

Joint PSSC Presentation

from the Sackville Family of Schools
to the District Education Council
27th November, 2018

Good evening, my name is Andrew Wilson and I am the Chair of the Marshview PSSC. I am here tonight to present on behalf of the PSSC committees from the Sackville family of schools: Salem Elementary, Marshview Middle and Tantramar Regional High.

Joint PSSC meeting

On November 14th, a joint PSSC meeting was held at Marshview Middle School to discuss the current Sustainability Study and consider what input these committees would contribute to this process.

By the end of that meeting, there was clear consensus that of the four options presented to us by the DEC, the PSSCs support “final recommendation #4.”



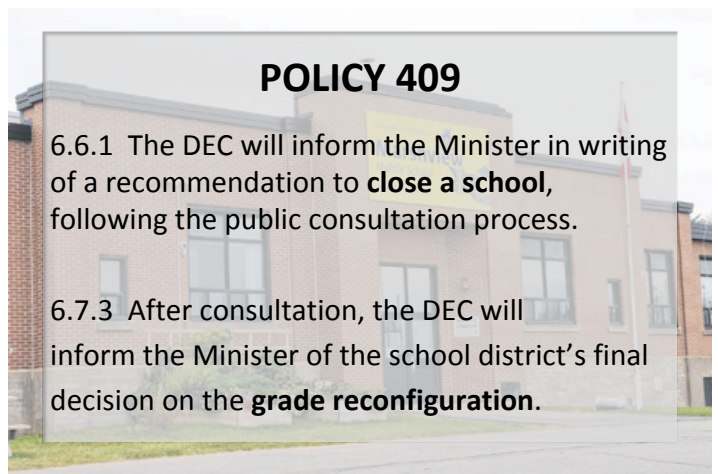
This recommendation is open to “*another option brought forward during the study.*” The PSSCs request that this other “option” take the form of a meaningful and substantial community led process for the planning and locating of new facilities.

4. Consider combinations of items 2 and 3 **or another option** brought forward during the study.

Scope and Considerations

PSSC members are aware that Policy 409 outlines a very specific role for the DEC. The policy language shown here is, in plain speak, dealing with 2 key issues:

1. the decision on whether to close Marshview Middle School and
2. a recommendation to the Minister about grade level configuration.



Policy 409 - 8 Sustainability Considerations

- Health and safety
- Low / declining enrolments
- Quality of education programs and services
- Transportation
- Finance
- Impact on local community
- Impact on other schools
- Economic development
- Provincial finances – Education and Early Childhood Development
- District global budget
- Programs and staff
- Other factors raised by the community/parents



As part of the DEC's deliberations, we understand that there are a number of sustainability considerations influencing the final recommendation. Although there is much more to say, our comments here address the considerations listed. Interestingly, they also form the bulk of the concerns brought forward in the PSSCs' recent Thought Exchange survey.

“Thought Exchange” data

The data collected from the Thought Exchange survey communicates important values held by members of our community concerning education and educational infrastructure. While there was a reasonable spread of opinion on what kinds of issues were most pressing, what was clearly in focus was the widespread support for substantial community involvement in the process. This data follows other levels of consultation that have taken place in our community, all of which confirm the commitment to and deep interest in education demonstrated by the Sackville community.

THOUGHT EXCHANGE

Changes to the Sackville Family of Schools
14 November 2018



206
People



509
Thoughts



11063
Stars

Participation: Salem Elementary, Marshview Middle School, Tantramar Regional Highschool

The Four Recommendations

Of the four possibilities put forward by the DEC, the Sackville PSSCs agree that the fourth option is the best option.

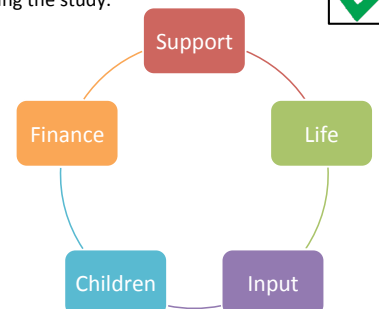
4. Consider combinations of items 2 and 3 or another option brought forward during the study

The PSSCs have an additional request that the DEC affirm the need for more substantial community involvement in the development of learning facilities in the community. There are at least five compelling reasons for this.



4. Consider combinations of items 2 and 3 or another option brought forward during the study.

FIVE
compelling
reasons



Tantramar Wetlands Centre is precisely the kind of program we need in our new schools. This is not an "added extra."
 We need new options for school design and planning that value such programs as essential rather than putting them on the chopping block as "extras."

4.7 ★★★★★ (15 &)
 Ranked #5 of 10



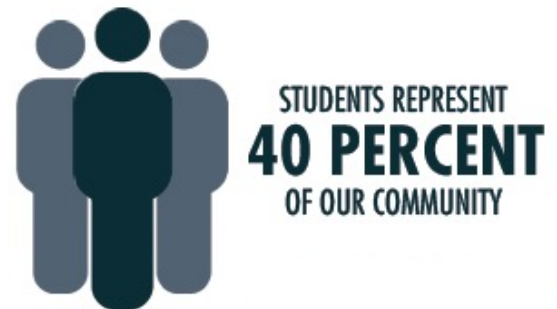
- **SUPPORT:** First, the community has demonstrated ongoing support of and solid interest in retaining community supported educational programs such as the Tantramar Wetlands Center, the “trailblazers” after school program, embedded pre-school programs like “playschool” and “talk to me,” the community integrated Marshview “engage” program, outdoor learning spaces created by community partners such as the Salem outdoor classroom, and many others. In the case of the

Wetlands Institute, the E&Y Multi-Year Infrastructure Planning report excludes this community initiative from the design and planning of new schools. However, in a small community such as ours, we understand that these kinds of opportunities should not be regarded as value added extras, but rather are essential to the way teaching and learning unfolds.

It makes sense then that any new school facilities involve substantial community input with the opportunity to preserve existing local learning partnerships and create new ones.

There is no doubt that our community strongly supports education.

- **LIFE:** Second, meaningful and substantive community consultation and engagement is something we should be obliged to do when restructuring or redesigning schools. The Sackville community definitely has a strong interest and a genuine stake in the development of its schools. Education is the central economic driver of the community of Sackville. Education provides over 700 jobs and millions of dollars in salaries and investments. Students represent 40% of our local community and the percentage of the workforce employed in “Education and Government” in Sackville is twice the Provincial average.



Education is a way of life in Sackville.

- **INPUT:** More than this, though, community consultation and engagement is also necessary in order to create a school environment that reaches the various demographics within our community and meets their specific needs and interests [SLIDE]. Socio-economically speaking, this is a high needs region and this reality needs to be reflected in the process of creating appropriate facilities in Sackville and the surrounding area. The

reality is that these specific, complex and additional needs do not always fit into generalized funding formulas and design specifications.

This is why we need direct and impactful input on our schools.

- CHILDREN: More specifically, there are compelling ethical reasons to consult with and engage with a range of different groups within the wider community. For example, one of the highest rated comments of the thought exchange survey expressed the hope that the children of our community would be consulted with regards to any educational changes that might take place. This just makes good sense.

I hope the kids are being asked what they think too.
Its important to get their opinions - especially the older kids will have a definite opinion on these matters.

3.9 ★★★★★ (31 👤)
Ranked #2 of 10

5	★	██████████
4	★	██████████
3	★	██████████
2	★	██████████
1	★	██████████

Increasingly, this kind of focused consultation and engagement is understood, not simply as a courtesy, but as a moral obligation. For example, Canada is a signatory of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*. [SLIDE] Article 12 states:

Most children spend very substantial portions of their time in schools, and educators and school tribunals make very significant decisions about children’s lives. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognized that the right of children **“to be heard within education is fundamental to the realization of the right of education”**... The Committee recommends that **children be heard with respect to the development of school policies and codes of behavior, as well as in proceedings that affect their individual education.** Too often, however, children are not included in decision-making about their education and schooling.

We need to hear from those most effected by educational change.

- FINANCE: Finally community engagement and consultation will provide an opportunity to explore additional funding options and revenue streams not currently available to the Department and essential in creating a more tailored facility or set of facilities in Sackville. [SLIDE] This possibility for creative partnerships and arrangements would help offset the necessary limitations inherent in the current funding model



and provide the resources necessary to realise a more expansive educational vision.

Exploring partnerships can open up additional financial possibilities.

The PSSCs also discussed the three other possible recommendations.



[The] recommendation [from the DEC] will be **one** of the following possibilities:

1. Maintain the **status-quo**.
2. **Close** Marshview Middle School and **reconfigure** Salem to a (K to 5) and Tantramar High School to a (6 to 12).
3. **Close** Marshview Middle School, build a **new** K to 5 school and build a **new** 6 to 12 High School.
4. Consider **combinations** of items 2 and 3 **or another option** brought forward during the study.



1. Maintain the status-quo

We do not support maintaining the status quo. Marshview needs to close. It has definitely passed its use-by date. Marshview is nearly 70 years old (built in 1949). Learning spaces are designed and function very differently in 2018 than they did in 1949 (c.f. Marshview 409 2018 presentation). There are wonderful things happening at Marshview Middle school but the bottom line is that it is

unsafe and an unhealthy working and learning environment. The E&Y Infrastructure report rated Marshview as being in “poor” condition. It is not cost effective to put more money into this school vs. building a new one (over \$2.3 million just in deferred maintenance). As supported by the “thought exchange” data, while the community at Marshview is valued tremendously, no one is arguing from this community that Marshview, as a physical building, should remain open.

2. Close Marshview Middle School and reconfigure Salem to a (K to 5) and Tantramar High School to a (6 to 12)

Like Marshview, Salem has been classified as being in “poor” condition (E&Y report). Salem is not as old as Marshview (built in 1980), but has significant deferred maintenance costs (\$1.4M). Salem has space issues, and not only due to the rise in numbers at K level entry. Salem’s gymnasium is undersized, the school has significant ongoing maintenance issues and its facilities are in need of updating to meet the demands of contemporary pedagogical approaches and psychosocial needs. Some alteration of facilities and floor plan reconfigurations have occurred in recent years, but this has been at the expense of other resources such as library space and a dedicated art room. Additional students will further inhibit attempts to redevelop educational spaces to meet contemporary pedagogical, community and individual needs (c.f. E&Y report: 27).

The E&Y Infrastructure report determined that an upgrade to Salem to accommodate grade 5 would likely exceed 50% of the cost of a new building (the usual threshold prompting a new build). E&Y cautions that the costs would continue to rise with any “new discoveries” and they acknowledged that the deferred maintenance list was not “all inclusive.” In addition, and by their own admission, the E&Y “Class D” estimates could vary as much 30% over the projected cost. It seems more than likely that upgrade costs to Salem would exceed that 50% threshold (E&Y report: 18).

Tantramar, built in 1968, has its own significant deferred maintenance costs (\$1.84M). It is an old building that was designed as a high school. Bringing this building to the point where it can comfortably house a larger student body and reconfiguring the school in order to adequately accommodate a broader range of student groups with differing social and learning needs, would involve significant change and cost. Additions to the building would mean compromising outdoor education spaces and sports facilities. It is also not clear the location of Tantramar can accommodate the increased traffic and parking demands that additional student numbers would bring.

Tantramar has many spaces that, while technically classified as classrooms, practically speaking, do not work as classroom spaces. Many of these spaces are currently music rooms, tech and culinary labs, closets and storage areas, etc. Increasing the student population would mean losing many resources and facilities that would have to be converted into classrooms, such as the Breakfast room, Keyboard lab, computer labs not to mention community programs currently housed in the school such as the Wetlands Institute and the pre-K Playschool program.

If Tantramar is converted to a 6-12 school, it would be the largest 6-12 school in the Province with approximately 700 students (based on the Department’s 2016-17 Summary Statistics). Accommodating this many students across such a broad age span would be challenging enough as a new build, with complex design and coordination issues to resolve. To attempt a retrofit of the current Tantramar building for this purpose, filling to capacity a 50 year old structure with significant ongoing maintenance issues and an outdated floor plan, is not a feasible solution (either logistically or economically).

3. Close Marshview Middle School, build a new K to 5 school and build a new 6 to 12 High School

While this option is more attractive given the current age and condition of the facilities generally, it is not an acceptable option if it follows the typical department processes, specifications and metrics. There is a real desire for meaningful community engagement in the process of designing and

configuring the schools in this town. Much of what is currently regarded as “extra,” and not included in the standard development of new school facilities, is of central value to the community. The community is very concerned about these potential losses.

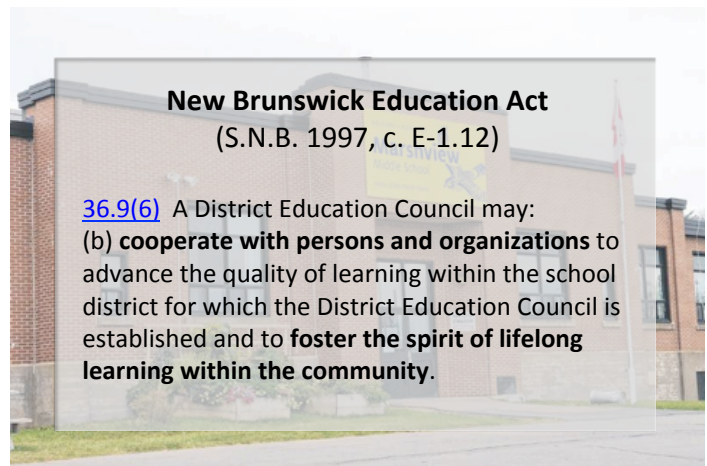
Community concern extends to the question of grade configuration and the proposal to divide two schools along K-5 and 6-12 lines is not seen as a good fit for this community--particularly as Dorchester and Port Elgin students join our schooling community in grade 9. Students from outlying communities have different needs and bring with them different kinds of experiences. They require time and attention as they adjust to a new school community in Sackville. Careful transition is essential for the creation of a sense of belonging and for the success of their future learning.

There is also some concern from the community about having grades 6-8 in the same facility as grades 9-12. The needs of differing student groups require consideration alongside pressing infrastructure needs. Having community input and basing school design on significant community engagement is essential in developing a set of school facilities that connect in meaningful ways to the shape and character of the Sackville context.

I've spent a bit of time on these three options but basically, for logistical, cost and community reasons, these options just don't make sense for Sackville.

Community cooperation

While we recognize that formal procedures for such a community led process are not in place in New Brunswick. Even so, we have heard that there is considerable interest in such a process from communities across the Province. We are also aware of considerable expertise in doing this kind of consultation and engagement effectively. Moreover, we are heartened to read in the Education Act that the DEC has the latitude to advance the quality of learning and foster values of lifelong learning in a community through partnerships and cooperative ventures.



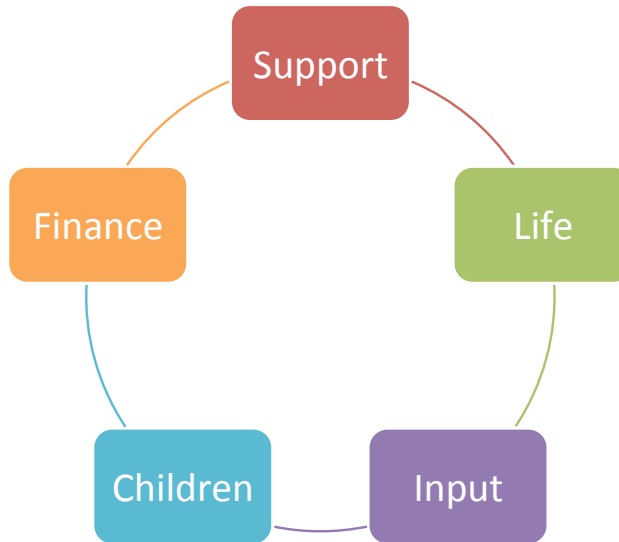
In voting to recommend the closure of Marshview and the possibility of a community led process as part of recommendation #4, the PSSCs are asking for the DEC to become partners with this community. To forge a cooperative relationship with the community of Sackville that will enable us to create something truly groundbreaking in this place. In all of this, our hope is to consolidate the wonderful things already happening in education in our schools and help provide the support to expand and extend them to ensure a bright and vibrant future for our children.



4. Consider combinations of items 2 and 3 or another option brought forward during the study.



FIVE
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reasons



Respectfully submitted by Andrew Wilson on behalf of:

Salem Elementary School PSSC;

Marshview Middle School PSSC;

Tantramar Regional High School PSSC.