

Dalhousie Focus Group 1
Feedback
September 22, 2009

Opportunities:

- To alleviate student accommodation issues at West Dalhousie if option 1 is preferred (grade 2-6 transferred 2010/2011)
- Seed commercial portable spaces for interim leasing (2-3 years) on site, for use as library/computer lab (auxiliary spaces). Create pilot program for off grid environmental teaching centers.
- If grade 5/6 were to remain at Dalhousie for 1-2 years, develop a campus community between Dalhousie and West Dalhousie. This maximizes utilization of classroom space and facilitates a positive/productive working and support environment for the teaching staff who may be based out of West Dalhousie but working at Dalhousie. Combine resources.
- My hope is that the merging of the 2 schools creates a greater sense of community among the children and parents.
- There will be opportunities for new friendships and possibly new job openings for staff.
- To consolidate an English elementary program at one Dalhousie elementary school over time.
- Resources that are extra at Dalhousie School will they be moved to our school too? ie computers, books, learning materials, etc.

Challenges:

- Accommodation at West Dalhousie – short and long term larger school community = 2 X designated play areas and/or 2X playtimes at lunch and recess
- Easing the fear and trepidation of the West Dalhousie parents, staff and students
- Make the transition as smooth as possible
- Ensuring that Dalhousie kids are made to feel welcome rather than like intruders
- To keep communication with all involved in a timely manner
- There are many logistics to work out when increasing the schools population; space, lunchtime, bussing, playground etc
- Coordination of school schedules. I may have 1 child at Senator Patrick Burns, 1 child at Dalhousie Elementary and 1 child at West Dalhousie elementary. That may take an “event planner” to coordinate drop-off/pick-up/busing schedules/PD days etc.
- Parent involvement at the schools

- If one's children are spread over multiple schools there will be less parent participation, ie field trips at all schools.
- Space in the school
- A fundamental value of our school is the multi-aging/team teaching class organization in place since our school's inception. I feel strongly that maintaining 2 teachers and 2 grades per classroom in grades 3 /4 and 5/6 is essential to our school
- A surge in students in 5/6 in 2010-2011 will put significant stress on our staff and administration to deliver the quality education that makes our school so exceptional.

Comments:

- Positive approach to challenge ahead, but will be 2-3 years of upheaval in the community
- Need to explore "outside the box" opportunities
- Further study is required on the rate of build out of Sherwood and Nolan Hill and this to be better identified and projected in students' numbers. Alternate future schools for these students need to be identified as redirection of students from one school to another could take 1-2 years which may impact student accommodation at West Dalhousie significantly.
- Option 3: - grades 2 to 4 transfer 2010/11 (47 students), grade 5/6 remain at Dalhousie; grade 6 transfers 2011/2012 (32 students)
- If option 1:
 - 170 WD,
 - 100 D,
 - 77 Sherwood,
 - (88-16) 72 out of bounds
 - 420 students (approx), current school capacity is 375 students.
 - Potentially-quality/quantity of programs (phys ed, music library, computers) would decrease to accommodate overpopulation. Only flexible student populations – reduce out of bounds and/or Sherwood numbers.
- Thank you so much for the information the presentation was very good
- Great that Dalhousie has two schools to accommodate our kids. Unfortunate that the E Dalhousie student will have to cross 53rd Street.
- The use of a "Focus Group" involving parents in the Dalhousie School, English program and Spanish program is commended. However I feel strongly that both parents should be Dalhousie residents as this matter primarily affect the parents of elementary school aged children who live in Dalhousie. All other parents choose Dalhousie Elementary, however we residents of Dalhousie live here and are raising our children here partly due to the fact there are elementary, junior and senior high schools in the neighbourhood.

- Two options were presented. I think we should be able to take k-4 next year, but I'm afraid to have grads 5-6 as well. It puts our school next year just at capacity. Exception with siblings.

Questions:

- Will the after school care program be expanded at West Dalhousie?
- What impact will this have on current 'out of bounds' students and their siblings who may not as yet be enrolled? Will these students be able to complete their education at West Dalhousie?
- I had inadvertently come to the conclusion that the redirection of Sherwood students to a school closer to them would alleviate the numbers crunch immediately and in the future. Why not have one upheaval in this community rather than putting the inevitable off?
- Portables to W Dalhousie?
- Has Dr. Coffin School been considered?
- If I request a new stop for the bus, is my request granted or will it be rejected?
- If I request a waiver for the school fees does it include the bus service? Will I still have to pay the lunchtime supervision fee?
- Will there be adult patrols hired to help young children cross 53rd Street? I would recommend this. I would not let my young one cross 53rd Street on his own till he is much older. I support either option.
- With the extra enrolment, will we get more support staff?
- Would the children still be grouped according to grade level?

**Focus Group Meeting 2
Comments/Questions
October 21, 2009**

Comments:

- Community generally felt that the recommendation to move the Dalhousie School students to West Dalhousie School would be positive for the community- the question lies in the implementation of the move.
- Some Dalhousie parents would like to see the move done all at once and not as a phase out of the grades.
- Would the principals consider keeping families together if the 'phase out' scenario is chosen?
- Some parents from the West Dalhousie community voiced concerns about the large numbers of students in the classrooms for the next two years. It was felt that a phase out would be a better option to alleviate the high numbers. There is a fear that with the higher numbers in the classrooms that the great programming and quality of education for their children would be impacted.
- Re-designating Sherwood and Nolan Hill students to a different school will not result in a decrease of numbers at West Dalhousie School, as CBE will honour the fact that students are entitled to complete their division.

- Some parents felt that we need to try to reduce the number of school moves the students have. Perhaps keep all the Gr. 6 students at Dalhousie and move only Gr. 1-5. That way, Gr. 6 students would only have one move, to Jr. High.
- Wording in the letter home to parents was filled with too much CBE jargon. The letter was difficult for some parents to understand and as a result some parents did not have a clear picture of the recommended accommodation and the proposed consideration for closure of the regular Dalhousie program and the implementation scenarios.

Open House:

- CBE will bring graphs with the projections and numbers based on the 2009 September count
- CBE will have available to parents the overview of the Administrative process for student accommodation planning and proposed closures of programs.
- CBE will have available to parents the overview of the Regulatory Process (mandated process by Alberta Education) or the consideration of closure.