

NNDSB Accommodation Review Committee – Secondary School Recommendation Statement

The process of creating an alternate proposal for the Near North District School Board to move from three secondary schools to two grade 7-12 schools was not an easy one. This Accommodation Review Committee needed to look beyond emotion and deal with the facts provided for us. Our committee took into consideration information offered by the public, the municipality, the board, and Ontario's Ministry of Education's financial reform policies.

Concerns addressed by the ARC included program availability, transportation, facility condition, traffic and safety, the relationship between school size and student success and well-being, refurbishment and building costs, and the Ministry's funding incentives.

All ARC members agree that there is not one perfect solution to the problems the school board is faced with due to declining enrollment. It is clear that three NNDSB high schools in the city of North Bay is no longer viable within the Ministry of Education's financial reform policies. While one school is viable and has certain benefits, it does not have general public support. Two grade 7-12 schools are also viable and do have general public support, but can only be accomplished by moving the French Immersion and Extended French Immersion programs to the south location.

The committee reached consensus on the choice of site for the northern school facility through objective appraisal of the benefits and drawbacks of site locations and the buildings themselves. Both the Chippewa Street and Ski Club Road sites have benefits and drawbacks, however it was felt that the Ski Club Road site had many advantages, including ease of bus movement and transfers, a much larger student population within its zone boundaries, fewer traffic concerns, the potential for future expansion if necessary, the existence of an elevator for accessibility, and the value of a newer building that is in better physical condition.

The ARC would also like to emphasize the importance of protecting current school populations through the regulation of zone attendance and program limits during the transition from three to two secondary schools.

The objective reasoning behind the ARC's recommendations can be viewed in much greater detail in the document *NNDSB Accommodation Review Committee – Secondary School Consolidation Considerations*, available to trustees and the public as a handout.

The ARC would like to thank the Near North District School Board and our facilitator, Paul Addie, for their candour, thoroughness and transparency as we worked through a challenging accommodation review process according to the timelines and procedures regulated by the Ministry of Education.

Guiding Principal	Considerations taken during the ARC process
Expanded curricular offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed at working ARC meeting April 19: when responding to the question regarding what a healthy school population size would be for all programs to be maintained within the NNSB, 2 out of the 3 principals responded saying 750-800 students would be considered the 'sweet spot' with regards to numbers and programming; the third principal indicated a preference for 1200 students for ease of programming/scheduling. • for programming within a secondary school the selling feature of increased course selection in a school with a larger population is only viable if the population that that it is servicing is interested in taking these courses. • “The breadth of the curriculum, often cited as a major advantage of large comprehensive secondary schools, seems achievable in schools as small as 500-600 students. Compelling evidence now suggests, furthermore, that such breadth is a serious threat to the academic progress of most students.” *
Expanded co-curricular offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two 7-12 schools provide increased opportunity for a larger proportion of students to access extracurricular activities and participate in expanded co-curricular offerings.
Enhanced safety for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-1 NNSB proposed preferred option... concerns: traffic congestion at Chippewa and High Streets, student safety, lack of space at building site and surrounding area, administrative support/supervision. • Accessibility at 320 Ski Club Rd. and 60 Marshall Ave. allows for transportation access and ease of bus loading/unloading, and is not land locked by a dead end to cause congestion. • The ARC requested the City of North Bay to take into serious consideration a traffic study and bus transportation audit for 320 Ski Club Rd. and 60 Marshall Ave.
Equity of access to programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed at working meeting April 24, that all programs will be transferred to one of the two sites. • Maintaining 1 school at the North side of city and one school at the South side of the city provides equal access to regular programming based on zoning distribution. • Discussed at working meeting April 19, distribution of Students from Grade 7-12 within zoning: West Ferris 34.3 % of population, Widdifield 39.8% of population and Chippewa 19.7 % of population. • The Ski Club Rd. Facility and the Marshall Park Dr. facility both have existing elevator access.
Sustainable financially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Small secondary schools manage to graduate a significantly larger proportion of their students than do large secondary schools." *</i> • On the Ground Capacity within ARC's alternate proposal dealt with through programming changes, while Renewal Needs are met through refurbishment of two existing buildings. These refurbishments quoted would be equal in quality to a new build, and at a cost that is \$17 412 553.88 less than a 3-1 build. The ARC recommended the Ski Club Rd facility as the north site as it is a newer facility with lower refurbishment costs, and was constructed for future expansion if necessary. • Distribution of students by zoning, both the Ski Club Rd. and Marshall Park Dr. location have a high percentage of the current grades 7-12 students within their zones (see above), meaning they are within walking distance, or already accounted for within transportation budget. The vast majority of

Sustainable financially continued	<p>FI and EFI students are already accounted for in transportation budget. The ARC thus recommended the Ski Club Rd. and Marshall Park Dr. facilities to prevent a significant increase in transportation costs within the 3 to 2 Secondary School scenario.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the 3-1 option, transportation costs would be increased due to need of adding 6 new busses at approximately \$50 000/bus/yr. • The ARC requested the Board to regulate optional zone attendance to ensure a balance in student numbers during the transition period and beyond.
Smooth transitions for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total rebranding and renaming of both north and south locations, in order to offer equality for all students and staff on emotional and social levels with the transition to the 3 to 2 Secondary School scenario. • Transition opportunities to be offered to all students, including extra support for students that may experience challenges with change/anxiety/transition. • Provide adequate communication to parents regarding transitions. • Provide opportunities for School Advisory Council members to be consulted in planning of transition activities.
Special programs maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed at working meeting April 24, all programs maintained within the NNSB. • All Intermediate and Secondary Special Education programs to be offered at one of the two 7-12 sites.
Enhanced facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbishment needs quoted are equivalent to a new build and is a more cost-effective solution.
Development of the whole child; cognitive, social, physical and emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OTG capacity within the 3 to 2 Secondary School scenario project healthy population distribution numbers in order to offer curriculum that enhances the development of the 'whole child'. • More accessibility to co-curricular experiences for all students than in a 1-school scenario. • <i>"The researchers concluded that analysis of the data supported the conclusion that students performed best in schools ranging in size from 600-900."**</i>
Supportive and respectful of all students at-risk, be it from a cognitive, mental health, or social-economic standpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At risk students, whatever the catalyst, are better supported in close proximity to their zoned school, and within a smaller population setting. • <i>"Students who traditionally struggle at school, students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, for example, are the major benefactors of smaller schools."*</i>
Respects and promotes diversity in culture, language and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with our First Nations leaders, enhance programming for our First Nations students and enhanced employment opportunities for First Nations educators and support staff.

* Jantzi, D., Leithwood, K.; Review of Empirical Evidence about School Size Effects: A Policy Perspective Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. August, 2007.

**Stevenson, Kenneth R.; School size and Its Relationship to Student Outcomes and School Climate: A Review and Analysis of Eight South-Carolina State-wide Studies. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, Washington, D.C. April, 2006.