

EASTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PLAN
~~ Executive Summary ~~

Dr. Alex (Sandy) MacDonald
Superintendent of Education
January 7, 2009



Eastern School District Mission Statement

The Eastern School District is committed to excellence in education. In partnership with the community, we will provide a safe and caring learning environment in which all students have the opportunity to reach their potential and to face the future with confidence.

Executive Summary

In September 2008, the Eastern School District (ESD) was asked by the Prince Edward Island Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to complete a School Organizational Plan (SOP) and forward it to the Department by December 31, 2008. This request was prompted by the findings of the provincial enrollment analysis entitled, *Schools for Tomorrow: Building and Sustaining High Quality Education Programs* (Ascent Group 2008). This report indicated that the PEI public school system has dropped almost 10,000 students (-32%) since 1970. In the ESD alone, twenty of our elementary schools have lost between 30% and 50% of students in the past decade. Projections indicate that the trend will continue. Fourteen of our 20 schools in Kings County are projected to lose a further 25% or more of their students in the next decade. Similarly, 21 of 23 Queens County schools are projected to lose students during this period.

The impact on ESD schools has been significant. In our smallest schools, ten of which have 90 or fewer students, we are struggling to provide comprehensive programming in areas such as physical education, French, music, and resource-based learning (library). We are also having difficulty providing comprehensive student support services in areas such as guidance, special education/resource and Reading Recovery®. As well, our teachers in these schools, most of whom are teaching split classes, often do not have the opportunity to collaborate with others who teach the same grade/subject areas. We now know that this type of collaboration is a vital component of effective teaching, the absence of which compromises students' achievement.

As a result, it is recommended that we close eleven of our smallest schools, effective June 2009. These include Dundas Consolidated, Eastern Kings Consolidated, Fortune Consolidated, Georgetown Elementary, Grand Tracadie Elementary, Parkdale Elementary, Rollo Bay Consolidated, St. Jean Elementary, St. Peter's Consolidated, St. Teresa's Consolidated, and Tracadie Cross Consolidated Schools. We believe that by reorganizing the just over 700 students directly affected into larger groups, we will be able to provide more comprehensive programming and broader student support services. It will also mean that our teachers will have many more opportunities to collaborate. This decision will result in increased enrollments in Cardigan Consolidated, L.M. Montgomery Elementary, Montague Intermediate, Morell Consolidated, Mt. Stewart Consolidated, Prince Street Elementary, Souris Consolidated, Souris Regional High and West Kent Elementary Schools.

This School Organization Plan will be made public in January of 2009. The trustees of the Eastern School District will then seek public input for a ninety-day period. By May 31, 2009 at the latest, the ESD Board will forward its recommendations to the government of Prince Edward Island. The final decision regarding school closures rests with the Provincial Government.

It is further recommended that a new K-12 facility be created in Souris and a new elementary school be constructed adjacent to Glen Stewart. It is also recommended that a number of schools be rezoned. Glen Stewart Elementary and West Royalty Elementary will need to be rezoned and Westwood Primary renovated to accommodate the incoming kindergarten students. Birchwood Intermediate, Donagh Regional and Stonepark Intermediate should be rezoned to better balance the student population in each facility, and Cardigan Consolidated grade 7 and 8 students and Souris Consolidated grade 8 students will be rezoned to Montague Intermediate and Souris Regional respectively. These rezonings will take effect in September 2010. A rezoning report will be forwarded to the Board by October 15, 2009, with a much more detailed report to follow by no later than January 31, 2010. This will be followed by six weeks of public consultations. The final decision rests with the Eastern School District.

Over the past thirty-five years, the manner in which schools in the Eastern School District have been organized has changed very little. We have now been overtaken by one of the most significant demographic changes in Prince Edward Island history. In the years ahead, we will continue to see serious declines in student enrollment. The impact on students and teachers has been significant and, if the status quo is maintained, students' achievement will be compromised. The recommendations to close eleven schools and to rezone others are made so this situation can be addressed. By reorganizing schools in this manner, student programs and services can be improved and teachers will have the opportunity they need to collaborate broadly and deeply with their peers.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~