

DATE: September 27, 2011
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Student Accommodation Plans for Newer Subdivisions (Response to TT #104)
ORIGINATOR: Brian Smith, Executive Director Finance and Infrastructure
RESOURCE STAFF: Leanne Fedor, Jack Geldart, Ann Parker, Christopher Wright
REFERENCE: June 14, 2011 Board Meeting

ISSUE

The following information was requested:

Provide information on what plans are in place to handle the educational needs of the increasing numbers of children living in newer subdivisions. For example, is the demand within current catchment areas expected to exceed the capacity of the school(s) currently designated for those catchment areas, within what timeframe, and what is the plan to deal with that? Comment with respect to potential impacts on staffing, programming, transportation, and any other relevant areas.

BACKGROUND

Increasing numbers of Edmonton Public School students are residing in new subdivisions. This is placing enrolment pressures on existing schools.

CURRENT SITUATION

As the city continues to grow, accompanied with uncertain funding for new school construction, it has become necessary to accommodate students who reside in new neighbourhoods at schools farther away from where they reside. The designated schools are the closest schools with available space to accommodate all of the current and projected students within a given area. Historically this has meant bypassing schools that are closer to the newest neighbourhoods as these schools are already at or near capacity. (See Appendix I, City Map).

Currently, transportation services are often provided to students who attend their designated receiving school where the school is located outside an established walk boundary. The total cost for the District's transportation services is funded through provincial transportation allocations and fees paid by parents through the sale of bus passes. Increased demand for student transportation service areas accompanying suburban growth will require the addition of buses to counter increasing ride times. Increases in any individual component of the district transportation service model will result in increased fees to parents. Lastly, as the area of the city being serviced by Student Transportation continues to grow, environmentally, the district will be increasing its carbon footprint.

KEY POINTS

School Capacity and Enrolment

When creating the attendance area boundaries for new district schools, as many neighbourhoods as possible are included. However, due to the large number of students residing in the new areas and the rapid pace of development beyond these neighbourhoods, it was necessary to close the attendance area boundaries for A. Blair McPherson, Dr. Donald Massey, Elizabeth Finch, Esther Starkman and Johnny Bright schools for the 2011-2012 school year. The closure of these school boundaries was required in response to enrolment and space pressures. While Florence Hallock School will not have closed boundaries for 2011-2012, it will; however, have an optimal enrolment limit of 480 elementary students and 240 junior high students for a total of 720 students.

Each Alberta School Alternative Procurement (ASAP) school has the physical capacity to accommodate three classes per grade. Using this measure, A. Blair McPherson and Dr. Donald Massey schools, are at capacity for the 2011-2012 school year. Esther Starkman and Johnny Bright schools have exceeded their core capacities and as a result, two modular classrooms for each school have been requested and approved by the province. September enrolment data indicates that Elizabeth Finch School will be at capacity within one to two school years. At a consistent pace of enrolment growth, Florence Hallock School is projected to be at capacity within 3-4 years.

A number of other potential means of accommodating students from new and developing neighbourhoods have been considered in the past. Each of these considerations create unique challenges with respect to student accommodation, transportation and staffing.

The following five methods have been considered as means to accommodate the educational needs of students in new subdivisions.

1. Modular and Portable Classrooms

Modular and portable classrooms are intended to be a temporary solution for schools experiencing enrolment pressures from attendance area students. In the case of Esther Starkman and Johnny Bright schools, they will each be receiving two modular classrooms in response to enrolment pressures. The number of modular classrooms a site can accommodate is finite and each site is unique. The delivery of modular classrooms is dependent upon the priority of each request submitted to the province and outside of the control of the District. Portable classrooms from the current district inventory can be relocated in response to enrolment pressures.

The continued long term growth of the City of Edmonton cannot be addressed solely through the use of modular/portable classrooms. Core school buildings are designed to accommodate a specific number of students. Historically, the addition of modulars and portables has created issues such as:

- a. Traffic congestion in the surrounding community as parking and drop off locations are inadequate to accommodate the increased number of students. Increased levels of traffic result in student safety concerns due to traffic congestion. Also, there are additional costs associated with the installation of traffic control signs and supervision of school bus zones.
- b. The building facilities including washrooms, gymnasiums and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) spaces are designed to accommodate the core capacity. The addition of portable or modular classrooms places additional strains on these facilities. For example, during the years of peak enrolment of Brookside School, washroom facilities were limited to a one male and one female washroom for 362 students. The school at this time had two portable classrooms, and all available rooms within the core building were converted to classrooms.
- c. Portable relocations within the district inventory carry a cost of approximately \$68,000 per unit. These costs have not been consistently recovered from the Province. When these costs are not recovered by provincial funding the District must incur the costs.

2. Amendment of Existing Attendance Areas

When there is extreme enrolment pressure at a school, it is possible to amend the attendance area for the school by re-designating one or more neighbourhoods to a different school. This would see fewer residences designated to a given school. This is problematic for a number of reasons. Considerable animosity toward the changes would be anticipated as families would no longer have access to a nearby school. Once a student is enrolled in a school, she/he is entitled to complete all grade levels offered at the school. Additionally, the district sibling rule guarantees access to that student's siblings who will be enrolled concurrently. As a result, the effects of changing an attendance area would not have significant impact on enrolment until a number of years later. As the number of students in the school attendance area would decline, the school would not require the same levels of staffing. It is likely that some staff would be identified for transfer or would need to relocate to another district school.

Transportation Implications

There would be increased transportation ride times as the impacted families would be required to travel to designated schools with available space. Amending the attendance area would require additional transportation resources for both the district and families. Increases in any individual component of the district transportation service model will result in increased fees to parents.

3. Re-designating Specific Grades

As a means of reducing the number of students in one location, the district could consider re-designating specific grades to another school. For example, in a Kindergarten to Grade 9 school, it could be possible to move Kindergarten and Grade 1 to a different school. This is potentially disruptive for families and would require the re-assignment of staff to other sites. Geographically, these sites will likely be quite distant as nearby schools are already at or near capacity. Due to the terms of the *School Act* that defines the movement of three consecutive grades as a school closure, the district would be limited in terms of the number of students that could be accommodated elsewhere. In the specific case of Esther Starkman and Johnny Bright schools, the effects of re-designating two grades would not reduce the

enrolment pressure to the extent necessary. This method may only defer the situation in the short term. To be effective in the long term, this method would have to be done in conjunction with one of the other methods outlined.

Transportation Implications

There would be increased transportation ride times as the impacted families would be required to travel to designated schools with available space. Re-designating grades to another school would require additional transportation resources for both the district and families. Increases in any individual component of the district transportation service model will result in increased fees to parents.

4. Requests for New School Construction

While new schools may be requested through the submission of the district’s Capital Plan, funding for their construction is determined by the provincial government. Further, the prioritization of new school construction encompasses all school districts within Alberta, creating uncertainty as to where and when Edmonton Public Schools may be approved and funded.

Transportation Implications

Fewer transportation resources for both the district and families will be necessary as students will have local school accommodation.

5. Reconfiguration of Space

If the options outlined above are not implemented or if enrolment pressures continue despite the implementation of the above options, the reconfiguration of existing school space would be required.

a. Creative Use of Space

Should enrolment continue to grow, non instructional spaces within schools will be required to house students. This will necessitate the reconfiguration of areas such as staffrooms, music rooms, libraries, meeting rooms, office spaces, lunchroom areas and staff workrooms to create classroom spaces. As a result these spaces will not be available for their intended purposes. As the ASAP agreement stipulates that these facilities may not be modified structurally, these areas would not be ideal student learning spaces.

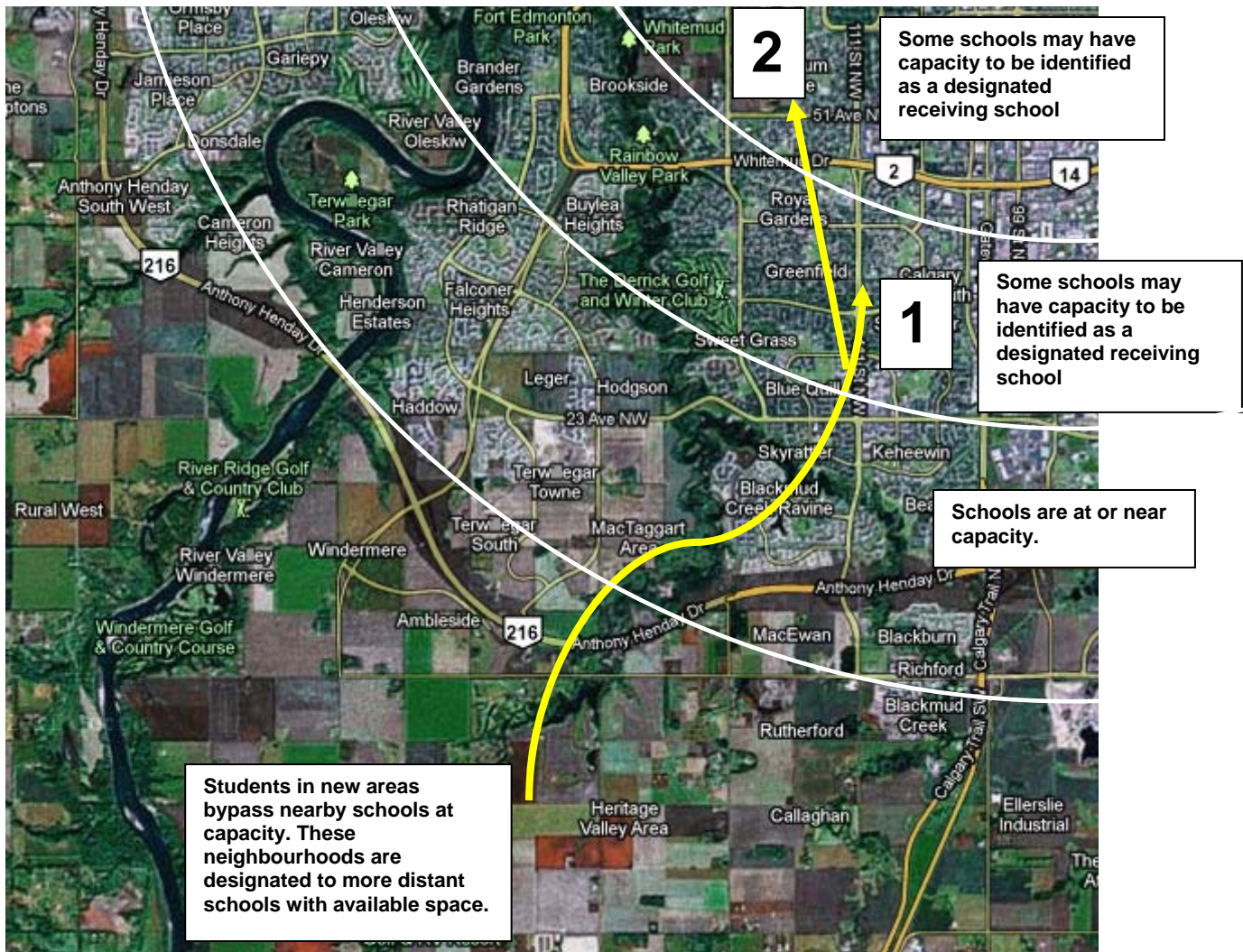
b. Increased Class Sizes

Due to growing student enrolment and limited classroom space it may be necessary to increase class sizes. This would create additional demands on staff working in these schools and restricted learning environments for staff and students. With increased student hallway traffic, supervision challenges can arise and, in some very full schools, air quality issues have been documented.

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

APPENDIX I City Circle Map

LF:sa



In the absence of new school construction, new and developing neighbourhoods are designated in the following order

Ring 1- This is the first location which is researched for available space when a new neighbourhood comes to fruition in the City of Edmonton. As more new and developing neighbourhoods begin to materialize and more city neighbourhoods must have a designated receiving school, there will be less capacity in this area of the city to accommodate Edmonton Public students. Schools in this area of the city may have some capacity for out of attendance students.

Ring- 2- If available space does not exist within Ring 1, the shift of focus for available space enters this area of the city.