



ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

(For the purposes of this survey alternative education is defined as any program/approach that supports students who are not successfully engaged in school and require an alternate delivery model)

**School Board:** Waterloo Region District School Board  
**Contact Person and Email Address:** Peter Rubenschuh, Superintendent - peter\_rubenschuh@wrdsb.ca  
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**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Uturn Alternative Programs – Uturn Connect, Uturn, Uturn Diversion, Uturn Works & Re-engagement

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

### Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

The focus is on programs/initiatives/strategies that increase student engagement, confidence, achievement and well-being. In the brief description please provide answers to the following questions: Where the program/initiative/strategy is delivered (school/board locations)? Who is responsible for delivering and monitoring the program/initiative/strategy? Who is the target audience? Are there any community partnerships involved? Are there any staffing or budget implications? Are there any special resources required? What are your indicators of success, etc.?

**Location:** Storefront Alternative Education Sites; Cambridge and Waterloo.

**Delivery by:** Vice Principal, Alternative Education Teachers, CYW's & Social Workers.

**Target Audience:** At-risk youth who are disengaged from mainstream school with a variety of challenges ie: truancy, lack of motivation, stress/anxiety, anti-social behaviour, peer conflict and low grades .

**Partnerships:** Circle of support partners including Public Health, Nutrition for Learning, Ray of Hope Addictions Services, John Howard Society, Lutherwood, Waterloo Regional Police Services SRO, support from Probation, OW, F & CS.

**Staffing:** Teachers have an alternative education special education or outdoor background, small class sizes, CYW allocated to each class, access to social workers.

**Budget Implications:** School Board allocates funding to support alternative education sites and

infrastructure. Students use Chromebooks, access bus tickets, recreational supports, breakfast & lunch provided at each location. Funds to create an invitational learning environment for students ie: couches in the student lounge, access to Board foundation grants for clothing, hygiene products for students with financial needs.

**Special Resources:** Unique co-op placements, mindfulness approaches, in class activities like rock climbing and kickboxing. Access to YMCA gym facilities and recreational activities in the community. We have access to Board Social Workers to support students in crisis, CYW workers support transition plan back to mainstream school after readiness is demonstrated or scaffold to other co-located Uturn program – co-op Uturn works, or when student is 18 and close to graduating transfer to Re-engagement program.

**Success Indicators:** -student attendance improves – less truancy

- Students are able to transition successfully back to mainstream school or another co-located alternative program
- Students self-regulation of their emotions and demonstrate ability to make better choices, resolve conflict and problem solve
- Communication sheets and self-advocacy growth
- We have students who graduate with their OSSD, gain fulltime employment
- Students return to thank us and visit
- Co-located programs work collaboratively to transition students between programs and regular monitoring their progress

#### **What has been the impact on Student Learning?**

Our invitational, supportive alternative storefront learning environment with the circle of support from community partnerships and a dedicated, engaging staff has proven success with 14-18 at risk students.

Our program provides modifications and accommodations using an individual student centred flexible approach. We teach high interest relevant courses combined with kinesthetic activities. Staff are able to build relationships as staff student ratio is lower and as a result students open up, and are able to better focus on their social-emotional well-being and become more resilient and self-assured. Once students feel more connected & supported they put more effort into their studies and attend regularly.

Our new Uturn Connect for grade 8 & 9 truant students is an early intervention approach with a welcoming environment, regular outings (rock climbing) and development on work habits and regular attendance.

Uturn Works our co-op program for students in other Uturn programs has graduates who earn their OSSD and secure employment each semester.

Uturn Diversion in partnership with the John Howard Society programs supports our students, who are in trouble with the law. Students work at their own pace on their own individualized learning plan and a flexible schedule and access the John Howard programing on site.

Re-engagement is an alternative opportunity for 18-21 year old students to still be enrolled in courses and still work at a pace that suits and reflects their unique situations. We have reached over 300 students with past year, collaborate with Conestoga College dual credit and graduating students with OSSD

All of these Uturn programs are co-located to support a seamless and more successful transition between programs if a student is not able to transition back to mainstream school. Students achieve and find success in our non-traditional learning setting with a focus on building relationships and strengthening their social emotional learning in a welcoming safe setting.