



***Highland Consolidated Middle School
Response to Impact Assessment Report
January, 2014***

Executive Summary

In September, 2013 the Study Committee for Highland Consolidated Middle School was presented with an Impact Assessment Report by the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. This report asked the Study Committee to consider the option of moving the students from Highland Consolidated Middle School to Dr. W. A. MacLeod Elementary School in Riverton. This school would in turn become a P-8 school.

After much consideration, the committee decided to accept the recommendation put forth by the Board to move the students from Highland Consolidated to Dr. W. A. Macleod thereby making it a P-8 school with the understanding that suitable additions and alterations will be completed at MacLeod in order to facilitate middle school programs. If these additions and alterations cannot be completed, the committee would like the required remediation completed at Highland Consolidated and the students returned there as soon as possible. Additions and alterations as considered necessary by the committee are identified further on in this report.

Impact Assessment Review Committee Members

Nancy Doyle
Gina Fagan (chair)
Tanya Kelly
Alanna MacDonald
Rev. Charles McPherson
Bernice Muise
Angela Murphy
Beth Williston

Dave Fulton (Facilitator)

Committee Meetings

September 19, 2013
October 3, 2013
October 10, 2013
November 14, 2013 – Public Meeting
November 25, 2013
December 9, 2013

Overview

The committee would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to respond to the *Impact Assessment Report* concerning the options for Highland Consolidated Middle School.

As you will see through this response, the reaction to the move has been met with mixed emotions and with concern with respect to several issues, with the most prevalent being the loss of space and amenities, which contribute to both a positive school climate and a successful “middle school experience” for the students at the school.

At the site in Westville, students had many options for activities that are no longer available. For instance, during the lunch hour, students had the option to go off-site to purchase their lunch and to get some exercise; partake in daily intramurals; go to the band and/or music room; play soccer on the field outdoors; play basketball using the outdoor equipment; go to the library; go to the fitness centre, or walk home. Currently, students go outside and have a limited space for play available to them, with limited equipment. The library is available two times per week, there is no music room, and students are not permitted to leave school property due to its rural location.

Currently, all academic needs are being met; however space limits what is offered to students, especially those who are required to serve in school suspensions, who need to work in the Learning Centre, or for those with special needs. There is also no space available to do any science experiments outside of the classroom, as there is no lab facility.

There are many concerns with respect to the Physical Education program. The proximity to the local rink and track made it possible for our athletes to walk to practice and for gym classes to be held there occasionally. In addition, the gym was available for school use at any time, both during the day and in the evening. Currently, gym space is limited, as both elementary and middle school teams have difficulty scheduling practices and games, due to the configuration of the gym equipment (elementary standard) and its use. Furthermore, there was a Fitness Centre at the former site that was used daily by individuals and classes.

Now that time has elapsed since the move from the original site, people have had time to reflect on what the school had to offer before the move and what it currently offers. There is grave concern that the lack of amenities is depriving the students of our school from experiencing what other schools in the area can offer.

Action Taken by Committee

Once the committee was struck, members were asked to read the *Impact Assessment Report* carefully and highlight any concerns. (These concerns are noted below.) It was then decided that the Public Meeting would be held in order to give stakeholders an opportunity to respond to the report.

After the Public Meeting, the current staff members were asked about their feelings with respect to the report. The staff overwhelmingly stated that if the remediation to the site in Westville were completed, they would prefer to go back to that building, rather than remain at Dr. WA MacLeod.

This information was conveyed to the committee and it was decided that a letter would be sent to the parents/caregivers of the current Grade 7 students, as well as those in all of the grade levels at the three feeder schools: Dr. WA MacLeod, GR Saunders, and Walter Duggan Consolidated. The letter posed the following question, "*Should the SAC consider the option of returning to the Highland Consolidated Middle School site in Westville?*" They could answer either "yes" or "no" and had an opportunity to make comments.

There were approximately 250 responses received and 70% of them responded by answering "yes." The majority of the comments centered around the lack of space at the present location, no windows, students having the "middle school experience", issues with the gym, and extra-curricular activities. Those answering "no" were concerned that they did not want their child to attend a building that may pose a health risk to their child or that it would be a waste of money to send the students back to that site.

After much consideration, the committee decided to accept the recommendation put forth by the Board to remain at Dr. WA MacLeod, thereby making it a P-8 school. However, this decision is based on the receipt of the monies from the government from the Capital Construction Funding budget. If this were not to happen, the committee would like the required remediation at the former site to take place and students return there as soon as possible.

The committee has also noted several areas of concern with respect to the capital improvements. These concerns and the rationale behind them can be found at the end of this document.

Concerns expressed regarding current facility
(By Committee)

- Windows that were scheduled to be installed by September 2013 were not completed.
- Space in hallways very limited during high traffic times, i.e. Changing classes, recess, lunch, after school.
- Reduced time in gym due to lack of space (currently 120 minutes/cycle; formerly 150 minutes/week.) This applies to elementary students as well.
- Not able to host sporting events in gym, due to improper equipment for middle school students.
- Limited storage available for office supplies, gym equipment, Tech Ed equipment.
- No fitness centre.
- No space for Science laboratory.
- Limited space and equipment in computer room.
- No music room for some instrumental band classes – currently being held in cafeteria.
- No outside sports' equipment for student use at lunch.
- No space available for meetings with parents/caregivers, outside agencies, etc. for either Highland or Dr. WA MacLeod.

Concerns Expressed **(At Public Meeting)**

Approximately 20 people attended the Public Meeting, which was held on Thursday, November 14, 2013.

- lack of windows and poor air circulation
- not able to drink the water at Dr. WA MacLeod
- value of the school in the Westville community
- feeling that decision has already been made purely for fiscal reasons
- students disadvantaged due to lack of amenities
- gym not large enough to accommodate P-8 school
- even with the renovations, school would not have all that the site in Westville had to offer

Additions and Alterations Considerations

The committee has reviewed the proposed Additions and Alterations and has some other items which it feels should be included as well, in order for the students and staff at Highland Consolidated Middle School and Dr. WA MacLeod Elementary to have the same amenities and opportunities as those at other P – 8 schools in the area.

The following is the list and the rationale behind each item:

Classroom to serve as Fitness Centre

- Over a number of years, students and staff at Highland Consolidated worked very diligently to raise money to buy equipment for a Fitness Centre, which still remains at the site in Westville. This equipment was used for students to improve their cardio fitness and help them gain upper body strength. It was also used for special needs students who required some time out of the classroom to expend energy.
- Given the size of the gymnasium at the school, this Fitness Centre could also be used for gym classes, offering students more time for physical activity.

Student Services Rooms

- Several special needs students in both the elementary and middle school requires a quiet area where they can go to work independently, have a time out, or control their impulses. At the present time, there is no such space available and students in the building are sometimes required to remain in their classrooms while these students are managed in common areas. A more private area would be beneficial to these students.

Conference Room

- Currently, there is no private space available to meet with parents/caregivers or outside agencies, when a large group of people is involved. These meetings are held in a classroom and there are often distractions there, especially during the lunch hour. It would be more beneficial to have a dedicated room where these types of meetings could take place, alleviating unnecessary distractions.

Outside Play area

- When the middle school students go out for their lunch break, there is nothing available for them to do with respect to physical activity. There is no area where basketball hoops could be placed, or any other area where students could do some other sort of activity. The students are only able to access a small portion of the field and on it there is minimal playground equipment.

Track around Soccer Field

- Many students from Highland Consolidated participate in both Cross Country and Track and Field events. Since the move to Dr. WA MacLeod, students participating in these events have had to practice off-site. Arrangements for an area for them to practice are sometimes difficult for the coaches to secure and it also necessitates them (coaches) to have to bring the equipment to the site.

We respectfully ask that you consider these additional requests.