

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
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Gloucester-Rideau Transition Monitoring: Final Report

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PURPOSE:

1. To present the final report of the impact on student achievement and well-being resulting from the closure of Rideau High School and redirection of students to Gloucester High School, effective September 2017.

CONTEXT:

2. In March 2017, after a comprehensive accommodation review, the Board approved the closure of Rideau High School and redirected the students to Gloucester High School. The Board allocated additional staff resources to Gloucester High School for a two-year period to support the transition. In addition, the Board directed staff to monitor the achievement and well-being of students and to bring forward an annual update on student transitions resulting from this decision for three years. This is the final year of reporting.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. Background on the Accommodation Review
Before the amalgamation of the two schools, the OCDSB undertook the Eastern Secondary Area Pupil Accommodation Review (Sep. 2016 - Jan. 2017), which included extensive community consultations in an effort to support:
 - more equitable access to program offerings;
 - greater consistency in school size;
 - enriched program offering wherever possible;
 - enhanced capacity to deliver special education programs using the geographic model;
 - alignment of schools to support the Secondary School Program Framework; and
 - optimization of available resources.

At the end of the accommodation review, the Board adopted the following motion:

“Staff will prepare a report for February 2018, and every year thereafter for three years, to keep the community informed. Details will include such items as: total enrolment, number of new students, attrition rates, the number of sections by pathway and will provide information about supports in place at the school for special education students, English Language learners and students living in low-income neighborhoods.

Staff and Board will continue to monitor the achievement and well-being of all students at the newly amalgamated school. In addition, the total enrolment number of new students would be disaggregated by pre-amalgamated boundaries and number of sections by pathway and EQAO results at the school level and disaggregated by pre-amalgamated boundaries.”

In December 2019, Board moved the following motion:

- A. *THAT the date for the presentation of the final Rideau-Gloucester Transition Monitoring Report be delayed until the Fall of 2020 so that current year EQAO data can be included in the final analysis; and*
- B. *THAT staff hold a meeting with the school council at Gloucester High School to discuss the feasibility, usefulness, and relevance of the original report elements to be included in the final report.*

4. Analytical Framework

Prior to preparing the first report following the school consolidation, staff undertook a data review for the three previous years – 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017. The review helped to establish 3-year achievement and well-being trends at Rideau HS and Gloucester HS. Similar analyses were conducted for 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020. Hence, in most cases a six-year period has been established to illustrate trends pre- and post-amalgamation. Information is presented for each school independently and as a combined total. For the first year post-amalgamation (2017-2018) and going forward, the data is presented for the amalgamated school (Gloucester HS) and is disaggregated (where applicable and feasible) according to pre-amalgamated boundaries (i.e., previous Rideau HS boundary, previous Gloucester HS boundary).

5. Data Limitations

The data presented in this report comes from both internal and external sources, including OCDSB database systems, EQAO Assessment results, and primary data collected from students, parents and other key stakeholders after the amalgamation. Every effort has been made to ensure that the data sets are

accurate, reliable and appropriate for the analysis. However, there are some limitations related to data availability and interpretation, as follows:

- Certain data sets are based on a single snapshot in time (e.g., enrolment data is generally based on October 31st or June 30th) though actual enrolment may vary over the course of the year;
- Transition data (i.e., demissions, transfers, etc.) is usually based on time periods during which the majority of student transitions occur. Student transitions that occur outside this timeframe are not captured in this report;
- Some data is subject to externally imposed collection. For example, EQAO assessments were not conducted in the 2019-2020 as a result of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Well-being analyses are based on OurSchool school climate surveys which are only available on a 2-year cycle.
- The disaggregation of data by boundary reflects the home address of students as of October 31 in relation to the English program boundary of each school. Students residing in the former Rideau HS boundary and who were enrolled in French immersion had the option of attending Gloucester HS for that program¹. Further, the historical data sets that have been prepared with pre-amalgamated boundary information do not contain the detail necessary to disaggregate enrolment by program;
- Tracking cohorts of students across years as they transition from grade to grade introduces challenges, particularly for students who have newly arrived to Canada whose first language is not English. For example, these students may be identified in the student information system as a grade 9 student one school year, but appear to “skip” multiple grades the next. Further, the proportion of students transitioning to grade 12 from one year to the next typically exceeds 100% due to the number of students who return for a fifth year of high school (i.e., from grade 12 one year to grade 12 the next).

KEY FINDINGS:

6. Summary of Findings

The effectiveness and impact of the transition was measured through multiple indicators, which demonstrated fluctuating trends over time, both pre- and post-amalgamation. The multitude and nuanced nature of the indicators precludes us from making sweeping generalizations regarding the success of the transition and attributing any changes solely to the transition itself. Based on observed changes in the indicators over time and through stakeholder feedback, the transition of former Rideau HS students into Gloucester HS has progressed well and resulted in largely positive outcomes. Highlights of the findings include:

Overall enrolment: Both Rideau HS and Gloucester HS had experienced declining enrolment leading up to, and immediately following the amalgamation.

¹ At the secondary level, determining whether or not a student is in a French immersion program is complex. For example, relying on snapshot data such as October 31 would underestimate the number of French immersion students if students are not enrolled in a course first semester where the language of instruction is French.

By October 2019, total enrolment had increased slightly and stabilized at about 1,030 students. The additional funding generated from the increase in enrolment at Gloucester HS enabled the school to offer programs to the new amalgamated population of students that otherwise may not have been possible.

Overall enrolment by boundaries: Enrolment from the former Rideau HS boundary increased post amalgamation (from 41% to 45%) and now accounts for the largest proportion of enrolled students. Enrolment from other boundaries has been static at about 19%, while approximately 36% of students come from the former Gloucester HS boundary.

Enrolment of new students: Enrolment of new students has increased from an average of 30% in the three years leading up to amalgamation to about 32% in the last three years (310, 347 and 320).

Enrolment of new students by boundaries: Enrolment of new students from the Gloucester HS boundary has been gradually increasing since 2016 (31% to 36%), with a slight decrease recorded in 2018. Enrolment of new students from other boundaries has fluctuated over the same time period (25%, 21% and 20%). The former Rideau HS boundary accounts for the largest proportion of new students (44%) and has remained relatively stable over the past few years.

Transfers and withdrawals: The number of transfers and withdrawals has been on a downward trend since the amalgamation (8% in 2017-2018 to 5% in 2019-2020).

Cohort tracking: Retention of former Rideau HS students (i.e., those who remained at Gloucester HS) increased over time (81%, 86% and 86%, excluding graduations). Graduation rates also increased from 19% in 2017-2018 to 32% in 2019-2020), whereas the number of transfers and withdrawals have declined from 19% to 14% over the same time period.

Number of Unique Courses Offered: With a larger student population, access to a broader range of course offerings was possible and evidenced by an increase in the number of Locally Developed, ESL/ELD and Classical Studies types of courses offered following amalgamation. The number of Applied, Academic and University types of courses has generally remained consistent/static following the amalgamation. The overall number of unique courses offered also increased following the amalgamation, then decreased in 2019 (204, 206 and 192). Similarly, the number of Open, College/University and Workplace courses increased initially, but then decreased in 2019. In addition to the breadth of courses available to students, a larger student population also offers the opportunity to offer multiple sections of the same course, resulting in fewer timetable conflicts.

Provincial Assessments: Grade 10 OSSLT: Although the OSSLT success rate for first-time eligible students at Gloucester HS decreased from 74% in 2017 to

67% in 2018, it returned to 74% in 2019 (a pattern that was consistent at the District level). The combined success rate for the two sites was on a two-year upwards trend before it decreased the year following the amalgamation.

Grade 10 Credit Accumulation (16+): Grade 10 credit accumulation (16+) rates have decreased from 58% in 2017 to 56% in 2018, and further decreased to 51% in 2019. The exact reasons for the decline are unknown, but may be attributable in part to students enrolled in non-credit bearing courses in order to acquire the English skills necessary for other courses/subjects. This practice had also been in place at Rideau HS prior to amalgamation.

Physical, cognitive and socio-emotional wellbeing (reported by Parents):

Parent ratings of physical, cognitive and socio-emotional well-being on the OurSCHOOL School Climate survey increased in all areas between 2015-2016 and 2017-2018; the survey was not conducted in 2019-2020 as a result of the pandemic. Specifically:

- how welcome they feel -- 6.8 to 7.4;
- how well the school supports positive behaviour -- 6.5 to 7.0;
- social inclusivity -- 5.9 to 6.9;
- how well the school supports learning -- 6.8 to 7.1; and
- school safety -- 6.4 to 6.6.

Physical, cognitive and socio-emotional wellbeing (reported by Students):

For students, some indicators on the OurSCHOOL survey (administered in the spring of 2017 and 2019) demonstrated a downward trend:

- feeling safe at school -- 61% to 49%;
- average hours/day spent on moderate and intense physical activity -- 0.7 to 0.6 and 0.7 to 0.5, respectively.
- positive relationships -- 67% to 66%;

Approximately two-thirds of students in each administration period reported a positive sense of belonging and/or positive relationships. The proportion of students reporting bullying, harassment or exclusion remained at 20% and was higher than the latest Canadian Norm (17%).

Community voice: Feedback received from students, parents and school staff in the years following the amalgamation was generally positive. In the 2019-2020 academic year, additional feedback could not be collected due to school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access to school infrastructure, material, recreation and social

engagement: Overall, greater access to infrastructure for learning and recreation (labs, libraries, garden, sport facilities, etc.) was reported. Access to sports teams, clubs, extra-curricular activities, field trips and guest speakers has also increased. Incomplete construction projects, however, continue to cause disruption to learning processes.

Access to programs and support services: Students have access to a greater number and variety of student support services as a result of the amalgamation.

Additionally, programs such as the International Certificate program, Advanced Placement courses, cooperative education placements, Indigenous courses, Specialist High Skills Major programs and DELF have also been made available to students.

For more details, please refer to Appendix A (infographic) and Appendix B (full report).

7. Lessons Learned

Since amalgamation of Gloucester HS and Rideau HS, and through the compilation of information and data to support monitoring the transition and impact on student achievement and well-being, staff have had the opportunity to reflect on some of the key lessons and considerations for future decisions:

- Careful consideration must be given as to the timing and process for gathering student voice/feedback. Specifically, we heard from students in February 2020 at the Gloucester High School Parent Council meeting that the students most impacted by the amalgamation were those who were in grade 11 or 12 at the time, and therefore no longer at the school. We also heard from students during the 2018-2019 school year that they had “moved on” and now viewed Gloucester High School as their school community.
- Continuity of staffing helps provide a smoother transition for students, building on previously established student-teacher relationships.
- Greater flexibility is needed with the allocation of additional staffing resources, as the specific needs may change over time.
- Timelines, scope and pacing of construction should consider the impact on student learning, and commitments to new construction should reflect this.
- Despite being able to track student achievement and some aspects of well-being over time to get a sense of how students are doing, attributing any changes (positive or negative) solely to the transition itself would be impossible. Student outcomes – achievement and well-being – are influenced by many factors, some of which can be addressed through the education system and some that require working with other agencies, families, and the broader community.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8. The compilation of data and information for these reports have been a joint cross-departmental effort involving the Research, Evaluation & Analytics Division, Planning, and Business & Learning Technologies. The data/information related to student enrolment, program pathways, and achievement and well-being outcomes is stored in multiple database systems and required continuous collaboration. The disaggregation of enrolment and achievement data according to pre-amalgamated boundaries added a layer of complexity to the analysis, but was achieved using the existing staffing complement. The qualitative information for this report had been compiled by the school and also represented a

significant workload on the part of staff, redirecting their time away from supporting student needs.

9. In support of the amalgamation of Rideau HS and Gloucester HS, the Board allocated additional staff over and above what would typically be assigned to a school of this size and make-up, which extended into the 2018-2019 school year and includes:
 - an additional 0.5 vice-principal;
 - additional 1.0 Learning Support Teacher ;
 - additional 1.0 Student Success Teacher; and
 - a doubling of ESL tracking from .33 to .66 FTE.

For the 2019-2020 school year, the allocation of staff to Gloucester HS was done based on the normal staffing considerations. Through the allocation process, variables such as overall student population, RAISE index, students with special education needs, and other site-specific considerations were taken into account when allocating staff such as vice-principal, LST and SST.

10. In addition to the Board allocated funding, Gloucester HS has been receiving Urban Priority Funding to support the success and well-being of youth. Prior to September 2017, these funds were allocated to Rideau HS. This funding has made possible the allocation of a full-time social worker at Gloucester HS since amalgamation.
11. Program and Learning and Learning Support Services, working in partnership with administration and staff at the school(s), have supported students affected by the transition in a variety of ways. Some examples include:
 - allocating additional Outdoor Education funding;
 - creating opportunities for school staff to meet with central educators and professional support staff (social workers, psychologists, speech language pathologists) to improve tracking, monitoring, identifying, and responding to both academic and non-academic supports required by students.
 - providing extra time or alternate assessment formats (i.e., oral vs. written) for assessments (ELLs); finding suitable housing and arranging for transportation and providing nutritional snacks for students (students residing in lower income neighborhoods; creating opportunities for students to attend activities/events in the Lodge); and providing increased support for students with behavioral and/or mental health needs through assessments, counselling, conflict resolution, and family support (e.g., services provided by a Psychologist have increased from two to three days per week since the amalgamation).
 - Since amalgamation, Gloucester HS has received additional funds allocated under Student Success and Program Enhancement to support the student achievement and well-being through the transition process.
12. A significant capital project was undertaken at Gloucester to address the learning needs of the new larger learning community. These expenditures, totaling

approximately \$4.7 million, improved many areas of the school including: the renewal of seven science labs and teacher preparation areas; the creation of a new chemical storage room; the creation of a new Learning Commons in the former library space; and the creation of the Lodge and adjacent smudging area. Major renovations to the main office and foyer have provided a more welcoming entrance to the building, and gathering areas have been created in the main foyer with benches and charge stations for student collaboration. Additional work has involved renovations to the main floor boys' and girls' washrooms, various classroom upgrades to accommodate program requirements, new ceilings and LED lighting in the main foyer and all lower hallways, and an upgrade to the fire alarm and public address systems. At present, the only outstanding construction is the Greenhouse which is anticipated to be open for students in January 2021.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION:

13. Community engagement in the consultation process associated with the Eastern Area Accommodation Review was high. The community has been kept informed during the implementation and monitoring phase of the review. Annual updates have been brought forward to Committee of the Whole for discussion and made available through the Accommodation Review area of the District's website. In February 2019, staff consulted with the school council and representatives from student council to gain their perspective as to what was important to include in a final report. The following guiding questions were used to help focus the discussion:

- What do you want to know from this final report?
- What suggestions do you have towards improving the presentation of the information/data in the report to make it more accessible to your school community and the public?

Participants reported a desire for the final report to include information about:

- student transitions (e.g., students originally at Rideau but did not go to Gloucester; cross-boundary transfers/enrolments prior to grade 9 – i.e., at grade 7);
- school climate/environment and how it has changed over time, including incidents of bullying;
- access to courses, supports, resources (e.g., course offerings, sections, frequency, impact on class size; and
- lessons learned (i.e., what worked/didn't? how does this amalgamation compare to others? What are some best/effective practices when it comes to amalgamation? Were students better served by the move? What would you do differently next time?)

While student voice was deemed to be a critical element, student representatives suggested that students most impacted by the transition would have been those in their more senior years at the time of the transition. If gathering additional student voice before the end of the 2019-2020 school year ,

reframing the question to focus more on learning about the students' high school experience rather than the impact of the transition might be more meaningful.

In terms of presentation of findings, there was a desire for more of a narrative approach from a variety of perspectives that would be more accessible than the dense data-heavy reports of the past. The ability to relate specific outcomes to specific actions/strategies was also recommended. Staff were also encouraged to use vignettes to help tell the story.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

14. Monitoring of this transition began under the previous OCDSB strategic plan and supported the commitment of providing optimal learning opportunities for students in a way that ensures equity of access within sustainable resources, and was intended to provide greater understanding of how the decision is contributing to these outcomes for students. Under the new strategic plan, there is a natural connection to the work we are doing to creating a culture of social responsibility and caring.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

15. The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:
 - What information/data has been most useful to the Board for decision-making purposes?
 - How will this information be used to inform Board decisions in the future?
 - What would you do differently next time?

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Appendix A-Infographic
Appendix B-Gloucester-Rideau Transition Monitoring: Final Report