

March 30, 2009

To: Chris Smith, Manager of Planning
From: Anita Brooks Kirkland, Library Consultant, ITS

Re: Impact of proposed boundary changes on Preston area schools

As requested, this is a report on the impact of proposed boundary changes and consequent changes in student populations at Grand View, Parkway and Preston public schools in the Preston area of Cambridge. For the purposes of this report, I have revisited a library facility review conducted for the Planning department in January 2006, made school visits, and consulted with Jamie Groh, the centrally assigned teacher-librarian who supports all three schools.

When looking at a library space, we must consider more than the per student square footage. Indeed, the square footage standard typically applied to new schools (4.5 square feet per student) is an artificial measure when it comes to very small and very large student populations. A school library should meet standards and requirements for functional spaces, as outlined in the document, *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada* (2003), published by the Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL), a division of the Canadian Library Association (CLA). The facility review we conducted in 2006 assessed all elementary libraries using selected, relevant standards from this document. In terms of these three libraries, it is important to look at the specific areas of the review to assess the impact of increasing student populations. The areas we assessed were:

- ☞ Overall design
- ☞ Accessibility
- ☞ Large-group instructional area (should accommodate one full class, with tables and chairs)
- ☞ Small-group instructional area (distinct from large-group area)
- ☞ Individual study / informal reading area (distinct from large and small group areas)
- ☞ CATC computers in the library (numbers, configuration, impact on library function)
- ☞ Seminar room
- ☞ Library staff work room
- ☞ Circulation area
- ☞ Shelving

Grand View: This is a very small library already, and according to our survey, is already significantly below CASL standards. The library is a converted classroom. Half of the space that is designated as being part of the library on the floor plan is no longer library space. The library office has been taken over for other school needs. The large group instruction area will not accommodate a full class, which is the most basic standard for a library as an instructional space. The circulation area is inadequate to support the efficient functioning of the library, particularly since there is no longer a separate library workroom. The shelving in this library accommodates the existing collection, which is quite small, at just over 8,000 items. The enrolment projection for this year for Grand View was 168 students (not FTE), but the build capacity quoted in the Preston Area Elementary Schools Boundary Study is 259. Elementary library collections in schools with between two and three hundred students typically have collections of 10,000 to 12,000 items, or at least twenty percent larger than Grand View's existing collection.

It is clear that the current library is already below standards for library facilities. Any scenario that increases the student population even marginally puts even more stress on the library than already exists. It also means that the increased student population would be ill-served by the collection, as there would be no room to house any more items.

Parkway: In the survey conducted in 2006, the Parkway library met most CASL standards, with the exception of the circulation area and large group instructional area, which accommodates less than a full class. While at least one of the proposed boundary scenarios increases the school's population to over 400 students, of the three schools, this type of increase would have the least impact on Parkway. The library collection currently holds about 9,400 items. Given that the size of the collection would need to increase with any substantial increase in population, it would be necessary to address the inaccessibility of some of the shelves (too high), which limits how the collection can be housed and accessed.

Preston: This is a purpose-built library, unlike the converted classroom at Grand View. Nevertheless, the space is far too small to meet the school's needs. This collection is particularly small for a school with an existing student population of approximately 400 students. There are two seminar rooms that are part of the library's footprint on floor plans, but these rooms have been taken over for other school needs. The school has had to purchase additional movable bookshelves to accommodate the collection. Nevertheless this collection, at under 9,000 items, is significantly smaller than collections of other schools in the same population range. This additional shelving has encroached on the large group instructional area, meaning that a class cannot be accommodated at tables and chairs in this area. There is no separate small group instructional area, which is also a basic standard for school libraries.

If, as a result of the boundary realignment, there are to be renovations to Grand View and Preston, serious consideration should be given to addressing the libraries, as these two facilities do not adequately meet the current needs of these schools, let alone any increase in student population.