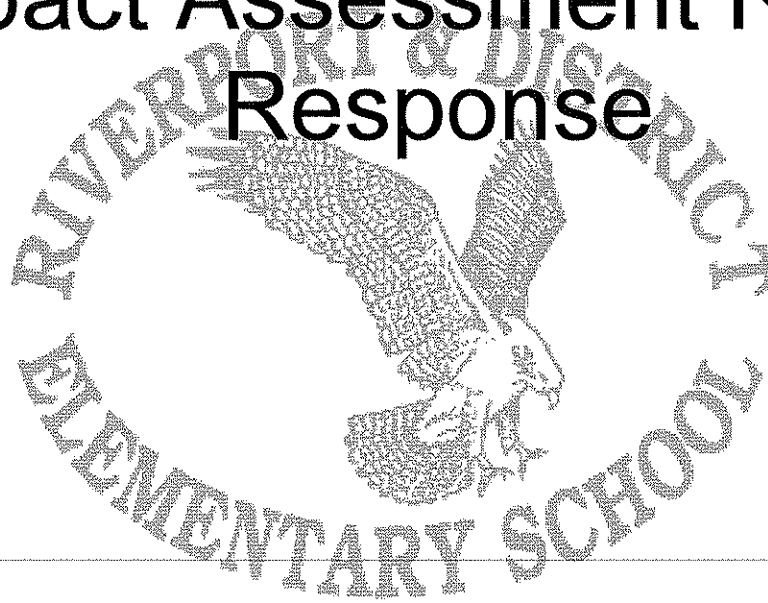


Riverport and District Elementary School

Impact Assessment Report Response



Submitted by

Riverport and District Elementary School Study Committee

November 30, 2008

Preface

The Riverport and District Elementary School (RDES) study committee is a group of parents, staff and community stakeholders who have willingly offered their time and expertise to respond to the RDES Impact Assessment Report¹ in accordance with the amendment to Section 89 Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96, *The Education Act* January 16 2008.

The School Utilization Report (submitted by the *consultant*^{4,5,6} on February, 27, 2008) was accepted by South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB) on March 26, 2008 formally identifying RDES for utilization review. May 28, 2008, an Impact Assessment Report (IAR) regarding RDES review was tabled and accepted by the South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB).

The following report is the formal response of the RDES study committee to the findings in this Impact Assessment Report.

Each finding in this response is preceded by the applicable italicized excerpt from the RDES Impact Assessment Report.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the findings in our response are transparent and based on objective fact that is available through the public record.

Roland Genge
Chair
RDES study committee

Topic in Impact Assessment

Part 1: School information

I. Enrolment Projection

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

The enrolment of RDES decreased from 100 in 2000-01 to 59 for this school year, 2007-08, a decrease of 41%. The history shows a decline of 33% since 2003-4. It is important to note that the Grade Primary enrolments can only be based on the recent historical trend for Grade Primary over the past few years. The projections would be more accurate if Grade Primary enrolments could be predicted using department of Health pre-school children data, but this type of data can no longer be accessed by school boards, as in the past. The enrolment history combined with the 5-year projection shows that the enrolment of Riverport and District School will decrease from 88 in 2003/4 to 36 in 2012/13, a decrease of 59%.

RDES Study Committee Response:

Quantitative findings:

Enrolment projections for RDES can be extrapolated based on provincial community data for regional areas⁹. The census trends for our General Service Area (GSA) (i.e. areas with similar socio-economic infrastructure established by the Province of Nova Scotia) predict a slower decline in school age population in the next 10 years (i.e. -23.4%). Based on the 1996 – 2006 census period this trend suggests that RDES should expect an enrolment of 52 students by 2013 (vs. 36 in IAR report). Notably, this number can be affected by student transfers irrespective of the population trend for the area. **In May 2008, 7 RDES student transfers to CCS were granted in accordance with SSRSB policy. At present RDES student enrolment is 52^{7,8}.**

Qualitative findings: (see section on PSP)

Enrolment projections are relevant if there is evidence that lower numbers result in poorer education outcomes for the students in schools affected

Table 1: Census data for school age children in the General Service Area (GSA) of LaHave.

Gender: Total	1996 Census		2001 Census		2006 Census		Percent Change
	#	%	#	%	#	%	1996 - 2006
Total Reporting	5011	100	4934	100	4638	100	- 7.4
By Selected Age Groups							
Pre-School Age (less than 5 yrs)	254	5.1	220	4.5	168	3.6	-33.9
Elementary/Secondary School Age (5-19 yrs)	988	19.7	926	18.8	757	16.3	-23.4
Labour Force Ages							
20-34 yrs	875	17.5	677	13.7	589	12.7	-32.7
35-54 yrs	1572	31.4	1717	34.8	1483	32	-5.7
55-64 yrs	473	9.4	625	12.7	765	16.5	61.7

Ref: Community counts web site, Government of Nova Scotia 2008

(i.e. The Populated Place Names that are included in this community are: Bush Island, Conquerall Bank, Crescent Beach, Crousés Settlement, Dayspring, Dublin Shore, East LaHave, Five Houses, Kingsburg, LaHave, LaHave Island, Lake Centre, Lower LaHave, Lower Rose Bay, Middle LaHave, Moshers Island, Mount Pleasant, New Cumberland, Pentz, Pleasantville, Rhodes Corner, Riverport, Rose Bay, Upper Kingsburg, Upper LaHave, West Dublin, West LaHave.)

Conclusion: The RDES study committee agrees that the reduction of 7 students over 5 years is statistically significant. However, prior SSRSB school review precedents strongly indicate that this reduction data is not significant enough on its own to warrant RDES closure.

II. Population Patterns

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

The information in this section was provided by the office of the Town of Lunenburg. Some additional information may be available at a later date from the office of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, Town of Lunenburg. The 2001 population of the Town of Lunenburg reported by Statistics Canada was 2,568. In 2006 the census population was 2,317, a decrease of 9.8%. The reported number of dwellings in 2006 was 1,124, representing a density of 2.28 persons/dwelling. The total population projected for 2027 is 3,020.

RDES Study Committee Response:

Quantitative findings: Population patterns for the two respective GSAs of Lunenburg and LaHave have similar yet different trends of decline. Despite the projected infrastructure work that has been cited in the IAR for Lunenburg, the provincial 10 year census data indicates that the decline has been greater for the GSA of Lunenburg than that of LaHave (see table 2 and table 3).

Conclusion: The IAR does not offer any comparable population trends for Riverport and area (LaHave GSA), nor does it address the actual population trend for the GSA of Lunenburg which more accurately illustrates the population trend that would support a P-9 school in Lunenburg. The RDES study committee agrees that there is a trend of population decline in our community, however, this trend is shared (and more significant) in the Lunenburg community. This quantitative finding does not suggest that RDES be identified for closure on the basis of population statistics alone.

Table 2: Population patterns for LaHave^a GSA based on Census data (1996 to 2006)

Gender: Total	1996 Census		2001 Census		2006 Census		Percent Change
	#	%	#	%	#	%	1996 - 2006
Total Reporting	5011	100	4934	100	4638	100	- 7.4

Ref: Community counts web site, Government of Nova Scotia 2008

^a The Populated Place Names that are included in this community are: Bush Island, Conquerall Bank, Crescent Beach, Crouses Settlement, Dayspring, Dublin Shore, East LaHave, Five Houses, Kingsburg, LaHave, LaHave Island, Lake Centre, Lower LaHave, Lower Rose Bay, Middle LaHave, Moshers Island, Mount Pleasant, New Cumberland, Pentz, Pleasantville, Rhodes Corner, Riverport, Rose Bay, Upper Kingsburg, Upper LaHave, West Dublin, West LaHave.

Table 3 Population patterns for Lunenburg^b GSA based on Census data (1996 to 2006)

Gender: Total	1996 Census		2001 Census		2006 Census		Percent Change
	#	%	#	%	#	%	1996 - 2006
Total Reporting	5576	100	5407	100	5035	100	-9.7

Ref: Community counts web site, Government of Nova Scotia 2008

^b The Populated Place Names that are included in this community are: Back Centre, Bayport, Blue Rocks, Centre, Corkums Island, Deans Corner, Eastern Points, Feltzen South, First Peninsula, First South, Front Centre, Garden Lots, Grimms Settlement, Heckmans Island, Indian Path, Lilydale, Lunenburg, Martins Brook, Masons Beach, Northwest, Schnares Crossing, Second Peninsula, Spectacle Lakes, Stonehurst East, Stonehurst West, Tanners Settlement.

<p>III. Physical Condition of Building</p> <p>Preface:</p> <p>The majority of the findings in this section are sourced from the Building Condition Study for Riverport District Consolidated Elementary School prepared by MacDonnell Group Consulting Ltd for the SSRSB in October 2003².</p> <p>The urgency of necessary repairs are prioritized in this report using the following scale: Priority 1 = "must do", Priority 2 = "should do", Priority 3 = "could do".</p> <p>A. <u>Systems</u></p> <p>Windows:</p> <p><i>Impact Assessment Report (IAR):</i> Although not mentioned in the MacDonnell Group Report, the windows are described as poor in the checklist accompanying that report. These windows show a lot of rot and need replacement. The estimated cost is \$100,000.</p> <p>RDES Study Committee Response:</p> <p>Contrary to the above statement, our General contractor consultant states that upon inspection, the issues with window rot seem limited to sills and other trim. The window frames themselves appear to be largely in good shape for their age. Replacing all or even any of them may not be needed, as a lot can be done with prudent replacement of sills and trim, and some caulking and painting. This would be less costly than replacing all of the windows. The cost quoted in the MacDonnell report is stated as \$60,000.</p> <p>Exterior Doors:</p>	<p>IAR finding \$100,000</p> <p>RDES finding \$60,000</p>
<p><i>Impact Assessment Report (IAR):</i> "Four sets of exterior doors are original and need to be replaced. The estimated cost is \$25,000.00."</p> <p>RDES Study Committee Response:</p> <p>Contrary to the IAR statement, the need to replace the front and rear main doors is designated Priority #2 in the MacDonnell Group report as they are all still in good shape., "</p> <p>Roof:</p> <p><i>Impact Assessment Report (IAR):</i> The roof is original and requires replacement. Even though it's not leaking, there are signs of deterioration so replacement should be completed in the next 2 to 3 years. The estimated cost is \$130,000.</p> <p>RDES Study Committee Response:</p> <p>The only reported concern since October 2003 was a minor leak in January 2008 that was repaired by patching. Since that time, there have not been any reported leaks or issues with the roof. Our general contractor consultant strongly suggests that it may be good for several more years and a second</p>	<p>IAR finding \$25,000</p> <p>RDES finding \$0.00</p> <p>IAR finding \$130,000</p>

<p>opinion should be sought. Flat roofs are much easier to maintain and can be patched rather than replaced if the issues are not severe. Notably, if the roof were to be replaced, it is unclear where the consultant referenced the \$130,000 figure. The cost quoted in the MacDonnell report is stated as \$90,000.</p>	<p>RDES finding \$90,000</p>
<p>Boiler, Ventilation, Sprinklers:</p> <p>Impact Assessment Report (IAR):</p> <p><i>"The existing boiler (two identified in the MacDonnell Group Report but there is only one at the school) is 43 years old and should be replaced within the next 2 to 3 years. The estimated cost is \$22,000.00.</i></p>	<p>IAR finding \$22,000</p>
<p>RDES Study Committee Response:</p> <p>The MacDonnell Report states that "The overall condition of the school is fair for a building of its age." The Report further states that the boiler "could be replaced" and this is at a low priority level (priority 3).</p> <p>RDES is not new construction and according to the MacDonnell Report, "installing a ventilation system in a building of this size is NOT COMMON practice". Similar to other schools in the SSRSB, "the school is substandard by current codes for new construction in the areas of ventilation, plumbing, sprinkler protection and accessibility."</p>	<p>RDES finding \$0.00</p>
<p>Digital Control System:</p> <p>Impact Assessment Report (IAR):</p> <p><i>To install a digital control system to control heat and possible ventilation would cost \$25,000.00.</i></p> <p>RDES Study Committee Response:</p> <p>Our General contractor consultant states that the installation of a digital control system is unnecessary for a building of this size. The MacDonnell Report indicates that this is a priority two item "should do". Notably, the cost in the MacDonnell Report is \$30,000.</p>	<p>IAR finding \$25,000</p> <p>RDES finding \$0.00</p>
<p>Sewage Treatment plant :</p> <p>Impact Assessment Report (IAR):</p> <p><i>Although not mentioned in the MacDonnell Group report the sewage treatment plant is in unrepairable condition. Design work has been completed with the proper permits acquired from the Department of Environment, in anticipation of a major failure of the existing plant. The estimated cost to install a new sewage system as per the design and permit is \$110,000.00.</i></p> <p>RDES Study Committee Response:</p> <p>The statement in the report, "the sewage treatment plant is in unrepairable condition" is not referenced in the MacDonnell Report therefore, and we have been unable to corroborate the source of this conclusion. In consultation with Berrigan Surveys Ltd, it remains unclear if this conclusion is substantiated. The following documents regarding the review of the sewage treatment plant were requested but not available from the SSRSB Operations department:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Records of sewage plant maintenance. 2. Record of inspection from Berrigan Surveys Ltd in last 18 months 	<p>IAR finding \$110,000</p> <p>RDES finding \$0.00</p>

According to our general contractor consultant, if there are no other impending issues with it (leaks, runoff etc), it may be possible to extend the life of the system further. Given the cost implications of this issue, we feel the ambiguity regarding the above mentioned statements warrants a second opinion regarding the condition of the RDES sewage treatment plant by a qualified contractor.

B. Costs associated with maintenance, repair and operation exceeding normal expectations

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

Costs associated with maintenance, repair and operation exceeding normal expectations: Actual maintenance costs for last fiscal year totaled \$2,412.48 and the estimated ongoing maintenance costs are \$5,000.00 per year.

IAR
finding
\$2412.48

RDES Study Committee Response:

This is a contradictory statement, unsure of it's intention or meaning. This statement indicates that maintenance, repair and operation costs are **less than half** of normal expectations.

RDES
finding
\$2412.48

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

The total annual property services cost for RDES for the 2007/08 fiscal year was \$74,170.00. This cost included custodial salaries, benefits and supplies, security, electricity, heating fuel and garbage and snow removal.Loss of Revenue for the SSRSB: Under the provincial funding formula, the closure of RDES would result in a loss of revenue for the SSRSB. The Board receives \$150,000 annually in operating revenue from the Department of Education because RDES is classified in the provincial funding formula as a "small school". This revenue would be lost as a result - of the school closure.

RDES Study Committee Response:

According to the SSRSB, schools with less than 100 students are to receive an annual small schools grant for property services of \$150,000. The RDES IAR indicates that the school does not receive all of this funding directly.

C. Accessibility:

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

Ability to provide barrier free accessibility to the buildings and grounds: As observed by the MacDonnell Group, the difference in elevations between the parking lot and the school entrance make it difficult, if possible at all, to gain barrier free access from the front of the school. It is possible to gain access from a service driveway that runs along side of the building for oil delivery and other deliveries. The estimated cost to upgrade the driveway (paving) to handle bus traffic is \$75,000.00—this area gets very soft in the spring.

IAR
finding
\$75,000

RDES Study Committee Response:

Accessibility is no longer an issue. RDES does provide barrier-free access to the building and grounds. Over the past three years our student with special needs has enjoyed unrestricted access to the building and grounds.

RDES
finding
\$0.00

Conclusion: Physical Condition of the Building

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

To upgrade and maintain this facility as it should be will cost over half a million dollars within the 2 or 3 years.

RDES Study Committee response

The IAR interprets the priority 1 costs = \$230,000, plus additional urgent costs (see right hand column) of \$257,000. Total = \$487,000.

According to the MacDonnell report, the **actual** repairs that are designated as priority 1 are the roof and windows. The costs quoted in the MacDonnell report for these repairs are \$90,000 and \$60,000 respectively. Total = \$150,000.

Most importantly, the RDES IAR neglects to assess the impact of ongoing annual costs associated with the option of closing RDES and moving these students to CCS. The following tables outline the annual operating costs as they specifically apply to RDES decision. *(it is assumed CCS annual costs would remain unchanged exception: accessibility renovations required to accept RDES students)*

Table 4: Annual Maintenance, repair and operation balance sheet if RDES remains open

School	Category	Amount/1 st Yr	Amount/5 Yrs
Expenses	RDES Custodian/Admin	- \$48,000	- \$240,000
	RDES Property Service Costs	- \$74,170	- \$370,850
	RDES Accessibility upgrades	\$0.0	\$0.0
	CCS Accessibility upgrades	\$0.0	\$0.0
Revenue	RDES Small School Grant	+ \$150,000	+ \$750,000
	Total	+ \$27,830	+ \$139,150

Note: assumption that the expenses and revenues would be equally indexed to inflation over 5 years

Table 5: Annual Maintenance, repair and operation balance sheet if RDES is closed + renovation costs to CCS for accessibility (see Part 3: Proposed Receiving School information)

School	Category	Amount/1 st Yr	Amount/5 Yrs
Expenses	RDES Custodian/Admin	\$0.0	\$0.0
	RDES Property Service Costs	\$0.0	\$0.0
	RDES Accessibility upgrades	\$0.0	\$0.0
	CCS Accessibility upgrades	- \$150,000	- \$150,000
Revenue	RDES Small School Grant	- \$150,000	- \$750,000
	Total	- \$300,000	- \$850,000

Total cost of keeping RDES open (with needed priority 1 repairs) / 5 years = - \$10,850

Total cost of closing RDES and moving to CCS / 5years = - \$ 850,000

Part 2: Impact analysis

I. Capability to Deliver PSP

From an Educational Perspective:

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

In the first School Utilization Study Part I report, released last November, a list of factors were introduced which indicate when a school may have reached the point of being too small in terms of its ability to deliver the educational program. These "potentially serious barriers to effective program delivery" included having to increase staff allocations, difficulty in matching teaching assignments to teacher qualifications and interests, difficulty in retaining suitably qualified teachers to provide specialist services to students, multi-age classes with more than 2 grades, and the number of very different professional responsibilities that must be carried by individual teachers. As the enrolment of RDES continues to decline, the inflexibility and risk caused by these and other factors will increase. At some point, if not now, it becomes unrealistic and unreasonable to expect a principal and small staff to do all that is necessary for students and do it successfully year after year. Even with the very best staff, the potential for problems, including staff overload, is very real.

RDES Study Committee Response:

We contrast the IAR statement above with the September 5, 2008 statements from Premier Rodney MacDonald, Education Minister Karen Casey and SSRSB Superintendent Nancy Pynch-Worthylake on the opening of Greenfield Elementary School.

"I commend the Greenfield Community School Society for presenting this unique idea to government, nurturing the concept, and bringing the project to such a successful conclusion," said Premier MacDonald. "What you have done here speaks to the ingenuity of Nova Scotians."

"This unique project shows the dedication of the people of Greenfield and area to the education of their children," said Ms. Casey. "The school will have a very positive impact on the community and will be a source of pride for years to come."

"The innovation and collaboration of the community that has resulted in the building of this new community school is very significant," said board superintendent Nancy Pynch-Worthylake. "The South Shore Regional School Board will continue to provide equitable education to the Greenfield students."

SSRSB executive states that smaller schools, particularly Greenfield Elementary School, can provide an equitable education for its students.

In contrast, the RDES IAR states:

Educational Benefits of the Transfer of RDES Students to Centre Consolidated School: The direct benefits to the students of RDES are easily identified. The problems or risks related to small school size described in the section above would be eliminated; Centre Consolidated School has an enrolment which is recognized in the professional literature as being optimal in terms of effective program delivery and operational efficiency.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS AT RDES:

RDES students receive a full roster of programs with the same programming as students in other schools in the region. A greater percentage of students receive supportive specialized programming such as

- Reading recovery
- Program support
- LiPs program.

Small class size – ideal class size: Many practices common in small schools work because they are much easier to implement and manage in small environments than in larger ones. Looking at instructional practices in small schools, researchers find that teachers are more likely to form teaching teams, integrate their subject-matter content, use performance assessments, employ multiage grouping and cooperation learning, and.

Access to Technology: We have three "Smart Boards" (one for each home classroom) and a very high student to computer ratio (3.5:1).

In a speech to governors at an education summit, Bill Gates said,

"The new three R's (Rigor, Relevance and Relationships), the basic building blocks of better school, are almost always easier to promote in small schools. The smaller size gives teachers and staff the chance to create an environment where students achieve at a higher level and rarely fall through the cracks. Students in smaller schools are more motivated, have higher attendance rates, feel safer, and graduate and attend college in higher numbers."

"Small schools have the most promise for raising achievement levels of disadvantaged students. Small schools create professional learning communities where teachers have the opportunity to work collectively to improve their skills and curriculum."

The Gates Foundation and Smaller Schools, Summer 2005

Why Smaller is better:

People in small schools come to know and care about one another to a greater degree than is possible in large schools and rates of parental involvement are higher. Small school students tend to take more responsibility for their learning, learning activities are more likely to be individualized, classes are typically smaller, and scheduling is much more flexible. Students at RDES indicate that they receive more one-on-one attention in a small school. Social bonding to teachers and the school occurs in this community minded environment.

"Researchers have found that teachers in small schools are more likely to form teaching teams, integrate their subject-matter content, employ multiage grouping and cooperative learning, and use performance assessments."

ERIC Clearing house on Rural Education and Small Schools 1996

"It is important to realize the one of the cornerstones of multiage learning is that classrooms are not curriculum driven but rather child-centered. Students become advocates for their own learning by taking responsibility and having an active role in their own success. Traditional competition and frustration are often replaced by cooperation, respect for other people. It is important to remember that we are educating children to become informed, socially active, and caring citizens...we are not mass producing a product for future employment."

- Marian Leir (multiage educator), 2008

II. Transportation

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

The new bus routes to transport all students from Riverport and District Elementary to Centre Consolidated School would encompass the same geographical area. Consequently, the present bell time difference between the 2

schools would provide an additional 25 minutes to arrive at Centre and allow for additional run changes if required. It is important to note that the students from Riverport have traditionally attended Centre Consolidated in Grade 7-9. In summary, no major disadvantages to students in terms of travel time and no negative financial impact would result from the closure of Riverport and District School.

RDES Study Committee Response:

Further study by the Transportation Department of the SSRSB indicates that possible travel time for children would be forty- five minutes to travel to Centre Consolidated School.

"The first student on the bus to go to Centre from Riverport would board the bus at 7:45am (approximate) and arrive at Centre around 8:25am. The afternoon should be the same with the students on board the bus for approximately 45 minutes."

(Transportation Manager, SSRSB, November 2008)

The Study Committee has concerns about the length of time on the bus, as well as the ramifications of having four year olds on the bus with fifteen year olds. In contrast to the statement from the IAR, the Study Committee believes that these factors are potentially major disadvantage to students.

III. Extracurricular activities

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

Some students and their families would have greater distances to travel while others would have less.

RDES Study Committee Response:

Currently in the communities RDES serves, the average distance to the school is 6.6 km one way or 13.2 km round trip. By transferring our students to Centre School the average distance would increase to 13.7 km one way or 27.4 km round trip. The greatest distance from the school increases from 23 km (Middle Lahave to Riverport) to 37 km (Kingsburg-Centre). See Appendix C. Contrary to Dr Gunn's report, no parent would have less distance to travel to Centre School. The Grimm Rd at Crouse's Settlement junction and Middle Lahave are distance neutral while all other communities would have greater distances to travel to Centre School.

As stated by the IAR, "RDES has enjoyed the advantages of a strong extracurricular activity program with a high level of commitment and support from the school community". Parents, teachers and community members are involved in many activities both during and after school including:

- PTA
- SAC
- Healthy Hot Lunch program
- fluoride rinse
- library
- breakfast program
- reading practice
- student band
- soccer
- basketball
- battle of the books
- lunch time intramurals
- after school fun club, etc.

In addition to these scheduled activities parents often feel comfortable in dropping by the school to help out in the classroom or attend special activities. All teachers at RDES have been willing to participate in extracurricular activities.

CCS is a significantly greater average distance for an RDES family. This distance would present significant deterrents to students, families and community volunteers wishing to participate and support extracurricular activities.

With increasing gas prices and costs of living low income families may not be able to afford to travel greater distances to participate in extracurricular activities. Risk to families travelling on winter roads also increases with greater distances travelled.

By transferring our students to Centre School the sense of community ownership that makes our school so strong in its extracurricular activities would be lessened with little incentive to transfer that enthusiasm and support to a school that is not geographically linked to any community.

IV. Staff allocation efficiencies:

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

In a previous section, it was noted that the transfer of the RDES students to CCS would result in more than 2 FTE teaching positions that could be used elsewhere in the school system. Other staff allocation efficiencies would result from this transfer. The other staff allocation reductions would be a full-time administrative assistant position and a 0.67 FTE custodian position. The total cost savings in salaries and benefits for these two allocations would be \$48,000 annually—the cost saving for the custodial position is included in the property services costs discussed in a previous section. No reductions would occur in the library clerk allocation and the lunch and bus supervisor allocation because these allocations would increase accordingly at Centre Consolidated School.

RDES Study Committee Response:

The Study Committee recognizes the value of low pupil- teacher ratios benefit students. The attention received by students is of high educational value, as shown by the academic results of students.

V. Impact on the Communities

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

As with most school closures, this one would be very difficult for members of the RDES communities. It is time that the students of Riverport and District Elementary School attend Centre Consolidated School where the problems of a very low enrolment do not exist.

RDES Study Committee Response:

A survey was undertaken to quantify and qualify the views of parents and community members' on the SSRSB's decision to identify RDES for School Review. 500 Surveys were mailed to Riverport and District area households with a 27% return rate.

Summary of Survey Results ¹¹:

- 83% Support keeping RDES open as our community school.
- 87% agree that RDES offers a unique, small-sized educational setting for our community's children.
- 92% agree that RDES is important to our community and has a positive impact on our community.

VI. Community use of RDES

Impact Assessment Report (IAR):

Various groups in the communities around RDES use the school, some on a regular basis and some on an annual basis; e.g., the Lions Club and the Riverport Choir. Perhaps the Riverport Choir has used the facility more than

any other community group, continues to use it on a weekly basis and has contributed to the school in very tangible ways over many years—e.g., choral risers and sound equipment. This is the largest facility for community activities in the area, so it would be a loss for the Choir and the other groups. There is a community hall/recreation facility not too far away, but it does not have as much space as the small gymnasium in the school.

RDES Study Committee Response:

The RDES building is often used by various community groups and organizations throughout the year.

Activities held at the school over the last year:

1. Riverport Community Choir- weekly event and fundraisers
2. Lutheran Church- yard sales and variety shows held throughout the year
3. Municipality-used for various public meetings, elections, etc.
4. District Planning Commission- met on a regular basis
5. Kingsburg Coastal Conservancy-met occasionally
6. Bike Rally- an annual rally sponsored by the Bike Barn
7. Triathlon- sponsored by the Triathlon Club
8. Thursday Night Basketball- weekly activity attended by a parent group from the community
9. After School Fun Club- students attend weekly sessions
10. Fitness/Movement Class with Instructor Heather Dennis- attended weekly by women in the community

Extra Curricular Events held at the School:

1. Sports such as: soccer and basketball and intramurals held throughout the year
2. Craft Class-held occasionally
3. Spring Fair-annual fundraiser sponsored by the Parent Teachers Association
4. Movie Nights- held occasionally and sponsored by the PTA for students, parents and the community
5. 5K Run-annual fundraiser for the school
6. Transition to School- a program for new Primary students held for a week in the summer
7. Lions/RCMP Bike Rodeo- held annually for the students
8. Running Club for Students-sponsored by Doctors of Nova Scotia Run- held weekly during the spring
9. Jump Rope For Heart –annual fundraiser for the students sponsored by the Heart and Stroke Foundation

Part 3: Proposed Receiving School information

I. Physical condition of the Centre Consolidated School (CCS) building

Impact Assessment Report (IAR – CCS¹³):

The following assessment is quoted from a separate Impact Assessment Report for Centre Consolidated School:

Although many improvements to Centre Consolidated have been made in recent years, much needs to be done over the next few years at a very significant cost of over \$ 2 million. Perhaps the main point to be emphasized is that there is a serious question about whether or not the very substantial upgrades required should be completed on such an old facility. More directly, it may not be a good use of scarce taxpayer dollars even to hire a professional architect to answer the question. It might be better to simply decide to build a new school.

Although air quality problems have not been significant, the continuous upgrading of the building could cause problems associated with air quality without the installation of a ventilation system. The only ventilation in the school is washroom exhaust and the exhaust in the Elem. Gym.

RDES Study Committee Response:

Acknowledging that greater than \$ 2 million of renovations are required to extend the life of the CCS building, detailed below are priority health and environmental issues identified by Pinchin Leblanc Environmental Ltd and MacDonnell Group Ltd that would conflict with any decision to move more students to this school.

Environmental:

Asbestos:

There are known asbestos issues at Centre, as indicated in the Asbestos Audit- Centre Consolidated School- Pinchin LeBlanc Project 01- 1578 ^{3,12}.

The audit identifies "Action Levels" for recommended work.

- Action Level 1 for Immediate Action
- Action Level 2 for Earliest Convenience
- Action Level 3 for No Action Required

Centre Consolidated School has five "Action Level 2" recommendations and one "Action Level 1" recommendation which is the remediation of asbestos fire retardant sprayed on the ceiling. Asbestos is also located in the joint compound, floor tiles, and most of the pipe insulation in the building. This is easily dislodged and stirred up when work is done in the ceilings to repair plumbing and electrical systems.

According to the Communications Officer SSRSB, there is no documentation of any removal of asbestos from Centre School. Despite the availability of *The Code of Practice for Managing Asbestos in Buildings* from the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, the SSRSB does not have a maintenance plan for managing asbestos. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/lwd/healthandsafety/asbestos02.asp>

Accessibility:

RDES has one student who requires permanent use of a wheelchair. CCS has significant wheelchair accessibility issues 1) between the elementary and the central sections of the building 2) no wheelchair access to the 2nd floor (i.e. elevators). According to the IAR for CCS, ***Accessibility to all areas of the school is difficult due to elevation change between the Elem. & Jr. High Building; currently need two elevator devices. Automatic door operators and ramp upgrades would also have to be done. Estimated cost (\$150,000).***

At RDES this student has a designated room for his personal care needs – there isn't a comparable facility on the ground floor of the Elem. Section at CCS.

Fire Escape:

Junior High fire escape requires replacement. (~\$12,000)

RDES study Committee Conclusion

These findings would not support moving RDES students to CCS given the documented environmental and air quality issues at CCS.

II. Capability to Deliver Public School Program

From a Facility Perspective:

Impact Assessment Report (IAR CCS):

As a facility, Centre Consolidated School has been able to facilitate the delivery of the public school program and there is no reason to suggest that the facility will become a barrier to successful program delivery if the status quo configuration continues, especially because the enrolment decline is expected to be significant for several years. This assessment is made with the assumption that the maintenance requirements reported above will be carried out within a reasonable period of time.

RDES Study Committee Response:

The RDES study committee objects to sending RDES students to a school with the known critical health and environmental issues.

From an Educational Perspective:

Impact Assessment Report (IAR RDES):

Within any forward-thinking school, it would be reasonable to predict that trained staff may look at other teaching or leadership opportunities in other schools through the normal staffing process. If this occurs, the training cycle would have to begin all over again at base level.

RDES Study Committee Response:

Staff turnover:

While the SSRSB Impact Report makes the case that staff turnover at RDES impacts the quality of education, the same may be said for CCS, where staff turnover (or assignment change) is typically 10 to 15 teachers per year, out of a staff of approximately 36. This has the potential to effect the ability of CCS to deliver effective programs and support.

The effects of staff turnover at RDES have been successfully mitigated by the hiring of staff with multi-age training and experience and who enjoy and support multi-age teaching. This committee feels there is no reason this success can't continue, with proper support, recruiting and hiring by the SSRSB Human Resources department, and ongoing community support.

III. Building Use and Configuration (CCS)

Impact Assessment Report (IAR RDES):

The CCS school presently houses Grades P-9. There would be no change in this configuration.

RDES Study Committee Response:**Current CCS Current Class Size & Configuration:**

Grade	Number of Classes	Current Class Size (2007/08)
Primary	2	21
Grade 1	1	22
Grade 1-2 Split	1	20 (assume 50-50 split)
Grade 2	1	26
Grade 3	1	22
Grade 4	2	23
Grade 5	2	20
Grade 6	2	27
Total		273

Projected CCS Class Size & Configuration with the addition of RDES the student population:

Grade	Number of Classes	Est Class Size (Without RDES) (2008/09)	Projected Number of Classes (With RDES)	Projected Class Size
Primary (est)	2	21	2	24
Grade 1	2	21	2	23
Grade 2	1.5	32	Need to inc to 2	39
Grade 3	1.5	36	Need to inc to 2	46
Grade 4	1	22	2	28
Grade 5	2	23	2	25
Grade 6	2	20	2	26
Total	12	260	14	309

Department of Education class size regulations:

- Primary, Grade 1 and Grade 2: Student population not to exceed 25
- Lower-elementary for split classes: Student population not to exceed 20

The addition of RDES students to the CCS population may exceed these regulations.

A recent presentation at Primary Elementary Teachers Association (PETA) has recommended class-sizes of 16-18 for elementary schools. There are numerous studies that show smaller class sizes to be more beneficial for elementary students and program delivery. CCS class sizes are currently significantly larger than recommended. Based on the above numbers, additional classrooms will need to be added to accommodate incoming RDES students in the low/mid grades. The higher elementary grades will experience significantly higher class sizes which will lower the amount of personal attention given to students during the course of a school day. This is a drastic change given the small classes at RDES, and the ongoing success of the multi-age program.

Part 4: Conclusion

In this school review process, the RDES study committee supports the SSRSBs intent to seek opportunities and solutions in the best interest of our students.

"... the school board will make use of this information to make a decision in the best interest of Riverport students"

Elliot Payzant, SSRSB chair , November 25 2008 SSRSB board meeting .

The Department of Education school review process requires 4 factors be considered when identifying schools for review (stated in **bold** print).

1. **Enrolment projections** (39% decrease Dr. Gunn vs 12.5% decrease Census Canada)
2. **Population projections** (9.8% decrease for Lunenburg GSA vs 7.8% decrease for Riverport GSA)
3. **Ability to deliver Public School Program (PSP):** *It is to the credit of the school administration and staff that the educational program is being delivered as it is, with strong support from the school families and community...Dr. J Gunn*
4. **Facility Operations:** \$140,000 increase in operational costs and \$750,000 reduction in revenue to move students to CCS/ 5 years.

The foundation of the RDES formal review process is based on the subjective interpretation of the quantitative data regarding these 4 factors. We have demonstrated these conclusions are fundamentally flawed and require further review. Decisions made on flawed data is not in the "best interest of our students".

With the known asbestos and air quality issues at CCS, the RDES study committee does not support sending RDES students to a school with the known critical health and environmental issues. This is not in the "best interest of our students".

Small schools do work. Our community survey has clearly illustrated the symbiotic relationship between our small school and the community of Riverport. Rural schools need small communities as much as small communities need rural schools. Small schools are in the "best interest of our students".

The RDES Study committee urges the SSRSB to:

1. Objectively re-evaluate the recommendations of the MacDonnell Group and Pinchin LeBlanc reports.
2. Consider the actual school age population projections for the Riverport and District (Census Canada) and the opportunity for small communities and small schools to support each other.
3. Re-evaluate the fiscal merit of keeping RDES open.

The RDES study committee sees the school utilization review of RDES as an opportunity for South Shore Regional School Board to balance fiscal responsibility with community stewardship. We look forward to working with the board to identify what is best for our students and the future students in our area.

Part 5: References

1. *School Review Impact Assessment Report: Riverport and District Elementary School.* May 27, 2008, report to the South Shore Regional School Board, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.
2. MacDonnell Group Consulting Limited Project No. 1022, 2003. *Building Condition Study – Riverport District Consolidated Elementary School*, report to the Southwest Regional School Board, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.

3. Pinchin LeBlanc Project 01-1578. *Asbestos Audit River Port Elementary School (231) Riverport, Nova Scotia*, report to the Southwest Regional School Board, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.
4. Gunn's Leadership Consulting. April 2008. *Program Review: Equitable Access*, report to the South Shore Regional School Board, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.
5. Gunn's Leadership Consulting. February 2008. *School Utilization Study: Phase 2*, report to the South Shore Regional School Board, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.
6. Program Review: Phase I. 2006. *Review of school programming*. South Shore Regional School Board.
7. Roland Genge, Chair, SAC. Letter of correspondence regarding student transfers. October 17 2008
8. Nancy Pynch-Worthylake. Letter of response regarding student transfers. November 3 2008
9. Community Counts website: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/finance/communitycounts/default.asp>
10. Statistics Canada: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/rt-td/index-eng.cfm>
11. Riverport District and Elementary School (RDES) Study Committee community survey: *We Need Your Voice*. Summary document.
12. Pinchin LeBlanc Project 01-1578. *Asbestos Audit Centre Consolidated School (112) Lunenburg, Nova Scotia*, report to the Southwest Regional School Board, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.
13. *School Review Impact Assessment Report: Centre Consolidated School*. May 27, 2008, report to the South Shore Regional School Board, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia

Appendices

RDES Transfer query letter to SSRSB

Response from Nancy Pynch-Worthylake

Voice of the Community Survey Results

Distance in Kilometers Riverport School vs Centre Consolidated School

Appendix A
Distance in kilometres

Riverport School to:

Riverport	5.8
Rose bay	3.8
Kingsburg	8.1
Feltzen South	5.4
Bayport	1.7
Lower LaHave	7.2
East Lahave	8
Middle Lahave	11.5
Grimm Rd at Crouse's Settlement Rd	8.2 (via Tanner Settlement Rd)
Average Distance: 6.6 km one way/13.2 km return	

Centre School to:

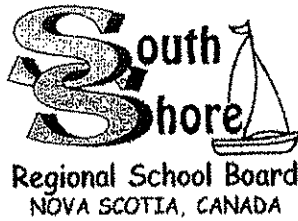
Riverport	14.1
Rose bay	14.2
Kingsburg	18.5
Feltzen South	15.8
Bayport	12.1
Lower LaHave	15.6
East Lahave	13.9
Middle Lahave	11.1
Grimm Rd at Crouse's Settlement Rd	8.3
Average Distance: 13.7 km one way/ 27.4 km return	

WE NEED YOUR VOICE - SURVEY RESULTS
Nov 12/08

Total Survey distributed 500
Surveys returned 137

Results	Parent	Community Member	Total	Total
Surveys returned	18	119	137	27%
Question 1: RDES offers a unique, small-sized educational setting for our community's children.				
Agree	16	103	119	87%
Disagree	1	7	8	6%
No Opinion	1	9	10	7%
Question 2: RDES is important to our community and has a positive impact on our community.				
Agree	17	109	126	92%
Disagree	1	3	4	3%
No Opinion		7	7	5%
Question 3 (a): I support keeping RDES open as our community school.				
Yes	15	99	114	83%
No	2	15	17	12%
Unchecked	1	5	6	4%
For 3 (a) NO responses				
B: until a new school is built	1	5	6	35%
C: Bus to Centre 2009/10	2	10	12	71%

* of the 12 that answered YES to question 3(a) - 9 also answered Question 3 (b) with AGREE



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Nancy Pynch-Worthylake

Superintendent of Schools

Phone: (902) 541-3001

Fax: (902) 541-3055

npynch-worthylake@ssrsb.ca

November 3, 2008

Mr. Roland Genge
Chair of the SAC
Riverport & District Elementary School
General Delivery Riverport
Nova Scotia B0J 2W0

Dear Mr. Genge:

I am writing in response to your letter of October 17, 2008. As per our e-mail correspondence, I will make myself available to speak directly to the SAC. However, I certainly understand with the demands on the committee's time, this is not possible at this point.

In terms of student transfers, the policy and practice of the SSRSB is that students are to attend their community school. I know you are familiar with the transfer policy, and the programs for which students may be granted a transfer. Of particular importance to Riverport would be transfers to Bridgewater Elementary School for Middle Immersion, and transfers to Lunenburg Junior-Senior High School for Intensive French in grade six. Allowing students to transfer for programs is a component of the Board's commitment to equity of programming. However, this does result in students transferring out of their home school, thus having an impact on the home school and programming for students who remain.

As superintendent, I have made a commitment to ensure a thorough and consistent process. I review each transfer application, and seek input from the principals of the schools involved. The family making the request is contacted by a regional staff member. For requests that are program-based, the Coordinator for the level concerned (Elementary, Middle, or High School) reviews the application and makes a recommendation. If there are emotional, social, or other basis for the request, appropriate regional staff members review the application, speak with the principals and the family, and make a recommendation. Once I have received input, I make a decision about the transfer.

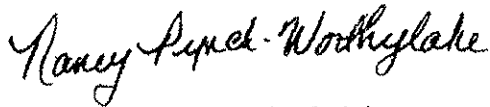
Any transfer request that I deny may be appealed to the Board's Transfer Appeal Committee. I have worked collaboratively with the Committee to track the basis for decisions in order to ensure consistency. Typically, transfers that are approved on appeal are based on specific circumstances related to the student and/or family. This can be the result of experiences with the school, or completely based on the family's particular situation.

While the details of each of the transfers are confidential, each of the requests and appeals is examined as thoroughly as possible. The decision of the Transfer Appeal Committee is final.

In response to your specific question regarding the impact on the home school, I am very aware of the impact of reducing the enrolment of a small school by even one student. The Transfer Appeal Committee is also very cognizant of this, and takes this into account during each appeal. However, the final decision regarding a transfer request is based on the pedagogical needs of the individual student.

I hope this is helpful. I would be more than pleased to meet with the SAC at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Pynch-Worthylake".

Nancy Pynch-Worthylake
Superintendent of Schools

/lf

Riverport District Elementary School (RDES)
SAC & Study Committee

Attn:
Nancy Pynch-Worthylake
Superintendent of Schools
South Shore Regional School Board
October 17 2008

Dear Nancy

On behalf of the RDES SAC & Study Committee, I am writing this letter to formalize our concern regarding the impact of granted transfers for 2008-9 on RDES.

As I am sure you can appreciate, student transfers often have two significant impacts on a school.

- 1) The **loss of a student** impacts the critical mass required to administer the diversity of our public school programming (PSP).
- 2) The **loss of a parent** impacts the pool of volunteers that small schools so heavily depend upon.

At RDES, the 8 transfers that were granted to RDES students in May./ June 2008 has had the following impact:

- 1) **Student numbers:** our student population has decreased by 12% due to transfers alone
- 2) **Volunteer pool:** we have lost 4 core parent volunteers (approx 40% of a core volunteer group)
- 3) **Extracurricular activities and volunteer programs:** the lack of volunteers this has precluded our ability to offer : (insert list)
- 4) **Fund raising:** (insert story)

Although we believe that each of these transfers were appropriately granted in the spirit of the policies and procedures outlined by the SSRSB for the transfer process (criteria on reverse), the RDES SAC membership would like to have an opportunity to discuss our related concerns with you at your earliest convenience


Questions to explore:

Do the transfer criteria and approval process approval criteria have a mechanism for assessing the impact on the following variables:

- Programming for remaining students and school staff
- Busing costs
- Costs of administering the program with lower numbers
- Staff complement

Looking forward, we fully expect the SSRSB to appropriately consider the influence of these granted transfers on the parameters that have been used to identify our school for closure in our recent Identification Report & Impact Assessment.

Looking forward to your correspondence



Roland Genge,
RDES SAC & Study Committee chair
Cc: SSRSB board chair

Appendix:

SSRSB General guidelines for approving student transfer requests: (Policy #195)

1. Students accepted into either the Alternate School or Verge House programs do not require a student transfer.
2. Transportation will not be provided by the School Board outside a school's catchment area.
3. The approval of a student transfer may have no influence on the application of another student from the same family. Consideration will be given if additional reasons are provided.
4. Transfer requests will be processed by the following dates in preparation for the next school year: a). May 30 b). June 20 c). July 31 d). August 30
5. Requests to transfer made for the school year currently in progress will be processed as soon as possible.
6. The Superintendent of Schools will provide a written decision on the transfer request to: a. The party requesting the transfer; b. Both the sending and receiving Principals
7. With the approval of a transfer, the student becomes a student of that school. If that school feeds into another school (i.e. elementary school to a junior high school, junior high to senior high, etc) the student will require a transfer to this new school, or the student will return to the school which serves the area where he/she lives. Principals shall inform such graduating transfer students of this requirement.
8. Approval will not normally be given for more than one student transfer per year per student.
9. A school principal may make application for the Superintendent of Schools to rescind a transfer:
 - a. This application must include the reasons for the request.
 - b. The application process and appeal process will follow the general steps outlined for a student transfer but will reflect an application from a school principal to rescind a student transfer.
10. The Superintendent of Schools will provide the School Board with a summary report of transfer requests as they are processed on a regular basis.
 1. If you can add under "Questions to Explore"
 - a. % of students requesting transfers out of their SSRSB school vs % approved.
 - b. % of approved transfers across all SSRSB schools vs RDES