



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
**Report No. 19-070**

**18 June 2019**

**New Fernbank Elementary School – Approval of Opening Grade Structure, Program, and Attendance Boundary**

**Key Contact: Michael Carson, Chief Financial Officer, (613) 596-8211 ext. 8881**

**PURPOSE:**

1. To seek approval of staff's recommendations regarding the opening grade structure, program, and attendance boundary for a new elementary school to be opened in the Fernbank development area, and other associated changes.

**CONTEXT:**

2. Fernbank is a new residential area in the western part of the District, located south of Highway 417 between Kanata and Stittsville. The development is expected to contain an estimated 11,000 new homes at full build out. Construction in Fernbank has been on-going for a number of years. As of the end of December 2018, building permits had been issued for an estimated 2,350 residential units within the community.

In May 2018, the Board approved an updated list of capital priorities which ranked the opening of a new elementary school in the Fernbank development area as the highest project. At that time, the identified planned opening date for the new school was September 2020.

There are four elementary school sites that were identified for the OCDSB as part of the completed Fernbank Community Design Plan (CDP) process. The site which is expected to accommodate the first new school is situated at the southwest corner of Cope Drive and Rouncey Road within the Blackstone subdivision. It is a development-ready 2.84 hectare parcel of land (approximately seven acres) located adjacent to a municipal park.

Most of the students residing in the Fernbank development area are currently directed to John Young Elementary School, located in the Glen Cairn neighborhood of Kanata South.

John Young Elementary School is experiencing significant accommodation pressure and currently requires the use of 11 portable classrooms on site (see Appendix A). As of 31 October 2018 the school accommodated 735 students in a building with a pupil capacity of 547 (a utilization rate of 134%).

In January 2019, the Board approved a study consultation plan and timeline for the setting of an opening grade configuration, program offering, and attendance boundary for a new elementary school in the Fernbank area (see Appendix B).

Although there has been no information from the Ministry as to when the next capital request will be received, establishing a program and an attendance area for the future new school will be beneficial given the timing of need.

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS:**

3. In accordance with the approved timeline, a locally-formed working group met during the winter of 2018 and the spring of 2019 in order to consider potential options and receive input. The group was comprised of council representatives and principals from potentially impacted schools, District staff, and members of various local community associations. Trustees were also invited to attend.

The following summarizes the key objectives that helped guide the working group process:

- propose an opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary for a new Fernbank elementary school;
- examine local Middle French Immersion (MFI) program attendance boundaries, and suggest revisions if necessary; and
- analyze options with consideration being given to existing school feeding patterns, neighborhood alignments, the creation of viable programs, and the planning of future new school facilities.

Following a review of potential attendance boundaries and a discussion of local issues and concerns, the working group endorsed the preparation of a proposed plan for the purpose of receiving input from the larger school community.

The proposed plan was presented at a public consultation meeting held on 23 May 2019 in the gymnasium of John Young Elementary School.

## **4. The Proposed Plan**

- a. New Fernbank Elementary School Opening Grade Structure, Program Offering, and Attendance Boundary  
Under the proposed plan the new school would be a dual-track kindergarten to grade 6 facility, offering both an English program with Core French (ENG) and an Early French Immersion (EFI) program.

The new school's attendance boundary would be comprised of that portion of the John Young Elementary School boundary located west of Terry Fox Drive and the Carp River. More specifically, the attendance

area would be bounded by Hazeldean Road to the north, Iber Road and Robert Grant Avenue to the west, Fernbank Road to the south, and Terry Fox Drive and the Carp River to the east (see Appendix C).

The new school's attendance area includes a significant amount of future residential development. Creating a larger attendance boundary for the first OCDSB school to be opened in the community would make good use of the new building, and would serve to accommodate a higher number of students locally, for a longer period of time.

When capital funding is provided for the opening of a second elementary school in the Fernbank development area, the attendance boundary would be reduced to a more sustainable longer-term size.

In order to limit disruption to existing students and families, the new school would open with a kindergarten to grade 5 structure. The new school would progress to kindergarten to grade 6 for the following school year.

The kindergarten to grade 5 opening grade structure would allow grade 6 students residing in the new school's attendance boundary to complete their final year at John Young Elementary School. These students would also avoid having to attend three different schools in three successive school years.

For the purpose of the study, an opening date of September 2021 for a new Fernbank elementary school was assumed. Projected enrolments would see the school open with 322 students in 2021. It would then grow to 685 students and a utilization rate of 109.1% by 2025 (see Appendix D).

It should be noted that projecting enrolment for a new school can be challenging and is impacted by a number of different factors and assumptions: student movement and choice; the rate of enrolment growth and development; and the presence or absence of other local school options. Enrolment for the new school could therefore vary more than would typically be expected.

b. Associated MFI Program Attendance Boundary Revision

The proposed plan also includes a revision to MFI program boundaries in the Fernbank development area. MFI program students residing east of Iber Road and Robert Grant Avenue are currently directed to Bridlewood Community Elementary School (grades 4 to 6) and Glen Cairn Public School (grades 7 and 8). MFI program students residing west of Robert Grant Avenue are directed to A. Lorne Cassidy Elementary School (grades 4 to 8).

MFI attendance boundaries in the area could be revised so that the entire Fernbank development area is directed to the same set of schools for the program, located within the Stittsville area (see

Appendix D). To minimize disruption to existing students and families, this proposed change would be phased in.

Upon the opening of the new Fernbank elementary school, Grade 4 MFI program students residing within the Fernbank development area, and a future residential development area located north of Hazeldean Road (west of Terry Fox Drive and the Carp River), would be directed to A. Lorne Cassidy Elementary School. These revised areas would phase out of Bridlewood Community Elementary School and into A. Lorne Cassidy Elementary School, one grade per year thereafter.

MFI program students attending Bridlewood Community Elementary School during the year prior to the opening of the new school, and residing within the affected boundary areas, would remain at Bridlewood Community Elementary School until the completion of grade 6.

c. Student Movement under the Proposed Plan

Kindergarten to grade 4 students attending John Young Elementary School in the year prior to the opening of the new Fernbank elementary school, and residing in the new school's attendance area, would be relocated to the new school in a block move upon its opening.

The plan above would serve to alleviate the significant enrolment pressures being experienced at John Young Elementary School. Projected enrolment at John Young Elementary School would be reduced to 624 students for 2021, and further decrease to 567 students by 2025 (a utilization rate of 103.7%).

Given the pressures at John Young Elementary School, staff is not proposing that a grandfathering provision be put in place to permit students who reside within the new school's attendance boundary to continue at the school.

The proposed MFI program boundary revisions would be phased in beginning at grade 4 when the new school is opened, and would progress one grade per year thereafter.

5. **Input Received Regarding the Proposed Plan**

At the public consultation meeting a majority of those in attendance expressed support for the presented plan. Feedback was provided regarding the program and opening grade structure for the new school. Support was expressed for the new school's proposed attendance area, and also the MFI boundary revisions.

The following summarizes some of the common themes of input received before, during, and after the public consultation meeting:

- proposed attendance boundary makes sense given the variables involved;
- opening the school with a kindergarten to grade 5 structure will help limit disruption to students and families;
- a dual-track program for the first elementary school to be opened in the community is important;

- long-term accommodation planning for students in the Fernbank development area should be accounted for;
- how can the capital funding process be expedited in order to have new schools opened when planned;
- consider future intermediate and secondary feeding patterns for the new Fernbank elementary school students; and
- would the new school include pre-school child care and an extended day program.

All input received by staff during the consultation process has been provided to trustees in its original form.

Concern was expressed by an individual at the meeting that the Trailwest community (located within the southern portion of the John Young Elementary School attendance boundary) was not considered for inclusion in the attendance boundary discussion for the new Fernbank elementary school.

The working group did examine the possibility of dividing the existing John Young Elementary School attendance area in a north-south manner, rather than one which used Terry Fox Drive and the Carp River.

This was not deemed viable given that it would (in the longer-term once a school was opened in the northern part of Fernbank) reduce enrolment at John Young Elementary School to a level which may not be sustainable. This could result in a need to redirect the Trailwest community back to John Young Elementary School.

Under the proposed plan the attendance area for John Young Elementary School would be comprised of a mix of neighborhoods and homes. It would include more mature areas in the northern section, and newer residential units and future development potential in the southern portion. Projected enrolment would see the school at or just above capacity.

In response to the concern expressed regarding the Trailwest community, working group package #2 which contained some information related to the Trailwest area was subsequently posted to the study webpage.

#### 6. **The New Stittsville Secondary School Study**

In March 2018 capital funding for the construction of a grade 7 to 12 secondary school in the Stittsville area was approved by the Ministry of Education. The school is scheduled to open in September 2022.

The site which will accommodate the new secondary school is located within the Fernbank development area, at the southwest corner of Cope Drive and Robert Grant Avenue.

It is expected that a study will commence in the fall of 2019 which will serve to determine the new school's attendance boundary, program offering, and opening grade structure. In doing so, that study will also examine local Intermediate

(grade7-8) MFI program attendance boundaries, taking into account decisions already made as part of this current process.

Although still to be confirmed during the fall study, it is anticipated that students attending the new Fernbank elementary school would feed to the new Stittsville secondary school.

**7. Staff Recommendation**

Staff is recommending that the proposed plan which was presented to the community at the 23 May 2019 public consultation meeting be recommended for approval.

The plan results in a set of recommendations which cover all of the study's key objectives. The working group process was collegial and constructive in providing local input regarding a variety of options. The proposed plan was well-received by most in attendance at the public consultation meeting, and those who have provided feedback.

Note that all of the recommendations would come into effect upon the opening of the new Fernbank elementary school.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

8. The cost of conducting the new Fernbank elementary school study has been managed within existing departmental budgets.

## **COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:**

9. In accordance with the approved timeline, a working group for the study was formed in January of 2019. Over the course of the winter and spring the working group met on two separate occasions. The group was comprised of council representatives and principals from potentially impacted schools, District staff, and representatives from various local community associations.

On 23 May 2019, a public consultation meeting was held in the gymnasium of John Young Elementary School in order to receive parent and community feedback on a proposed plan which was prepared during the working group process.

Notice of the public consultation meeting was provided by the following:

- an advertisement placed in the local community newspaper which serves this area of the District;
- communication through school councils and local community associations;
- a mass email distribution, synrevoice message, or school newsletter/website to parents and guardians of students attending potentially impacted schools;
- a posting on the study webpage located on the District website; and
- District social media notifications.

Approximately 25 members of the public attended the meeting at John Young Elementary School. An information package was provided to those in attendance that evening. Additional copies were made available in the offices of the four potentially impacted schools. A digital version of the package was also posted on the study webpage.

A staff presentation at the meeting was followed by a formal public question and answer period. The presentation provided an overview of the study process, key objectives, and details regarding the proposed plan.

## **STRATEGIC LINKS:**

10. The opening of a new elementary school within the developing Fernbank community would serve to provide improved access to learning environments and optimize the use of District resources. This is consistent with the stewardship objectives of the Board's 2015-2019 Strategic Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A. THAT the opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary for the new Fernbank elementary school be approved as outlined in Appendix C of Report No. 19-070, to be implemented upon its opening.
- B. THAT the revised attendance boundary for John Young Elementary School be approved according to Appendix C of Report No. 19-070, to be implemented upon the opening of the new Fernbank elementary school.
- C. THAT upon the opening of the new Fernbank elementary school, a boundary revision be approved that redirects a portion of the Bridlewood Community Elementary School Middle French Immersion program boundary to A. Lorne Cassidy Elementary School, beginning with grade 4 and adding one grade per year thereafter, as outlined in Appendix D of Report No. 19-070.

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Camille Williams-Taylor  
Director of Education and  
Secretary of the Board

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix A 31 October 2018 Actual Enrolments  
Appendix B New Fernbank Elementary School Study Timeline  
Appendix C Recommended School Attendance Boundaries  
Appendix D Recommended Middle French Immersion Attendance Boundary Revision  
Appendix E Staff Recommendation – School Enrolment Projections