

Pathway Transfer to Postsecondary

Exploring the Connection between Tuition Free Credit Courses and Postsecondary Studies

Executive Summary



January 30th, 2017

Hamilton

ONCAT Final Report (#2016-14)

Mohawk is pleased to submit this final report that details the research, analysis and findings of the Exploring the connection between tuition free credit courses and postsecondary studies project, funded by the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) under the Pathway Transfer to Postsecondary fund.

Since launching the Community Access Strategy in 2010, Mohawk continues to lead the community and the province in mobilizing resources to significantly increase the postsecondary participation levels of underrepresented and vulnerable youth and adults residing in priority neighbourhoods. The Community Access Strategy has the following strategic objectives:

- To raise awareness of opportunities for and pathways to learning beyond high school;
- To support greater accessibility to postsecondary through diversified learning opportunities;
- To bring the college to the community through the establishment of community-based learning hubs;
- To enhance the early college experience through mentorships, reach-ahead activities, and dual credit opportunities.

In October 2015, Mohawk launched an intentional strategy to deliver accessible postsecondary education through a place-based methodology at the neighbourhood level through the City School by Mohawk initiative. The first City School site opened at the Eva Rothwell Resource Centre (the former Robert Land Elementary School), located in the Keith neighbourhood, one of eleven priority neighbourhoods in Hamilton.

The goal of City School is to create a welcome, open space for learning, community engagement and partnership, student collaboration and experiential learning. Presently with two sites, City School has generated significant interest among other jurisdictions tackling poverty and marginalization within their community, and praise from residents who have participated City School programming.

The research undertaken studied the perceptions and outcomes experienced by residents of priority neighbourhoods who participated and enrolled in City School programming and activities, and examined the feedback provided by faculty who led the instructional work of City School.

The study's results indicated significant promise in the City School model, with participating residents conveying high levels of satisfaction with their learning and engagement experience. Many students felt that the courses provided them with an opportunity to build academic confidence, and connected them to Mohawk College through a strong support system that advocated for their interests and aspirations. Students expressed positive views on how the classroom instruction was managed, observing that faculty approached their teaching predicated on student-centred instruction. Among a number of other positive findings, the students appreciated the flexibility of course delivery schedules that were able to accommodate to their personal situations, and valued the integration of child-minding facilities.

We are indebted to the citizens of Hamilton's neighbourhoods who participated in these early City School educational offerings, and are sincerely grateful for their unqualified trust and confidence in permitting us to include them in this study. It is also important to recognize the faculty and staff team whom provided the exemplary program design and delivery which helped to pioneer City School in the Hamilton community.

The City School team is very encouraged by the outcomes identified in this report, and see the report's recommendations as an opportunity to improve and strengthen the pedagogy; curriculum and program design of the City School initiative, while we continue to focus on building a robust accessible postsecondary pathway framework that enables hope and aspiration for marginalized communities.

Mohawk College is sincerely appreciative to the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer for its support of this research.

James L. Vanderveken
Dean
Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies