



École John W. MacLeod - Fleming Tower School
School Advisory Council

June 6, 2019

Dear JWMFT Community Members,

RE: HRCE Announcement of the Addition of a Portable Classroom for the 2019/20 School Year

This is further to yesterday's announcement from Principal Emily Quigley regarding the Halifax Regional Centre of Education's (HRCE) plan for addressing the projected increase in school enrollment in the 2019/2020 school year.

As outlined in Emily's letter, the School Advisory Council was approached by the HRCE in April to provide feedback on three potential short-term planning options. The Council learned of the consultation request just prior to its meeting held on April 17, 2019, during which discussion of the matter was done *in camera*. The Council was made aware of HRCE seeking the Council's recommendation as soon as possible following our meeting, so most of the meeting was spent on the item and arriving at our recommendation. Additionally, Cunard Junior High School principal, Paula Fairbairn, was in attendance to assist in our discussion with respect to the third option of moving the grade 6 students to her school.

With HRCE's decision being announced, the Council has moved to release the Summary of the rationale and factors we considered in support of our recommendation - a document that formed part of the *in camera* minutes and was submitted to the HRCE as part of our recommendation. The Council felt it was important to not only provide HRCE with a recommendation, but to include the reasons for why we didn't support the other two. Attached to this letter is a copy of the Summary of our discussion on the three options presented.

For further context, in seeking input the HRCE provided the Council with the following parameters to factor into any recommendation:

- The HRCE goal is to meet CAP guidelines;
- Decisions can involve Grade configurations;
- Decisions can involve the addition of portables;
- Decisions should maximize available classroom spaces as defined in the Long- Range Outlook. Decisions must respect dedicated spaces in schools (Gym, Library, Learning Centre, Music rooms. Family Studies and Technology Labs);
- Pre-Primary expansion may need to be considered in schools not currently housing the program; and
- Boundary reviews are outside of the parameters of the group.

We hope the attached summary is useful in providing insight into our decision-making process on this. Should you have questions or concerns on this, please contact myself or another member of the Council.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Moorhouse', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dave Moorhouse
Chair, School Advisory Council
École John W. MacLeod – Fleming Tower School

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École John W. MacLeod - Fleming Tower School School Advisory Council

This is further to HRCE's for input on three possible solutions brought forward at our regular Council meeting on April 17, 2019. The following is a summary of a consultation requested of the Council and rationale for our decision to support the second option of adding a portable classroom (with recommendation that this addition is accompanied by an additional teacher) to alleviate the enrollment pressures.

As understood from the parameters provided by the HRCE, the options were considered in the context of being a one-year solution for the 2019/20 school year, pending the completion of the new J.L. Illsley which HRCE currently projects to open in 2021.

We are grateful for HRCE's request for input from our Council. As the HRCE is very aware, the enrollment pressures are a paramount concern for our school community. We look forward to receipt of information regarding any decisions made around the proposed solutions. In the interim, we remain willing to provide further consultation or input that would assist the HRCE in addressing the enrollment pressures, and any other matters that arise.

Yours truly,

Dave Moorhouse

Chair, School Advisory Council

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Option #1 – Status Quo – No Change to Current Configuration

Contextual Factors Discussed by Council:

- **What are our current class numbers at?**
 - Current Enrollment: Sep 2018: 452; Apr 2019: 453
 - CAP Guidelines:
 - Hard Cap: **P-2** – 22 students (20+2); **3-6** – 27 students (25+2)
 - Soft Cap: **P-2** – 20 students; **3-6** – 25 students
 - JWMFT's 21 classes are all under their respective caps.
- **Enrollment for 2019/20 school year next year:**
 - Currently have 74 primary students incoming – subject to change with late registration.
 - HRCE is projecting P-6 enrollment for 2019/20 at 461 students, a net increase of 8 students.
- We know there will be increased enrollment (HRCE is currently projecting a net increase of 10 students). However, there is still uncertainty on what the final numbers will look like.
- Assume that families will continue to move into Governor's Brook subdivision and other areas over the summer, and new apartment building on Purcell's Cove Road may be completed prior to or during the 2019/20 school year.

FOR

- The council did not find any reasons to support this option.

AGAINST

- Better to have the additional space from a portable than remain without any changes to accommodate the expected increased enrollment.
- Current classes are under cap, but with expected increases, some French classes are likely to be at cap next year (English class numbers not expected to present cap issues)

Option #1 Outcome: Council does not support this Option.

Option #2 – Addition of a Portable Classroom Where Feasible (at JW or FT)

Contextual Factors Discussed by Council:

- If a portable was to be added, it would only be feasible at the JW site and not FT, for the following reasons:
 - Portables are less appropriate for younger students.
 - Adding a portable at FT might mean having a 2/3 split class at that site – grade 3 students could be considered too old for that site.
 - Fleming Tower site has less day-to-day traffic and no full-time office personnel with sight lines to the portables.
- ***Does the proposal for adding a portable include an additional teacher?*** The proposed option for a portable did not expressly include an additional resource i.e. teacher for the space. Even without a teacher for the new space, the additional room could be used to improve space constraints elsewhere. Nevertheless, if this option is supported, it would be prudent to recommend inclusion of a resource.

FOR

- Additional portable would not have a significant impact on play space as it would likely be located at the back of the school where the b-ball backboard with no hoop is located.
- Despite some parents' object to portables (initially and/or in principle), portables are generally a positive experience for students and staff i.e. brand-new space, lots of windows.

AGAINST

- Portables are only a band-aid solution to a bigger problem to be addressed.
- No washrooms; students required to use facilities in main building.
- Unsightly addition to the school yard.

Option #2 Outcome: Council supports this option, with recommendation that the portable classroom be accompanied by a additional resource i.e. a teacher.

Option #3 – Moving Grade 6's to Cunard Junior High

Contextual Factors Discussed by Council:

- ***Would there be families impacted by the split i.e. siblings at two schools?*** Likely, but this is something that would occur at some point anyway.

- **Would it be both the English and French Grade 6 classes that would move?** Not entirely clear, but there are concerns around moving them together and moving just the English (since Cunard does not have French Immersion).

FOR

- Moving the Grade 6's would address the concerns regarding over-capacity at JWMFT, and Cunard has space for four classes.

AGAINST

- Grouping Grade 6 students with Grade 9 students can be problematic.
- Concerns re moving just the Grade 6 English classes:
 - Split from friends in same cohort, and therefore preference is likely to move both English and French together.
 - Just the Grade 6 English group would be a smaller proportion of the youngest students at the school.
- Concerns re moving Grade 6 French and English classes:
 - Move to Cunard would mean changing schools two years in a row, as they would move on to Elizabeth Sutherland for Grade 7 (Cunard does not have French Immersion).
 - Possible challenges in setting up French program for single class (teachers are contracted with each school; moving one teacher from JWM to Cunard is not necessarily a simple solution).
- There are Grade 6 traditions/ opportunities at JWM that the kids may miss out on with a move e.g. electricity fair, Milford House Class Trip

Option #3 Outcome: Council does not support this Option.