

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Report No. 20-004

18 February 2020

**John Young Elementary School – Interim Accommodation Measures
Study – Approval**

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PURPOSE:

1. To seek approval of a temporary elementary school attendance boundary redirection of students residing in the Fernbank-area, west of Terry Fox Drive in Stittsville (John Young Elementary School boundary area), who will ultimately be directed to the new Fernbank elementary school upon its opening.

CONTEXT:

2. At the Board meeting of 26 November 2019, trustees approved a consultation plan and timeline for the John Young Elementary School (ES) interim accommodation measures study. See Appendix A – Timeline.

The objective of the review was to alleviate growing enrolment pressures at John Young ES on a temporary basis, until a new Fernbank elementary school is open. A general location map of the area has been included. See Appendix B – General Location Map.

Rising enrolment levels at John Young ES, as of the 2019-2020 school year, have resulted in an urgent need to alleviate accommodation pressures for September 2020. The total 31 October 2019 enrolment was 849 students while the school capacity is 547, resulting in a utilization of 155% and the need for 16 portables for instruction. Enrolment at John Young ES for September 2020 is projected to increase to 956 students which will not be sustainable given that the portable capacity on site is nearly maximized. The enrolment is expected to increase to 1072 in September 2021. See Appendix C – Status Quo Enrolment Projections. Much of the enrolment growth at John Young ES can be attributed to growth within the Fernbank community.

A capital priorities business case was submitted to the Ministry on 27 September 2019, requesting funding for a new elementary school in the Fernbank area of Stittsville. This business case was ranked as the number one capital priority on the submission. Staff continues to await a response from the Ministry of Education regarding funding awards. Should the District receive confirmation of funding, staff expects that the new Fernbank elementary school could be constructed and ready to receive students by September 2022.

3. **Staff Preliminary Plan:**

The new Fernbank elementary school study to set the program, opening grade structure, and attendance boundary was approved by the Board on 24 June 2019. The approved attendance boundary area will result in significant enrolment pressures being alleviated at John Young ES in the long term. In the interim, the enrolment at John Young ES will not be sustainable for September 2020 requiring temporary measures in order to alleviate pressure.

In advance of the proposed consultative process staff proposed a preliminary plan to address these enrolment pressures as follows:

The redirection of year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 students who attend John Young ES and reside in the approved new Fernbank elementary school attendance boundary area to Westwind Public School (PS) for September 2020. The redirection would continue for September 2021. Year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 students residing in the Fernbank-area would continue to attend Westwind PS during that school year.

The majority of elementary schools within the neighbouring area of John Young ES are either at or over capacity. Several of these schools are operating with portables as instructional spaces. Westwind PS, located in Stittsville, west of the John Young ES attendance boundary area is the only school nearby with available classroom space. The status quo projected enrolment for Westwind PS for September 2020 is 511 students in a school with a capacity for 628. See Appendix C – Status Quo Enrolment Projections. Westwind PS also has the capacity for 12 total portables on site. As a result, staff considered the school site as a possible option to manage the overcrowding at John Young ES.

The impact of redirecting year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 students to Westwind PS would result in the stemming of further enrolment growth at John Young ES in the interim, and it would also serve to reduce the amount of portables required on site for September 2020. Enrolment in the interim would increase at Westwind PS, although within sustainable levels.

4. **Other Options Considered:**

Staff examined other options to alleviate enrolment pressures at John Young ES. For example, the possibility of redirecting the John Young ES grade 6 students to Glen Cairn PS, a grade 7 to 8 intermediate school. This would follow a natural feeding progression as John Young ES students are directed to Glen Cairn PS following grade 6. The school is also located within the Glen Cairn community in Kanata.

Glen Cairn PS offers English, Early French Immersion, and Middle French Immersion to grade 7 and 8 students. The school has a capacity for 352 students and a projected enrolment of 358 in September 2020. There are currently no portables on site, and the maximum portable capacity at the school site is six.

Under this scenario, current grade 5 students at John Young ES would be redirected to Glen Cairn PS at the start of the September 2020 school year. This

scenario however, would not provide adequate relief to the enrolment pressure at John Young ES. There are a total of 94 projected grade 6 students at John Young ES for September 2020, and if they were to be relocated, the remaining kindergarten to grade 5 enrolment at John Young ES would be projected at 862 students.

Consideration was also given to the relocation of grade 6 students to Glen Cairn PS coupled with directing new Fernbank-area students to Westwind PS (who have not yet been directed to John Young ES) and whether this move could alleviate sufficient pressure. Although recognized as an option, there were some particular concerns with regard to this scenario, including the issue of relocating grade 6 students. There was also considerable public feedback that indicated that this was an unpopular scenario.

Staff was concerned about the relocation of grade 6 students as these students are an established cohort and most have likely spent several years at John Young ES. As a result of relocating grade 6 students to Glen Cairn PS one year earlier, some students would be separated from younger siblings one year earlier, and would need to plan for leaving from grade 5 in the current school year. This option would also be disruptive to the planning of a number of junior clubs and sports teams for the grade 6 students.

Another concern with this scenario is that there is a large cohort of kindergarten classes at John Young ES. It should be noted that there are five fitted-up kindergarten classrooms at the school (with proper kindergarten washrooms and sinks) and that under the status quo projection for September 2020, a total of 9 homeroom kindergarten classes would be required.

Finally, staff was also concerned about the physical site limitations of Glen Cairn PS given the size of the school and the number of students that would be directed there if grade 6 students from John Young ES were relocated. There are a total of 14 classroom spaces at Glen Cairn PS, as well as one instrumental music room. In the first year of implementation, enrolment would be projected at 450 students, resulting in a utilization rate of 128% and the need for five portables. By September 2021, the enrolment would increase to 493 students and a utilization rate of 140%, resulting in the requirement of seven portables on a site that is restricted to a maximum of six portables.

As a result, staff determined that this was not a viable option to explore and that the interim accommodation measure should be confined to the approved attendance boundary for the new Fernbank elementary school.

Staff also considered whether the kindergarten to grade 5 students from the Fernbank-area, as of September 2020, could be moved as a block to a non-operating or other OCDSB school site, while grade 6 students would remain at John Young ES to complete their final year of schooling. There are former school sites that may have enough capacity for this option; however none were determined to be in close enough proximity to the community, nor with the proper kindergarten classroom space available. As a result, this option was not considered.

Staff was hopeful that whichever interim option was brought forward for consideration that it would be a smooth transition for students once the new Fernbank elementary school is open to serve the community.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

5. Feedback From Meetings:

In accordance with the approved consultation plan and timeline, an advisory committee met on 5 December 2019 and in response to the staff-formulated proposed plan, raised a number of discussion points.

Feedback from the advisory committee found that relocating year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 students from the approved new Fernbank elementary school attendance boundary area to Westwind PS was the preferred option. A key component in implementing the option as an interim solution was determining a particular sibling provision that would keep siblings together in one school.

Additional feedback included that consideration should be given to sending all incoming Fernbank-area residents (kindergarten to grade 6 who have not attended John Young ES) to Westwind PS in the interim, in advance of the new Fernbank Elementary school.

It was also noted that if staff were to consider redirecting all year 1 kindergarten to grade 1 students and their siblings to Westwind PS, any of those impacted students with a grade 6 sibling should be permitted to remain at John Young ES so that the older student is able to complete their final year at the school.

The advisory committee also questioned the number of portables that would be required at Westwind PS as a result of the above interim accommodation measure, and how many portables might be eliminated from John Young ES as a result.

Staff first analyzed what a projection would result in for a full movement of year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 Fernbank-area students and their older siblings relocated to Westwind Public School. Any of the impacted students who had a grade 6 sibling were excluded, as it was advised that these students should remain at John Young ES together in order for the older student to complete their final year at the school, and to eliminate having siblings separated from one another.

Staff reviewed existing data of current year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 John Young ES students and their siblings in order to determine the projected number of future siblings impacted as a result of this interim accommodation measure. Also Included in this projection were any new students moving into the Fernbank-area following implementation of the interim measure, who have not yet attended John Young ES.

The resulting enrolment projection from the above would provide accommodation relief to John Young ES and also eliminated the need for several portables. See Appendix D – Interim Accommodation Measure Redirection – Siblings at Westwind PS. The concern however, was the resulting projected enrolment at Westwind PS in September 2020. The scenario resulted in a projected 717 students and requirement of six portables in the first year of implementation at Westwind PS. Furthermore, September 2021 projections resulted in a total of 857 students and requirement of 11 portables at Westwind PS. These projected numbers were far greater than staff had anticipated.

Consideration was given to what the resulting projected enrolments for each school would be if year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 students were relocated to Westwind PS, and any of those with an older sibling would remain at John Young ES. Also included in this projection were any new students moving into the Fernbank-area after implementation of the plan, who have not yet attended John Young ES.

The projection under this scenario did provide accommodation relief to John Young ES and also resulted in a projected enrolment for Westwind PS that was manageable in the interim. The scenario projects that the John Young ES enrolment will decrease to 809 in September 2020 resulting in the requirement of 13 portables, and remain stable should a second year of interim measures be implemented, at a projected 808 students and 12 portables required. The projection at Westwind PS resulted in 658 students in September 2020 with the requirement of three portables; and increase to 777 in the second year of implementation with a requirement of seven portables.

Staff determined that as a result of feedback from the advisory committee that this scenario would be the focus on the interim accommodation measure for consideration at the public meeting.

Subsequent to the advisory committee meeting, a community public meeting was held on 20 January 2020 in the Westwind PS gymnasium and was attended by approximately 50 members of the public. Included in the information package for the meeting was; the staff proposed interim accommodation measure for consideration; comments; and alternate options raised by the advisory committee along with staff comment. Public feedback and comments received generally focused on the following issue areas:

- The distance as well as the direction of Westwind PS in relation to the Fernbank-area, and typical daily commutes for those impacted;
- If the student transfer policy could be an option for families, and how it would comply with the study timelines;
- The possibility of the extension of the extended day program hours to compensate for additional commute time;
- Why relocating John Young ES grade 6 students to Glen Cairn PS was not given more consideration;
- Why staff did not consider the redirection of Fernbank-area students to a number of different schools as opposed to Westwind PS only;
- Why a Kanata-area school was not chosen as an interim option;

- Concern over the number of transitions between schools for some students; and
- The possibility of teaching staff relocating from John Young ES to Westwind PS, and ensuring that relocated John Young ES students remain in homeroom classes with one another.

6. Staff Comment/Response:

Staff is cognizant of the added travel distance this redirection will result in for many families and preferred that students remain in the community however there simply were no other schools nearby with sufficient space to provide the much needed alleviation to John Young ES.

Staff noted that the student transfer request period is open from 3 February to 18 February and that decisions are expected to be final regarding the study as of 25 February, staff commented that with regard to transfer applications, principals will typically hold on to applications until the decision is made so that any families who wish to fill out a transfer application do so during the student transfer request period.

The Extended Day Program (EDP) typically runs from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Discussion with the Co-ordinator will take place to determine whether the possibility exists to extend the program beyond the 6:00 p.m. time frame to allow for additional commute time to Westwind PS.

Relocating the grade 6 John Young ES cohort to Glen Cairn PS one year in advance was considered, however not presented as a viable interim option for consideration. It would not provide enough relief to accommodation pressure and could result in unsustainable accommodation pressures at Glen Cairn PS.

Staff preference is that the community be relocated together in the interim as opposed to splitting different areas of Fernbank-area students to different schools. There are also a number of schools in the nearby area with accommodation pressures that would be compounded by relocating additional students.

There are no elementary schools in the Kanata area in closer range to John Young ES that have enough available classroom space to accommodate the number of year 1 kindergarten to grade 1 students that would be redirected in the interim.

Fewer transitions for students is preferred and as a result of the interim accommodation measure some students may have to make more transitions between schools than staff would prefer.

Planning Staff will share the stated preference that John Young ES teachers relocate with students to Westwind PS, and that impacted students should be placed in homeroom classes together. Collective agreements must be considered, however Planning staff will inform Human Resources staff of the sensitive redirection process during the staffing period.

7. Staff Recommendation:

In order to alleviate growing enrolment pressures at John Young ES, staff is recommending that the interim option for consideration presented at the public consultation meeting at Westwind PS on 20 January 2020 be considered by Board. See Appendix E – Recommended Interim Accommodation Measure Redirection – Siblings at John Young ES.

As with the above, staff is seeking Board approval to temporarily redirect year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 students from John Young Elementary School who reside in the approved future New Fernbank Elementary School attendance boundary area to Westwind Public School for September 2020, in advance of the opening of the new Fernbank elementary school. See Appendix F – Recommended Interim Accommodation Measure Redirection – Attendance Boundary Map.

Staff is recommending modifications to the plan originally proposed including sibling provisions in recognition of the advisory committee and public comment received. Any impacted year 1 kindergarten, year 2 kindergarten, and grade 1 student as of September 2020 who has an older sibling (s) in Grade 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 at John Young ES will be permitted to remain at that school.

Future year 1 kindergarten to grade 6 students who move into the impacted attendance boundary area who have not attended John Young ES nor have a sibling at that school will be directed to Westwind PS in the interim.

Parents/guardians always have the option to apply for a student transfer under the student transfer policy in situations of extenuating personal circumstances. (It should be noted in this particular case however, that area schools will have a zero student transfer cap for 2020-2021, and as such, applicants may have to utilize the appeal provisions within the student transfer policy).

It is acknowledged that attendance boundary changes create challenges and disruption for students, families and staff at the affected schools. It is hoped that the recommended additional caveats and sibling considerations options serve to minimize the impacts of the recommended changes and address many of the transitional concerns raised by the community, while maintaining the need to alleviate growing enrolment pressures at John Young ES until the new Fernbank elementary school is open.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8. The cost of conducting the study has been managed within existing departmental budgets.

There will be financial implications as a result of implementing the interim accommodation measure. Additional buses will be required to transport students between the Fernbank-area and Westwind PS. Additional costs may also be incurred should the EDP hours be extended.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

9. In accordance with the approved timeline and consultation plan, an advisory committee meeting was scheduled and held on 5 December 2019 and attended by school council and principal representatives from the two affected schools, namely; John Young ES and Westwind PS. The meeting was attended by District staff along with the area trustees for John Young ES and Westwind PS. : Although not in attendance, local community association representatives were invited to attend.

On 20 January 2020, a public meeting was held in at Westwind PS in order to receive parent/guardian and community feedback on the proposed plan and other potential options.

Notice of the public meeting was provided by the following methods;

- An email distribution to families of each the affected schools, or school newsletter/website to parents and guardians of students attending the affected schools;
- An advertisement placed in the local community newspapers which serve this area of the District;
- A posting of the Interim Accommodation Measures Study located on the District Website and Board Calendar and associated District social media notifications ;and
- Communication through school councils.

A binder containing public feedback in its original form has been placed in the Trustees' Lounge for reference purposes.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

10. Conducting a review of pupil accommodation in this part of the District in order to provide students with improved access to learning environments serves to optimize the use of District resources which is consistent with culture of caring objectives of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A. THAT future students moving into the Fernbank elementary school (k-6) attendance area, who are in kindergarten (year 1) through grade 6 be directed to Westwind Public School as of September 2020, subject to sibling provisions outlined in Recommendation C to Report 20-004;
- B. THAT current (2019-2020) year 1 and 2 kindergarten John Young Elementary School students who reside in the new Fernbank elementary school (k-6) attendance area be redirected to Westwind Public School for year 2 kindergarten and grade 1 in September 2020, subject to sibling provisions outlined in Recommendation C to Report 20-004;

- C. THAT incoming year 1 kindergarten (September 2020 and beyond while the redirection is in effect) and current year 1 and 2 kindergarten (2019-2020) students who reside in the new Fernbank elementary school (k-6) attendance area, but who currently have older sibling(s) in grades 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 (2019-2020) attending John Young Elementary School be provided a one-time option to remain at John Young Elementary School;
- D. THAT Recommendations A through C to Report 20-004 shall remain in effect until such time as the anticipated new Fernbank elementary school is opened or until other accommodation measures are approved;
- E. THAT upon the opening of the new Fernbank elementary school all of the students who reside in the Fernbank elementary school boundary, including those who remain at John Young Elementary School and those who have been subject to this redirection in accordance with Recommendations A through C to Report 20-004, move in a block (year 1 kindergarten through grade 5) to the new Fernbank elementary school; and
- F. THAT the only exception to the redirection outlined in Recommendation E to Report 20-004 shall be those students entering grade 6 and their younger siblings who are attending John Young Elementary school, having exercised a one-time option to remain.

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

Appendix A Timeline

Appendix B General Location Map

Appendix C Status Quo Enrolment Projections

Appendix D Interim Accommodation Measure Redirection – Siblings at Westwind PS

Appendix E Recommended Interim Accommodation Measure Redirection – Siblings at John Young ES

Appendix F Recommended Interim Accommodation Measure Redirection – Attendance Boundary Map.