

HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

Staff Technical Report Further to: Eastern Passage School Options Committee Recommendations to HRSB for Usage of Schools

PURPOSE: To provide comments to the Governing Board regarding the recommendations from the Eastern Passage School Review School Options Committee (SOC).

BACKGROUND: At the regular Board Meeting on December 16, 2015, *Report 2015-10-42 Recommendation to Review Schools in Eastern Passage* was presented by staff and the following motion was carried by the Governing Board:

It was moved/seconded (Yee/Jakeman) that the Governing Board direct staff to initiate a review of the following schools:

- *Eastern Passage Education Centre*
- *Ocean View Elementary*
- *Seaside Elementary*
- *Tallahassee Community School*

That the Governing Board direct the Superintendent to establish a School Options Committee to complete the review following the provincial School Review Policy

That the Governing Board approve the Terms of Reference for this review as being those included in Appendix A.

CONTENT: The SOC has completed its review and submitted its report to the Superintendent.

The provincial School Review Policy defines a Staff Technical Report as:

“A report written by school board staff (superintendent) that comments on the SOC’s Report and Recommendation; the Staff Technical Report is not mandatory.”

In addition, Directive M of the provincial School Review Policy reads:

“If deemed necessary or requested by the governing school board, school board staff will submit a Staff Technical Report providing additional technical details or pertinent comments related to the SOC’s Report and Recommendations.”

Staff has reviewed the report and recommendations from the Eastern Passage School Review SOC and submits Appendix A as the Staff Technical Report.

COST: There are no additional costs anticipated should the Governing Board approve the recommendations from the Eastern Passage SOC.

FUNDING: N/A

TIMELINE: N/A

APPENDICES: Appendix A: *Staff Technical Report Eastern Passage School Review, June 2016*

RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that the Governing Board receive this report for information and consider its contents when making decisions regarding the Eastern Passage School Review School Options Committee recommendations.

COMMUNICATIONS:

From: For further information please contact Ron Heiman, HRSB Director Operations Services at 902-464-2000 ext. 2144 or by e-mail rheiman@hrsb.ca.

To: Senior Staff – June 14, 2016
Governing Board – June 22, 2016

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Appendix A



STAFF TECHNICAL REPORT

Eastern Passage School Review

June 2016

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Introduction

Policy and legislative frameworks exist in Nova Scotia related to school reviews and permanent school closure. Among other things, the provincial School Review Policy provides information and directives which guide the development of a Long-Range Outlook (LRO), timelines for school reviews and a detailed process for the creation and work of a School Options Committee (SOC).

In accordance with the provincial School Review Policy, the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) passed a motion at its December 16, 2015 Regular Board Meeting to initiate a school review of the four schools in the Eastern Passage area of our board. This review included

- Eastern Passage Education Center,
- Ocean View Elementary School,
- Seaside Elementary School, and
- Tallahassee Community School.

An SOC was formed and a facilitator was appointed by the Superintendent to assist the SOC. HRSB staff supported the SOC throughout its process when requested. The SOC submitted its [final report with recommendations](#) to the Superintendent on June 8, 2016.

This Staff Technical Report is submitted as per Directive M of the provincial School Review Policy:

“If deemed necessary or requested by the governing school board, school board staff will submit a Staff Technical Report providing additional technical details or pertinent comments related to the SOC’s Report and Recommendation.

The Staff Technical Report will be presented at the same public school board meeting as the Report and Recommendation.”

This Technical Report is intended to support the Governing Board in its decision making.

Reference Documents

The following documents are provided as references. Hyperlinks are useful in e-copies of this document; web addresses are also provided for use in printed copies.

- Provincial [School Review Policy](https://www.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/pubdocs-pdf/schoolreviewpolicy.pdf)
<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/pubdocs-pdf/schoolreviewpolicy.pdf>
- HRSB [Long-Range Outlook, April 2015](http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/long_range_outlook-apr23.pdf)
http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/long_range_outlook-apr23.pdf
- HRSB [Report 2015-10-42: Recommendation to Review Schools in Eastern Passage](http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/2015-10-42revised.pdf)
<http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/2015-10-42revised.pdf>
- HRSB [Report 2016-06-22: Eastern Passage School Review - School Options Committee Recommendations](http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/2016-06-22.pdf)
<http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/2016-06-22.pdf>
- HRSB [2016-2017 Business Plan and Budget](http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/2016-06-24.pdf)
<http://www.hrsb.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/2016-06-24.pdf>

In addition, the HRSB webpage for this review can be found at:

- [Eastern Passage School Review webpage](http://www.hrsb.ca/school-review/school-review-eastern-passage-schools)
<http://www.hrsb.ca/school-review/school-review-eastern-passage-schools>

Policy Compliance

Staff is confident that the Eastern Passage School Review process adhered to the timelines, directives and intent of the provincial School Review Policy. Minor exceptions were made to some policy directives. These are explained below. It is the opinion of staff that these variances from the policy did not conflict with the intent of the policy or impact the SOC's ability to meet its mandate.

- **Directive A:** Compliant
Report 2015-04-13 Long-Range Outlook was presented to the Governing Board on April 22, 2015.
- **Directive B:** Compliant
Report 2015-10-42 Recommendation to Review Schools in Eastern Passage was presented to the Governing Board December 16, 2015
- **Directive C:** Compliant
Board motion approved on December 16, 2015 as noted in report above.
- **Directive D:** Compliant
SOC was formed as required.
- **Directive E:** Compliant
A facilitator was appointed upon Governing Board approval of the initiation of the school review.
- **Directive F:** Compliant
Terms of Reference were presented and finalized as required.
- **Directive G:** Compliant
School Information Profiles were prepared and presented to the SOC.
- **Directive H: Not Compliant**
"A Chair will be elected from among the voting members of the school options Committee within the first two working meetings of the SOC."

The SOC decided not to designate a Chair from among the committee members. Instead, tasks were assigned and meeting structures were established that ensured the intent of Directive H was met. Staff do not consider this variance from the provincial policy to be significant.

- **Directive I:** Compliant
Regular working SOC meetings were held.

A webpage was created for the review of schools in Eastern Passage and minutes were posted.

- **Directive J:** Compliant
Three public meetings were held in the community – March 9, April 20, May 24.
- **Directive K:** Compliant
The SOC Facilitator and HRSB staff worked together to ensure that meeting notices, minutes and presentation materials were made available on the website. Information about the Review of Schools in Eastern Passage can be found at: <http://www.hrsb.ca/school-review/school-review-eastern-passage-schools>.

To assist users to find information, a link was added to the HRSB front page, called “School Review”. Additionally, if an interested party wished to find more information related to the data used in the School Review process, a link to the Long Range Outlook is posted on the front page of the HRSB website: <http://www.hrsb.ca/about-hrsb/operations-services/long-range-outlook>

- **Directive L:** Compliant
The SOC presented its Report and Recommendations to the School Board (June 22, 2016) through the Superintendent.
- **Directive M:** Compliant
Staff has prepared this technical report for presentation at the same meeting the SOC report is presented.
- **Directive N:** Compliant
“The governing school board is responsible for making a final decision with respect to the outcome of a school review.”
For clarity, staff have not made any decisions about the outcomes of this review.
- **Directive O:** Compliant
The SOC Report does not include a recommendation for school closure.
- **Directive P: Not Compliant with (ii)**
“The following timelines will apply:
 - i. A Recommendation to Review can be made to the governing school board at any time.*
 - ii. If a review is approved, no more than 30 calendar days must elapse before the establishment of the School Options Committee.*
 - iii. Upon its formation, the SOC has a minimum of 90 and a maximum of 150 calendar days to conduct the review, including public consultation.*

- iv. No more than 60 calendar days will elapse between the submission of the Report and Recommendation to the superintendent and the presentation of the Report and Recommendation at a public school board meeting. [If a Staff Technical Report is being submitted it must be done during these same 60 days].*
- v. Generally, no more than 30 calendar days must elapse between the presentation of the SOC's Report and Recommendation and the board's final decision at a public school board meeting. In exceptional circumstances an additional 30 days is permissible for the school board decision to be made.*
- vi. If the governing school board votes to permanently close a public school, the school must close within five school years of the decision, beginning in September of the school year following the decision."*

The school review process was approved on December 16, 2015. The first SOC meeting occurred on February 10, 2016, exceeding the 30 day timeline for the first meeting to occur. We attribute the delay to three specific things: (a) the Christmas Holiday occurred in this timeframe; (b) the process to select and appoint a Facilitator took longer than expected; and (c) availability of SOC members for the first meeting. All other policy timelines have been met to date.

Staff do not consider this variance from the provincial policy to be significant.

Communications

Staff believe the SOC had a strong communications plan. HRSB Communications Department assisted the SOC as requested throughout the process. As examples, the scope and schedules for the three public community meetings were publicized in both the *Metro* and *Chronicle Herald* on the following dates:

- Chronicle Herald: February 20 & March 5
- Metro: February 24 & March 2

Notices of the meetings were posted on the HRSB website and on Twitter, shared with schools for distribution (print and Alert - phone messages) and posted on school websites and outdoor school signs.

For people who could not attend the public meetings, or who had additional comments to share, an email address EPReview2016@hrsb.ca was created on the HRSB website. There were 15 emails received to this address. These were shared with the facilitator.

As outlined in their report, SOC members undertook a number of additional strategies to help share information about the public meetings, including on Twitter and Facebook, emails and word of mouth in the community. A hashtag #epsoc2016 was also created that could be used on Twitter.

Summaries of each public meeting, presentations and participant feedback were posted on the HRSB website at: <http://www.hrsb.ca/school-review/school-review-eastern-passage-schools>

In addition, the HRSB Communications Department has created and organized resources including the Provincial School Review Policy, Long-Range Outlook and videos which educate everyone on The Future of Our Schools. These can be found easily by following the **School Review** link on the HRSB website.

Impact of Proposed Changes on Business Plan Goals

The Governing Board and Senior Staff have established four goals to guide the development of the 2016-17 business plan priorities. In reviewing the recommendations from the Eastern Passage SOC, staff have considered their impact on each of the business plan goals, should the Governing Board decide to approve the recommendations.

Goal 1: To improve student achievement.

The proposed changes in the SOC recommendations do not restrict achievement of this business plan goals. Our system focus to improve student achievement will not be impacted by these changes. There are no impacts to programming which need to be noted.

Goal 2: To strengthen safe and inclusive school environments.

The proposed changes in the SOC recommendations do not restrict staff's efforts to strengthen safe and inclusive school environments. Currently all schools in this review are accessible in terms of mobility, with the exception of the portable classroom at Tallahassee Community School. The SOC's recommendation would eliminate the need for this portable classroom.

Goal 3: To achieve equitable learning opportunities for all students.

These proposed changes in the SOC recommendations do not inhibit the focus of our system to achieve equitable learning opportunities for all students. It should be noted that the possibility of continuing courtesy bussing for students living in the Birch Hills Estates, Greenridge Mobile Home Park and Hornes Road areas has been assessed and additional comments are provided below.

Goal 4: To build engagement, support and confidence in HRSB.

We have intentionally built this school review to engage the public differently than in the past. These efforts are part of our intention to build support and confidence in HRSB.

Impact of Proposed Changes on System Operations

Staff have considered the recommendations from the Eastern Passage SOC and offer comments on each, as they relate to system operations.

Main Recommendation

This main recommendation includes a grade reconfiguration and a boundary change.

- **Grade Configuration**

The proposed grade configurations can be supported. Transitioning would occur through the school principals to assist students and families with changes to new school buildings due to grade configuration proposals. It is not anticipated that there would be significant costs associated with grade configuration changes.

- **Boundary Change**

The proposed boundary change can be supported. Transitioning would occur through the school principals to assist students and families with changes to new school buildings due to boundary change proposals. Although there is an impact to bussing as described below, it is not anticipated that there would be additional bussing costs associated with the proposed boundary changes.

Additional Recommendations

The report included two additional recommendations.

1. **Graduated Implementation of boundary changes**

Should the Governing Board approve this recommendation, the School Administration Supervisor would work closely with principals to support the transition process for students affected by the proposed boundary changes. The Out of Area process (*Student Registration Policy*) accommodates requests for students to attend a school outside of their homeschool boundary. Each school must follow the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) guidelines outlining Class Size parameters. When space allows, requests can be accommodated to support students and their families.

2. **Board Established Campus Committee**

Staff do not believe formally establishing a “Campus Committee” is necessary.

Currently, each of the schools in the Eastern Passage School Review has its own principal, staff, and school boundaries. Typically, a campus concept would involve one principal responsible for all buildings.

There are current structures in place at each school which could share and discuss community initiatives - School Advisory Councils and Home and School groups. When

the high school in Eastern Passage opens, principals in the five Eastern Passage schools will form their own Family of Schools structure. The Family of Schools' principals will meet regularly during the year with their School Administration Supervisor. There will be times and opportunities for them to discuss and plan based on common interests and community initiatives.

Impact of the Proposed Changes on Budget

The recommendations from the Eastern Passage SOC do not have any significant budget implications.

The Human Resources Services and School Administration Departments would oversee and manage any required changes in staffing resources in accordance with the applicable Collective Agreement(s).

Impact of the Proposed Changes on School Facilities

The recommendations from the Eastern Passage SOC do not require significant facility upgrades or modifications to the school buildings and grounds.

The portable classroom at Tallahassee Community School would be removed from the grounds upon implementation of the recommendations.

Impact of the Proposed Changes on Student Transportation

The recommendations from the Eastern Passage SOC do not require significant bussing changes.

As per HRSB's *Student Transportation* policy, the impact to bussing would be minimal for the estimated 30 students impacted by the recommendations. The identified streets where they live are within walking distance to all the elementary schools. Some of these students are currently transported using courtesy bussing. This could continue for these students as they change schools from Tallahassee Community School to Ocean View Elementary School. However, it is important to underline that regardless of boundary change, courtesy bussing at each school, like at all others, is not permanently guaranteed.

Minimal additional time in the bus route would be required to accommodate this change.

Impact of the Proposed Changes on School Capacity Utilization

The proposed grade configurations would create a more balanced utilization of space in the schools under review. In addition, each school could accommodate the projected enrollment published in the LRO.