



South Shore Regional School Board:
Option Feasibility Report

June 6th, 2012

Introduction

Deloitte were asked to raise to the Superintendent's attention any instances where an option under consideration may not be feasible or are impractical because of one or more obstacles that cannot be overcome. In the preliminary investigations we have found six school options where this may be the case, and where the Board of the SSRSB may wish to consider withdrawing the option from formal consideration in the school review process, at this time. These options are:

1. Transfer of grades 10-12 from Bridgewater Junior Senior High School to Park View Education Centre
2. Transfer of grades 6-9 from Hebbville Academy to Bridgewater Junior Senior High School
3. Transfer of New Germany Rural High School students to Park View Education Centre
4. Transfer of New Germany Elementary students to New Germany Rural High School
5. One of the options for Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School
6. Transfer of Newcombsville students to Hebbville Academy

The question our team considered for each option is:

- Are there specific stand-alone reasons, material enough to justify that some options should be set aside because the reasons identified cause the option to be unfeasible?

Our assessment of the situation for each of these options is presented below. Some of the options here depend on other options being implemented to render them possible. (See Option 2: The transfer of grades 6-9 from Hebbville Academy to Bridgewater Junior-Senior High school is not feasible unless the space is cleared by moving that school's grade 10-12 students to Park View.)

1. Transfer of grades 10-12 from Bridgewater Junior Senior High School (BJSHS) to Park View Education Centre (PVEC)

The proposed transfer is likely to result in the total number of students in Park View being unacceptably high. We conclude this for several reasons:

- a) **Current and projected enrolments raise capacity issues:** The present enrolment in grades 10-12 of BJSHS is 214, it is expected to be 220 in September, and it is projected to be 209 in 2016-17. The present enrolment of PVEC is 847, it is expected to be 811 in September, and is projected to be 710 in 2016-17. Using these figures, if BJSHS students were transferred to PVEC in 2016-17, the enrolment would be 919. If the transfer was not made until the fall of 2014-15, in 3 years' time, the total enrolment would be 977, based on the present projections. With acknowledgement of the inherent uncertainty in projecting enrolments, the assumption that the combined enrolment would be in the range of 900-950 seems reasonable.

Table 1 contains current and project number of students:

| Table 1: Projected enrolment at PVEC | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Current | September 2012 | 2014-2015 | 2016-2017 |
| BJSHS | 214 | 220 | 227 | 209 |
| PVEC | 847 | 811 | 750 | 710 |
| | | 1032 | 977 | 919 |

Although PVEC was designed for about 750-800 students, the enrolment has been greater than 900 for many of its 40+ years. Because of this high enrolment, PVEC as a facility was under "stress". Only in recent years has the enrolment decreased to a level such that the number and types of classrooms and specialist areas are sufficient to meet the requirements for the effective delivery of programs and student services.

- b) **Implications of changing classroom usage on classroom capacity:** It must be kept in mind that in all schools, including PVEC, the need for additional spaces to provide student services and alternate programs has increased dramatically in the last decade or so. When the school was designed, and for many years through the 1980's, unique programs and services for students with special needs were slowly becoming a reality. It was not until the early to mid-1990's that it became necessary to dedicate and convert former classrooms to student services areas. For example, in-school suspensions rooms have become rooms for various behavioral support programs, resource rooms have become learning centres, and classrooms have been converted to spaces in which literacy teachers, autism specialists and speech language pathologists can support students in their learning.

In 2008, an Impact Assessment Report was completed to consider the option of transferring the grade 10-12 students from Lunenburg Junior-Senior High School to PVEC. In that report, PVEC had to be assessed as the "receiving school". According to that report, the enrolment of PVEC in 2008-09 was 824 and there were no excess teaching spaces that year. Prior to that year, a classroom had been converted to an in-school suspension area and several areas for student support or alternate programs were being established. Since the assessment in 2008, a classroom was converted to a full-time learning centre and, at present, the plan is to convert a staffroom to provide yet another learning centre to begin in September. It is acknowledged that a new wing was built at PVEC and put into operation last year but, except for the music room, it cannot be viewed as additional space because the wing was added to house the new Skills and Trades Program. PVEC houses several programs which serve students from other high schools of the region; these include skilled trades, STEP and International Baccalaureate. From our assessment of the present facility use at PVEC, the school has no unused classrooms or teaching areas to effectively accommodate a significant increase in enrolment.

In summary, the effective classroom capacity in PVEC has decreased appreciably in practical terms, To bring the enrolment back to a level above 900 would bring it back to at least the "stress" levels experienced previously during its history.

- c) **Moving the 200+ students to PVEC leaves no excess capacity for growth in student numbers, should the economy of Lunenburg County see economic prosperity.** PVEC sits in the middle of the largest industrial and commercial centre of the school system or even of Lunenburg County. To consider the option of transferring all the high school students from BJSHS into PVEC must be viewed as a long-term decision being made for the next 10 to 20 years. Some excess capacity, if any exists now, should be maintained. This issue should be revisited in 5-10 years to monitor the population trends and identify whether another review is required.

The enrolment projection for PVEC in the 2008 Impact Assessment Report for Lunenburg Junior-Senior High School is also relevant. In that report, the PVEC enrolment, including the students from Lunenburg, was projected to drop by 26%, from 897 in 2008-09 to 667 in 2012-13. Now, the enrolment for this September is expected to be 811. In fact, the enrolment has dropped only by 9.6% in the last 5 years. It is projected to drop by 16.2% in the next 5 years, but will the recent history repeat itself?

In summary, an enrolment of 850 to 900 at PVEC should be viewed as optimal. Our analysis leads us to conclude that to decide now to transfer grade 10-12 from BJSHS to PVEC sometime in the next 5 years, based on the 5-year enrolment projections, causes short term over-crowding and relies on enrolment decreases to eliminate the resulting problems. If the projected enrolment stability in the Town of Bridgewater remains constant and if the projected decrease for PVEC is not as great as expected, then PVEC would remain well over the maximum (or the optimum) capacity.

2. Transfer of grades 6/7-9 from Hebbville Academy (HA) to Bridgewater Junior Senior High School (BJSHS)

This option is only feasible if option 1 happens. The transfer of students from Bridgewater Junior Senior High School to Park View Education Centre frees up the space to allow 350 HA grade 6/7-9 students to relocate to BJSHS. If option 1 is set aside, then option 2 must be set aside as well.

Should option 1 go ahead, there is another factor affecting the feasibility of this move for Hebbville students:

Ability to load/unload buses at BJSHS: The layout of the HA property was designed to meet modern-day standards for school bus traffic lanes and parking areas for drop-off and pickup. In addition, there are separate traffic lanes and parking areas for staff and the general public. This is not the case at BJSHS: buses unload from a busy street, and the additional congestion imposed by having the eight or more school buses required blocking traffic is expected to cause major traffic problems. In future working with the town to find a solution for bus parking at the school will be required if additional students are to be bused in significant numbers to BJSHS.

3. Transfer of New Germany Rural High School (NGRHS) students to Park View Education Center (PVEC)

Setting aside capacity considerations at PVEC, and assuming it can handle the NGRHS student population (presently 173), the following items should be assessed prior to further consideration of this option:

Impact on student transportation times – transferring students from NGRHS to PVEC would add an additional 50 minutes (25 minutes each way) of daily travel time to each student’s journey. The travel time for students today, versus transport time to attend PVEC is provided in table 2.

| Table 2: Average time on bus | | | Longest bus time – to PVEC |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| | Current – to NGRHS | Proposed – to PVEC | |
| Morning | 49 mins | 1h 14mins | 1h 26mins |
| Afternoon | 48 mins | 1h 13mins | 1h 25mins |

**Excludes AVRSB students on busses*

Table 3 provides more detail on bus travel times for students who have moved to PVEC from NGRHS. It shows substantial increases in bus travel time. The time reflected Table 3 represents when the first student gets on the bus up until arrival at their destination and illustrates that on all but one bus route, students will travel longer than the SSRBS’s desired standard of 1 hour per student.

Table 3: Impact on bus times already an hour or more in length

| Driver | AM | | | PM | | |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|
| | Current Time | Projected Time | Number of Students | Current Time | Projected Time | Number of Students |
| Route 1 | 0:37 | 1:02 | 10 | 0:36 | 1:01 | 4 |
| Route 2 | 0:40 | 1:05 | 8 | 0:51 | 1:16 | 14 |
| Route 3 | 1:14 | 1:39 | 1 | 1:07 | 1:32 | 8 |
| Route 4 | 0:56 | 1:21 | 7 | 0:52 | 1:17 | 7 |
| Route 5 | 0:52 | 1:17 | 9 | 0:45 | 1:10 | 1 |
| Route 6 | 1:01 | 1:26 | 8 | 0:54 | 1:19 | 5 |
| Route 7 | 0:34 | 0:59 | 0 | 0:29 | 0:54 | 0 |
| Route 8 | 0:51 | 1:16 | 4 | 0:58 | 1:23 | 5 |
| Route 9 | 0:55 | 1:20 | 4 | 1:00 | 1:25 | 2 |
| Route 10 | 0:41 | 1:06 | 1 | 0:42 | 1:07 | 5 |
| Route 11 | 0:44 | 1:09 | 6 | 0:49 | 1:14 | 9 |
| Route 12 | 0:52 | 1:17 | ?* | 0:44 | 1:09 | ?* |
| Route 13 | 0:50 | 1:15 | ?* | 0:46 | 1:11 | ?* |
| Total | | | 58 | | | 60 |

*Please note that these two drivers are AVRSB employees and while we received their route sheets with times and mileage, they cannot release student information. Therefore we cannot determine the number of students onboard the bus for over an hour if they attended PVEC rather than NGRHS.

4. Transfer of New Germany Elementary School (NGES) students to New Germany Rural High School (NGRHS)

This option is only feasible if option 3 happens. The transfer of students from NGRHS into PVEC frees up the space to allow 199 NGES students to relocate to NGRHS. If option 3 is set aside, then option 4 must be set aside as well.

5. Options for Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School (GRWSES)

Initially, two options were put forward if GRWSES closed: 1. Send all students (present enrolment is 100 students) to Chester and District Elementary School (CDES) or 2. Send some to CDES and send others to Bayview Community School (BCS). The latter option would mean that those students attending CDES would attend high school at Forest Heights Community School (FHCS) and those attending BCS would attend Park View Education Centre.

Presently, the students of GRWSES attend FHCS in grades 10-12. It became clear in our discussions that there is no educational or operational advantage to sending the students of GRWSES in two different directions and because the present practice is that they attend FHCS, the option to attend BCS could be set aside at this point in preparing the impact assessment report. If the Board chooses to drop the second option for GRWSES, the impact assessment report will consider only the option of sending students to CDES.

6. Transfer of Newcombsville Elementary School (NES) students to Hebbville Academy (HA)

There are two primary areas of concern with sending NES students to HA; enrolment and transportation:

Enrolment concerns: The present enrolment of Newcombsville Elementary School (NES) is 160, in Grade P-5, and it is projected to be 152 in 2016-17. The Grade P-5 enrolment of Hebbville Academy (HA) is 180 and it is projected to be 167 in 2016-17. The option under consideration through school review is to close NES and transfer its students to HA. This option was to be assessed in relation to another option of possibly closing Pentz Elementary School (PES) and Petite Riviere Elementary School (PRES) by transferring the students from either or both schools to Hebbville Academy.

Hebbville Academy has 6 former classrooms which are being used to house various school, regional, and community programs and services and there are no other unused classrooms in the school. If these programs and services were eliminated or transferred to other facilities, the 6 classrooms could be used to house most if not all the students from NES. Presently, 7 classrooms are used at NES, but it is possible that 6 classrooms would be sufficient, depending on the enrolment decline and the particular grade level enrolments from year-to-year.

If all the students of NES could be accommodated in 6 classrooms at HA, this definitely would bring the school utilization up to its maximum capacity. With all the NES students (about 150) transferred to HA, there would be no space to transfer any students from PES or PRES. This would mean that the closure of NES would eliminate the option of transferring the students of either PES or PRES to HA. Each of these schools has significantly less students than NES (less than 100 each) and their enrolments are projected to decline.

Another option under consideration in this review is to close the four elementary schools (NES, PES, PRES, and HA) and replace them with a new elementary school. Under this option, the total Grade P-6 enrolment would be greater than the optimal size for an elementary school. The total enrolment of the four schools presently is 593 and it is projected to be 543 in 2016-17. An elementary school with more than 500 students is generally not viewed as being optimal for the effective delivery of programs and student services.

Transportation Issue: A separate issue is student transportation times for those in the catchment area of Newcombsville Elementary School. Under the present transportation system, many elementary students who attend NES have long bus rides and, more importantly, many of the students from the NES catchment area who attend Grade 6-9 at Hebbville Academy have long bus rides---6 students are currently on the bus for over an hour to reach HA.

A complicating factor to adding additional transport time on students in the NES catchment area is the large number of secondary and unpaved roads which make up a relatively haphazard road network in the very large catchment area. The complexity of the transportation system in this area can impact travel times in winter and spring as it is a fairly common occurrence that buses cannot travel on various unpaved roads because of winter driving conditions and that roads have to be closed due to thawing conditions in spring.

In order to make this option work, the addition of another bus to serve this expanded network would be necessary to maintain a similar level of service, but it should not be expected to reduce the travel times for students in a significant way. A change in bell times would also be required in order to limit the impact on student travel times.

Suggested Bell Times:

| Table 4: Bell Time Changes at NES | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| School | Morning | Afternoon |
| Hebbsville Elementary | 8:00am (currently 8:00am) | 2:00pm (currently 1:50pm) |
| Hebbsville Academy | 9:15am (currently 9:00am) | 3:00pm (currently 3:00pm) |
| PVEC | 9:30am (currently 9:30am) | 3:30pm (currently 3:30pm) |

The additional costs to add an additional bus to the fleet per the above:

- Acquisition costs of new school bus: \$75,000 (cost absorbed by the Province)
- Additional ongoing annual operating costs: \$67,625
 - a. Maintenance and mileage costs - \$28,000
 - b. Salary for additional school bus driver- \$25,000
 - c. Increased paid time for the current drivers by approximately 3 hours/day - \$14,625

In summary, the main transportation concern surrounds the length of travel time on buses for the children in the early elementary grades, especially Grade Primary and Grade 1.