



School Closure Report

Maitland District Elementary

River John Consolidated School

Wentworth Consolidated Elementary

Presented to:

Committee-of-the-Whole

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board

March 2, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Maitland District Elementary (Grade Primary to Grade 6), River John Consolidated School (Grade Primary to Grade 9) and Wentworth Consolidated Elementary (Grade Primary to Grade 6) were permanently closed by the Chignecto-Central Regional School on June 30, 2015.

Students were enrolled in identified receiving schools according to student civic address as new school boundaries were identified. Students and their parents / guardians were informed of their receiving school in the spring of 2015.

Independent student transfers according to CCRSB Policy *#ES-G-03 Student Transfer* did occur. These students are not included in this report.

In September 2016, 121 students of the permanently closed schools began attending the following 11 schools:

Maitland District Elementary students to:

- Cobequid District (Grade Primary to Grade 6) / 10 students
- Hilden Elementary (Grade Primary to Grade 6) / 1 student
- Kennetcook District (Grade Primary to Grade 6) / 10 students
- Redcliff Middle School (Grade 5 to Grade 7) / 1 student

River John Consolidated School students to:

- North Colchester High School (Grade 7 to Grade 12) / 14 students
- Northumberland Regional High School (Grade 9 to Grade 12) / 2 students
- Scotsburn Elementary School (Grade Primary to Grade 6) / 14 students
- West Pictou Consolidated (Grade Primary to Grade 8) / 17 students
- Tatmagouche Elementary (Grade Primary to Grade 6) / 24 students

Wentworth Consolidated students to:

- Cyrus Eaton Elementary (Grade Primary to Grade 6) / 19 students
- Oxford Regional Education Centre (Grade Primary to Grade 12) / 5 students
- Tatmagouche Elementary (Grade Primary to Grade 6) / 4 students

The *Education Act and Regulations Under the Education Act* state that the principal of the school receiving students of a permanently closed school shall provide a report to the school board of their new students' educational and social progress and adjustment to their new school by December 31 in the calendar year in which the school was permanently closed (Permanent closing of schools, 16 (1)(f)(i)(ii)(iii)).

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Policy and Administrative Guidelines (*#B-01 School Closure*) provide the procedures to apply when a school is being considered for possible closure or is closed, including a post-closure report by the receiving principal.

PROCESS

Principals of the receiving schools were provided a template (Appendix A, page 11) that contained questions related to student academic progress, social / emotional adjustment, involvement in school activities and any overall observations related to the students new to their school due to the three school closures.

Principals were instructed to avoid providing individual students identifiers; therefore, the comments included in this report are general in nature. The director of education services contacted individual principals where additional information for the purposes of clarity in this report was required.

Rather than individual reports from principals of the 11 receiving schools, information has been collated into a single report for consideration by the Education Services Committee (March 1/16) and the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board (March 2/16)

In addition to reports from principals, report card results of students that moved schools, including the 'Learner Profile', were examined with the expectation that possible signs of a negative, neutral or positive transition experience would be documented by the students' teacher(s) or show in academic progress. Report cards from November 2014 (pre-transition) to November 2015 (post-transition) were examined.

Additional information in this report includes student attendance, student conduct, and Provincial Assessment results.

Comments were solicited from the CCRSB Transportation Division regarding student experiences on the bus, noteworthy incidents or other significant matters yet to be satisfactorily resolved.

FINDINGS

General Comments

Over the course of June, through to the fall of 2015, the director of education services and family of schools supervisors discussed the transition and progress of students enrolled in the receiving schools, including principal communication with the students and their parents / guardians. Through these conversations, no significant concerns were identified as requiring attention other than those managed by the school principal.

The following general statements are from the 11 official *Principal School Closure Report* documents and are organized under the name of the sending school.

Maitland District Elementary

Students from Maitland District Elementary began to attend Cobequid District, Hilden Elementary, Redcliff Middle School or Kennetcook District School in September 2015.

Receiving principals report that students from Maitland District Elementary have become accustomed to school routines and classroom structures.

As part of the transition process, student records were examined to ensure continuity of supports and programming. Where identified, supports have continued from previous years.

Students have formed friendships and have positive interactions with staff on a daily basis. One principal reports there have been no incidents of a student going to the school office upset or displaying emotional or social distress about their new surroundings, classmates or staff at the receiving school.

Many students stay for after-school programs and parents have been extremely supportive and involved.

It is apparent staff at the receiving schools were very mindful of the possible pressures of a transition and change in schools, including the longer bus ride, a larger class and school population or just being the “new kid” in the class. This attention to the social and emotional well-being of students has been noted across all principal reports.

The family of schools supervisor was identified as being very supportive of the schools transition work and provided guidance in the development of the transition and communication plans.

River John Consolidated School

Students from River John Consolidated School began to attend North Colchester High School, Northumberland Regional High School, Scotsburn Elementary, Tatamagouche Elementary School or West Pictou Consolidated.

Principals at the receiving schools report that, overall, students have adjusted to their receiving schools.

As identified in a few of the principal reports, some students were reluctant and appeared shy at first, but soon made friends and have settled in to school routines.

Most students have taken advantage of opportunities for participation in school activities.

School staff recognized this transition would have been difficult for some students and monitored for possible signs of anxiety or stress. Additionally, some staff members of closing schools were assigned to the receiving school location and they too are pleased with the transition for both themselves and the students.

There is a stated concern about the increased student case load on the program support teacher in one of the receiving schools. The matter was resolved through the usual program planning team process and prioritizing student support where required. The family student services consultant provided support during this adjustment. Students that were struggling with some academic expectations or unacceptable behaviours continued to do so; guidance support, educational assistant and program support time are in place and progress has been noted.

One receiving principal stated that the extra technology required due to the influx of students was slow arriving; however, it is now in place.

A notable success story is that a student who previously did not regularly attend school is now regularly attending at the receiving school.

One receiving principal identified some students were initially having difficulty adjusting to a single-graded classroom rather than the multi-grade classroom from the sending school. Staff are monitoring students and providing assistance where required. It has been noted students are increasingly seeking help from staff.

Principals have identified that some students are not at expected levels of achievement in English language arts or mathematics. As time progresses, the students are adjusting and academic progress is improving. Teachers are monitoring students and providing supports as required.

Wentworth Consolidated Elementary

Students from Wentworth Consolidated Elementary began to attend Cyrus Eaton Elementary, Oxford Regional Education Centre or Tatatmagouche Elementary in September 2015.

Receiving principals report that academic progress has been comparable to other students in the school and students are working hard and successfully achieving. Students are making progress at expected rates and levels. Students that did demonstrate slightly lower than expected reading levels for their grade have received the necessary supports.

Socially, students have adjusted well to the receiving schools. Staff were particularly attentive to student social transition and clearly concentrated on this aspect of student experience. Staff regularly discussed students moving from one school culture to another and were attuned to possible issues that might arise because of this change. Where individual students expressed unacceptable behaviours, staff response was considerate and consistent, and restorative approaches were used. The unacceptable behaviours were minor and were seen as normal, with all things considered. Some of the unacceptable behaviours include not taking turns, adapting to new school rules and play behaviour which is not in line with the new school rules.

Many of the students that transitioned are involved in extra-curricular activities and have adjusted to their new classes and peer groups.

Several students were described as shy and reluctant to participate at first, but now participate and contribute regularly to class discussions and activities. Several comments are made in the reports that it is difficult to point out students that have transitioned from a school that was closed, that the students have seamlessly become part of their current school and are happy.

In one principal report, there were some issues identified regarding student anxiety at the new location. Supports were put in place, including increased communication with home, and the matter appears resolved. Monitoring continues.

The adjustment to the new school has been fairly uneventful and teachers and other staff have noticed new friendships and relationships have developed. Students are participating in sports teams, activities and academic clubs. It is difficult to notice any concerns regarding emotional and social adjustments for the students.

Some adjustments were required for two students that were not getting to the bus pick-up in time, but the principal notes it is difficult to comment without a reference to student tardiness in previous years. This appears to be more of a practical matter, rather than an emotional one or related directly to a change in schools.

Student Report Cards

Individual report cards of the students moving schools in September 2015 were examined, in particular, mathematics and English language arts progress and the 'Learner Profile'. Results are expressed in summary form so that individual students cannot be identified.

Report Cards from November 2014 (pre-transition) to November 2015 (post- transition) were compared.

Learner Profile

The Learner Profile of the student report card describes student behaviour and social development, such as accepting responsibility, use of time, work habits, completion of school work, and conflict resolution, for example.

Maitland District Elementary

For Maitland students, all but one student either maintained or improved on their Learner Profile.

River John Consolidated School

All but two River John students either maintained, or improved on their Learner Profile.

Wentworth Consolidated Elementary

All Wentworth students maintained or improved on their Learner Profile evaluation.

All students continue to be monitored.

Academic Progress

This portion of the student report, describes the student's academic progress.

It is important to note that in mathematics, for students enrolled in grades Primary to 3, a new curriculum was introduced in September 2015. In this new curriculum, results are no longer reported out by 'Strand', rather as an 'Integrated Mathematics' reporting code.

Maitland District Elementary

Mathematics: Overall, Maitland students either maintained or improved on their mathematics.

English Language Arts: Overall, there is more fluctuation in achievement as compared to mathematics. However, all but three students are maintaining or improving on their English language arts compared to November 2014. These students are receiving required support through their classroom teacher.

River John Consolidated School

Mathematics: All but three students either maintained or improved on their mathematics. These students are receiving required support through their classroom teacher.

English Language Arts: Overall, there is more fluctuation in achievement compared to mathematics. Seven students have been identified as not meeting expectations as compared to November 2014. Of the seven, six have shown relatively minor change attributed to adjustment to new teacher expectations. One student continues to require increased supports and intervention, as was the case in November 2014.

Wentworth Consolidated Elementary

Mathematics: Overall, Wentworth students either maintained or improved on their mathematics.

English Language Arts: There is more consistent student progress comparing mathematics and English language arts for students. All but two students are meeting expected levels of achievement, compared to November 2014. The change for these two students can be attributed to adjustment to new teacher expectations. Their progress is being closely monitored.

Provincial Assessment Results

Provincial Assessment results for students moving to the receiving schools were compared to those students already attending the receiving (Reading and Writing Grade 3 (RW3), Mathematics Grade 4 (M4), Reading, Writing and Mathematics Grade6 (RWM6)).

A comparison to the 2014/2015 Provincial Assessment is not possible because the group of students is different.

Maitland District Elementary

Overall, Maitland students performed comparable to students already attending the receiving school on the provincial assessments: RW3, M4 and RWM6.

River John Consolidated School

Overall, River John students performed comparable to students already attending the receiving school on the provincial assessments: RW3, M4 and RWM6.

Wentworth Consolidated Elementary

Overall, Wentworth students performed comparable to students already attending the receiving school on the provincial assessments: RW3, M4 and RWM6.

Unacceptable Behaviour – Recorded Incidents

There were 43 recorded behaviour incidents from September 1/15 to February 1/16. Of that 43, six were single incidents (six students with one incident each).

Principals' report improved behaviour due to the supports that are in place, and as a result of home and school working together. Student Services staff have been involved in some instances.

The incidents were recorded as insubordination, vandalism, bullying or physical violence.

Recorded behaviour incidents do not show patterns of concern related to school closure.

Attendance

Principals of the 11 receiving schools did not report student attendance as an issue of concern. The few matters related to attendance described were routine in nature.

Student attendance records since 2012/13 were examined looking for patterns of absence for individual students. There was particular focus on 2014/15 to 2015/16, the transition year.

Three of the 11 receiving schools have some students with a pattern of absence trending higher than the previous year.

The three schools with absence trending higher include a total of 14 students whom require close monitoring. In each case, principals' report being aware of the situation and state that daily monitoring and regular communication with home is helping. Individual circumstances are being addressed through program planning or improved collaboration with parents / guardians, where required.

For all other students, attendance patterns are stable or have improved compared to the previous year.

There are many reasons a student could be absent from school on a particular day; it would be premature to directly relate the change in schools as the single reason a student is absent.

Student attendance will continue to be monitored.

Transportation

The Operations Department reports no on-going transportation issues, other than those matters normally experienced at the beginning of the school year that are generally resolved with minor adjustments to routing, pick-up / drop-off times and communication with parents / guardians.

All student travel times are within the stipulations of *Policy #OS-T-01 Student Transportation (Bussing)*.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the transition of the students from the three permanently closed schools to the 11 receiving schools is proving to be successful. As with any school transition, some uneasiness or feelings of uncertainty are expected on the part of both students and parents / guardians. It is obvious the administration, teachers and support staff of the receiving schools are deliberately attending to the well-being and transition of their new students and their families.

It is expected that student transferring or moving to a new school could meet with some challenges, such as adjusting to new school rules, social groups or a change in teacher expectations related to academic work.

Overall, students have performed well academically and have shown growth and improvement on behavioural expectations, as reported on the Learner Profile of the report card. Generally, students that are meeting expectations or not meeting expectations were also demonstrating a similar result previously.

The small number of students that have experienced a decrease in achievement are being monitored or are receiving support through the classroom teacher and support staff.

Overall, students from Maitland, River John and Wentworth performed comparable to students already attending the receiving school on the provincial assessments: RW3, M4 and RWM6.

Behaviour concerns that existed prior to the permanent closure of the three schools continue to exist for a few students. No new concerns have developed.

Principals of the 11 receiving schools did not report student attendance as an issue of concern. When examining student attendance records, 14 students have been identified as requiring close monitoring. Principals are aware of these individual circumstances and have increased

communication, developed specific program supports and established behaviour expectations related to attendance. Any conclusions relating a change in school to student absence would be premature.

As with any new school year, student transportation issues arise and are dealt with by staff. All student travel times are within the stipulations of CCRSB policy.

The monitoring of student progress will continue at the school site throughout the school year to ensure student success.

School Closure Report

Report of Receiving School

Permanently Closed School:

Receiving School:

Number of Students / Grades reporting on:

Principal:

Date:

DIRECTIONS: Consider the students that have moved to your school in September from the permanently closed school. Provide general comments to the following questions without identifying individual student names. Your comments will be collated into a report that will be presented to the governing school board and available to the public.

1. Describe the educational progress of students from the permanently closed school. Consider report card data, class room assessments and information provided by classroom teachers.

2. Describe the social progress of students of the permanently closed school. Consider social interactions with peer group, interactions with staff, involvement in school activities.

3. Describe the overall adjustment of the students from the permanently closed school to the receiving school. Consider their emotional adjustment and other matters possibly impacting the change of schools for these students.

4. Have there been any issues or concerns that are on-going?

5. General comments.