

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 13, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Delegation Regarding Potential Closure of Bellevue School

ORIGINATOR: A. Sherwood, Board Secretary

INFORMATION

Ms Jillian Scrimger has requested an opportunity to appear before the board to present the position of Bellevue parents and community members regarding the potential closure of Bellevue School.

A letter from Anne Sherwood, board secretary, dated April 28, 2003 advising that arrangements have been made for Ms Scrimger to be heard by the board on **Tuesday, May 13, 2003 at 7:30 p.m.** is attached (Appendix I).

Ms Scrimger has advised that she and Ms Gaenor Bond will be speaking.

AS:mmf

APPENDIX I - Correspondence from A. Sherwood, Board Secretary
APPENDIX II - (Green Pages) Correspondence submitted by Ms Scrimger

April 28, 2003

Dear Ms Scrimger:

Your e-mail below is acknowledged with respect to your request to appear before the board regarding the possible closure of Bellevue School. Accordingly, arrangements have been made for your presentation to the board on **Tuesday, May 13, 2003 at 7:30 p.m.**

To assist you in making your presentation, please be advised of the following board procedures (a link to the board policy regarding delegations is provided below):

- **You may be assisted by an advocate or representative to make your presentation. We ask that your presentation not exceed 10 minutes in length. You and/or your spokesperson must be prepared to clarify issues and answer questions for the trustees at the meeting.**
- **Board meetings commence at 6:00 p.m. and are held in McCauley Chambers on the second floor of the Centre for Education at 102 Street and Kingsway. Underground parking is available. Two seats will be reserved for you and your assistant/spokesperson near the centre microphone in McCauley Chambers where you may be seated until called by the chairman.**
- **A decision regarding your request will be dealt with at the next meeting of the board unless otherwise agreed to by a majority vote of the trustees present. *Please note that a decision with respect to school closures will be made at the Tuesday, May 27, 2003 board meeting and your presentation will be taken into consideration in the board's deliberation as part of the information gathered through the public consultations.***
- **If you have information you want provided to trustees with respect to your request, please provide one reproducible copy to the Board Office no later than noon, Wednesday, May 7, 2003. This information will be included in a report to board.**
- **A copy of the complete board report being sent to trustees with respect to your presentation will be provided to you on Friday, May 9, 2003.**

Please note that the agenda for the May 13, 2003 board meeting and related board reports will also be accessible from the district's internet site later the afternoon of May 9, 2003 at: <http://www.epsb.ca/board/agenda.shtml>

Please contact my office at 429-8021 once you have received this letter to advise whether you will be submitting information as well as to provide the address you would like board report sent to you on May 9, 2003. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne Sherwood".

Anne Sherwood
Board Secretary

cc: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools
A. Habinski, Executive Director School and District Services
P. Fizell, Principal Bellevue School
J. Bidulock, Director Planning

Web Link to JAB.BP – Formal Delegations and Presentations to Board -
<http://policy.epsb.ca/jab.bp.shtml>

Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: JAB.BP

EFFECTIVE DATE: 11-09-2001

TOPIC: Formal Delegations, Presentations,
and Comments to the Board

ISSUE DATE: 25-09-2001

REVIEW DATE: 09-2006

A. FORMAL DELEGATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS TO BOARD

1. The board secretary shall advise the delegation on the procedures for submitting a brief and/or making a verbal presentation and assist the delegation in making their request.
2. Groups or individuals who wish to appear before the board shall first discuss the request with the superintendent of schools or a designate.
3. If after meeting with the administration, an appearance before the board is still desired, the delegation must give written notice to the board secretary at least two weeks prior to the meeting at which they wish to appear in order that the request may be considered for scheduling on the board agenda. Written briefs or a digest of the information to be presented must be submitted to the board secretary's office at least five days prior to the meeting. The notice and the brief will be provided to each trustee with the notice of meeting at which the delegation is to appear.
4. The board reserves the right to determine whether the delegation will be heard, and if so, whether it will be heard by the board or by a committee of the board.
5. The delegation may have 10 minutes in total to make its presentation and may appoint two spokespersons. The spokespersons must be prepared to clarify issues and answer questions of the trustees.
6. Decisions regarding requests made by delegations will be dealt with at the next meeting of the board or appropriate committee unless otherwise agreed to by a majority vote of the members present.

B. GENERAL COMMENTS ON AN EDUCATIONAL ISSUE AT THE END OF A BOARD MEETING

1. A member of the public or a staff group representative may address the board on any educational issue.
2. A member of the public or a staff group representative may speak for two minutes at a public board meeting under the agenda category *Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives*. The total duration of the *Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives* section of the agenda shall not exceed 15 minutes. Exceptions to the time limits may be made by a majority vote of the board.

Speakers shall address their comments to the board chairman. Attacks on the personal character or performance of any individual or, disruptive remarks shall be ruled out of order and persistence in such remarks by an individual shall terminate the person's privilege to address the board.

C. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC BOARD AGENDA ITEMS

1. If a member of the public or a staff group representative wishes to give a position to board on a specific board agenda item, the individual shall, prior to the start of the meeting, ask the permission of the board chairman to be heard.
2. The board chairman will, at the time the item is considered, seek concurrence of the board to hear the individual.
3. Speakers shall confine themselves to two minutes and address their comments to the board chairman.

Reference(s):

[AB.AR](#) - Appeal Processes

[School Act](#) Section 123



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

From: Jillian Scrimger
Sent: April 25, 2003 3:42 PM
To: Anne Sherwood
Subject: Trustee Meeting, 13 May

Hi Anne. It was great speaking with you yesterday.

Per our conversation, I confirm that I would like to request that I and Gaenor Bond be put on the agenda as co-speakers for the Trustee Meeting on May 13th. We will be presenting the position of Bellevue parents and community members regarding the potential closure of Bellevue School.

I look forward to receiving the procedure and protocol notes as discussed.

Best regards,
Jillian Scrimger

Proposal to Edmonton Public School Board Trustees Re. Potential Closure of Bellevue Elementary School

Due to the fact that parents of Bellevue students and Bellevue/Highlands community members were not provided with ample notice of the potential school closure, information and statistics provided in this document have yet to be finalized. Because we were given less than two months from being informed that closure of Bellevue was likely imminent and given the opportunity to present a viable plan of action for the school, some of the statistics in this document are still being collated. We are continuing to compile statistics and hope to have these available shortly.

It is worth noting that we feel that the time between first notification of potential school closure and commencement of closure proceedings does not allow interested parties sufficient notice to prepare and provide input with pertinent information.

Request:

We ask that Bellevue Elementary School remain open for a minimum of two years while our plan is undertaken to increase Bellevue enrollment, increase utilization and defray operating costs in the short term by offering suitable other uses for the school.

Plan in Brief:

Short term: to begin implementation of special focus of Bellevue (see below)

Medium term: market Bellevue's focus while increasing utilization of the school with appropriate non-school groups (to defray operating costs) with a view to long-term plan (i.e. implementing a play school or pre-K and/or day care would provide potential kindergarten students).

Long term: have Bellevue be fully marketed as an instructional focus school with stabilized enrollment within the acceptable range.

Ongoing: engage and strengthen the community by offering community events and programs (for a range of age and interests) in Bellevue school.

Background:

Bellevue has many strengths. The fact that it IS a small community school is a strength. The fact that it has a strong academic record is a strength. The fact that bullying is rare is a strength. Bellevue simply needs to market these strengths to parents and students – in the Bellevue/Highlands area and beyond - while becoming a more active member of the community. This will allow us to reach our goal of meeting utilization requirements as well as maintaining our fiscal viability.

Bellevue has an excellent academic record. Its students particularly excel in mathematics and literacy. This is an even greater accomplishment than it first appears, since many of Bellevue's students are from lower-income and

marginal environments. Implementing a unique teaching style, focus and philosophy would be complementary to Bellevue's high academic achievement – thus increasing enrollment.

Bellevue students are an extremely close-knit group. The small, local nature of the school gives students the opportunity to get to know all of the other students, not just those in their class. Smaller numbers mean that cliques (the hotbeds of bullying) simply cannot form. The importance of this CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. Bullying can have crushing, lifelong, even terminal, effects, and a system that eliminates it is a system to be valued.

Since students are no longer required to attend their local school, parents are consumers, shopping for what they perceive as the best educational value for their child. Schools that specialize are schools that thrive. In this very district, Virginia Park has become extremely popular since reinventing itself as an 'arts' elementary. Other schools have incorporated the popular 'micro-society' model. Single sex schools like Nelly McClung have waiting lists. These are all just examples of how having something unique to offer can make a school successful.

In schools, a 'mall' mentality, where bigger and more concentrated is better, is dangerous and shortsighted. Students excel personally and academically in smaller classes. All the fancy computers and sparkly resources in the world can't compete with sufficient 'one-to-one' time with the teacher. Shunting students to schools whose enrollment will suddenly leap by 30-40% is an invitation to disaster.

Bellevue school could be used during non-school hours for community outreach programs, continuing education opportunities and specific interest programs. Whether it's Brownies, tai chi classes or French lessons, these all serve to engage the community and draw parents, students and community members to a school, which fosters an image of vitality and inclusiveness.

Bellevue would benefit from offering on-site daycare and/or before and after school care. Many parents work, and work hours are not necessarily the same as school hours. The need for before and after school care means that parents who require child care would be more likely to select a school which offered this feature.

Short Term Plan for Bellevue

- ◆ Increase enrollment through implementing and marketing a focus for Bellevue school.

This is an effective method for not only getting neighbourhood students to attend their local school, but also for attracting students from neighbouring communities.

- ◆ Determine focus of school:

In researching potential focuses for Bellevue, we found that Bellevue lends itself particularly well to addressing one or more of the following:

Academic/music: Bellevue currently has a strong academic record as well as an excellent music program. Implementing an academic/music focus in Bellevue could be done quickly, efficiently and cost effectively. This focus would twin nicely with neighbouring Virginia Park School (which has an arts core) and feed into the strengths of Eastglen High School, which has a strong arts and academic foundation. The Bellevue Highlands school community could be co-marketed as the "arts and smarts" area.

In canvassing parents both in the Bellevue community and further afield, we determined that application of this kind of program was appealing to parents. Other elementary schools that have implemented an academic focus have seen increased enrollment.

Second language: Because of a positive community response to this suggested program, as well as the current federal bilingualism initiative, we feel that implementing a French, Spanish, Ukrainian and/or another language program at Bellevue School would successfully increase enrollment. The new government policy calls for half of Canadian children to be French/English bilingual. Currently, Edmonton schools are not equipped to accommodate this volume of French instruction.

Speech/language:

A strong need currently exists for a speech and language program. The Eship program is currently not able to adequately meet the needs of low and average income families in need of speech and language programs. Tevie Miller Heritage School is a site school for speech and language, however high tuition fees make it inaccessible to lower income families. No speech/language program currently exists for low and middle-income families. Bellevue could easily integrate speech and language services as an integral part of both early education and school based programming. This is possible with the appropriate staffing team and proper programming. Elementary is an ideal time for this therapy, as it offers best results in early childhood learning.

Medium Term:

- ◆ Defray operating costs by installing suitable groups, which will provide a "feeder group" to augment and stabilize kindergarten and higher grade enrollment.

The Bellevue neighbourhood demographic is changing rapidly. Many homeowners who have been in the neighbourhood for decades are now moving on. The modest home sizes and reasonable house prices make them ideal for young families. As young families move in, the need for a neighbourhood elementary school will become more acute.

Bellevue is ideally suited for after school care. As many parents work, this would be a useful and popular feature. The need for before and after school care means that parents who require child care would be more likely to select a school which offered this feature. As the parents and children become familiar with Bellevue as a learning environment, and are comfortable with the facility, it is a natural progression to enroll their school age students to Bellevue. Bellevue would benefit from offering on-site daycare and/or before and after school care.

The same holds true for parents sending their preschool age children to a Bellevue daycare/preschool. It is natural that these parents would continue to send students to Bellevue as they start Kindergarten. This strategy will ensure that enrollment remains stable and does not fluctuate with demographic shifts. The facility could be easily modified to accommodate playschool and/or daycare groups.

◆ Marketing Bellevue's focus

With parents now being able to make more and more choices about their children's education, they will "shop for" an education package that fits their perceptions of being the best value for their child. Bellevue's focus, and the benefits of attending Bellevue School would be aggressively marketed to the Bellevue community as well as to the wider population.

Long Term

With Bellevue's focus being effectively marketed and enrollment increased to an acceptable range, Bellevue will be proactive in implementing and adjusting programs to meet the changing needs of students and the community.

Ongoing

As an ongoing initiative to engage and strengthen community bonds, Bellevue will offer a variety of community outreach activities, both educational and recreational to engage a range of ages and interests.

The Negative Effect

The community

Citizens in the Bellevue and Highlands community areas were petitioned to determine their reaction to the potential closure of Bellevue school. Attached are signatures of people who are opposed to the closure of Bellevue School.

The community as a whole would be negatively affected by the closure of this school. More specifically, community services and facilities that would be negatively affected by Bellevue's closure include:

- **Community stores:** less parent and student business; less general "drop in" traffic resulting in diminished sales for these stores.
- **Community services** such as the Highlands Library and the Eastglen Pool. Usage of these facilities will decrease with the closure of Bellevue School. This will jeopardize these facilities – the City of Edmonton may view these facilities as superfluous and close them. This will be a great loss to ALL members of the community, including the many seniors that reside in the Bellevue area.
- **Realtors.** The presence of a school within walking distance is a definite selling feature for homes. If this is removed, it may negatively affect property values – this will impact on ALL homeowners in the Bellevue and Highlands areas.
- **Community League:** Students being bussed or driven to schools will make it less practical for these students to be involved in local community league events, teams, etc. A lack of participation in these events could result in their being cancelled. This has the potential to degrade the cohesiveness and community spirit.