

## Terms of Reference, School Options Committee (SOC)

### School Options Committee (SOC)

#### Terms of Reference

August 26, 2016

**Schools Under Review:** Dr. Thomas McCulloch Jr. High  
Pictou Elementary School  
Pictou Academy

**Schools Included in the Review:** Northumberland Regional High School

#### MANDATE

- Conduct a review of the Pictou Academy Feeder System of Schools according to the Policy and Procedures within the *Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development School Review Policy*.
- Engage the public in the SOC work as required of the School Review Policy.
- Provide a written report regarding various options considered with a final recommendation to the school board.

#### REVIEW OBJECTIVES

- Through a reorganization of schools optimize the provision of educational services which could enhance the learning opportunities for students.
- To optimize the use of facilities within the Pictou Feeder System, including excess capacity and utilization of facilities.
- Effective and efficient use of school board resources.

Consideration should include:

- the school board provided options.
- any additional options that move from status quo towards optimization
- the fiscal and staffing resource implications with all options.
- all options must consistent with the NS School Review Policy and the Reference Criteria within this SOC Terms of Reference.

#### REVIEW CRITERIA

##### Grade Configuration

The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board recommends the following grade configurations:

Elementary:	Primary to Grade 5 (P-5)
Middle:	Grade 6 – Grade 8 (6–8)
High:	Grade 9 - Grade 12 (9-12)
Combined:	Primary to Grade 8 (P-8)
	Grade 6 to Grade 12 (6-12)
	Primary to Grade 12 (P–12)

Any options developed by the SOC should contain these configurations.

### **Class Size and Composition**

Classes for grades Primary to 2 are capped at 20 students, with flexibility. Creating combined classes or multi-age groupings are appropriate to meet this cap. Classes for grades 3 to 6 are capped at 25 students, with flexibility. Creating combined classes or multi-age groupings are appropriate to meet with cap. Combined classes have multiple grade levels in one room. The cap for a combined class shall be the cap for the lowest grade level. Class caps are applicable to both English and French Immersion classes.

### **Optimization of Educational Services**

Recommendations on how the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board could move towards system optimization have been presented to the joint committee of Education Services and Operations and are part of the Committee’s continuing work. Recommendations on how to optimize the educational programming in CCRSB are being based on international studies aimed at defining the factors leading to high- performing educational systems.

In CCRSB, it is being recommended the system could be optimized by moving towards a critical mass of students in each school, resulting in at least two teachers teaching the same grade level/subject area. This could significantly enhance collaboration amongst teachers, leading to increasing effective teaching, ultimately leading to gains in student achievement. An initial assessment recommended the following critical masses:

**Elementary** (Grades P-5) – At least two teachers teaching the same grade level.

**Middle** (Grades 6-8) – At least two teachers teaching the same grade level and subject area.

**Senior** (Grades 9-12) – Enough staff teaching a subject area to justify a subject-specific Department.

The critical mass of students needed to achieve the standards above would lead to increased program opportunities for students. It would also increase the likelihood teachers are teaching in areas of expertise related to their areas of qualifications. In addition, larger student populations increase the likelihood of increased and varied social interactions, including a larger number of co-curricular activities to choose from.

Consistent grade configurations of schools is also identified as moving CCRSB towards an optimized system. These should be:

Grade Primary to 5 schools

Grade 6 to 8 schools

Grade 9 to 12 schools

It is acknowledged there are occasions where configurations of P-12, P-8 and 7-12 are appropriate for reasons due to proximity and geographical location of schools.

Moving towards these three grade configurations would bring CCRSB further in line with what is happening in the province of Nova Scotia, capitalizing on provincial alignment. It would also provide alignment in student achievement data comparisons.

### **Access to an Equity of Programming**

The CCRSB endeavours to make educational program services available to all students. Consideration for students to transfer to other schools is according to *CCRSB Student Transfer Policy #ES-G-03*.

Options developed by SOC should not expand on current educational program services.

### **Optimization of School Facilities**

The school board has developed options for the Pictou Feeder System which optimize the utilization of existing school facilities. Additional options should demonstrate similar improvements to facility utilization.

### **Optimization of Available Use of Resources (Fiscal, Labour and Capital) across the CCRSB and for the Department of Education**

The school board has initiated the review of the Pictou Academy feeder system, including Pictou Elementary School, to assist the board in determining the future need of the P3 facility and the province with the time lines included in the P3 lease agreement for the elementary school.

The review is also initiated to optimize the use of school board resources including staffing, school operations and capital repairs across the CCRSB.

### **Limiting Factors**

Any options developed and recommendation provided must adhere to *CCRSB Student Transportation Policy #OS-T-01*.

### **Membership**

Membership of the Study Options Committee includes all schools under review and those included in the reviews follow Directive D (above or within the Provincial School Review Policy). These would be:

A. Voting Members - School Advisory Council (SAC) Representatives

Dr. Thomas McCulloch Jr. High (TMJ)

- Parent representative – Lisa Smith
- Parent representative – Ralph Heighton

Pictou Academy (PA)

- School Advisory Council – Michelle Davey
- School Advisory Council – Lesley Heighton

Pictou Elementary School (PES):

- Chair, School Advisory Council – Natalie Jay
- One parent representative – Kora Hanrahan

Northumberland Regional High School (NRHS)

- Chair, School Advisory Council – Gina Fagan
- One parent representative – Jack Cox

School Advisory Council representatives cannot be employees of the school board

B. Voting Members – Community / Business Representatives

- Shawn Ryan
- David Porter

Two (2) community / business are representatives from the region in which the schools under review are located.

Representatives must not be elected officials, parents of impacted students or employees of school boards.

C. Non-Voting Members – School Board Staff (as required by the SOC)

- Director of Operations – Herb Steeves
- Director of Human Resources – Allison McGrath
- Director of Programs and Student Services – Stephanie Isenor-Ryan
- Director of Financial Services – Valerie Gauthier
- System Development Supervisor – Chris Boulter
- Family of Schools Supervisor – Ron Turnbull
- Recording Secretary (appointed by the superintendent) – Debbie MacDonald
- Principal (or designate) from each school
  - Dr. Thomas McCulloch Jr. High/Pictou Academy
  - Pictou Elementary
  - Northumberland Regional High School

D. Non-Voting Members – Other Members

As determined by the Superintendent, representatives of other directly impacted groups in the schools' region.

## **School Review Facilitator**

As outlined in Directive E of the Provincial School Review Policy, a facilitator, Lawrence Currie, has been appointed by the Superintendent from a roster maintained by the Department. The role of the facilitator is to guide and support the School Options Committee in fulfilling its mandate.

The role of the facilitator is distinct from the role of the chair. He or she has no decision-making capacity but will assist the members of the committee to effectively communicate, collaborate and, where possible, achieve consensus. The facilitator will assist the chair in ensuring that meeting agendas are followed and that members are engaged and on-task.

The facilitator will also:

- facilitate public meetings;
- act as liaison between the SOC and the school board (information requests will be directed through the facilitator); and
- assist the chair in presenting the *Report and Recommendation* to the governing school board.

The facilitator will not be responsible for:

- decision-making (ex-officio);
- information preparation and collection (outside the context of meetings); or
- logistics (organization of meetings, etc.).

The appointment and role of the facilitator will be in accordance with the guidelines established by the NSEECD within the *Nova Scotia School Review Policy*.

## **Procedures**

### **Election of a Chair for the SOC**

Working meetings of the SOC shall be chaired by the Facilitator until the Chair is selected.

The Chair shall be elected from among the voting members of the SOC within the first two working meetings of the SOC.

The school board will provide the individual elected as Chair with information on his or her role, i.e. on standard meeting procedure. Generally, the Chair will be responsible for ensuring that the committee follows the meeting agendas that the established norms are maintained and that correct decision-making procedures are followed.

### **Decision Making**

- a. No business shall be conducted at any meeting of the SOC unless a quorum is present.
- b. A quorum consists of 50 % of the voting members of the SOC.
- c. It is recommended that decisions of the SOC be determined by consensus.
- d. When consensus cannot be reached, a vote will determine the decision under consideration.
- e. When a vote occurs, a majority will consist of 50% plus 1 of all voting members present at the meeting the day the vote is held.

- f. A reconsideration vote requires assent of the reconsidered decision by a 2/3 majority of all voting members.
- g. Once a vote has been taken, it represents the decision of the SOC.

In all other procedural matters provided for in these Terms of Reference, the rules and practices of Bourinot's Rules of Order shall govern as far as they are applicable, and as a secondary reference the provisions of Procedures for Meetings and Organizations (Kerr and King) shall prevail.

The committee should establish group norms at the beginning of the review process outlining expectations for individual, voting and non-voting committee members' participation on the SOC.

### **Working Meeting Agenda**

Working meetings of the SOC are not public meetings. Non-members may attend meetings if they are invited by the SOC. The SOC may, from time to time, invite individuals to the working meeting in order to assist the committee with its work.

Minutes of key decisions and key actions will be taken by the Recording Secretary of the SOC at each meeting and approved at subsequent SOC meetings. Minutes will be posted on the school board's website as soon as they have been approved, along with any presentation material provided to or by the SOC. The school board website will include a dedicated web page for each ongoing review.

The agenda for the working meetings shall be as follows:

- Call to Order
- Record of Attendance
- Additions to Agenda
- Approval of Agenda
- Adoption of Minutes
- Business arising from Minutes
- New Business
- Reports, correspondence, communications;
- Future meetings
- Adjournment.

### **Public Meetings**

The SOC will hold at least three public meetings to present its work and seek input and feedback about the review scenarios under consideration.

Public meetings must:

- be well-publicized through a range of methods;
- preferably held at the schools under review; and
- advertised at least two weeks prior to the meeting date.

The SOC must ensure that a wide range of school and community groups are invited to participate at public meetings. These groups may include:

- School Advisory Council members
- Parents/guardians;
- Students and staff of the schools involved in the review;
- Local communities; and
- Other interested parties.

Public meetings will be facilitated by the facilitator appointed to support the SOC. Public meetings should:

- begin with an explanation of the school review process, including the mandate of the SOC;
- summarize the work completed to date;
- outline the objectives and reference criteria of the review; and
- provide opportunities for members of the public to speak, and where possible, for dialogue with SOC members.

The agenda for each public meeting will be as follows:

- Call to Order
- Record of Attendance of SOC members
- Explanation of the school review process
- Mandate of the SOC
- Objectives and reference criteria
- Summary of work conducted to date
- Purpose of the meeting
- Public feedback
- Future meetings; and
- Adjournment

A summary of public contributions will be taken by a member of the SOC at each public meeting and approved at subsequent SOC meetings. Summaries will be posted on the school board's website as soon as they have been approved, along with any presentation material provided to, or by, the SOC, in a dedicated section for the ongoing review.

### **Requests for Information**

All requests for information from the SOC shall be directed, in writing, through the School Review Facilitator.