
Prepared for:

**River East Transcona
School Division**

Senior 1 Location Study

***FINAL REPORT
YEAR 3***

Prepared by:



May 2003

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INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In June 2000, the Board of Trustees of the River East School Division No. 9 began a process to determine the most appropriate placement for Senior 1 students in the River East School Division. A Study Committee was struck to examine all relevant factors and information related to the location of Senior 1 students.

Since that time, two reports have been presented to the Board of Trustees. The first report, in June 2001, recommended the placement of Senior 1 students in the high school setting and, further recommended that the Committee continue its work. The second report, submitted to the Board in May 2002, recommended the following:

1. The Board accept the findings of the Committee that the most appropriate grade groupings for the River East School Division are kindergarten to Grade 5 for elementary (early years) schools, Grades 6 to 8 for middle schools (middle years), and Senior 1 to Senior 4 for high schools (senior years).
2. The Board approve that the Location Study Committee continue their work, moving to the phase of exploring the actual impact of reconfiguration and developing options regarding the implications for specific schools and communities, including (but not limited to) school configurations of K-5, 6-8, K-8, and S1-S4. A consultation strategy that addresses identified issues will need to be developed as part of the Committee's work.
3. The River East School Division No. 9 prepare a report to the Public Schools Finance Board by October 2002, which explores the facilities throughout the newly amalgamated school division and outlines a facilities request to support the proposed school/grade configurations.
4. The Board immediately release a communication to the public sharing the findings of the Location Study Committee's work and the Board's resolution of the Committee's recommendations.

In Year 3, the Senior 1 Location Study Committee continued its work in order to address the recommendations from Year 2. Given a number of factors, including issues related to amalgamation and advice from Public Schools Finance Board (PSFB), the timing of a submission to PSFB was postponed. This submission will now follow the report of the Year 3 Senior 1 Location Study Committee.

This document represents the third formal report of the Study Committee. The report has been prepared by Linda E. Lee (Proactive Information Services Inc.) on behalf of, and in consultation with, the Senior 1 Location Study Committee.

B. What are the Issues?

In recent curriculum documents, the provincial government (Manitoba Education and Youth) has identified early years (kindergarten to Grade 4), middle years (Grades 5 to 8), and senior years (Grades 9 to 12, now known as Senior 1 to Senior 4). Many schools across the province now place students according to these groupings. In fact, the Transcona area of the River East Transcona School Division places students in an early, middle, and senior years configuration, with Senior 1 students already located in the high school setting.

In the first year of the Location Study, the Board accepted the recommendation that the high school setting was the most appropriate place for Senior 1 students. In the second year (Phase 2 of the Study), the Board accepted the recommendation regarding the configuration of early, middle, and senior years, as previously discussed. (Reports from Phase 1 and Phase 2 are available on the school division web-site www.retsd.mb.ca.)

In the third year (Phase 3), the Committee was asked to explore the physical options for making the recommendations of Phases 1 and 2 a reality.

SENIOR 1 LOCATION STUDY- PHASE 3

A. Study Committee Composition

In its third year, the broad-based Committee was comprised of 20 members: four members of the Board of Trustees for the River East Transcona School Division, five parents, two members of the Superintendent's Department, four school administrators (RETAC), four teachers (RETTA), and an outside consultant (Proactive Information Services Inc.) who provided technical and consultative support.

In addition, the Communications and Research Officer for the River East Transcona School Division provided extensive support by providing enrollment projections and data related to the options discussed by the Committee.

B. Committee Activity – Phase 3

The Senior 1 Location Study Committee met nine times during the third year of its mandate. The following is a listing of Committee activity:

- ▲ reviewed options and related data, including enrollment projections, catchment boundaries, and architect's recommendations;
- ▲ identified issues relating to options and their implementation;
- ▲ determined which were viable options;
- ▲ made decisions on how to best communicate with the public and outlined an inclusive consultation process;
- ▲ reviewed the public brochure and other communication vehicles;
- ▲ participated in the public consultation process as individual Committee member observers and resource people;
- ▲ consulted with school staff at all levels;

- ▲ revised the findings of the Phase 3 consultation process and developed draft recommendations; and,
- ▲ reviewed the report prepared for the Board of Trustees and suggested appropriate revisions.

C. Results of Committee Activity – Phase 3

1. Definition of Options

The Committee participated in an extensive process which led to articulating and examining four possible solutions.

1. Distribute the enrollment overflow through the amalgamated Transcona schools.
2. Expand the existing high schools in the River East area.
3. Convert an existing school to a high school and absorb the students who would have originally attended the converted school through other neighbouring schools.
4. Construct a new high school.

The Committee studied these four possible solutions in depth, including various scenarios within each. In the final analysis, two viable options remained and formed the basis for the consultation process:

- ▲ **Option 1:** Converting Chief Peguis Junior High into a high school, with changes in catchment and grade configuration to Maple Leaf School, John Pritchard School, John Henderson Junior High École John-Henderson, Emerson Elementary, Princess Margaret School, and Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton School.
- ▲ **Option 2:** Building a new high school in the northern part of the River East area of the division, south of the Perimeter highway.

The following table provides an overview of the options discussed by the Committee, the advantages and disadvantages of each option, and whether it remained a viable choice (Table 1).

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Decision
Distributing Overflow through Transcona Area High Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Uses existing facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Insufficient space available, 400 additional spaces would still be needed ▲ Students would be transported out of their community 	Rejected
Distributing Overflow through Transcona Area Schools - Converting Bernie Wolfe Community School to a High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Facility is suitable for conversion to a high school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Over 350 students would still have to be bussed to other Transcona schools ▲ Significant cost for adding high school quality labs, enclosing open areas, and adding parking ▲ Students would be transported out of their community ▲ Isolated from feeder schools 	Rejected
Expanding the Three Existing River East High Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Kildonan-East Collegiate can accommodate upgrade and addition for additional 300 students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Each high school would be in excess of 1 300 students. Based on the educational literature, the Committee did not believe students would be best served in larger high schools. ▲ Core facilities are undersized at Miles Macdonell and River East Collegiate making additions costly ▲ Outdoor instructional and recreation space would be compromised by building and parking additions 	Rejected
Converting Emerson Elementary to a High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Location in northern part of the division where future need has been identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Core facilities and parking are inadequate, making renovations to existing facility too costly ▲ Building site is too small – does not meet PSFB requirements 	Rejected

Table 1 Possible Options for Housing Senior 1 Students in High Schools			
Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Decision
Converting John Pritchard to a High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Easy access (on a main transportation route with city buses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Renovations to existing facility would be too costly ▲ Core facilities are inadequate ▲ Additional parking would compromise exterior instructional and recreational space 	Rejected
Converting Chief Peguis to River East Collegiate Annex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ No change to River East Collegiate catchment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Size of expanded River East Collegiate (1800-1900 students) would be an issue in terms of best serving student needs ▲ Building cohesive school culture between schools would be difficult ▲ Would create “imbalance” of size between River East high schools, resulting in disproportionate programming and staffing 	Rejected
Converting Chief Peguis to a High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Facility is well suited to conversion to a high school and uses existing buildings ▲ Conversion would be cost effective ▲ Additional building and parking needs would not compromise exterior instructional and recreation space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Proximity to River East Collegiate might be problematic (e.g., vehicle traffic and parking, as well as the possibility of rivalry between the schools) ▲ Would involve changes to the catchment areas of 8 schools, resulting in disruption for students, families, and staff ▲ Does not increase the capacity of the division (no room for growth) 	Viable Option
Constructing a New High School North of Perimeter Highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Addresses area of high growth ▲ Division already owns property on Donald Road ▲ Would increase the capacity of the Division and allow for future growth ▲ Would result in a state of the art facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ PSFB would build a school to house students from north of the Perimeter, resulting in a school for 350-500 students; a size that is not comparable to the other River East Area high schools ▲ Additional spaces would still be needed in schools south of Perimeter highway ▲ Supporting programming in a high school of this size would be an issue 	Rejected

Table 1 Possible Options for Housing Senior 1 Students in High Schools			
Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Decision
Constructing a New High School South of Perimeter Highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Would increase the capacity of the Division and allow for future growth ▲ Would result in a state of the art facility ▲ Least disruptive option for students and families ▲ Logical location given the traditional flow of people (south in the A.M. and north in the P.M.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Land would have to be located and purchased ▲ Appears to be the highest cost option 	Viable Option

A presentation, compiled by the Communications and Research Officer for the River East Transcona School Division, which provides more detail regarding four options and explains the reasons for narrowing the selection to two viable options, is available on the school division web-site www.retsd.mb.ca.

2. Development of the Consultation Process

As previously mentioned, in the third year of the Senior 1 Location Study, the Committee undertook a consultation process with school staffs and parents/community members from the River East area of River East Transcona School Division. The consultation process was similar to that used in the previous two years.

The **key questions** developed for the consultation process were:

- a. What do you like about the options being presented? What do you dislike about the options being presented?
- b. Which option do you prefer and why?
- c. What additional information about these options would you like to have? [For school staff: What additional information do you think would be helpful for parents and students?]

Presentations were made to school administrators regarding the process and the options. These presentations were followed by an information package that was circulated to school administrators in the River East area. Administrators were asked to provide staff with the opportunity to discuss the options. Results were to be forwarded to the Superintendent's Department by April 21, 2003.

To inform the public of the process, a notice was placed in The Herald community newspaper and a brochure was sent home to each family who had a child attending school in the River East area of the division. (See Appendix A for a copy of the communication materials.)

Three community fora were held between March 17th and 20th, 2003 (see Table 1). Consultation sessions with parents/community members began with a presentation outlining the previous years of the Study, the insufficient space to house Senior 1 students in the current River East area high schools, and the possibilities for accommodating Senior 1 students. After presenting some options rejected by the Committee, the presentation focused on the two viable options for housing Senior 1 students in high schools.

Small group discussions regarding both options followed the presentation. Discussion surrounded the three main study questions developed for the consultation. The small group discussions were facilitated by the consultant and two other staff members from Proactive Information Services Inc., with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, the Communications and Research Officer, and other Committee members in attendance as observers and resource people.

At the end of the small group discussions participants were given an opportunity to complete an individual response form and mail it back to Proactive Information Services Inc. in an addressed, postage-paid envelope. This gave participants a further chance for input, if they so desired.

Table 2 Consultation Activities 2003		
Group	Participation	Date
Community Fora: 3 Sessions (large group introduction followed by facilitated discussion)	Session 1: River East Collegiate: approximately 90 attendees at large group presentation; 54 participants in small group discussions Session 2: Miles MacDonnell Collegiate: 29 participants Session 3: Kildonan-East Collegiate: 20 participants Total Participants = 139 attendees (approximate)	March 17, 2003 March 19, 2003 March 20, 2003
Individual Community Response Forms	Total Forms Received = 13	March, 2003
School Staff Discussions	Written feedback from consultations in 14 schools was received: seven elementary, four junior high, and three high schools. Different programs are represented, including English, Immersion, bilingual, and technical/vocational programs.	March to April, 2003

3. Results of the Consultation Process

A total of 103 community members participated in small group discussions at the three community fora. Thirty-two (32) participants preferred Option 1 (Converting Chief Peguis Junior High to a high school), while 71 preferred Option 2 (building a new high school). It should be noted that some people who chose the conversion option did so because they were not convinced a new school could gain PSFB approval.

Of the 14 schools responding, the majority preferred the option of building a new school. Six of 11 elementary and junior high schools favoured the conversion option, while staff in two high schools preferred the construction of a new facility. Staff in the third high school did not express a preference.¹ Again, some staff were sceptical that building a new school was a really a possibility.

¹ It is apparent from the written feedback that staff discussions included options other than those recommended by the Committee. These options included the conversion of Chief Peguis to an annex of River East Collegiate, the conversion of Emerson Elementary, and construction of a high school north of the Perimeter. It is difficult to determine to what extent the introduction of these other options influenced staff decisions regarding their preference for Committee Option 1 or Option 2 and whether this dynamic should be considered a limitation.

For detail on community responses, please see Appendix B. This appendix includes both the results of the small group discussions and the 13 mail-in responses that were received. Detail on staff responses is found in Appendix C.

Key consultation findings include the following:

- ▲ Building a **new school** was viewed as **less disruptive** for students and families, both during construction and during the transition year. As stated by one community member, this option *“involved less [sic] compromises.”*
- ▲ The **conversion of Chief Peguis** was the preferred option of some staff at elementary and junior high schools because it was viewed as **cost effective** and the best use of existing facilities.
- ▲ **Concerns about Chief Peguis** as a fourth high school centred around its **proximity to River East Collegiate**. Unhealthy rivalry between the two schools and increased traffic congestion were two issues raised by participants in the consultation process.
- ▲ The construction of a **new facility** was perceived as a preferable long-term solution, by providing more room for growth and **increasing the capacity** of the division. The significant majority of community members and many staff expressed support for the construction of a new, state of the art facility as preferable to the conversion of an existing structure. In addition, although initial capital costs may be higher for this option, it may save money in the future, particularly with ever increasing building costs.
- ▲ Although the estimated initial **costs** of a new building may be higher than renovating an existing structure, ‘hidden costs’ of refurbishment may make costs similar. More information about the costs involved in both options was often requested.
- ▲ Careful **attention** needs to be **paid to the programming** at the new high school, regardless of whether this is a renovated Chief Peguis or a new facility. A ‘magnet,’ something to attract students to the new school was viewed as important. Some community members and staff suggested fine art or performing arts programming as a focus, while some staff further suggested the possibility of a French Immersion

centre. High school staff expressed concern that programs will be “removed” from current facilities and displaced to a new high school.

- ▲ There is a **need for continued and targeted information** to be provided staff and community members. In addition to information regarding the conversion of Chief Peguis or the construction of a new high school, community members and staff require information regarding how to access the research and decisions made during the first two years of the Senior 1 Location Study. Specifically, they would like to know more about costs, the programming that might be available in each school, timelines for implementation, transportation implications, the location of a possible new school, revision to catchment areas, and staff selection for a fourth high school. Particular attention should be paid to informing staff of the recommendations made in Phases 1 and 2, while parents will need more information about the philosophy and implications of Middle Years schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

After an extensive three year process of study and consultation, the Senior 1 Location Study Committee unanimously supports the option of building a new high school in the River East Transcona School Division.

Specifically, the Senior 1 Location Study Committee recommends to the Board of Trustees that the Board:

1. Endorse a submission to the Public Schools Finance Board, prior to the end of the school year, that supports building a new high school as the division's emphatically preferred option and presents the compelling reasons for this conclusion.
2. Approve the continued work of the Senior 1 Location Study Committee in recognition that there will need to be further analysis concerning the effects of reconfiguration and, contingent upon the decision of the Public Schools Finance Board, there will need to be analysis, regarding the impact on specific schools and their communities.
3. Approve the development of a plan, involving the high schools and junior high schools, that addresses both issues of transition to high school and the implementation of Middle Years schools, including attention to further communication with parents, community, and school staff regarding Middle Years education.
4. Communicate to all constituent groups, prior to the end of the school year, the findings of the Location Study Committee's work and the Board's resolution of the Committee's recommendations.