

Question and Answer

French Review Public Information Session

Centre Wellington DHS – March 31, 2016

Q: You mentioned that the average JK enrolment at James McQueen is 50 students? Do you know the average enrolment in secondary? How many of those 50 kids are continuing in the program?

JP: Our retention rates Boardwide are very high. For JK-8, we are retaining an average of 95% of students per year, with some drops experienced in grade 3 and grade 6, which is coincident with the standardized testing years. There is also a more significant drop between grade 8 and grade 9.

Q: Why does the J.D. Hogarth chart show enrolment that exceeds capacity even with the cap? How will enrolment be accommodated if there isn't more room?

JP: You do not see the effect of the cap at J.D. Hogarth until 2022 because it accommodates grades 3-8 students. There are still large cohorts working their way through the school so the capped enrolment does not have an impact there until the end of the projection period. This review process did not consider any boundary reviews or other processes that could address some of the growth-related pressures. Those could be considered once we know the outcome of this review.

Q: What is the timeframe for pool hiring? Some boards begin this process as early as February.

LB: We are starting interviews next week to shortlist people with French qualifications to add to the occasional teacher roster. That is the first step in the hiring process. There are also some changes to the regulations which consider a process for current contract teachers from other boards who wish to relocate.

Q: Does Centre Wellington DHS provide enough courses for students to graduate with their FI certificate?

TL: Yes. Centre Wellington DHS is the secondary FI site for Centre Wellington and students can get full FI and graduate with a certificate.

Q: There is growth happening in Fergus. How do you explain the 63 JK students this year? The cap is only set at 50 JK students.

JP: We are aware of the growth that is forecast for Centre Wellington and we have built that into the projection. There are pockets of growth, but there are also areas of decline. The recommendation is to review the cap if significant growth occurs to determine if the 50 JK students remains appropriate for the area. This will need to be balanced against the staffing issues as well.

Q: What would it take to change the provincial regulation to be able to start FI in grade 1? It seems like the 5 FI centres are holding back the rest of the board? It would be beneficial to start FI in grade 1 because it would give parents a chance to see how their child adapts to school and then make a decision whether or not the child is ready for FI.

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TL: The committee considered Grade 1 FI entry very seriously, but then received notice that the Ministry would not allow a change in grade structure. The ministry is aware of the position that this places boards in, but until the regulation is amended we cannot implement a Grade 1 entry point. FDK must be provided at all schools that had the program prior to July 2014. Parents concerned with the regulation could contact the Ministry to voice their concerns.

JP: The committee also felt that it was important to begin FI as early as possible, and this consideration weighed into the preference not to move to a Grade 1 entry point.

Q: When would the instructional time changes come into effect?

TL: The recommendation has not been approved, but if it is approved by trustees it would come into effect in 2017, which is the same year as the proposed cap.

Q: The recommendation includes reviewing the enrolment caps every 5 years. If pool hiring and recruitment strategies are successful in attracting FI teachers, is it possible that the cap could be removed?

JP: Staffing is one component of the review, but accommodation is another. We still have large cohorts working through the system. It would be part of the 5 year review, but we cannot say for sure now that we won't continue to need caps in the future. At this point, we do foresee the need to cap long term.

Q: Could you keep regular track FDK classes in FI centres and then change to a Grade 1 entry point?

JP: No, this would not help with the accommodation issue at these schools.

Q: How often do you review school boundaries?

JP: We monitor enrolment at all schools regularly, and we undertake boundary review processes as required.

Q: There seems to be a changing dynamic between FI and regular track enrolment, but when you look at the overall JK enrolment, it seems to be fairly steady. Do you have the ability to flex class sizes in order to respond to the pressure? If so, then it appears to be an HR more so than an accommodation problem.

JP: The ministry sets class size caps so there is the ability to flex to a certain extent, but we still have thresholds that can't be exceeded. With dual track schools, you can't blend English and French classes so you aren't able to be as efficient with class sizes.

Q: Once the French Review is complete, are there plans for another boundary review here?

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JP: Boundary reviews would occur as needed. The next step would be to determine where these would need to occur, and would be dependent on the outcome of the recommendations made as part of this review.

TL: The goal of the review is to provide predictability for families so there aren't constant boundary reviews.

Q: If the population continues to rise in Fergus, what is the process to deal with that? How quickly could a new school be built?

JP: A boundary review process is typically a three month process, and that would address enrolment imbalances in existing schools. In order to build a new school, you need funding and approval from the Ministry. The expectation is that you will be able to fill a school before it is built. Therefore, you need to be able to prove in your business case that the students are already in school. Once you submit your case, you are in line for funding with all boards in the province. Once you have approval and funding, the design/build process is approximately 2 years.