level of uncertainty makes buy in more challenging. If I have other ideas/ input is there a way to share further?

It is important for The DC site at Robert Thirsk to have it's own identity, it's own space.

The vulnerability of Discovering Choices students (DC) needs to be paramount in the decisions made. Many have experienced trauma and significantly detrimental life circumstances. They come to DC because traditional high schools have contributed to their difficulties and were unable to meet their needs. Housing two DC programs within traditional high schools presents many challenges and we must be mindful of protecting these vulnerable students, without drawing more attention to their unique needs. Outreach has always been a separate entity because that is the only proven design that is effective. The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) already has specialized programming within traditional schools, and DC frequently registers students who were not successful in these programs. The flexibility, accessibility, and extensive support necessary for DC students to be successful will be extremely difficult to offer from within Robert Thirsk and Alternative High schools. A better solution would be to close down either the Bowness or Westbrook DC location temporarily and find a new separate place to house the other that is between Bowness and Westbrook and easily accessible by Calgary Transit. If students truly do come first in the CBE and safe and caring environments are a priority, maintaining our outreach programs by valuing their stand-alone design and prioritizing their funding is crucial. In times of funding deficits, it becomes even more necessary to support the most marginalized and vulnerable students effectively.

Recognizing that students who do well at Discovering Choices and are successful in the outreach program, are also those who do not/are not successful in large traditional school settings. Large populations, strict rule environments and highly scheduled settings. Being able to recognize this when moving into Thirsk/Alternative settings might be a challenge, since you are moving into settings that perhaps are the problems for students that are successful within the outreach programs.

I am concerned that being located in a traditional setting will be detrimental to student attendance. Better options would be elementary schools or stand alone buildings so that our students are not connected to locations where they have experienced trauma, anxiety, and peer issues.



I worry that this transition is going to cause students to not come. In reach programs in the CBE have never worked and have been very ineffective. It is tough for us as a staff to not worry that a program we have built is not going to be in these schools for a year or two then chewed up and spit out. I also for see that because these two programs are being moved to place with difficult transit to reach (no c train for alti and a long walk to the train for thursk) I also worry about being isolated from the programs at these high schools. We do need to function different then the traditional highschool but we still need to be able to work with the staff in the building. A sperate entrance for our program may be needed also with awareness that we may need to allow students to come and go as they need. As blow ups or anxiety attack's happen we need to be able to use the hall way or outdoor space to do this. Our students do not work well on schedules so if the expectation is that they only move through the halls during the schedule times it wont work. It will need to be viewed as and treated positively by the tradition space we cant have school staff treating it as a punishment or less then program that will be destructive we have had in our programs all levels of students abiltiy from math 30-1 to k and e our students need to have a positive stigma around them not negative and that is very important. Support staff BSW and ISW are very important to us i know ISW can mark but that is not what we normally need from support staff we need experience staff to help with the complex struggles our students deal with. If our students are in crisis or no food security they are not learning and our support staff have done wonders supporting students in these areas so we teachers can do our jobs and get them to graduation. I don't think this move is the right way to deal with this but based on the way you have worded the question this survey is not a consultation on if but how.

With the limitations that are present being housed an office building, the PE, outdoor leadership, Jam club and art teachers/staff have done an incredible job of craving out spaces, options and opportunities for the DT DC students to have access to meaningful and interesting options experiences and classes. With the impending changes, it would be optimal to have blocks of time for DC students in the dedicated spaces of Thursk and Alternative high schools i.e. time in the gym, time in the labs, time in the weight room, art rooms. I think it will be important to have this NOT be time blended with students of Alternative and Thursk with teachers of those High Schools but with the DC teachers who have established mutually respectful relationships and expectations based on the individual DC students needs. While some DC students will be able to join mainstream classes and walk in both worlds, some DC students will not and I hope that those that cannot will be offered equal access to resources in the school buildings with the supports that they require that are offered in outreach. The DT site no longer has the same level of Indigenous supports due to the changes to the strategies for Indigenous education in the CBE and the move of the CACY Catholic Family Services youth worker to Louise Dean - there are no specific targeted Indigenous services DT . However, it remains important for our Indigenous students to have access to information about community connections and to have staff who are knowable and connected to the happenings in the community as well as having a large visual representation of Indigenous students.



I hope that we will be able to continue to offer the option courses that are currently available to our students.