



Parry Sound JK-12 Build Community Feedback Report

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October 25, 2021

April 20, 2022

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June 4, 2024



July 16, 2021

To our valued community members,

At its heart, Near North District School Board (NND SB) is a learning environment. This value underpins every activity within the board. By sharing the Board’s plans to build a new JK-12 school in Parry Sound, we have learned about the critical importance of two-way communication between communities and Near North District School Board. By asking for and listening to people’s needs, opinions, suggestions and complaints, the Board can adapt its response to provide information that supports their specific circumstances and concerns. Enabling our local communities to provide input during the Parry Sound family of schools accommodation review process, the development of the architectural plans for the new build and beyond is critical to the Board to support communication transparency while respecting the momentum of this project. Throughout the entirety of this engagement, the need for clear information was acknowledged by all parties. NND SB is guided by data-informed decision-making. By providing insight into the substantive analysis that has guided the Board’s actions contained in this report, our community can be assured that NND SB is acting in the best interests of students within the parameters established by the Ministry of Education and the board’s fiscal realities.

As the Chair of the Board of Trustees, and the Chair of the Parry Sound Build Committee, we are pleased to present this report to our community to recognize how important their voices are. We hope that this provides the information needed to spark excitement about our new school. Within the next two years, Near North District School Board anticipates opening our JK-12 state of the art education campus. It is our intent, through ongoing engagement, to continue to provide information and celebrate project milestones leading up to September 2023, to support positive and productive relationships with all stakeholders. We look forward to celebrating together.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jay Aspin'.

Jay Aspin

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John Cochrane'.

John Cochrane



October 25, 2021

Dear stakeholders:

Near North District School Board (NNDSB) is committed to evolving this report as additional developments unfold. Given that further questions have been raised, we felt this was a good opportunity to provide updated information about the build's milestones, funding intricacies, and capital project prioritization. Please continue to refer to the NNDSB website for updated information from administration, the Ministry, and the Parry Sound Build Committee.

The Board will continue to provide transparent communication on the journey towards welcoming students into the new JK-12 Parry Sound school, as part of NNDSB's strategic commitment to excellence in communication.

We are thankful for our community's support and excitement about this project. This is a truly spirited example of the board's mission to provide opportunities that empower all learners.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Myles', written in a cursive style.

Craig Myles

Director of Education



April 20, 2022

To our valued community members,

We are pleased to share further developments in our Parry Sound Build. In keeping with the commitments, the Board has made in the 2021-2026 Multi-Year Strategic Plan regarding Excellence in Communication, our Parry Sound JK-12 Build Community Feedback Report has been updated to reflect new information and developments in our project.

Thank you for continuing to stay engaged with our progress. We look forward to celebrating the opening of this wonderful educational facility with you.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jay Aspin'.

Jay Aspin

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John Cochrane'.

John Cochrane



June 7, 2022

To our valued community members,

We are pleased to share another update of the Feedback Report regarding developments in our Parry Sound Build in response to questions and comments received from the community.

The Board will continue to provide transparent communication on the journey towards welcoming students into the new JK-12 Parry Sound school, as part of NNDSB's strategic commitment to excellence in communication. The board remains committed to evolving this resource as additional developments unfold, as I outlined in the letter to you on October 25, 2021. In this iteration, a new theme has been added to respond to questions and comments about governance procedures.

Thank you for continuing to stay engaged with our progress. We look forward to celebrating the opening of this wonderful educational facility with you.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Myles', written in a cursive style.

Craig Myles
Director of Education



April 14, 2023

To our valued community members,

We are happy to present another update to our Feedback Report. In addition to NNDSB's ongoing commitment to excellence in communication, we are also committed to building positive relationships with all members of our community to foster an engaged and inclusive culture. In this regard, we thank you for sharing your questions and feedback with our trustees and staff. Your valuable input allows us the opportunity to reflect on the project from a community perspective, and ensures we are providing relevant and current information related to the new JK-12 Parry Sound school.

This report includes additional information about the separation between elementary and secondary students, enrolment trends, physical spaces including the gymnasium, hexpods, childcare, and EarlyON, an updated projection on the new school open date, and much more. We would encourage you to read through the report for full details.

We want to express our continued enthusiasm and excitement for this project as it moves closer to becoming a reality. We thank you again for your ongoing interest in this project as we continue to deliver superior educational experiences to all students.

Sincerely,

Parry Sound Build Committee

Parry Sound Build Committee Members:

Howard Wesley, Committee Chair

Shane Hall, Trustee

Jeanie Fuscaldo, Trustee

Seija Van Haesendonck, Superintendent of Business

Gay Smylie, Superintendent of Education

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Preamble:

This report provides an analysis and a response to the feedback received from NNDSB staff, stakeholders, and community members regarding the Parry Sound JK-12 build. Consideration was given to feedback received via the board's survey posted on the website, correspondence received directly by trustees, school, and board level administration, as well as media inquiries. The board did not consider any statements voiced about the board that were not directed to the board (for example- public social media posts that were not directed to an NNDSB account). This decision was made to protect the integrity of the feedback that was received, with recognition that other social media comments represent an inequitable mode of gathering data. The quotes in this report are extracted from direct feedback received.

Upon review of all board-directed feedback, the Parry Sound Build Committee distilled it into central themes to ensure consistent and thorough responses while at the same time making best use of time and resources, in lieu of providing individual responses. A media release was issued on June 22, 2021, advising the public this report would be posted to the website. The themes are discussed in no particular order. Near North District School Board is guided by reliable and valid data-informed decision making throughout all its operations.

Definitions:

- **“ADE”** refers to “Average Daily Enrollment” which describes the enrolment calculated using the average of the October and March enrolment figures. This formula is used and expected by the Ministry of Education and all public-school boards in the province.
- **“ARC”** refers to the “Accommodation Review Committee”. When school boards are considering decisions regarding the future of a school, that decision is made with the full involvement of an informed local community, and it is based on a broad range of criteria regarding the quality of the learning experience for students. An ARC assumes an advisory role and provides recommendations that inform the final decision made by the Board of Trustees. Each ARC must include membership drawn from the community.
 - In this case, the NNDSB Board of Trustees initiated an ARC regarding the Parry Sound family of schools in the fall of 2012.
- **“MOE”** refers to the “Ministry of Education”, the division of the provincial government that administers the system of publicly funded elementary and secondary school education in Ontario.
- **“OTG Capacity”** refers to “on-the-ground capacity” which describes student capacity, as approved by the Ministry, and reflects all permanent teaching space available for instructional purposes. There are different capacities attributed to different types of instructional space – for example, a regular classroom, library, or a special education classroom. The OTG capacity is subject to increase or decrease as it represents what is actually “on the ground” at a point in time. Temporary instructional spaces (such as edupods or hexpods) are not included in OTG capacity.
- **“NNDSB”** refers to “Near North District School Board”.

- **“PARG”** refers to the “Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline” which are the Ministry of Education’s requirements for school boards to share information with and seek feedback from their local municipalities and other community partners related to any pupil accommodation reviews a school board initiates.

Theme #1 Collaborating with Indigenous Partners

Stakeholders have expressed their interest in the opportunity to continue to make an impact in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Further consultation has occurred with First Nations leaders.

NNDSB has committed to learning from local Indigenous communities, to become culturally competent and to become more inclusive in the language we use regarding working with all youth throughout all regions. We understand the important impact of surrounding First Nations, knowledge keepers, and Elders who share and teach Anishinaabemowin and Indigenous ways in accessible, safe, and communal space where Indigenous youth see themselves in their school.

NNDSB consulted Indigenous partners throughout the ARC process and was pleased to have a representative as a voting member on the ARC to ensure the perspectives of First Nations Peoples were represented.

In terms of the physical site, NNDSB architects are aware of the need for the inclusion of an Indigenous hub, specific Indigenous classroom needs, communal sharing space, accommodation for smudging and the placement of the Learning Lodge where teaching and learning can continue to occur. Architects will determine a place of honour, accessibility and safe keeping for the school drum Bmaadzijig Dewaganwaa that was birthed 18 years ago at PSHS by Indigenous youth and supported by members of the First Nations communities. The capital planning team will meet with Indigenous teachers and other representatives to confirm the best fit for the physical site.

NNDSB is proud of the relationships with First Nations communities and remains grateful to the communities’ leaders for their support. As an example, please find an article [here](#) regarding how Shawanaga's Healing Centre offered its tipi to Parry Sound High School. Further engagement is planned to determine meaningful ways to honour Indigenous ways of being in the new school with external Indigenous stakeholders.

In August 2021, NNDSB staff, trustees, and representatives of three First Nations met with the managing partner, principal architect, and a technologist of +VG Architects to discuss priorities for learning spaces for the new school. This conversation focused on methods for creating a space that would feel like a second home for the students. These design elements include locating space intentionally with proximity to the outside so Elders can easily access the classrooms, together with efforts to incorporate more language through signage, and meaningful symbols throughout the school. This meeting was an important part of the

consultation process. The feedback, ideas, and new learning was evident, and participants left the meeting with a stronger sense of the needs required to support the achievement and well-being of all students. Further internal consultation continued, which included our Indigenous Education team, +VG, the PSHS Principal (who brought forward thoughts and considerations from the Indigenous Youth at PSHS), as well as central staff responsible for the build. Three meetings were held to gather input during the design phase in the spring of 2022.

Theme #2: Concerns About Student Population

Concerns regarding collocating students from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 12 were expressed. This included comments from parents of younger students concerned about the negative influences of older students as well as concerns from parents of older students about experiences being limited by the presence of younger students. Comments were shared about transition planning for shared spaces (restrooms and the library for example). Questions were raised about transportation and entrance/exit management, together with inquiries about dedicated outdoor learning spaces.

This concern was shared by members of the ARC Committee and echoed by community members during the four public ARC meetings in the early stages of this project. The NNDSB has been engaging in a wide variety of strategies and activities to improve the mental health and overall well-being of all students. Find out more about the board's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy [here](#).

Research into the effect of having multi-grade or mixed panel students in one facility was undertaken. Educational research does not find consistent or compelling negative trends or impacts to student well-being or achievement when operating JK-12 schools. This is a growing trend and many schools throughout North America have leveraged the positive potentials that arise from this configuration, including student mentoring, tutoring, and collaboration. We've already seen this kind of mentoring occur in the building of picnic tables and outdoor spaces, transition events, sports events, and powwows. These opportunities can be sustained and grow with the new building population. Jk-12 schools allow younger students exposure to equipment and resources they may not have in an elementary specific school. For instance, students can explore music, technology, e-tech and arts programs and visit with High Skills Major Students. They can witness Secondary School Sports and extra-curricular events, which cause excitement to transition to the next grade. In Ontario, there are more than twenty JK-12 schools operating across the province, with approximately 25% of those schools opened in the last decade, and several more planned or currently under construction. Since the last update in April 2023, the Communities of Rainy River, Blind River, and Wasaga Beach have joined Parry Sound in announcing their acceptance of funding for new jk-12 schools now under construction.

The Near North District School Board has established school emergency procedures to manage emergency situations, including hold & secure and lockdowns. The recently enhanced procedures ensure that all students respond safely and efficiently in the event of an emergency. These same procedures will apply in the JK-12 school. The Safe Schools team meets regularly with police services across the district to ensure that the NNDSB's emergency response policies and practices are effective, efficient and maintain the highest level of student safety possible.

The design of the school provides students with a balance between separate elementary and Secondary spaces that reflect their age and developmental stages alongside shared spaces that promote community and cooperation. The resources and connections of a larger school support a welcoming environment and greater opportunity for all students. Younger students have access to shared spaces such as a large gymnasium, and playing fields that are not typically available at an elementary school. The design intentionally maintains separation between the elementary and secondary students, with separate wings, and the triple gymnasium is split into a double gymnasium separated by a solid wall from a single gymnasium. The elementary dedicated gymnasium is directly accessible from the elementary wing and contains its own gym storage space. A raised stage area for the music program will have retractable soundproof walls on either side which allows performances/assembly type activities to be viewed from either the student commons cafetorium side or the large double gymnasium, allowing elementary students the opportunity to enjoy or take part in stage presentations or performances, unlike in a normal elementary school design.

The EarlyON space has been included in the elementary wing of the design, between the childcare space and the elementary classrooms, and the kitchen space will be available for use by the elementary panel for breakfast programs, hot lunches, and special events.

Another strength of the collocation model is the reduced impact of student transitions, which do have a negative effect on student achievement. Current JK-12 schools have shared there is a thoughtful spiraling of curriculum where common language is introduced early and built upon as students move through their JK-12 program. Horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum and social-emotional development is evident throughout all 14 years, providing unparalleled continuity and strength of experience. Students do not have to transition from one physical building to another as their entire elementary and high school experience occurs in the same building. Transitioning from school to school to school can be very stressful for students.

Additionally, parents may choose to send their children to the childcare at this JK-12 school, further reducing transitions during their educational journey. Please see a media release [here](#) as an example of how secondary students act as role models for elementary students.

Further information from a provincial perspective was outlined in a report prepared by independent consultant, L. Dallip, to demonstrate the success of this integrative model. L. Dallip noted this model provides for better overall performance by students; stronger extra-curricular programs in the primary, junior, senior, and secondary divisions while providing

stronger program opportunities for Grade 7 and 8 in specialized secondary school program spaces.

NNDSB values outdoor learning and it will continue. The JK-12 build will allow for ample outdoor spaces suited to the needs of all students. This includes intentionally structured and individualized play yards for our child-care operators, kindergarten learners and elementary students and physed and sports spaces for intermediate senior students. All students will continue to benefit from the green spaces located on the 10-hectare property, which will be maintained as part of the design.

Through the construction of a more efficient design, there is expected to be more outdoor recreation space that is currently utilized on the property. NNDSB was pleased to have received approval from the Town of Parry Sound to reduce the number and size of required parking spaces. As a result of this reduction approval, further property space can be used for outdoor recreation and learning.

Further information on how the board supports the equity and well-being of students can be found [here](#) on the board's website.

Theme #3: Questions About Historical Decision-Making and Community Engagement

Inquiries were submitted regarding the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) process, time lapse and recommendation age. Our community had questions about the location selection, community partnership opportunities explored, and creative use of existing facilities. Questions were raised on the Board of Trustees' approval and decision-making process.

Public school boards in Ontario are mandated to consider school consolidations and/or closures when educational spaces are underutilized. Based on a funding model that only provides boards with dollars "per-student," schools lose funding as their enrolment decreases, resulting in deficit operating costs. NNDSB understands the importance of spending money on improving the educational experience of all students, but when buildings are underutilized, NNDSB must then use those funds to maintain empty spaces, not on the students who are in the classrooms.

Utilization rates for October 2022 at Nobel Public School, McDougall Public Schools, and Parry Sound High will sit at 56%, 56% and 58% respectively. Generally, any schools under 60% utilization are deemed to be "underutilized." NNDSB is paying to operate those empty spaces, spending dollars that should go towards student programming.

Boards of Trustees, through information received by staff and the ARC, make decisions on school closures and consolidations based on student needs. Diverse programming and specialized supports abound when students can be brought together through school consolidation. Often, these specialized spaces, and the qualified staff to operate them, would be unavailable at smaller schools with low enrolment. In this way, school consolidation benefits all students.

Some community members continue to express desires for the existing elementary schools and the high school to be renovated, while others would like for a new elementary and high school to be built. In order to renovate or make a new proposal for two new schools, an accommodation review (ARC) would need to be submitted to the Ministry of Education for consideration. However, in June 2018, the Ministry introduced a freeze (a moratorium) on the initiation of new ARCs, meaning that no new renovation or development projects can be considered until such a time as the moratorium is lifted. NNDSB is fortunate that approval for the new JK-12 school was obtained prior to the moratorium and is thus permitted to proceed. If the Board terminates this project, there is no ability to pursue other options. As noted above, renovations to existing schools or constructing two buildings (an elementary and a secondary school) instead of the JK-12 school, would not be considered by the Ministry. The schools would remain underutilized, and funds would continue to go towards maintaining empty space, rather than being directed into student programming. Furthermore, future applications for funding would be looked upon negatively, based on our history of having declined funding that was previously offered for a new build.

The following outlines the accommodation review process for the Parry Sound family of schools:

Initial Project Funding: Spring 2013 – Fall 2013:

The new JK – 12 Parry Sound project began with Board motions in October and November of 2012, to conduct a pupil accommodation review to consider closure and/or consolidation options for schools *William Beatty, Nobel, McDougall, and Parry Sound High. This accommodation review took place in the Winter and Spring of 2013 and included four public meetings to gather parent, staff, and community input.

**William Beatty and Victory were involved in an ARC several years earlier resulting in a successful business case to build a new school on the Tudhope site (now the Parry Sound Public School). Due to funding issues, PSPS originally designated as a JK-8, was changed to a JK-6. William Beatty was clustered in this series of motions to seek approval from the board to move the Grade 7 and 8 students to Parry Sound High School to become Parry Sound “Intermediate” School.*

As per the Accommodation Review process and the Board’s policy at the time, public consultation meetings were held at the locations and dates listed below:

- ✓ Parry Sound HS: February 21, 2013
- ✓ McDougall PS: March 20, 2013
- ✓ Nobel PS: April 18, 2013
- ✓ Parry Sound HS: May 16, 2013

Following public consultation, the ARC recommended that NNDSB seek Ministry of Education (MOE) funding to build a new K-8 elementary and 9-12 secondary school on one campus, resulting in the closure of Nobel PS, McDougall PS and Parry Sound High. This new facility set out to house K-8 students in a separate but attached space to the space accommodating 9-12 students to allow program integration and the use of shared facility amenities. The final report from the Parry Sound Family of Schools ARC (dated June 25, 2013) was shared with local town councils for review prior to being reviewed by the NNDSB Board of Trustees. Resolutions from the Corporation of the Township of Seguin (dated September 9, 2013- resolution 2013-300), and the Council for the Town of Parry Sound (dated September 17, 2013- resolution no. 2013-199) expressed support for the ARC's recommendations.

In October 2013, NNDSB Trustees passed a motion at the public session of the regular Board meeting to file a capital funding submission under the Capital Priorities initiative with the Ministry of Education. This submission was based on the recommendation of the ARC to build one facility that would house separate elementary and secondary learning areas with shared use of common facilities such as the gymnasium, library, and office spaces.

In March 2014, the Ministry of Education denied the Capital Priorities submission, as presented at the Public Session Board meeting by then Director of Education Geoff Botting. At the same meeting, the Board put forth a motion to resubmit the Capital Priorities funding submission in the Fall of 2014.

On March 5, 2015, the Ministry announced that funding would be approved for a JK-12 Parry Sound build and the Parry Sound Building Committee was struck.

Site Selection:

Site selection was the first order of business brought forward by the newly established Parry Sound Building Committee in the Spring of 2015. The original funding was \$27.6 million. However, the Ministry funding is provided for the building only and not the purchase of a building site.

The ARC, with the support of trustees, formed a Site Selection Committee whose members included elected municipal representatives, Parent Advisory Council members, members of the community and senior staff involved with capital projects. Stakeholder consultation was broad reaching and included community employers, staff at the three consolidating schools, students, NNDSB Plant Department, and representatives of the five First Nations in the Parry Sound area. Simultaneously, several site studies and environmental investigations were being conducted, including subsurface conditions, surface topography and traffic studies.

A site consultant was contracted and approximately 20 sites were investigated, with each township requesting consideration. Despite the desire to house the new facility, none of the communities were able to contribute financially to the redevelopment of a site, which would be needed to support the build. To honour the requests of all townships to investigate sites on their behalf, this process took just over 2 years to complete (April 2015 – June 2017). To date there are still no offers of financial or in-kind support from any municipalities.

During the site consultation period, the MOE announced the approval of funding for the inclusion of a childcare centre at the site and allocated \$1.5 million more towards the project (October 2015).

Senior staff of NNDSB, in consultation with the MOE's analyst at the time, concluded that the selection of the current high school site would be the preferred option, as it was sizeable and serviced, there was no purchase required, with the potential to build around the existing school, allowing students and staff to remain on site during the build. The Board passed a motion in June 2017 to select the Parry Sound High School site as the location for the new JK-12 build and proceed with the project.

Initial Building and Design:

From October 2017, through February 2018, the Parry Sound Building Committee met to discuss design and programming for the JK-12 facility. During that time, it met with representatives from the five First Nations whose youth attend Parry Sound High, along with community employers who wanted to prepare students for employment in the region. These stakeholders spoke about the youth migration out of the community and the need for increased work fields related to trades, hospitality, and healthcare. The Committee consulted with school staff and students, collecting data that significantly informed the programming needs of the area. Moving ahead in tandem, consultants were initiating several site studies and environmental investigations in anticipation of demolition of the existing facility, as well as subsurface conditions, surface topography and the possible requirement for blasting and dewatering, traffic studies, etc.

On June 28, 2017, the Ministry of Education introduced a moratorium on school closures. Additionally, with the changing of the provincial government in June 2018, boards could not initiate a new accommodation review. ARCs completed prior to this date were not subject to the moratorium and could continue the planning and construction of their new builds. The Accommodation Review Process remains on pause, and as of February 2023, has yet to be revised for use by public school boards.

In summer of 2021, the board engaged an external consultant to review the information and conclusions of the ARC. Ms. Lygia Dallip was selected as an independent consultant given her significant experience with the ministerial capital planning process. Ms. Dallip was provided with extensive information to form her opinion. This included the notices from several municipalities, that previously supported the ARC Recommendations in 2013, which adopted resolutions calling to establish a new ARC to review the accommodation needs within the Parry Sound Family of schools. When reviewing this information, the consultant recognized that if the Board were to consider the municipalities' resolutions to establish a new ARC for the Parry Sound area, such an action would continue to delay addressing the accommodation needs within Parry Sound. In fact, the build may be in jeopardy of being shelved indefinitely as there is a ministerial moratorium on PARCs. In the development of her report, the consultant concluded that based on the information available through the NNDSB and available publicly, the Board has consistently followed its required process. Ms. Dallip's full report is available to the public and posted on the board's website [here](#).

Theme #4: School Building Concerns and Timelines

Stakeholders questioned sustainability features as well as longer term sustainability plans. Questions arose regarding the size of the building and placement of equipment and dedicated spaces within. A great number of suggestions were provided on items for inclusion, with some specifically noted as gym construction and size parameters, specialty program placement (technical shops, music program and instrument needs). Questions were raised regarding timelines for construction work on the demolition stage of the project.

The Ministry has approved the built environment at 105,345 sq. ft. Based on enrolment, a double gym and a single gym have been approved, in essence creating three functional gym spaces including the single gym dedicated to the elementary students. Regarding energy efficient design practices, the architects and professional consultants will implement as many elements as the budget will allow.

NNDSB was approached by the Canadian Wood Council for a partnership opportunity under the Wood WORKS! Program that provides technical assistance on codes, standards, design, material sourcing and field related issues. Wood WORKS! advocates and celebrates the use of wood products that are as strong as steel and as durable as concrete as well as being the only renewable, sustainable and carbon sequestering construction product to help the environment for today and future generations. This is an example of potential opportunities NNDSB will consider exploring.

The first phase included a partial demolition summer/fall 2021 to ensure students have a functional school to attend in September 2021 while preparing for construction. Plans included the demolition of the north side of the current building (library area), while maintaining the cafeteria and shop areas. The two-storey school features two wings forming an L-shape: a childcare/elementary wing and a secondary wing. Main elements will be located on the first floor (cafeteria, lobby, gym, administration offices). The second floor will be academic wings, with seven additional elementary classrooms and private study areas. The rear wing will house technology areas, and science and technology wings are being overlaid to make the best use of ventilation systems. The L-shape will allow construction around the existing building while placing the new build prominently on the site between the two main streets.

As with all schools, programming is driven by student interest. At the working drawing stage, the project architect met with staff representatives about the unique needs of their space. The PSHS administrator as well as the Superintendent attended each individual meeting. NNDSB created a Programming Sub-Committee with a specific focus on programming that continues to oversee these developments. Membership is comprised of NNDSB staff involved with

capital projects management, the PSHS principal, and Superintendent. Additional staff resources are invited to attend as needed.

Over the winter months of 2022, in order to ensure that the JK-12 building design fit within the parameters set by the Ministry, the Board paused progress on the working drawings, and collaborated with the Ministry and its architects to review the floor plan and square footage of the design. Following confirmation from the Ministry that the design continues to meet the appropriate benchmarks, the Board requested that +VG resume work on the building design and working drawings. The building design and site plans are now complete and can be viewed on the board's website [here](#). Additionally, a video walkthrough of the site plans, floor plans and building renderings can be seen [here](#). This walkthrough will give you a sense of what the building will look like, and the general layout of the school spaces. A revised project schedule is projecting a September 2025 planned opening for the new school, which extends the expected timeframe for the project's other milestones as well.

Theme #5: Budget Constraints:

Questions regarding the age of the funding, how the budget would adapt to rising costs of construction, other revenue streams that should be considered, and comparative analysis to other NNDSB capital projects.

The total funding provided by the province was \$27,372,629 as of August 2021. This amount was confirmed in a press release issued on August 5, 2021. It is posted on the board's website [here](#). Negotiations with the province given pandemic affected pricing funding reached 43.9 million. After all spring tenders came in at over 49.8 million, the province announced in June the additional increase to 54.8 million. The Near North board is contributing just over \$3.7 million, putting the build budget at \$58.6 million.

Costs are part of the approval process. NNDSB is bound by Ministry allocations for new builds. Up to this point, there have been no offers from individuals or organizations for financial or in-kind support. Therefore, our budget remains fixed. We are expected to design this project within the approved funding allotment.

NNDSB continues to seek out further funding opportunities to further enhance design possibilities. We are thankful for the continued partnership with First Nations communities and their further consideration of support to allow additional design features reflecting First Nations cultures. These possibilities continue to be explored under the leadership of the Board's First Nations Trustee and our executive council.

Building upon the information shared in theme 3 that articulates factors affecting the Ministry's funding formula, it is noted that further information would be helpful to expand our community's understanding. To arrive at the funding calculation, the Ministry has recognized geography and unique location needs as one element, referred to as "Geographic Area Factors" (GAF). The

Ministry had calculated the GAF for the Parry Sound build at a lower rate than the GAF used to calculate capital projects constructed in other regions of NNDSB. This results in a lower funding allocation for the Parry Sound capital project in this category. Despite a lower GAF and an overall lower funding allocation, the proposed JK-12 build will feature a state of the art gymnasium and cafetorium with a raised stage area, a special needs hub which includes a barrier free kitchen area for life skills training and food preparation, a dedicated Indigenous Classroom with attached seminar room that will include appropriate ventilation for smudging ceremonies, and innovative hexpod-design educational space with a large outdoor deck for outdoor collaboration will join the modular classrooms, and an untouched greenspace area of approximately 2 acres that could be developed for student use. The finished product will be a welcoming space where all students can grow and thrive.

Similarly, funding approval age is another element drawn from construction benchmarks. Currently, NNDSB has plans for the use of temporary instructional space in two capital projects. It is noted that the temporary instructional space funding for the Parry Sound project was approved at a higher rate than other capital builds given the approval was received more recently (in 2020). As part of the independent report prepared, Ms. Dallip reviewed the concerns of some members of the Parry Sound community that schools in the community are at a disadvantage when compared to NNDSB schools in North Bay and determined these are opinions only.

Additional funding related to site specific costs forms part of the total build budget. To date, the Ministry has provided supplementary funding related to the additional costs for the Parry Sound Build for demolition. This is not related to enrollment, but entirely related to engineering requirements for the unique site.

There are variances between capital projects regarding childcare spaces and funding given the unique needs of each community. It is noted that the design and approval process for childcare and EarlyOn centres are approved separately from the costs for the school building capital project application. Opportunities for new childcare or EarlyOn spaces are opened by the Ministry through a “Call for Proposals” approach. In the case of the Parry Sound capital project, NNDSB was proud to be identified as the successful applicant. Approval for this project was received in 2015. Please reference information shared in Theme #3 for a review of the funding approval timeline.

As part of the design consultation, NNDSB met with childcare operators at the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board (DPSSAB) who determined the size and scope of the space request. The childcare space in the new JK-12 building will occupy 3 rooms, including one infant room (10 spaces), one toddler room (15 spaces), and one preschool room (24 spaces), which is based entirely on the childcare operator’s identified needs. The childcare center is designed to meet all licensing requirements, including the unobstructed floor space measurement required per child, the amount of window space required (as a percentage of the square footage of the room), the appropriate number of washroom spaces, unobstructed

space measurement per child in the outdoor play area, kitchen requirements (including commercial equipment), and appropriate office and other spaces for the staff.

Further information can be found by reviewing the Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline 2023, found [here](#).

Theme #6: Use of Edupods/Hexpods

Comments were received regarding the use, integrity, and quality of the hexpods. Questions emerged from the community on where they would be located on the property, and from educators on what programs they would support. Educators questioned how the pods would be properly secured during lockdown drills. Parents and community partners queried what amenities would be available in the pods, and how students would access the spaces from the main building. Questions were raised on their use/ sustainability in general and the cost. Educators raised concerns with equipment storage challenges due to the unique shapes and the impact on the learning environment.

It is an established practice for the Ministry of Education to consider the region's declining enrollment. In doing so, the approved square footage of the built environment will see appropriate utilization of space as we move into the future.

School boards are not permitted to build permanent square footage that data shows will be underutilized in 10 years. This is the reality across the province for all new school builds in areas experiencing declining enrolment. In the Fall of 2018 senior staff began to rethink solutions that might address the new provincial funding challenges and low enrollment projections. Utilization at Parry Sound Public School was another consideration, given that by 2027-28 when this school would be only 12 years old, the projected utilization at this school would be 58%. Considering that there will be two schools in Parry Sound proper, fiscally appropriate solutions for the future included building a JK-12 school with a smaller footprint and the use of temporary instructional space so that the structure and student population could shift with enrollment shifts.

In response to this challenge, our architects created a uniquely designed hex-pod that is attractive, innovative and creates an inspiring learning space. This new approach to transitional classrooms was designed by the Ventin Group and was featured in Building Magazine in August 2020. The hexagonal classrooms (hexpods) will be manufactured by NRB, a modular design company in Grimsby Ontario. VG will be working with NRB to create an exterior facade that blends nicely with the exterior of the main building and surrounding environment. The benefits of this new design, which includes 120-degree corners, allow pods to be clustered in a honey-comb shape. The hexagonal space feels more spacious and fosters a sense of collaboration, very much in line with the 21st Century collaboration spaces that will be featured throughout the school. These pods also offer increased natural light, fresh air, and eco-friendly designs. Each side is 17 feet long and 12 feet high, for a perimeter of 102 feet and surface area of 750 square feet, the size of a regular classroom.

The hexpod incorporates recycled, reusable, and ethically sourced materials. This attribute reinforces the sustainability philosophy valued by the board and expected by the community. A traditional portable is constructed as a stick frame wood assembly with insulation in the wall. By contrast, the hexpod uses structural insulated panels (SIPs), a high-performance building system for residential and commercial construction. The lightweight panels comprise an insulating foam core sandwiched between two structural facings; typically oriented strand board fabricated with timber from sustainable sources. SIPs use less timber than the portable's stick frame and are one of the most economical and eco-friendly forms of construction. SIP buildings are also more energy efficient, strong, quiet, and airtight. Less air leakage means fewer drafts, fewer noise penetrations and significantly lower energy bills with a consequent reduction in CO₂ emissions. The continuity of the rigid insulation within the system enhances thermal reliability and inhibits the passage of water vapour, reducing susceptibility to mould-causing condensation.

Hexpods provide at least 50 percent more windows than a typical portable. Washable finishes on all surfaces allow for increased ease of sanitization and feature an integrated HVAC (heating, ventilation, air-conditioning) and air purification system that includes a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter to remove airborne viruses and other contaminants such as dust and allergens. Pod materials are certified to be nontoxic and free of off-gassing from formaldehyde and other volatile organic compounds. Each pod functions like a separate classroom with communications consoles with phone system, heating controls and power.

Six hexagonal classrooms are planned to complement the built environment of the JK-12 school that will provide an additional 138 spaces for Parry Sound students. The hexpods will provide an additional 4,500 square feet of temporary instructional space. Four pods will be dedicated for secondary use, and two will be reserved for elementary use. The Parry Sound Build Committee has echoed the comments from the community on the preference for hexpods to be constructed adjacent to the school building. The four secondary hexpods will be adjacent to the secondary wing of the building, creating direct access to the main building, and a large deck has been designed to tie the four units together creating another pocket of space for outdoor collaboration.

The two elementary hexpods will be directly adjacent to the elementary wing for access to the elementary washrooms and the gymnasium.

Theme #7: Enrollment Clarifications

Detailed questions were received on disparities in the board's enrollment projections, the external factors used to make the calculations, and how adaptable the predictions would be in response to an increase in student registrations due to COVID-19 relocations out of larger cities and into Parry Sound and surrounding communities. Questions were raised on the board's boundary lines and how registration to the new school would be determined.

NNDSB has consistently demonstrated a plus or minus of 2% in the accuracy of projected enrollments. This information is calculated using planning data from consecutive actual NNDSB grade enrolment figures, local municipalities and information obtained from the census, including population projections and birth data. The current Ontario population projections are based on the 2016 Census and run from 2017 to 2041. When considered all together, the collective data points to aging populations in the communities served by NNDSB, which is reflected in the school board’s trend towards declining enrolment. When School-Aged Census Population data from 2011 is compared to 2016, for example, it shows that our district’s school-age population continues to decline, affecting both elementary and secondary panels.

**From November 2022 Enrolment Projections*

School Name	Projected Enrollment		
	October 2022	September 2023	September 2025
McDougall	168	160	138
Nobel	188	192	184
Parry Sound Intermediate	93	108	96
Parry Sound High	604	640	645
Total:	1,053	1,100	1,063

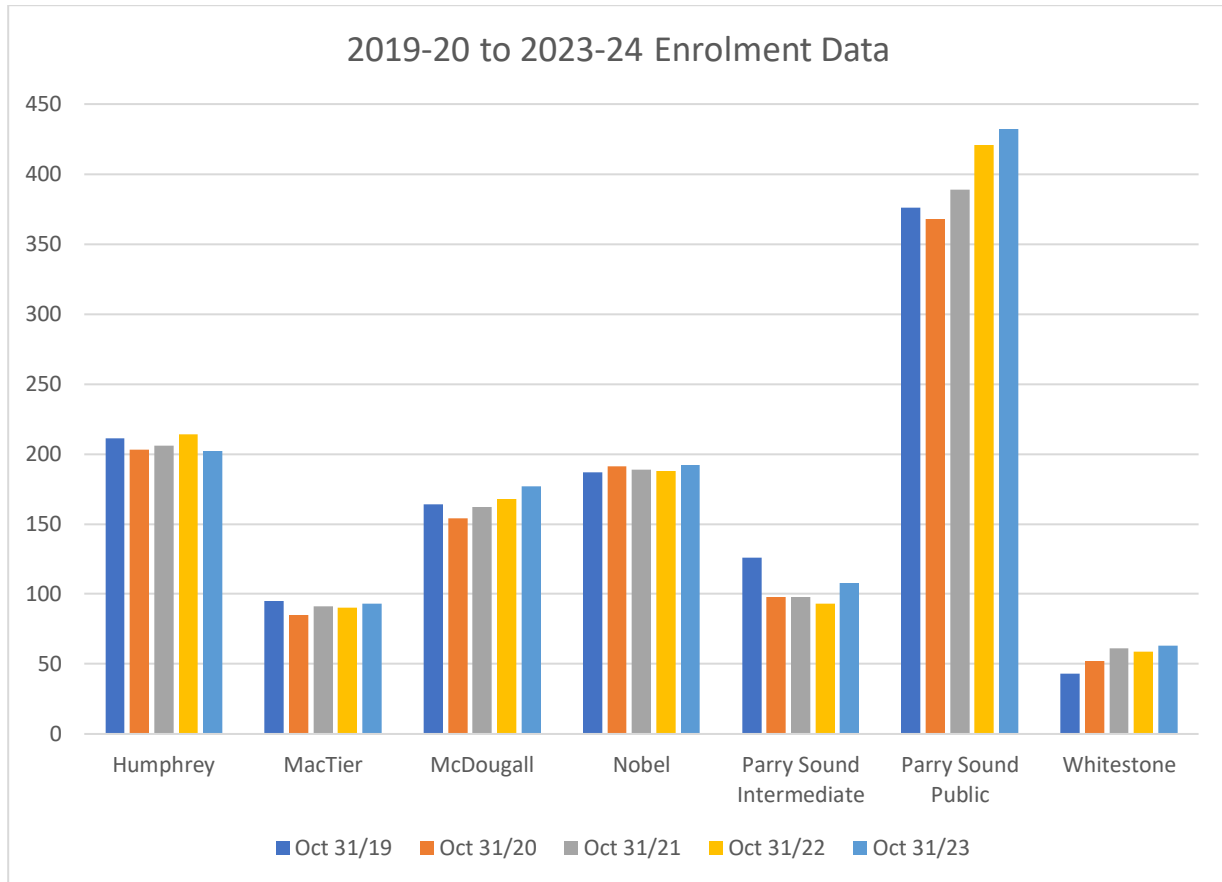
The Near North District School Board recalculates enrollment projections annually to ensure that they reflect the most current municipal trends. This ensures that any unforeseen changes, such as the impact of COVID-19, are reflected in our annual updates. This is also why enrollment numbers contained in documents from previous years may not reflect the most up-to-date projections.

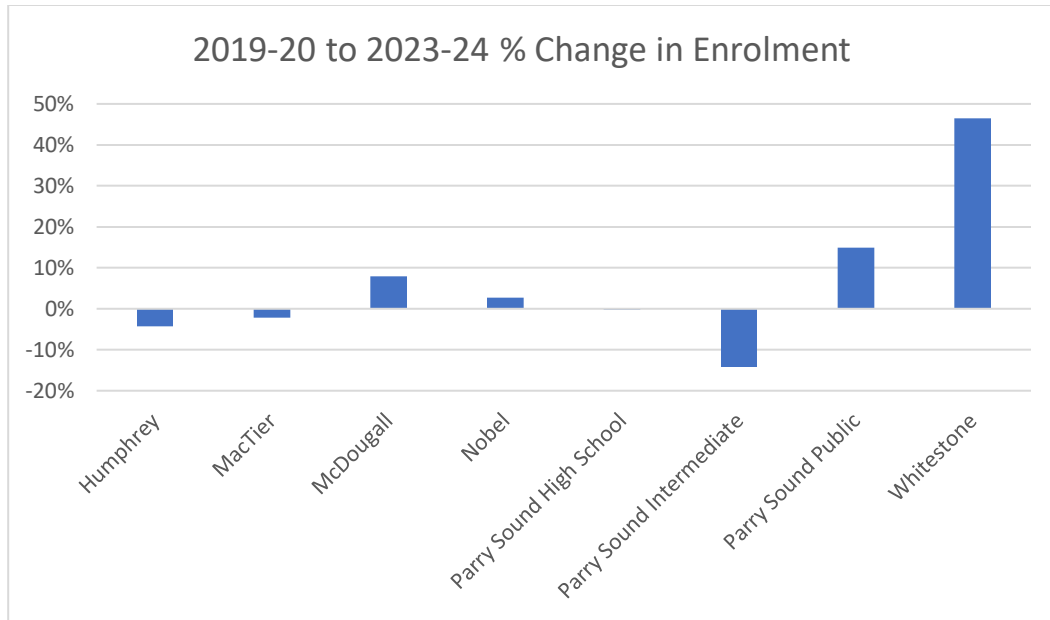
At the December 13, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting, an enrollment report was presented that noted student enrolment at the Near North District School Board has returned to a level consistent with pre-pandemic school years. As of October 31, 2022, the board’s overall enrolment was 10,010 students. Preliminary enrolment projections for the 2023-24 school year currently sit at 10,086 students, based on October 31, 2022, enrolment.

Community members have questioned how the build will adapt to the influx of newcomers to the community. NNDSB considers other trends, such as new employment opportunities or increased post-secondary programs, that may also affect the population of school aged children in any given area. It is important to note that population increases do not directly correlate to increases in school enrollment; the population of young families moving into or out of an area, for example, has a greater impact than raw population scores. While the area has a strong real estate market, this does not necessarily result in younger families with school aged children. Additionally, the impact to NNDSB schools only occur with school aged students being registered at our schools. Despite accounts from a variety of local Parry Sound contributors, no scientific, reliable, or valid data has been presented to support the anecdotal claims of increased population as it relates to enrollment; therefore, NNDSB is compelled to remain within the context of scientific data and not base decisions on speculation. It would be irresponsible of NNDSB to use speculation to inform data-based decisions. Further, it is not

expected that the ministry would allocate additional funding based on speculative input. No data has emerged to demonstrate NNDSB must recast enrolment projections.

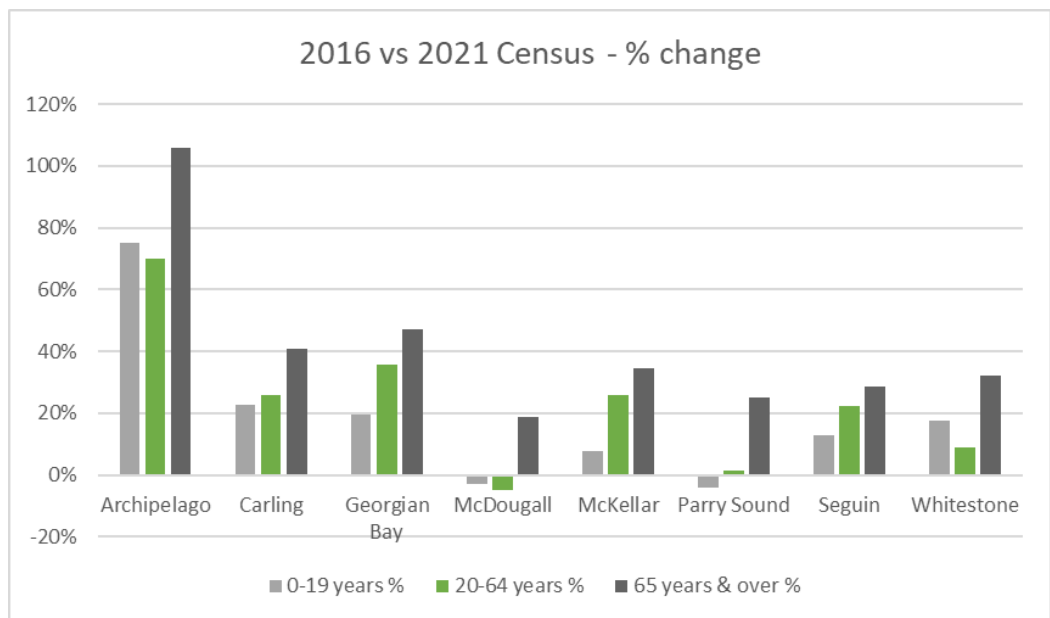
In reviewing the board’s enrolment data from October 2019 through October 2023, the following enrolment trends were identified in the elementary schools within the catchment:





Over the last 5 years, the largest enrolment increases occurred in Whitestone Lake Public School, which has a small enrolment (63 students as of October 31, 2023), so a small increase in students results in a larger percentage increase. McDougall and Nobel, which are slated to consolidate into the new JK-12 build, have experienced minimal or no enrolment increases since 2019, and Parry Sound High School and Parry Sound Intermediate have experienced a decrease in enrolment since 2019-20. The enrolment trends have not necessarily followed in the same direction as the overall census data.

When reviewing the 2021 census data by age, the following trends were noted:



In all the communities, the largest percentage increases were identified in the 65 years and over demographic category. The communities with large percentage increases in all age categories were usually the communities with smaller populations, so the increase shown as a percentage is higher (for example, although Parry Sound and The Archipelago increased by a similar number overall, the percentage increase for the Archipelago was 84%, while it was only 7% for Parry Sound). Also of note is that Parry Sound, the largest of the 8 communities identified above, experienced a slight decrease in population in the 0-19 years category, and only a 1.6% increase in the 20-64 years category, but a 25% increase in the 65 years and over category.

As indicated in the independent consultant's report, the Board uses local municipal and regional development forecasts as a component of the development of their enrolment projections. The Board then applies its historical apportionment share of the total projected number of the school-aged population to determine the need for additional school space. The apportionment share is a board's share of the total school-aged population for the area when considering the four/five other service providers. As with school boards of a similar size, NNDSB's enrolment projection process considers its student retention rates by assessing a two-year, a three-year, a four-year and a five-year weighted and unweighted average when applying progression factors to the projections. Any development is captured through this process.

Like all boards in Ontario, Near North adjusts resource allocations based on student enrollment annually. Every year at pre-determined points, NNDSB engages in an exercise to verify projected enrollment against actual enrollment and then adjusts accordingly. This may include allocation of resources, increasing or decreasing the number of regular classrooms and allocating the correct number of staff to serve each classroom, considering the grade, program and needs of the students. This process utilizes projected enrollments to plan, while maintaining a mechanism in which to right-size each school within the first month of each school year to ensure the best learning experience for each child, at each school.

Theme #8: Consultation and Communication

Our community wondered about previous communications to parents, as well as future communication planning across the whole school community. Website navigation suggestions were raised to share perspectives on how and where the board has shared material throughout the project on the NNDSB website. Specific questions on stakeholder engagement and board communication protocols were raised.

NNDSB has collected information in several sessions that included teaching staff, operational staff, students, and First Nations representatives. All the information collected has remained relevant, and further meetings occurred with selected staff where design details were required to support programming needs - i.e., Special Education, science labs, tech labs etc., as well as again with First Nations representatives when preliminary plans were prepared by the architect.

This project has a dedicated place on the board's website that contains media releases, reports from the Parry Sound Build Committee, as well as meeting minutes. All information shared with the public through the board's communication protocol will be added to the Parry Sound JK-12 section of the website. The board was pleased to be invited to present a deputation to Parry Sound Town Council on June 1, 2021. This event was recorded and is viewable on the town's YouTube channel. On June 8, 2021, the board hosted a community review event with the project leads and principal architect from +VG. An additional meeting was hosted for internal stakeholders from the Parry Sound family of schools to ask specific questions. At each of the events, participants were able to ask questions regarding the build. As a further courtesy, not required by the ARC process but in consideration of further opinion, participants were also invited to provide feedback through a website survey. NNDSB has a communication protocol in place to support effective communication. Communication protocols are in place to facilitate communication to and from inform the board. In January 2020, NNDSB strengthened its communications practices, building on the administrative guidelines that address how inquiries and communication are to take place by employees and members of the public.

On August 19, 2021, a consultation was held with First Nation representatives, where Paul Sapounzi of +VG presented themes and designs for the new build. There was significant discussion about various aspects of the build including the space dedicated to Indigenous education, and the importance of continuing consultation with the Indigenous students attending the schools.

In consideration of the feedback received in this meeting, internal consultation continued which included our Indigenous Education team, +VG, the PSHS Principal (who brought forward thoughts and considerations from the Indigenous Youth at PSHS), as well as central staff responsible for the build. Three meetings were held to gather input at the design phase in the spring of 2022.

While completing the designs of the building, and developing the working drawings, +VG has worked with the Capital Projects Manager to ensure staff input has been obtained into various aspects of the building, especially with regard to the specialized technical spaces.

At the February 6, 2023, PS Build Committee meeting, Manager Speirs presented a walkthrough of the site plan and floor plans for both levels. These plans have been posted on the website, and a video of Manager Speirs' presentation will accompany those plans for members of the public who did not attend the committee meeting.

As part of its commitment to more frequent, timely and transparent communication, NNDSB developed a protocol for written documents that includes stakeholders. Written communication has a process to be followed that allows the executive team, trustees, principals and managers, union partners and staff to see the information before it is sent to families, posted to the website, shared on social media, and distributed to media.

The intent of this protocol is to provide community stakeholders with relevant news while giving NNDSB staff advance notice wherever possible, as well as to ensure consistent, clear, and accurate information.

These protocols supplement the long-standing administrative guidelines that lay out the process for communicating with NNDSB. The objective of the process is to deal with questions and concerns at the grassroots level and move questions and concerns through an ascending communication flow until the question or concern is addressed.

For example, a teacher would speak to their principal; if the principal did not have an answer, they would speak to their superintendent, etc. A parent would address a concern with a teacher first, then the principal, then the superintendent, then the Director of Education, then the trustee who would then bring it to the Chair of the Board. A member of the public (who does not have a child affiliated with a school) could still reach out to the local school for information or contact their elected trustee for advice on the process. Members of school advisory councils should communicate with the principal of the school.

The purpose of an ascending communication flow is to ensure that NNDSB messaging is timely, consistent, clear, and correct. More detailed information regarding the protocols is posted on the board's website.

Theme #9: Programming Concerns:

Educators expressed concern about shared space scheduling and wondered how programming would be affected. Parents sought answers regarding administration planning (specifically if the school would have a separate elementary and secondary principal and related administrative support). Many voices spoke about the importance of community use of schools (largely focused on gymnasium use) and access by community partners. Feelings of inequity between opportunities in Parry Sound and North Bay were expressed.

While it is anticipated that the school will open in September 2025 to students, the final construction is expected to be completed in spring 2025 to allow educators ample time to move in and collaborate on routine planning and shared space accommodations.

All principals in publicly funded boards are qualified in elementary and secondary schools as per The Education Act. It is the responsibility of the school principal to ensure equity amongst elementary and secondary school administration, planning and programming.

Community Use of Schools is a Ministry of Education initiative that supports access to school space outside of school hours and when space is not required for use by students, for not-for-profit and for-profit groups. It is the policy of the Near North District School Board to make

available to the community the Board's school buildings, facilities and grounds provided use does not conflict with regular school use and is economically feasible. Throughout the design phase, community use of the school has been intentionally prioritized. Spaces that would see the highest community use (for example- the gymnasiums, and cafetorium) are located proximal to the main entrance to support the public navigating quickly and easily to these areas.

NNDSB administers public education to approximately 10,000 students across the Parry Sound District, a portion of Muskoka District and the Nipissing District. This unique makeup of distinct communities contributes to many rich opportunities within the school community. The Ministry of Education establishes the budget framework to guide how NNDSB allocates resources to support students. Often, this framework is enrollment-driven, with additional funding provided in special circumstances for outlying areas. NNDSB will endeavor to continue to offer unique programming options, based on student demand. Through collaboration with local community partners, NNDSB students have enrolled in such programs as Coop, OYAP, Dual Credit and Specialist High School Major (SHSM) programs that provide opportunity to gain industry experience while completing high school.

Theme 10: Governance Procedures

Questions came forward regarding Board of Trustee policies and governance processes. The community requested information about how private sessions were conducted, and how this relates to the Board's commitments to accountability and transparency.

A key responsibility of any board of trustees is to develop and adopt policies that are based on the board's vision and that provide a framework for implementation of the vision. The *Education Act* requires boards to develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that promote the school board's goals. It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to monitor and evaluate how efficiently the board's policies are implemented and how effective they are in achieving the board's goals. Through By-Law the Board provides direction and guidance to the trustees (and the public) with respect to their behaviour as publicly elected officials. The Bylaws for the Board of Trustees of Near North District School Board are posted on the board's website, linked [here](#) for ease of reference.

The *Education Act* identifies the items eligible for private session discussion by trustees. In accordance with section 207, a meeting in Private Session may only be closed to the public when discussions relate to the security of the property of the board; the disclosure of intimate, personal or financial information in respect of a member of the board or committee, an employee or prospective employee of the board or a pupil or his or her parent or guardian; the acquisition or disposal of a school site; decisions in respect of negotiations with employees of the board; or litigation affecting the board.

Private sessions may also be referred to as In-Camera Sessions. The decision-making process followed by the NNDSB Board of Trustees is outlined in Bylaw 106- Meetings in Private Session. If a private session will be held, it is identified on the Board or Committee meeting agenda. The session is limited to matters that meet the criteria discussion above and attendance is restricted to trustees and the resources they require. To the extent possible, report back publicly occurs in open session about what occurred during the private session.

In Conclusion:

In addition to the major themes discussed above, the Board received many positive comments from community members regarding their excitement for this project. NNDSB heard from community members expressing their support for the initial drawings, satisfaction with the consultation process, and appreciation for the board and architect's careful considerations on the project. NNDSB will continue engaging with community stakeholders regarding build milestones. It is NNDSB's intent, through ongoing engagement, to continue refining our communication strategies, to ensure it supports positive and productive relationships with the community.