

GCA Education Committee Input to CGOOS Accommodation Working Committee – May 9/11

On April 26th, two possible scenarios to provide long-term relief of accommodation pressures in the Centretown, Glebe and Old Ottawa South communities were presented by OCDSB Staff. Feedback was solicited from each of the schools and community groups participating in the CGOOS Accommodation Working Committee.

The role of the GCA Education Committee is to provide a forum for all schools in and around the Glebe to discuss common issues affecting schools, students and families in the Glebe. Our input to the Accommodation Committee will, therefore, be community based, not focussed on the specifics for any one school, and broad in scope.

In analysing the scenarios presented by the OCDSB, we returned to the Community Priorities identified at the November 4th/10 Community Education Forum hosted by the GCA Education Committee. Glashan, First Ave, Hopewell, Mutchmor, Corpus Christi, Lady Evelyn, Franco-Jeunesse and GCI were represented along with several pre-schools and daycares, and the area Trustees.

The Community Priorities identified at that session are:

1. Students should have access to the programs they need within their community
2. Schools should not be overcrowded to the point where student learning is compromised.
3. The English program should be maintained in all communities.
4. If changes to our schools are required to resolve accommodation issues, the least disruptive option should be considered first.

After reflecting on the proposed scenarios in light of these community priorities, the GCA Education Committee offers the following comments/questions:

- The definition of “community” needs further discussion. The Glebe has a strong physical definition with a clear sense of community and is fairly self-contained with parks, schools, community centre, and stores all within walking distance. What is the impact of moving children out of that community to attend school in another area of the city?
- Many students participate in programs at the Glebe Community Centre. How will they be transported to the GCC if they are attending school out of the area? What would be the impact for community programming and after school care for kids redirected to schools outside the Glebe as well as students who would come to a Glebe school but live outside the area?

- What level of overcrowding might be acceptable to schools? At what level of overcrowding is learning compromised?
- Could additional space within the Glebe be added by construction at Mutchmor? Has funding from various provincial Heritage organizations been considered to help offset costs?
- With Lansdowne Park construction expected in the next couple of years and 11,000 trucks travelling on Bank St, how will the safety of students using the same roadway be ensured?
- The criteria for the scenarios seem to focus on establishing a consistent occupancy rate for all schools which results in considerable disruption with many students travelling up and down Bank St daily. Are there other scenarios that keep more of our students in the Glebe community?
- The Board has advised that many scenarios were prepared and the two Board preferred one have been presented. Further discussion of the criteria used to determine which scenarios are preferred from the Board point of view is needed as well as a wider range of options available for comparison purposes. Which of the scenarios most closely matches the community priorities identified at the GCA Forum?

In an email dated May 6/11 from Co-Chair of the CGOOS Working committee (Gisele Durocher) several other questions were posed. Those that have not been covered above are documented here for re-inforcement of the need for discussion of these items:

What does strong programming mean?

The first scenario has created distinct English and French schools. What are the studies in student success to indicate that this model works better. Are children more likely to succeed in a dual track or triple track school setting offering both immersion and English or in a straight immersion or straight English setting?

The second scenario creates more movement between school divisions. Has this been done at other schools? Is there any evidence to support this - with regards to student success? When is the best transition point for students?

Where is the best place for middle French immersion? What are the current boundaries for this program and what is the impact of merging the boundaries? Should mfi school catchments outside of our area be part of the conversation? Have any studies been done to show the impact of mfi on efi. When an mfi program moves into an efi neighbourhood or school, do the efi numbers decrease?

Where is the best place for the gifted program? What should be considered in the location of a specialized program of this nature? Should we be inviting SEAC or ABC to represent this group?

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on behalf of the GCA Education Committee to these important deliberations.

Sharon Chartier

GCA Education Committee representative on CGOOS Accommodation Working Committee