



Executive Summary
Proposed New French Immersion School
Timmins, Ontario
December 18, 2008

School Boards were given the opportunity to submit capital plans to the Ministry of Education in response to the Provincial Government's announcement that \$500 million was being allocated for capital construction within the education sector.

Given that none of the schools are considered "prohibitive to repair" the opportunity to put forward the replacement of schools that are currently 89 (Flora MacDonald), 71 (Queen Elizabeth) and 52 (Coronation) years of age is something that the Board determined was its number one priority.

An Accommodation Review is required only because the existing physical school facilities will close. All other aspects of the schools will remain if the potential synergistic opportunities are taken advantage of by the greater school community.

Where Would the New School be Located?

It should also be noted that if one of the existing sites were predetermined by the Board to be the site of a new school, an Accommodation Review for that school would not be required. The Board felt that the process should include all schools and therefore purposely did not nor has it predetermined the location of the new school. The initial planning stage which follows the general acceptance of the concept and the allocation of funding by the Ministry of Education will further pursue this issue.

What are the Advantages of Having the New School

1. Replacing Three "Old" Schools With a New Technologically Based Facility

The new school will replace three "old" schools. The Board will have the opportunity to include all of the new technology available to support student success. Such technology includes FM hearing systems in classrooms which have proven to increase student achievement, the latest computer assisted learning technology such as interactive Smart Technologies (Smart Boards) as well as wireless systems which aid in the location and use of computer technology to best support student learning.

2. Curriculum Expectations

The expectations of the curriculum are numerous and rigorous. The expectations for a classroom teacher to present and meet the individual needs and learning styles are huge in classrooms containing three or more grades.

The expectations for each grade listed below shows the extensiveness of the demands placed on both the teachers and students:

JK and SK - 150 in each grade
Grade 1 - 377
Grade 2 - 387
Grade 3 - 393
Grade 4 - 483
Grade 5 - 456
Grade 6 - 462
Grade 7 - 516
Grade 8 - 538

When classrooms in excess of two grades are established the expected outcomes become daunting, detrimental and a barrier which limits the student's potential for greater success.

The new school as planned will have no combined grades.

3. Same Age Groupings

It is important for children to grow up in settings or groups where children are of the same age. Same age groupings promote stronger friendships, skills and abilities. As well, friendly competition and age development occurs. This also helps promote greater self-confidence and self-esteem for the student and promotes a broader learning experience for the children in our care.

This discrepancy in age and stage of development in multi-grade classrooms leads to a lack of social capital with a broad difference in age of up to five years.

From the Ministry document "Education for All"; Ornstein and Langley, 2004 in their research on student learning in classes state "Such confidence is essential for students to cope with minor frustration; to play with ideas; and to select a plan of action to carry out through peer groups and cooperative learning strategies can help relieve anxiety and stress."

The children will be in the same age groupings in the new school.

4. Student Support Within The Classroom

In a multiple classroom setting of three or more grades there is less support for each student available from the teacher as the teacher is required to instruct more lessons, and modify more programs to address individual needs. The students in this setting receive significantly less assistance and as a result are required to work independently most of the time.

The students in the new school will not compete for attention in the single grade classrooms.

5. Full Program Options

With the decline of enrolment and the establishment of multiple grade classrooms in the existing schools over time, fewer programs may be offered.

In the school the students will continue to have access full range of program options.

6. Teacher Professional Development

Teachers in today's classrooms must be able to discuss and collaborate on learning strategies for students in their class. They must do running records of assessment which are developed through same grade and divisional dialogue. In multiple classrooms where the teacher is the only primary, junior or intermediate teacher, we are greatly inhibiting the growth of both the teacher and the students.

In "Education for All" the Ontario Ministry of Education expects the following "A Professional Learning Community is exemplified by collaborative work that is grounded in reflective dialogue, in which staff in each division have conversations about students, teaching, and learning, identify interrelated issues and problems and debating strategies that could bring about real change....it refers to a way of operating that emphasizes the importance of each individual staff person and of supporting the collective engagement of staff in such activities as problem identification, capacity building and vision for classroom learning."

Through Professional Learning Communities, O'Connor's research showed "As teachers deepen their understanding, they change their practice, and as they improve their practice, students' learning improves commensurately."

The opportunities for teacher professional development will be greatly enhanced.

7. Student Participation in Some Curricular, Extracurricular and Team Sports

Students in schools with fewer students have limited ability to participate in curricular, extracurricular and team sports with other schools as their groups are too small. This inhibits their ability to develop many necessary life skills such as sportsmanship among their peers that they will not necessarily obtain in the regular classroom.

The students in the new school will have the opportunity to participate in more curricular, extracurricular and team sports.

8. Student Supervision

Student supervision has been an ongoing issue at these three schools among the three parties involved, the Board, the Elementary Teachers Federation and the government appointed commission mainly because of the size of the teaching staffs in smaller schools available to provide the supervision necessary to ensure student safety.

The new school will have sufficient staff to provide the required supervision within reasonable agreed guidelines. As well there is an opportunity to design the school and school yard in such a way as to reduce required supervision to enhance student safety.

9. Cost Savings

The consolidation of students into single school will produce cost savings estimated at \$578,000. This is important as resources decline and the Board's ability to meet the needs of all students within the Board's jurisdiction continues to diminish. The Board's ability to continue to provide "The Best That Education Has to Offer" will be greatly reduced and this will affect all students under the stewardship of the Board.

10. Government Perspectives

Quote from the Minister of Education and Senior Ministry Staff

On April 18th at the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association Annual Conference, the Minister of Education, The Honourable Kathleen Wynne stated "It would be fundamentally irresponsible of the Ministry of Education to tie the hands of the Board to not close schools due their inability to provide the best programs to meet the needs of our students."

On April 21st, at a meeting with the Board team in Toronto, Nancy Naylor, Assistant Deputy Minister stated that "The Ministry of Education is focusing on the consolidation of schools. Too many of our schools are under-utilized."

Quote From the Premier of Ontario

In a News Release on April 24th Premier McGuinty discussed the effects of declining enrolment and all the cost saving measures boards across the provinces were considering. He stated that "school closures aren't all bad" if "(school boards) can put more money into support for kids and less money into supporting buildings which aren't really serving their intended purpose, then it is probably a good thing."