Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board PAR – East Credit

Preferred Rationale Proposed by the St. Herbert Community

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Presented to the ARC on March 2, 2016
Ministry’s PAR Guideline

The Ministry of Education’s Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline requires school boards to consider three guiding principles when developing PAR policies:

1. Student well-being;
2. Student achievement; and
3. School board financial viability
Source of the Guidelines

• Section 169.1(1) of the *Education Act* mandates that every school board shall, “promote student achievement and well-being and . . . ensure effective stewardship of board resources”.

• The Ministry of Education clearly states that trustees must consider these three principles in all decision making including decisions to close schools.
  • Trustees are expected to carry out “. . . their primary responsibilities of fostering student achievement and well-being, and ensuring effective stewardship of school board resources.” (Source: Ministry of Education, Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline, March 2015)
Balanced Budget

• Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (the “Board”) must maintain a balanced budget.

• Due to a significant reduction of provincial funding, the Board must reduce their budget by $1.5 million in each of the next three years for a total savings of $4.5 million.

• In November 2015, our Board of Trustees approved the commencement of the PAR process in East Credit in order to address the budget shortfall.
Alternative to School Closures

• The preference of the St. Herbert community is that no schools be closed.

• As stated, Trustees are mandated by the Ministry of Education pursuant to the *Education Act*, to promote student well-being and achievement.

• During the Finance Department’s presentation on February 3, 2016, the ARC was advised that,
  • “Trustees may choose to do nothing, but depending on the outcome of this process, it will affect the budget next year. Trustees may reprioritize the budget cuts. If savings don’t come from here, they must come from somewhere else to balance the budget.”

• Given the potential negative impact of school closures on student well-being and achievement, it is our position that the Board should first explore all other possible means of achieving a balanced budget before resorting to school closures.
School Closures

• In the event that a comprehensive analysis of all alternatives to school closures concludes that school closures are the only means of achieving a balanced budget, the St. Herbert community respectfully submits that the Board should close as few schools as possible.

• We strongly recommend that our proposed rationale be used to determine which school(s) should be closed.

• Our proposed Option 7 meets the proposed rationale without having to close three schools.
Closure of Three Schools

• Board data indicates that East Credit is “significantly under capacity”. Four additional areas within the DPCDSB are projected to be “significantly under capacity” in the next four years.

• Any Option that proposes closing three schools in East Credit to address the funding cuts is inequitable as it places a disproportionate burden on the school communities of East Credit.

• Closing three schools in East Credit is inconsistent with the principles of student well-being and achievement due to the proposed separation of student communities and the resulting over capacity at one or more receiving schools. Utilization rates of the combined schools in Options 1-4 range from 102%-129% (2017-2025).
Preferred Rationale

1. Promote student well-being by keeping students together when moving a school community to another school.

2. Retain newer schools that have lower costs (i.e. outstanding renewal needs + maintenance costs).

3. Reduce the number of schools significantly under capacity in East Credit.

4. Avoid over capacity to minimize the need for RCMs or portables at receiving schools and maintain reasonable class sizes consistent with Ministry guidelines.
5. Maintain Catholic presence in the area.

6. Additional considerations raised by ARC members:
   • Keep schools with high projected enrollment;
   • Maintain space for the possible introduction of new programs to the East Credit area such as Extended French or International Baccalaureate;
   • Ensure accessibility for special needs students;
   • Maintain space for prayer room and specialized classrooms;
   • Avoid separation of school community upon graduation to high school; and
   • Keep schools with air conditioning to provide physical environment conducive to learning and also to attract revenue generating rental during the summer.

The preferred rationale complies with all PAR Guidelines set by the Ministry of Education.
Application of Rationale

• Option 7 complies with the preferred rationale. The details of Option 7 are set out below.

➢ Open schools:
  • St. Dunstan, St. Gertrude, St. Gregory, St. Herbert, St. Raymond, and St. Valentine

➢ Closed schools:
  • Our Lady of Good Voyage and St. Bernadette

➢ Student Relocation:
  • All Our Lady of Good Voyage students move to St. Raymond
  • All St. Bernadette students move to St. Herbert
Option 7 Meets Preferred Rationale

• No school communities are separated. All students from closed schools are moved as a unit to receiving schools.
• Schools with the highest projected enrollment over the next 3 years remain open.
• Five out of six East Credit schools are no longer significantly under capacity.
• In 2017, O.L.G.V., St. Bernadette, St. Herbert and St. Raymond combined have a projected utilization rate of 50%. In Option 7, the projected utilization after combining these schools increases to 83% in the receiving schools.
• Option 5 proposes the addition of Extended French at St. Dunstan. Options 5 and 7 result in virtually the same average utilization (2017 to 2025) with the inclusion of Extended French at St. Dunstan (74.4% for Option 5 and 73.6% for Option 7).
East Credit Utilization - Comparison

Utilization

YEAR

Option 7  Option 5
Option 7 Avoids Problems Caused by Over Capacity

- No portables or RCMs required at receiving schools.
- Average class size for the two consolidated schools is 20 students which is consistent with the Ministry’s average class size requirements.
- Space is available at one or more schools in East Credit for the introduction of programs such as Extended French and International Baccalaureate. These programs may increase utilization but more importantly, will promote student well-being and achievement.
- Does not require the elimination of prayer rooms and/or specialized classrooms.
Option 7 – Additional Considerations

• Receiving schools are accessible for all students (special needs and students who may suffer an injury). There is an elevator at both receiving schools providing access to both the second floor and the stage. Any other possible accessibility issues would be fully addressed by the Board prior to September 2017 in compliance with the Education Act and the Human Rights Code.

• Students in the proposed consolidated schools live within St. Joseph’s boundary and thus, graduating students will be able to attend high school together.

• Keeps newer schools with air conditioning which assists student learning and may attract possible revenue stream during the summer months. For example, French Summer Program offered by a private company.

• Maintains Catholic presence in the area.
Catholic Presence in the Area

• The map of feeder schools for St. Joseph Secondary School shows the Catholic presence in East Credit and adjacent areas.

• St. David of Wales contributes to the Catholic presence in the area despite the fact that it was not included in the East Credit PAR process.

• In Option 7, two schools would close – one north of Bristol Road and one south of Bristol Road.

• Option 7 retains a total of seven Catholic schools in the area – five schools in St. Joseph’s family of schools and two schools in the adjacent areas north of Britannia and east of Mavis.

• Option 7 maintains the Catholic presence in East Credit to the same or greater extent as all other proposed options.
Option 7 – Financial Advantages

- Compared to Option 5, which also proposes the closure of two schools, Option 7 results in a lower average FCI.
  - Option 5: Average FCI = 12.4% (higher than Board average)
  - Option 7: Average FCI = 10.0% (lower than Board average)
- Maximum savings are achieved by closing the oldest schools with the highest overall costs.
- Option 7 would result in over $5 million in savings for the Board as early as September 2017.
- In comparison to Option 5, Option 7 saves the Board an additional $1.27 million dollars.
Total Costs Saved – Option 5 vs. Option 7

School Renewal Needs

Option 5: $3,805,282
Option 7: $5,074,410

- Total Costs Saved: $5,074,410
- Option 5 vs. Option 7

- Green: School Renewal Needs
- Blue: Maintenance Expenditures
Disadvantages of Staff Options

• In all three staff options, students are not moved together as a unit to another school. Two school communities in each option are separated and sent to different receiving schools.

• All three options result in one or more schools being over capacity as early as 2017. In 2025, two schools are over capacity in each option which may result in larger class sizes, the need for portables or additions, and/or the loss of specialized classrooms.

• For example, Option 1 creates the need for portables at St. Valentine and/or the elimination of one or more of the specialized classrooms within the school.
Another example of the difficulty created by over capacity in Option 1 relates to FDK. No new facility requirements are identified in the Initial Staff Report for St. Valentine meaning that all FDK students (86 from St. Gertrude and 99 from St. Valentine) would be put into the existing four FDK classrooms.

Thus, from 2017-2025, each FDK class would consist of at least 46 students. This raises serious concerns regarding student safety and student learning.

Options 1-3 close schools with the highest projected enrollment.

As already explained, closing three schools in East Credit places a disproportionate burden on the school communities of East Credit.
Disadvantages of Option 4

• In 2017, St. Dunstan can accommodate 3 FDK classrooms, however, each class will have 30 students which is greater than the required Board average (26 students).

• Loss of the science and technology classroom to make room for the third FDK classroom.

• By 2020, Option 4 results in the need for a portable, the elimination of a specialized classroom, or the loss of YMCA spaces.

• Portables at St. Dunstan would result in the loss of hard surface play area.
Disadvantages of Option 4 cont.

- Closing three schools in East Credit places a disproportionate burden on the school communities of East Credit given that four other areas within the Board are significantly under capacity.
- As with all options that propose closing St. Herbert, this Option increases the risk that the Board will lose students to the public school board. St. Herbert is the only school in this PAR review or in previous PAR reviews that has three public schools, covering Kindergarten to Grade 12, within walking distance.
- The Transportation Dept. estimates that Option 4 will cost the Board an additional $162,000 per year in transportation costs.
- Option 4 does not maximize the potential savings to the Board. Option 7 demonstrates that keeping St. Herbert open results in an additional $1.27 million dollar budget reduction.
Summary

• It is respectfully submitted that the Board explore all other possible means of achieving a balanced budget before resorting to school closures.

• If school closures are deemed necessary, no more than two schools should be closed in East Credit.

• The rationale proposed addresses all of the PAR Guidelines and it is strongly recommended that this rationale be used to determine which schools should close, if any.

• Option 7 promotes student well-being and achievement as well as ensures the continued financial viability of the Board.