



ÉCOLE MARGARET JENKINS SCHOOL  
PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
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Dear members of the Boundary Review Team,

A number of families at École Margaret Jenkins School have expressed concerns over some of the proposed changes to the catchment boundaries. As a PAC, we wanted to ensure our school's families had an opportunity to collectively voice their concerns. We therefore offered to consolidate feedback and suggestions raised at our latest PAC meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> in a letter to you.

We are attaching minutes from that discussion, and want to highlight the following suggestions, not all of which may be within the scope of the Boundary Review, but which may be relevant to the effectiveness of the changes you are making:

- Many parents from our catchment would like you to reconsider making Monterey a dual track school. Monterey has a significant number of students from out-of-catchment (~90), and the number of in-catchment students enrolling in English at EMJS is dropping (was just half a class, 13 students total last year, compared with two full classes of French). If future English in-catchment enrolment continues to decline while the demand for French continues to be high at the feeder elementary schools, shifting some classes to French at this middle school will reduce distance to school for many families, and enable schools like Lansdowne to serve neighbourhoods farther north and west than it currently does. Parents feel that accommodating French at Monterey may be achievable with the addition of only one portable so that there are eventually a total of 18 classrooms, 3 English and 3 French per grade.
- Adjust enrolment priorities to take into account an applicant's proximity to the desired school. Instead of one category for out-of-catchment students, prioritize those out-of-catchment families requesting transfer to a school that is actually closer than their catchment school, over those who live farther away and have other schools closer to them. Distance and proximity to schools is a big concern and families feel somewhat betrayed for having supported the updated enrolment priorities on the assumption that going to your catchment school was synonymous with going to your closest neighbourhood school.
- If the proposed changes go ahead, please consider requesting Ministry funds to seismically upgrade Richmond school before opening it as a satellite campus of Lansdowne, and please consider delaying opening the Richmond school until after that work is complete, so that there is less disruption to students and families having to bus future grade 6's from Lansdowne to SJ Willis for a year.
- Consider whether George Jay would be better served feeding into Lansdowne or Central – it looks like Lansdowne is closer to George Jay with better transportation routes.
- Help make safe routes to school a priority. Safe routes to school should be a District long-term priority, so in addition to making this a consideration when redrawing the catchment

boundaries, consider forming a committee that partners with each of the municipalities, transit, and the Capital Regional District, that can advocate for children at all schools, instead of initiatives to improve safety being dependent on volunteers at individual schools.

- Please reconsider making French catchment maps available. It is not easy to figure out what the FI schools are for a specific address or to see at a glance how the catchment is laid out to identify improvements for safe routes to school.
- Revisit the capacity numbers, especially if class sizes are declining due to changing language around designations, and ensure that these realistic capacity numbers can accommodate the future catchment enrolment projections to assure us the plan will work.
- In order to ensure continued equitable access to learning opportunities, we recommend that a school district / board policy be formalized to protect multipurpose spaces, libraries, gyms, art and music rooms, exploratory spaces and childcare spaces from being turned into classrooms. Otherwise, even after redrawing catchments to accommodate anticipated enrolment, class size restrictions and unanticipated demographic changes may force schools in some areas to be reconfigured in ways that take opportunities away from students.
- Families would like the District to find a way to ensure schools consult with each other for scheduling major events. More families will have children split across schools with these enrolment priority and catchment changes, not just between elementary and middle schools, but between multiple schools at the same level, and this is extremely challenging for families.
- Revise the transfer forms to consolidate all transfer and enrolment requests for a single family (late immersion, transfers from French to English, and out-of-catchment transfers) and enable people to prioritize all their options for all their children on a single form.

Thank you for taking the time to consult with families and consider this feedback.

EMJS PAC Executive

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# Excerpt from Minutes of EMJS PAC Meeting Feb 27, 2019

In attendance: Trustee Rob Paynter, Principal Brett Johnson, Vice Principal Janet Langston, PAC Executive Chair Anne Tomy, PAC Executive members Carolyn Wick, Jessica MacDiarmid, Michaela Anderson, and approximately 20 additional parents.

**DISCLAIMER: The following minutes were transcribed to capture the discussion and opinions expressed by people present for the New Business portion of the PAC meeting and statements included below may contain unverified facts.**

New Business: Catchment Boundary Review Discussion

## 1. Summary of how the proposed changes affect EMJS families

For those who have been unable to attend the District's open houses we will summarize how the proposed SD61 Boundary Review Changes will affect EMJS families including:

1. EMJS French Immersion students will attend Lansdowne Middle School, instead of Central Middle School starting in September 2020.
2. For grade six, French Immersion students from EMJS will attend the reopened Richmond School as a satellite campus to Lansdowne with other grade six classes from Oaklands, Victor, Willows and Quadra. This campus would be converted to a middle school in the summer of 2020 after being used as an elementary school for Braefoot's seismic upgrades for the 2019-20 school year. The District has said that Exploratory spaces will be created, but there may be fewer options available to grade 6 students than to grade 7 & 8 students on the main Lansdowne campus and at other middle schools.
3. Late immersion will not be offered at Central middle school for English students wanting to transfer to French in grade 6 (this decision was technically not part of the boundary review process).

## 2. Introduction of Rob Paynter, SD61 Trustee

Rob Paynter has liaison responsibilities to the schools in the Oak Bay family. While he may not be able to address all concerns, he will take feedback back to share with the other trustees.

## 3. Will the new provincial funding model mean further changes are needed down the road?

The new model proposes going from per course to per student. Will affect music programs which won't get as much funding. Inclusive learning funding for designated students will go to school not student; will be based on averages so doesn't fluctuate as much year to year. No changes will be made to the funding process for the 2019-2020 school year. Will more schools close? Yes in areas where population is declining. Currently population increasing.

[Read more here about the funding model: [bit.ly/K-12FMRPanel](https://bit.ly/K-12FMRPanel)]

#### 4. Why the rush? Can Richmond school be Seismically upgraded prior to opening it as a Middle school (or grade 6 campus for Lansdowne)?

Richmond school has not itself been seismically upgraded. Has been used to temporarily house students from different schools around the district while those schools were being upgraded to avoid having to bring in a huge number of temporary portables for students for the year. Will be used for Braefoot next year, leaving just July and August to convert it to a middle school. Why not wait to open Richmond as a (permanent) middle school until it has been seismically upgraded and retrofitted to support the exploratories etc.

In order to access funding for the seismic upgrades, the school apparently must already be in use so that they can apply for funding. So apparently Richmond school cannot be upgraded until it is permanently converted back into a catchment school. This means that in a few years, will have to relocate grade 6s to SJ Willis for a year.

#### 5. How will the Richmond school be converted to a Middle School (with exploratories) in just two months, considering how long it took to build our portables last year?

[Question was made rhetorically during the meeting, but the school district has since added info on their FAQ page to say:

*“Exploratory spaces will be created, but the range of options available to the grade 6 students may be more limited than it is to the students in grades 7 & 8. ... Richmond will likely to be able offer Art, Home Economics, Music, Outdoor Education and other exploratory options comparable to those provided at the main building of Lansdowne Middle School. However, it is not likely that Richmond would be able to offer the Tech Ed program that we would like to see provided for students in Grades 7 & 8.”]*

#### 6. Can Monterey be a dual track school?

Apparently this was considered a number of years ago but projected enrolment would not have accommodated this. Now the numbers have changed. No accurate number about the enrolment capacity for Monterey. Worth a discussion – panel seems to have said will look into it again. They thought 500 was ideal minimum number of kids to consider dual track and Monterey is a bit smaller than this.

3 grade 6 classes eventually become 9 French classes at Monterey. School has 17 classrooms at Monterey now, but apparently there are 90 out-of-catchment students in English at Monterey right now. So maybe if enrolment were limited to just in-catchment students, the number of English spots could be reduced to make room for French.? So there could be 3 English and 3 French classes in each grade at Monterey (requiring just one portable). This is more than just the EMJS Catchment, so maybe combine Willows and EMJS graduates, but if necessary split Willows catchment between Monterey and Lansdowne if there isn't room at Monterey for all of the graduates from both schools (and many Willows students are closer to Lansdowne anyway).

Impact of registration priorities should have had a decline in out of catchment populations at more in-demand schools, but numbers don't seem to be taking that into consideration. EMJS went from two full English to just 13 students as a result of the enrolment priorities. Note that at EMJS this year, 2

French K classes filled up immediately but there were only 13 in-catchment students in English, and so have had to pull students from out of catchment to make a full K class. This indicates that there is even more demand for FI in our area than English, further supporting the longterm benefits of making Monterey dual track instead of single track.

## 7. How will the decision to remove Victor school from the review change things for us?

Taking Victor off the table on Monday, will definitely have a domino effect. Richmond might become a K-5 school instead to ease the pressure at elementary grades. Oaklands kids need a place to go. Lansdowne slope could be in Richmond catchment or back into Willows community.

## 8. What about the arguments about equity?

Concerned that need for equity will dismiss needs of students currently in the system. Please make supporting existing students the priority (too).

Lot of concern about equity. Seem to want distribution of FI schools around the city, not enough equity around the city. Certainly would be good to have similar access to FI as an option available to families around the city (currently not as much access on west side of city).

However, we must make it a priority to support the students already in the program. We should support FI where the students are now before adding FI somewhere else. Have chosen to offer it to so many elementary schools in our area, need to make sure middle schools and high schools in our area support those numbers.

There would also be a ripple effect here too. Shifting some FI middle schoolers to Monterey from Lansdowne, would mean Lansdowne can then accommodate more students from further north and west (instead of having it sit on the top corner of its catchment it could be more central to its catchment).

## 9. Why is George Jay being sent to Central?

George Jay is much closer to Lansdowne with better transportation routes. If George Jay went to Lansdowne would not necessarily free up more room at Central for EMJS kids longterm if the projections for increased student populations downtown are correct but might make more sense for George Jay and accommodate some EMJS students at Central (e.g. those for whom this is their closest middle school).

Trying to find more space at Central is a nonstarter. Would need more portables.

## 10. Want to see enrolment priorities adjusted to take proximity into account

Distance is a big concern. Support for the new enrolment priorities which prioritize going to your catchment school was based on an implicit assumption that your catchment school would be your closest school. Feel betrayed.

Would like to see enrolment priorities adjusted so that if you are applying from out of catchment, but the school you are applying to is actually your closest school, or at least closer than your own catchment school, then you have priority over those requesting a transfer from farther away (where the school they want to transfer to is farther than their own catchment school).

## 11. Concerned that the FI programs are being reduced

Frustrating that kids are dropping from French to English based on this. Eliminating late immersion at Central cuts 3 FI staff members there, and reduces number of students exiting FI from Central by ¼. If number of students funneled into Vic High is cut by 1/3 that will also impact the program offered there.

## 12. More families are getting split between schools

Now that siblings have lower priority, shifting catchments means parents are going to have kids at more schools, e.g. one student at Central and another at Lansdowne.

Schools need to consult each other for major events because otherwise having kids split across schools is challenging. Have not seen much coordination between elementary and middle school and none between different middle schools.

Also have a number of families with students in both French and English. Having Monterey be dual track could enable those families to stay together.

## 13. Appreciation for keeping cohorts together

Parents might want siblings at same school but kids don't want to not go with their friends. Appreciate that the review tried not to split students up between schools. This is an advantage of having the whole EMJS FI catchment being sent to a single middle school.

Other parents however prioritize proximity over peers even if it means splitting the EMJS catchment between two middle schools.

## 14. Distance and safe routes to school is the main concern for those opposed to Lansdowne

Proximity to schools was one of the top priorities according to the review. Of all 9 priorities, only 2 of them seem to be met by sending EMJS students to Lansdowne.

Not safe to Richmond / Lansdowne – need a safe way to get there. Dean suggested as a good route, but need to get around hospital. Is there a way to cut through the private school St. Patrick's behind the hospital and avoid any travel on Richmond or Foul Bay?

Seems two-tiered. If in FI, not as deserving of need to walk to school because you made a special choice.

At middle school level we are talking about 10-11 year olds, not high school age yet.

Adult bike commuters don't travel on these routes that we are asking kids to travel.

Bus routes aren't effective e.g. 25 min to bus on foul bay, 5 min ride then 10 min walk down to Lansdowne.

[During meeting with mayor earlier in the evening we learned that Lansdowne needs to be the one to apply to the Safe Routes to School program – even though it is families from EMJS catchment for example that want to see the improvements]

## 15. Bussing

Suggest school buses?

Legally don't have to provide transportation because we are in French immersion, program of choice. No business case for BC Transit to change routes to accommodate middle school students from south Oak Bay to Richmond/Lansdowne.

Transit – will not be increased from South Oak Bay to Lansdowne. Focus is between Oak Bay and downtown direction.

Urge all to see Jubilee transit plan beginning of March. Goes against sustainable issues.

## 16. Don't "do as little as possible" – do what's best long-term

"Do as little as possible" was a priority. But: this is an opportunity to look at more than just catchments of schools in crisis. Balance things that may potentially disrupt more people for next few years but do a better job for everyone over longer term.

## 17. How late is it? Is there really opportunity for making changes at this point?

Oaklands is a critical issue, without Victor will have a ripple effect across the district. So yes there will need to be some changes.

The pressure in 2021 will be Oaklands and George Jay forcing the issue. (George Jay will be graduating FI classes next year).

EMJS has families from Marigold catchment. Monterey has 90 students out of catchment. We just need to shift things so more people can go to their closest schools.

Seems to be some openness to divide catchments. Even though tried to have family of schools, they still split Oaklands. Community piece is important to people.

## 18. We need French catchment maps

Why are there no French catchment maps? It is not easy to figure out what your FI schools are. Apparently they have decided not to release French catchment maps. Maybe because this would highlight how far so many families have to go to school? Ours isn't the only problem – consider people in Cadboro Bay or Ten-mile point having to go to Reynolds, instead of Oak Bay high which is much closer and safer, or Mount Doug if it could offer FI. Reynolds is supposedly oversubscribed, and could serve people more on the west side if there were more options on the east side.

If there is a lack of French schools on westside impacting us on east side, are there any buildings on west side to turn into another school? Macauley is one school and Marigold is another. Shoreline is middle school or Cedar Hill. Rock heights is at half capacity. Nobody wants to go there despite the space. Takes a leap of faith.

## 19. Is our district maintaining and enhancing FI as it should?

Provincial French immersion act says school district must have a policy to maintain and enhance their FI program. No transparency about statistics, review that happened internally, no transparency about the program.

We are celebrating what we have. Feel grateful, but sad because not everyone has their eyes on protecting the FI program. These changes we are making should be in line with a policy. Is it maintaining and enhancing the program making students go so far, when this then encourages families to drop out of the program?



Most of the students in French are in-catchment. Most people in FI are not transferring to a school because they want to get into French. They are choosing to go to their closest school, and then selecting French as the preferred option at that school.

We are a community that is horrified about driving kids to school for environmental and health reasons.

## 20. Revisit the capacity numbers.

When supreme court ruled about the language reinstatement ... had different effect across districts... for us affected class size limits and number of children with designations in a classroom. Had to demonstrate best efforts to meet the different requirements. Some classes ended up being really small 18-19 students. Can fit a lot more students in a school when class sizes were 35.

Province also doesn't recognize middle schools.

And language that determines what counts as a designation is changing. If qualified designations are on the rise (certain designations count as 2 people) class size gets smaller and smaller with every designation. Some teachers have classes at Central with 9 designations. Class sizes are going to get smaller so the capacities of schools on paper are going to become less and less realistic.

Revisit the capacity numbers. Because do not seem to be realistic.

Enrolment projections in future catchments need to be determined to assure us that the plan will work.

Also want to see FI numbers. 5 of the 8 schools that are at or over capacity have FI. So what is the FI population in and out of catchment. Are there any options to move that program?

Worried also that basing all these changes on incorrect capacity numbers leaves no protection for multipurpose spaces, libraries, gyms, art and music rooms from being turned into classrooms.

As class sizes diminish but schools are forced to still accommodate overall capacity, there is currently no protection to ensure access to specialized learning spaces remains equitable across schools. Would like board to add language / policy to protect multipurpose spaces, libraries, gyms, art and music rooms, exploratory spaces from being turned into classrooms.

## 21. Revise the transfer forms

For those who do decide to request a transfer to an out-of-catchment school, the forms are not set up to enable you to have a Plan B or to accommodate keeping siblings together. Need a family form where you can list all your prioritized choices, and they can go down the list and give you the first one they can accommodate.

e.g. Plan A might be to transfer a younger student into their sibling's school, Plan B might be to move the older sibling to the younger one's catchment school, with only Plan C or D to keep them at separate schools.

Or e.g. if English EMJS student who has moved into Lansdowne catchment wants to go into late immersion at Lansdowne, but second choice is to go to Monterey with their friends, there is no way to apply for both.

Consolidate all transfer and enrolment requests for a single family – late immersion, transfers from French to English, out of catchment transfers.



## Follow-up: what can still be done

- Send letters to Boundary Review team and CC trustees.
- Some parents wondered whether a petition would help to reconsider Monterey for dual track
- Carrie Smart is on board meeting agenda next Monday to speak on safe routes to school between EMJS and Lansdowne.