

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 8, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Conduct and Outcomes of Athlone, McArthur and Wellington Schools' Cluster Study

ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Assistant to the Superintendent

### RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Randy Billey, Meredith Colgan, Michael Ediger, Kim Falkenberg, Leanne Fedor, Andrea Furness, Kerry-Ann Kope, Roland Labbe, Randy Leal, Kathy McCabe, Shirly McNeill, Deanne Patsula, Howard Saumer, Cindy Skolski

## INFORMATION

### **Background**

On December 14, 2004, the board approved a recommendation that groups of schools in areas of the city with low enrolment be examined for the purpose of addressing improved educational opportunities for students. The schools in this cluster study are: Athlone, McArthur and Wellington Schools'.

### **Educational Benefits for Students**

By working together with school communities, increased educational opportunities for all students is an expected outcome of the study. Small schools can be of benefit to students because of the family-like environment created. This environment can be created in a larger school. When schools become very small, significant disadvantages arise.

The following are educational benefits for students that will be realized if recommendations in the subsequent board report are approved.

- In larger schools with more than one class per grade, students can be placed with the most appropriate teacher to match each student's learning needs. There is typically only one teacher per grade in small schools, thus allowing little opportunity for schools to match teaching style to learning style of students. Very small schools, or programs with low enrolment, provide little flexibility for grade groupings, often necessitating double or triple-combined grades.
- The financial supports for inclusion of students with special needs are far greater in a larger school than they are in very small schools. As well, specialized teaching for students with special needs may be more difficult to provide in a very small school.

- Students attending schools with increased enrolment and more resources are able to experience diverse programming options that very small schools are unable to offer. As enrolment declines, the demands on staff to teach outside their area of expertise increase. The wider availability of specialist teachers, for example, for fine and performing arts, physical education, second languages and special education is less likely in a very small school. School librarians and computer specialists, as well as the available resources for libraries and computer rooms are far greater in a larger school.
- At the junior high level, the range of teacher specialization is much more limited in a small school. For example, teachers teaching beyond their specialty areas of expertise. The range of junior high option courses is limited as are opportunities for the organization of junior high clubs, teams and activities.
- Very small schools have limited funds to purchase resource materials for new curriculums, library book upgrades, physical education equipment, mathematics and science manipulative materials and technology upgrades.
- Studies show that student learning is enhanced in school facilities that are up to date and provide optimal classroom environments for student learning<sup>1</sup>. In larger schools, students have better access to specialized equipment, materials, and facilities for option courses, such as: Music, Instrumental Band, Food and Fashion Studies, Design and Technology and Computer Studies.

**Examples of Elementary Programming Available in Schools with Higher Enrolments (i.e. more than 350 regular program students)**

<b>Curricular</b>	<b>Co-curricular and Extra-Curricular</b>	<b>Special Education</b>	<b>Student Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French as a Second Language (FSL)</li> <li>• Second Languages (e.g. Mandarin, Ukrainian, German)</li> <li>• Computer Assisted Instruction</li> <li>• Fine Arts (Music, Art and Drama)</li> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Academic Challenge</li> <li>• Balanced Literacy</li> <li>• English as a Second Language (ESL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Competitions and Science Fairs</li> <li>• Field Trips</li> <li>• Computer, Table Tennis Clubs</li> <li>• Heritage Fair</li> <li>• Choir, Hand Bells</li> <li>• Intramurals</li> <li>• Athletics (Track &amp; Field, Soccer, Journal Games, Cross Country Running)</li> <li>• Theatre Sports</li> <li>• Family Dances</li> <li>• Student Council</li> <li>• Newspaper</li> <li>• Safety Patrols</li> <li>• Student Announcers</li> <li>• Conflict Management Teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour Assistance</li> <li>• Resource Room</li> <li>• Reading Recovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling Services</li> <li>• Daily Noon Hour Tutorials/Special Help</li> <li>• Lunch Program</li> <li>• Peer Support Programs</li> <li>• Teacher Librarian</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, Dr. Morgan, Where Children Learn: Facility Conditions and Student Test Performance in Milwaukee Public Schools, *CEFPI Issuetrak*, December 2000.

**Examples of Junior High Programming Available in Schools with Higher Enrolments (i.e. 400 – 600 regular program students)**

Curricular	Co-curricular and Extra-Curricular	Special Education	Student Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French as a Second Language</li> <li>• Second Languages (e.g. Mandarin, Ukrainian, German, Spanish)</li> <li>• Computer Assisted Instruction</li> <li>• Career and Technology Studies (Construction and Technology, Foods and Fashion Studies, Environmental and Outdoor Education, Information Processing, Visual Communications, Leadership)</li> <li>• Fine Arts (Band, Art and Drama)</li> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Academic Challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Competitions and Science Fairs</li> <li>• Field Trips</li> <li>• Cultural, Speech, Computer, Table Tennis, Travel, Cycling and Ski Clubs</li> <li>• Heritage Fair</li> <li>• Jazz and Concert Bands</li> <li>• Band Camps</li> <li>• Cheerleading</li> <li>• Intramurals</li> <li>• Athletics (Track &amp; Field, Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball, Slow Pitch, Journal Games, Cross Country Running, Downhill Skiing, Snow Boarding, Rock Climbing, Archery, Bike Trips)</li> <li>• Theatre Sports</li> <li>• School Dances</li> <li>• School Council</li> <li>• Yearbook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour Assistance</li> <li>• Learning Strategies</li> <li>• Resource Room</li> <li>• Reading Recovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling Services</li> <li>• Daily Noon Hour Teacher Tutorials/Special Help</li> <li>• Snack Shack</li> <li>• School Resource Officer</li> <li>• Peer Support Programs</li> <li>• Electronic Homework Hotline</li> </ul>

**Study Results**

With the goal of improving programming opportunities and learning environments for students, it was anticipated that this study would result in recommendations to the board for the consideration of one or more of the following:

- the relocation or consolidation of programs;
- the upgrading and preservation of existing space;
- the closure of schools;
- the demolition or decommissioning of space; and
- an alternative arising from the community consultation process.

Appendix I describes the completed consultation process and timeline for the study. A consolidated record of parent, staff and community input can be found on the district website at <http://planning/epsb.ca>.

**Preliminary and Refined Options**

A number of preliminary options were presented for discussion purposes at the special combined school council meetings, the individual school council meetings and combined staff meetings. Capacity, enrolment, and utilization rates were presented (Appendix II). Participants identified issues for consideration regarding each option, and provided advice relative to the issue. Participants also identified additional options.

### **Summary of Feedback Regarding Preliminary Options**

- The Athlone, McArthur and Wellington communities reflect the importance of a local neighborhood school in a community. Overall, their message was one of ensuring that the grade groupings remain the traditional K-6 and 7-9. The parents communicated that they were not interested in a K-9 school, especially a larger one.
- Parents and staff want assurance that dollars for classroom learning are not diverted to maintain buildings and that the school district is fiscally responsible in using educational dollars.
- Parents and staff expressed the importance for junior high students to have program options equal to other areas in the city.
- Parents spoke strongly about the relationships developed between students and staff.
- Parents expressed concern for transportation related issues.
- Parents and community members showed support for their schools in a number of ways and expressed concerns about playgrounds, green spaces, future use of potentially closed buildings, and property values. Clearly evident at the heart of these concerns is a passion for community as they know it and for a desire to preserve it for future generations.
- Some parents and community members expressed concerns that all options indicated a closure of one or more schools, and that they could not support any option that contemplates closing any school.

### **Refined Options**

Each consideration and offer of advice was reviewed and categorized into the following broad areas that successfully impact a student's education: programming, accommodation, transportation, staffing, capital, location, and general.

Advice was acknowledged in the running record, and then data was organized to extract common themes for each of the preliminary options to determine the refined options.

Parents and community members took additional avenues, including individual emails, letters, flyers, and phone calls to express their opinions. Consideration of this input was included in the refinement process.

### **Summary of Feedback Regarding Refined Options**

Refined options were presented at the parent and community consultation meeting in February (Appendix III). These options were refined based on feedback received at the previous sets of consultation meetings. At this time, participants evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of each refined option, and indicated which options they might be able to support.

### **Refined Option A**

Athlone School and McArthur School as a K – 6 facilities.  
Close Wellington Junior High School

**Advantages:** Parents, staff and community members identified the following as advantages of this option:

- retention of both elementary schools will ensure class sizes remain consistent
- relocating junior high students will provide students with improved programming options and facility
- parents and students have a choice in the community for a K-6 school
- access to elementary schools remains

**Disadvantages:** Parents, staff and community members identified the following as disadvantages of this option:

- capital cost to modernize McArthur School is a concern
- transportation and overcrowding are a concern if students are moved to Rosslyn School
- the community will lose the junior high program and with it the school band program
- it does not address declining elementary enrolment

### **Refined Option B**

Athlone School as K – 6 facility  
Close McArthur School and Wellington Junior High School

**Advantages:** Parents, staff and community members identified the following as advantages of this option:

- consolidating elementary enrolment into one school maximizes resources and staff
- it is more cost-efficient to modernize the building in better condition
- it displaces as few students as possible

**Disadvantages:** Parents, staff and community members identified the following as disadvantages of this option:

- closes McArthur School
- perception that Athlone School is located near adult businesses
- perception of overcrowding at the receiving school, if students are moved
- the community will lose the junior high program

- the community would lose two schools
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### **Refined Option C**

McArthur School as a K – 6 facility  
 Close Athlone School and Wellington Junior High School

**Advantages:** Parents, staff and community members identified the following as advantages of this option:

- keeps McArthur School open
- consolidating elementary enrolment into one school maximizes resources and staff

**Disadvantages:** Parents, staff and community members identified the following as disadvantages of this option:

- less cost-efficient to modernize building in worse condition
- perception of overcrowding at the receiving school, if students are moved
- the community will lose the junior high program
- the community would lose two schools

Some parents and community members expressed concerns that all options indicated a closure of one or more schools, and that they could not support any option that contemplates closing any school.

### **Summary of Indications of Parent and Community Input**

There were 86 parent and community members in attendance at the Parent/Community Consultation meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup> at Wellington School. There were 13 Athlone parents, 42 McArthur parents, 20 Wellington parents and 8 community members. One parent had children in both Athlone and Wellington Schools and 13 parents had children in both McArthur and Wellington Schools. Also, in attendance were Trustee Esslinger, Trustee Williams and MLA Eggen.

Parent and community members were asked to work with a facilitator to indicate advantages and disadvantages to each refined option. This information was analyzed along with the feedback that participants provided through individual input sheets.

More than half of the participants were able to support one of the three refined options presented. Of this group the majority supported refined Option A which keeps both elementary schools operational. The remaining participants indicated that they do not philosophically support school closures. However, the majority of the later group did indicate through the advantages and disadvantages portion of their input sheet, support for refined option A or whichever option keeps their own elementary school open.

Appendices IV and V provide details regarding school enrolments in the cluster, and an area map of schools.

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Appendix I	Consultation Process and Timeline for Study
Appendix II	Preliminary Options & Capacity, Enrolment & Utilization Rates in Cluster Schools
Appendix III	Refined Options
Appendix IV	School Enrolment
Appendix V	Cluster Area Map

## CONSULTATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE FOR STUDY

The consultation process for the cluster studies began in late November, 2004 with the administration holding preliminary discussions with the principals of all the schools in each of the three clusters. These discussions focused on defining optimal learning environments for students and informed the administration on the development of preliminary options.

Early in the New Year, staff from the Planning Department coordinated the commencement of the studies in each of the three clusters. Planning staff continued to consult with principals throughout the process and, in various meetings, consulted as well with school staff, parents, school councils, program representatives and the broader community within each cluster. The overall objective of the consultation process was to provide participants with the opportunity to work effectively and meaningfully with the district in the further refinement of options and, finally, in the identification of preferred alternatives.

The specific objective of the consultation process at each of the meetings was to enable the administration to receive and record advice specific to each of the preliminary options presented to participants within each of the clusters. This advice informed the administration on the further refinement of options. Refined options based on the advice received from participants in the process were then presented in each cluster to an assembly of parents and community members for their review and discussion around advantages and disadvantages. This information was also recorded along with information indicating which, if any, of the refined options participants felt they could support.

Throughout the process, the administration kept a running record of advice received specific to the preliminary options and feedback on the refined options. The advice and feedback that was received and recorded from all of the meetings held within each cluster was supplemented, as well, by advice and feedback that was received by the administration through phone calls, letters and emails. The full running record has been maintained for public viewing on the district's main website as well as the district's Planning website.

The consultation meetings held within each cluster study included:

- *Special Combined School Council Meetings (week of January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005)*
- *Combined School Staff Meetings (week of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005)*
- *Individual School Council Meetings (week of January 24, 2005, week of February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and week of February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005)*
- *Parent/Community Consultation Meetings (week of February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and week of February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005)*

The administration also consulted with the Logos Christian Society (meeting Friday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005), The Association for English-German Bilingual Education (meeting Wednesday, January 26, 2005) and the Ukrainian Bilingual Association (meeting Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005).



A table summarizing the timeline of the various consultation meetings held in the study of Athlone, McArthur and Wellington Schools' along with information on meeting attendance follows below:

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Special Combined School Councils	Wellington Junior High School	Wednesday, January 17, 2005	49
McArthur School Council	McArthur Elementary School	Monday, January 24, 2005	30
Special Combined School Staffs	Wellington Junior High School	Monday, January 31, 2005	43
Athlone School Council	Athlone Elementary School	Monday, February 7, 2005	9
Parent/Community Meeting	Wellington Junior High School	Wednesday, February 9, 2005	86
Wellington Band Association	Wellington Junior High School	Tuesday, February 15, 2005	8
<b>TOTAL ATTENDANCE (all meetings)</b>			<b>225</b>

**PRELIMINARY OPTIONS FOR:  
ATHLONE, MCARTHUR AND WELLINGTON SCHOOLS**

<b>Option A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize McArthur School as a K – 6 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from Athlone School to McArthur School.</li> <li>• Relocate grades 7 – 9 from Wellington School to another area junior high school to be determined.</li> <li>• Close Athlone and Wellington schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Option B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Athlone School as a K – 6 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from McArthur School to Athlone School.</li> <li>• Relocate grades 7 – 9 from Wellington School to another area junior high school to be determined.</li> <li>• Close McArthur and Wellington schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Option C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Wellington as a K – 9 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from McArthur School to Wellington School.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from Athlone School to Wellington School.</li> <li>• Close Athlone and McArthur schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Option D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize McArthur School to serve all K – 4 students in the cluster.</li> <li>• Modernize Athlone School to serve all grade 5 – 9 students in the cluster.</li> <li>• Close Wellington School.</li> </ul>
<b>Option E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Athlone School as a K – 9 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from McArthur School to Athlone School.</li> <li>• Relocate grades 7 – 9 from Wellington School to Athlone School.</li> <li>• Close McArthur and Wellington schools.</li> </ul>

## CAPACITY, ENROLMENT AND UTILIZATION RATE OF SCHOOLS IN SCHOOL GROUPS

(Based on September 30, 2004 enrolment.)

<b>Cluster Schools</b>	<b>Total Capacity (Actual)</b>	<b>Total Enrolment (Actual)</b>	<b>School Utilization (%) (PUR *)</b>	<b>Audit Score</b>
<b><u>Cluster B</u></b>				
Athlone (K-6)	340	229	84	440
McArthur (K-6)	329	173	56	1030
Wellington (Gr. 7-9)	676	182	36	810

\* **PUR (Provincial Utilization Rate)** is the calculation of school space utilization based on “weighted” enrolments and capacities. The PUR is not calculated on the basis of “actual” enrolments and capacities.

- **Adjusted enrolment:** The total enrolment at schools is weighted by Alberta Learning with consideration being given to the accommodation of students enrolled in special education programs.
- **Net capacity:** The total capacity at schools is weighted (or adjusted) by Alberta Infrastructure as well, with consideration being given to the total area of leased space and CTS (Career Technology Studies) space that exists within schools.
- **Provincial audit score:** Is calculated by Alberta Infrastructure and indicates the relative condition of the building. A high audit score (600+) indicates a school requiring major upgrades.

**REFINED OPTIONS: ATHLONE, MCARTHUR AND WELLINGTON CLUSTER****Option A (Refined)**

- **Athlone School as a K – 6 facility**
- **McArthur School as a K – 6 facility**
  - Essential modernization of Athlone and McArthur Schools
- **Close Wellington Junior High School**
  - Relocate regular program grades 7 – 9 to Rosslyn Junior High School
  - Relocate District Centre ISP special needs program to Westmount School
  - Relocate District Centre B&LA special needs program to Dickinsfield School
  - Consider Upgrades to Rosslyn School to accommodate more students
  - Upgrades to Westmount and Dickinsfield schools to accommodate special needs programs

**Option B (Refined)**

- **Athlone School as K – 6 facility**
  - Essential modernization of Athlone School and classroom additions
- **Close McArthur School**
  - Relocate regular elementary program to Athlone School
  - Relocate District Centre Strategies special needs program to Athlone School
  - Re-designate Hudson Neighbourhood to Kensington
- **Close Wellington Junior High School**
  - Relocate regular program grades 7 – 9 to Rosslyn
  - Relocate District Centre ISP special needs program to Westmount
  - Relocate District Centre B&LA special needs program to Dickinsfield
  - Consider Upgrades to Rosslyn School to accommodate more students
  - Upgrades to Westmount and Dickinsfield schools to accommodate special needs programs

**Option C (Refined)**

- **McArthur School as a K – 6 facility**
  - Essential modernization and classroom addition
- **Close Athlone School**
  - Relocate regular program to McArthur School
  - Relocate District Centre B&LA special needs program to McArthur School
  - Re-designate Oxford and Carlton neighbourhoods to Dunluce School
- **Close Wellington Junior High School**
  - Relocate regular program grades 7 – 9 to Rosslyn Junior High School
  - Relocate District Centre ISP special needs program to Westmount School
  - Relocate District Centre B&LA special needs program to Dickinsfield School
  - Consider Upgrades to Rosslyn School to accommodate more students
  - Upgrades to Westmount and Dickinsfield schools to accommodate special needs programs

## SCHOOL ENROLMENT

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Programs</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Athlone (K-6)</b>	Regular	210
		Behaviour & Learning Assistance	19
		<i>Total</i>	229
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	<b>McArthur (K-6)</b>	Regular	144
		Strategies	29
		<i>Total</i>	173
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	<b>Wellington (Gr. 7-9)</b>	Regular	150
		Individual Support	18
		Behaviour & Learning Assistance	14
		<i>Total</i>	182
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September 30, 2004 enrolment

CLUSTER AREA MAP

