

Mobile Central High Feeder System Review What We Heard and Frequently Asked Questions/Concerns *April, 2019*

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District thanks members of the St. Bernard's Elementary and Mobile Central High school communities for participating in the ThoughtExchange consultation process, and for taking the time to share their thoughts and perspectives with us in recent weeks. There were some great ideas shared among the close to 400 thoughts shared.

This document contains:

- A. ThoughtExchange Online Community Conversation Results, including:
 - o All Thoughts Shared
 - o Responses to Demographic Questions
- B. Thoughts of Supporters;
- C. Thoughts of Those Opposed/Responses to Concerns Raised; and,
- D. Next Steps.

Background

The District has been working in recent years to respond to enrolment pressures within the Mobile Central High school system. Most recently, we have been engaged with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (Department of Transportation and Works) during the construction of a 10-room extension (9 classrooms + computer lab) at Mobile Central High. This project will be completed this year.

In April 2018, the District's elected Board of Trustees passed a motion to move Grade 6 students from St. Bernard's Elementary to Mobile Central High for the 2019-20 school year to help alleviate space challenges at the elementary school. At that time, the Board also passed a motion to conduct a further school system review, specifically to investigate the possibility of reconfiguring St. Bernard's Elementary to a Kindergarten to Grade 4 school, with Grade 5 classes to be assigned to Mobile Central High School at the same time as the Grade 6 students. During this school year, the District consulted with the school community.

The District has now concluded online consultations with the Mobile Central High School feeder system (February 19 to March 8, 2019) as part of the review.

A. THOUGHTEXCHANGE ONLINE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

All Thoughts Shared

Once again, we extend our appreciation to the community members who took time to engage in the consultation process and share their thoughts and perspectives with us.

It should be noted that, while many people shared their desire to see a new school (elementary or middle school) in Mobile, that decision is outside the scope of this process. As noted previously in meetings with school council representatives, the Provincial Government's 2016 budget adjusted an earlier plan for a new middle school to a 10-room extension (9 classrooms + computer lab) for Mobile Central High. The Mobile extension is now nearing completion. For the purposes of this process, it must be recognized that while the community's desire for a new building is understood, it is outside the ability of the District/Board to deliver on that request.

All information gathered through the ThoughtExchange process will help elected Board Trustees determine whether Mobile Central High should be reconfigured to a Grades 5-12 school in 2019-20.

With that in mind, please review the results website developed for our exchange here: <https://my.thoughtexchange.com/report/8c204aa9350f2febb11d3870bdf75e4>

As always, complete information on this School Review process is available on the District's website at: <https://www.nlesd.ca/schools/schoolreview/2019/system-sbe-mch.jsp>



Responses to Demographic Questions

- DQ1 To what school does your family most associate?



%	Person Icon	Category
75%	(129)	St. Bernard's Elementary
6%	(11)	Mobile Central High School
14%	(25)	Our family has students in both
5%	(8)	Our family currently has no students in either school

DQ2 Do you believe that Grade 5 students should be moved from St. Bernard's Elementary to Mobile Central High?



%	Person Icon	Category
19%	(33)	Yes
62%	(108)	No
19%	(32)	I do not know

DQ3 What term best describes your role in this exchange?



%	Person Icon	Category
91%	(157)	Parent
1%	(1)	Student
3%	(5)	Other Family Member (Grand parent, aunt/uncle, etc)
4%	(7)	School staff member
1%	(2)	School community member

B. THOUGHTS OF SUPPORTERS

ThoughtExchange recorded the views of individuals who supported the Board motion to move St. Bernard's Elementary (SBE) Grade 5 students to Mobile Central High School (MCHS), along with Grade 6 students, in September 2019-20.

Some of the common thoughts expressed include:

- Mobile can accommodate Grade 5s now - and St. Bernard's students would benefit from additional space to enhance programming.
- St. Bernard's could reclaim space that could be used as originally intended.
- Removing Grade 6s is not enough to alleviate the pressures that exist now.
- Moving the Grade 5 students is the best decision at the moment, as SBE is too small for projected numbers and there is space to accommodate these students at MCHS.
- Grade 5 students will eventually make the move to Mobile; why delay the inevitable?
- There are K-12 schools throughout the province that work well. There is no reason to believe a 5-12 configuration wouldn't work.
- To move the Grade 5s would be better for students in both schools as it would allow them space to move, stretch, and exercise more comfortably.
- The current situation at SBE is not ideal, with Instructional Resource Teachers (IRTs) in small spaces/closets; the number of washroom facilities, and limited additional space. To move the Grade 5s would provide some relief.
- If the SBE Grade 5s were to move to MCHS, the remaining K-4 could potentially have staggered lunch and students may get to eat in the cafeteria regularly.
- Some parents noted they would not hesitate to have a high school student babysit their children, and did not feel that older students automatically meant a potential negative influence on their children.
- Other parents noted while they might have concerns with Grade 5 students moving to MCHS, they were confident the school would implement age-appropriate safety measures and practices for all students.



C. THOUGHTS OF THOSE OPPOSED/RESPONSES TO CONCERNS RAISED

Many individuals who engaged in the ThoughtExchange process had questions and concerns about the potential change to grade configurations at St. Bernard's Elementary (SBE) and Mobile Central High School (MCHS). The District is therefore taking this opportunity to respond to a number of the concerns raised, and answer questions, so that members of the school community are provided with as much information as possible in advance of any decision made by the Board of Trustees. A list of common concerns expressed, and responses to them, is provided below.

CONCERN: Adding Grade 5s into an Older School Environment (e.g., Risk of Bullying)

RESPONSE: There are many different grade configurations at schools throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, including more than 80 K-12 schools with students who range from age 5 to 18 or more. Administrators and staff can, and do, create safe school environments where older students serve as mentors for those in the younger grades, and where bullying of any kind is not tolerated.

CONCERN: Supervision Concerns for Younger Students (Mobile)

RESPONSE: Schools are guided by the District's Student Supervision Policy (PROG-308, available here: <https://www.nlesd.ca/about/policies.jsp>). Typically, students in the lower grades require more oversight and supervision than those in older grades. The school administration develops a supervision plan to meet the needs of the student population, taking age and the student population into consideration.

CONCERN: MCHS Parking Lot Safety (e.g., Lack of Space, Inexperienced Drivers)

RESPONSE: There is adequate space in the MCHS parking lot to accommodate safe driving practices which all licensed drivers (including students) would be expected to follow. Some additional parking spaces were added during the recent construction of the building extension.

CONCERN: Speed on Main Road in Mobile; Need for Crosswalk at Mobile

RESPONSE: In any community in Newfoundland and Labrador, road infrastructure, traffic calming measures, and signage are the responsibility of the municipality/Local Service Districts (LSDs), or the Provincial Government, through the Department of Transportation and Works. Enforcement of driving regulations is the responsibility of the local policing authority. The District/Board has and will continue to support the school community in making representation of these concerns to the appropriate oversight bodies.

CONCERN: Loss of Child Care/After-School Programming at SBE (e.g., Funlearning)

RESPONSE: The District makes every effort to accommodate programming in schools both before and after the standard school day, where it is practical and possible to do so. The Board understands that parents value this programming. School review decisions are, however, primarily based on the legislated role of the Board to "organize and administer primary, elementary and secondary education within the district" during the school day.



CONCERN: Busing (e.g., Impact on Courtesy Seating; Plans to Ensure Safety)

RESPONSE: For comprehensive information on current student transportation policies, regulations and protocols, see the District website at: <https://www.nlesd.ca/schools/busing/index.jsp>

Notes related to points raised through ThoughtExchange:

- *Will there be seating plans?* The creation of a seating plan is at the discretion of the school administration, as it deems appropriate, with assistance from the District where necessary. In general, it is recommended that younger students be assigned to the front closest to the bus driver.
- *Will there be volunteer or paid bus monitors?* The Provincial Government provides funding for District operations. There is currently no funding allocated for bus monitors. In addition, any volunteer within our school system is deployed under the supervision of teachers, following an extensive application process. Volunteers are not permitted to supervise students on their own, nor can the responsibility for oversight of students be placed on other students without teacher supervision.
- *How will this impact the 1.6 kilometre eligibility zone?* Current Provincial Government policy indicates students who live beyond 1.6 kilometres of their zoned school are eligible for transportation. Should the decision be made for Grade 5 students to move to MCHS, all students who live beyond 1.6 kilometres from MCHS will be eligible for busing transportation.
- *How will this impact the availability of courtesy seating?* Courtesy seating for students who live within the 1.6 kilometre eligibility zone is an option available for schools - but only where excess capacity exists on designated bus routes after all eligible riders are accommodated. Courtesy seating is not a factor for consideration for the District in any school review, as its potential availability is reviewed annually by individual schools.
- *How would moving SBE Grade 5s impact busing eligibility?* As noted in the School Review Information Booklet, available on the Mobile School Review Process website, [linked here](#); "Analysis shows that moving Grade 5 students to Mobile Central High in 2019 would result in 14 students gaining bus eligibility and 5 students losing bus eligibility."

CONCERN: Availability of Breakfast /School Lunch Association Programs at Mobile

RESPONSE: Breakfast is available five (5) days a week for all students at MCHS. The cafeteria is contracted through Chartwells, which is accessible to all students. The administration at MCHS is currently exploring the scheduling options for lunch given a new configuration, but no final decisions have been made to date.

CONCERN: Inadequate Outdoor Play Space at Mobile

RESPONSE: MCHS has a large sports field for both structured and unstructured play.

CONCERN: Safety of Drinking Water at Mobile Central High School

RESPONSE: The Provincial Government, (through Service NL) has advised the District and the school community that the drinking water at MCHS meets provincial and national drinking water standards. In addition, significant improvements were made to the school's well during construction of the extension at MCHS.



CONCERN: Amenities (e.g., Fountains, Toilets) to Accommodate Smaller Students

RESPONSE: Amenities at both SBE and MCHS are installed according to accessibility legislation and, as such, fountains are at the designated height. Similarly, toilets are standard height, like those in a common household.

CONCERN: Impact on Teacher Allocations

Response: As noted in the School Review Information Booklet, available on the Mobile School Review Process website, [linked here](#); “Preliminary staffing analysis for 2019-20 shows an allocation of 20.25 teaching units at St. Bernard’s Elementary and 19.50 units at Mobile Central High, for a combined total of 39.75 teaching units. The move of Grade 5 to Mobile Central High would result in an allocation of 17.50 teaching units at St. Bernard’s Elementary and 22.25 teaching units at Mobile Central High, for a combined total of 39.75 teaching units. There is therefore no net change in the total number of teaching units allocated to this system in 2019-20”.

CONCERN: Impact on Combined Grades/Multi-Age Classrooms

RESPONSE: The proposed move of Grade 5 SBE students to MCHS will not eliminate the possibility of combined grades. Combined grades will depend on student enrolment and class caps, as set by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

CONCERN: Challenge Accessing Mobile Gym Time (Exacerbated if Grade 5s Added)

RESPONSE: There is ample space/time to accommodate Grade 5-12 curricular programming at the MCHS gymnasium. MCHS also has an active and vibrant co-curricular program, which does make scheduling and availability a challenge. Like any school in this situation, priorities would be established and schedules created that provide balanced access to school resources. Other schools with this challenge explore community resources and partnerships which is something MCHS would do as well. Sharing gymnasium space with SBE is an example of a possibility.

CONCERN: Music/Sports Programs for Younger Students

RESPONSE: All schools work to provide active and dynamic programs for all of their students. This would be true for both SBE and MCHS, if their configurations were to change. Specialist allocations are based on a school’s total enrolment and programming needs. Programming decisions made at a school level, which typically depends on individual teachers’ skill sets and availability.



CONCERN: How Would St. Bernard's Space Be Repurposed (e.g., Library, Washrooms)?

RESPONSE: Plans are underway to facilitate changes to the distribution of students within St. Bernard's with the scheduled move of Grade 6 classes in 2019-20. Once the Grade 6 students attend MCHS, the library space will be reinstated for its intended purpose. The District also has a standing capital request to the Provincial Government for an expansion to the washroom facilities at St. Bernard's. However, in moving the Grade 6 students, there will be a reduced population and lower demand for washroom spaces. As current projections still reflect continued growth in the area, consideration must be given to maintaining classroom space should an expanding K-5 population require it. If there is a decision to move both Grade 5 and Grade 6 classes to Mobile in 2019-20, there would be more options to repurpose available space at St. Bernard's.

CONCERN: MCHS Cafeteria Capacity/Lunchtime Scheduling

RESPONSE: The school is currently exploring the scheduling options for lunch given a new grade configuration. The administration has options to decide the number of lunch periods it may use as well as the grades who will attend to specific lunch periods.

CONCERN: Alleged Drug Issues at MCHS. Police Investigating at School?

RESPONSE: It is the experience of the school administration and District staff that this has no basis in fact. While, in recent years, the school has encountered a few instances of students experimenting with controlled substances, there have been no concerns raised with the administration from staff or parents and no first-hand experience this year at MCHS. Additionally, police have not been engaged with the school to address drug issues. In fact, as part of their educational experience, MCHS administration works with the local RCMP to provide proactive presentations to the school population to encourage drug abuse awareness and resistance. Ferryland RCMP recently completed a round of such presentations at the school.

CONCERN: How Would MCHS Benefit by Grade 5s Moving?

RESPONSE: There would be no specific advantage or disadvantage to MCHS in either of the grade configuration models. MCHS has space as a result of the recent renovation to accommodate additional students.



D. NEXT STEPS

The District will analyze the information and results of the survey to understand any additional considerations.

On April 13, 2019, at a public meeting of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School Board, Trustees will vote on whether the Grade 5 students currently configured for St. Bernard's Elementary will be moved to Mobile Central High School for the 2019-2020 school year.

