

Special Meeting Notes from November 02, 2009

Meeting with St. Mary's French Immersion Parents

@ 7:00 pm at St. Louis School

Mr. David Leahy, Superintendent of Schools presented the details of the current Regional Facility Plan, the previous Facility Plan; and an explanation of the decision of the previous Board in relation to re-configuration and in particular, the movement of the grade sixes and the grades nines. An explanation of the Sectors; and utilization was explained.

The government would like 85% capacity in all schools. This school capacity is 255. Included in that formula are hallways; gymnasiums etc. Our City is 81%. Our Division is 79%. We are a regional division with a school in Bow Island; therefore St. Michael's School Bow Island is factored into our equation. We think there should be city to city comparison.

MHC number 1 capital priority was a new high school, we had reports commissioned, we made submissions to the government and we had a very good case for the government. The reason the first plan did not result in action because it was too much money. The government said we can not commit to five or six new schools, nothing happened with that plan. The government came to us in the fall to try a new regional plan; we said we would participate in that plan. Page 3 of the plan outlines the 3 priorities for MH Public, MH Catholic, CAPE and St. Thomas.

We received additional information on these priorities today, Monday, November 02, 2009. In actuality we were informed that: we have three small lists; modulars; modernization and a new school. We thanked the government today for the information and noted to them that going forward that language should be in the report. We are not optimistic, however; there is no new money for modular's or for a new school. Currently modular's are from emergent modular funds; we made this request in the spring of 2009; since that time the economic situation has worsened.

When we look at the report; and the outlook in the province; we need to prepare for the worse and hope for the best.

The government looked at the number of students that are leaving Sector 5 and in fact used that number in part of the decision making for placing a new school for our jurisdiction in a lower priority in the Report; the Board is not pleased with the government's decision and we will be responding to government accordingly.

Two months ago the Superintendent presented this grade reconfiguration plan to the Board of Trustees. In a Retreat on Oct 19 and Oct 20, the Board said you need to go out and talk to the community. One of the responsibilities of the Superintendent of Schools, is strategic planning and in preparing for the future. As a result, the Superintendent presented a grade re-configuration plan to the Board; this is the plan the Superintendent has brought this evening for your feedback. The Board may take all of the

recommendations into consideration, none of the considerations or parts the considerations in the proposal.

The decision has not been made.

David explained in detail the grade reconfiguration proposal. The proposed plan would go into effect in September 2010. If all of the students in grades 5, 6, 7 & 8 moves up there will be over 1100 students at McCoy; right now McCoy is full at 750; that is a major motivator for this plan. When we started this regional plan; the government said you have little or no hope for getting a new high school. We were however encouraged to go for a new elementary school in the south. David outlined the details of the grade re-configuration for 2010:

St. Francis, St. Michael's K -6

McCoy would be 10-12

FI would be K-6 at St. Louis with TP

St. Mary's K – 9 English, Dual track FI and English and re-zone boundaries to include sector 2 (flats) and sector 3 (the hill).

Mother Teresa; K – 6 and LAP

St. Patrick's; K – 5

Notre Dame; 6 -9

Ask for a new core school of 250 in the south; with modulars

Modernize McCoy

Modernize St. Francis at a later date

- 1. Concern as a parent of combining the special needs that we have here with Turning Points ; the reason we put our daughter into French Immersion; we want to challenged our children; putting them in with special needs may not do that?**
 - a. The students in Turning Points are integrated however remain in specialized programming a lot of the time.
 - b. We should encourage and welcome and celebrate opportunities where we can bring any special population into inclusion.
 - c. At St. Mary's right now we have SUCCESS; Learning Assistance; etc; those students are not exclusive in the program; however, they are integrated when ever possible.
 - d. When we feel those students can be included in regular program they are.
 - e. We are not aware of any research when French Immersion has been placed in with a population of students with special needs and there have been issues.

- 2. What is Turning Points Population?**
 - a. Majority is K – 6; some are middle school and one or two are high school age; and they spend a significant portion of their time at McCoy?

- 3. How would the integration work with Turning Points student into French Immersion?**

- a. Not all instruction is done in FI.
- 4. Andy Fune noted that he has three children in French Immersion at St. Mary's. He has no worries about moving his own children here to St. Louis.**
- a. For Turning Points majority are K – 6; the program is specialized; and most people what they hear is not true; the Turning Points staff clearly articulate when students are ready to integration.
- 5. What is the Turning Points Program?**
- a. Severely behaviorally disordered students attend this program and are provided exceptionally intensive support to provide the students with skills to re-integrate into a regular classroom setting; approximately 15 students enrolled currently.
 - b. From a Catholic perspective we need to serve them and provide for them.
 - c. Prior to this program; students were expelled and our success in turning students around has been tremendous.
- 6. Our daughter flourished with Fine Arts; will there be the same kind of programming here?**
- a. Yes, they will have the same kind of music program the same as other elementary schools.
 - b. The kind of enrichment at St. Mary's will not be the same as here.
 - c. It is unfortunate that we can not have the same programming at all schools.
- 7. I would tend to disagree; within a building if the mentality is to have that in the building anything is possible. I believe it can be done. Given their own building they can have the same quality as was at St. Mary's.**
- 8. Is isolation going to come with being in a school of our own?**
- a. That would be unfortunate; there is a choice there; if this would happen; we would need to do something about that.
- 9. Once we return to St. Mary's in grades 7 – 9 will the Fine Arts would be there again?**
- a. Yes.
- 10. Did you considering turning this into a K – 9 School?**
- a. Yes, we could house K – 9 FI in this building; but we decided against it because of all of the options that need to be offered at the junior high level.
- 11. On this document Academy Programs are not mentioned? What are the statuses of the Academies in Fine Arts?**

- a. It was an oversight that they were not mentioned in the Q and A; they will continue; at St. Mary's in 7 -9 and ND would continue. This year there is a review of the Fine Arts Academy and Notre Dame Sports Academy.
 - b. A consultant has been hired to review the Academies.
- 12. You need to understand if this Division does not get relief soon in modular's or a new school; some programs are going to have to be cut; or some space is going to be re-allocated.**
- 13. Push for a Fine Arts French Elementary School; these students are naturally focused toward that. We have two French Music Teachers; French Artists in our Community; a fine arts twist on a new school is an interesting concept.**
- 14. I love the Fine Arts; not every student is Fine Arts. I understand that St. Louis parents would miss their own community school; I do want to comment that French Immersion is not a special needs program; Inclusion is for every student; Canadian Parents for French says that French Immersion is for every student.**
- a. Our plan is to try to teach as much French Immersion in as many subjects as we can. We do not want to end the program. We want to run a Pre-K – 12 French Immersion Program eventually.
- 15. Felt blessed with the teachers so far; my concern with splitting them up is that there would only be three grades of French immersion at St. Mary's and students may wish to move to English; with the peer pressure.**
- a. I do not believe we would be able to offer the options for 7 -9 at St. Louis.
 - b. The French Immersion program does start to drop off in grades 7-9 statistically.
- 16. We have offered partnerships in offering FI with 76; we have not made a workable solution; however, we are still trying.**
- 17. Would you move P Kindergarten here as well?**
- a. Yes.
- 18. If you move St. Louis what would happen to North Flats Neighborhood Association programs?**
- a. We hope we could engage NFN Association to continue programming etc; after school; summer school; we would commit busing. The students live in this neighborhood and should be offered the same services even if they attend school in another area of the city.
 - b. Approximately 45 students; about half of St. Louis come to St. Louis from outside of the community area; you need to know that MH Catholic has amazing amounts of cross attendance. There are currently 95 students at this school; however students with

specialized codes count for (3). This school is still only half utilized.

19. I am thrilled grade sixes are moving back to the elementary schools.

- a. Between the students coming here and students going up there; 6's would staying and 45 students would be coming here. FI has on average an impact of 20 students per year.

20. One of the main strengths would be to have a French Principal and French Staff; it that something that will happen?

- a. It is time to have a French speaking administrator that would be ideal.

21. Will there be split classes?

- a. Yes, there could be and it is always a likely scenario given the economics. The cuts from the fiscal correction and the cuts expected next year it could be likely. Split classes are always a possibility at any elementary school and a possibility.

22. What would the utilization rate be if we moved here?

- a. There are a number of factors but the utilization would go way up and with room to expand.

23. If this goes through we are better utilizing all of our schools; to make wise use of space

- a. Yes, it would create more room for growth at St. Mary's; and it would create a better utilization for our division overall.
- b. We don't know the growth at St. Mary's because we have not had an elementary compliment on the hill for many years; we might have more students coming there than we are prepared for; this could be an attractive option.
- c. SE to St. Louis.
- d. SW to St. Michael's.

24. We need to reach out to the parents at St. Louis School and let them know they are going to be welcomed and OK at St. Mary's.

25. I have had a conversation with CPF ...what is being proposed is good; the challenge of dual track is actually better and more challenging; research shows students come out of that programming as or even more successful due to the diversity.

26. Any other options presented...

- a. The Board may decide we stay status quo; or let's move the 9's and 6's and FI stay's' for now.
- b. That is fine; the further along we go; if we don't get relief; the closer we get to make a tough decision.

- c. The Board will make a decision in December 2009. There may be a special meeting in December 2009.
- d. Delegations can make presentations at the Board Meeting.
- e. Welcome to appear before the Board on November 16 and November 17.

27. Do the bell times stay the same; and what about bell times?

- a. Classes start at 8:30 and end at 2:55.
- b. Many things can happen with bus time; especially during economic tough times.
- c. We get funded for 1.2 kms; this Division buses 2.4 kms; we are driving a lot of kids to school that should not be getting funded; the Minister said you need to look at this area

28. Are bus times going to change?

- a. Ideally they won't but they could.

29. Will there be an increased cost to the division to have FI at St. Louis?

- a. Yes, next year we are going to have busses from more areas to St. Louis.

30. In Grande Prairie Catholic....in areas where they do not have enough students for busing; the parents get paid a per diem rate to drive their children to school; could we do that?

- a. That is a possibility.
- b. We might not transport 2.4.
- c. We may use more City Transit.
- d. May have parents pay a fee for transportation.

31. Comment: I was not comfortable with a small child on a bus with big kids; so I drive them anyways.

32. Is there an argument for keeping the status quo?

- a. Yes, the Board can say...we love the plan or they may say we are not doing anything at this point

33. The opportunities abound if French Immersion moves to ST. Louis; it feels like we are growing up.

34. Peter Grad. The concerns I hear this evening are different than the concerns from last week. How can we reach out to the families at St. Louis families? There is a spectrum of decisions to be made.

35. I think as a parent in Alberta; we need to do a letter writing campaign; Education and Health Care are not the places to start cutting; and we are not happy with the decisions our school boards are having to make.

**No further questions. Thank you for coming
Approximately 40 in attendance.**