



School Advisory Council  
Chester Area Middle School  
P. O. Box 440  
Chester, Nova Scotia  
B0J 1J0

## **Response from the Chester Area Middle School to the report, “Transfer of Grade 9 from Chester Area Middle School to Forest Heights Community School.”**

**Directed to the South Shore Regional School Board**

---

Written, amended, approved and accepted,  
by the **School Advisory Council at Chester Area Middle School**

Since the South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB) began to seriously consider a reconfiguration of Chester and New Ross Schools regarding the placement of Grade 9 students, the Chester Area Middle School (CAMS) has been kept “in the loop.” Superintendent Nancy Pynch-Worthylake visited CAMS late in the 2011-12 school year to give the School Advisory Council (SAC) – as well as the administration and staff - a “heads up” about the SSRSB's (and by proxy, the Ministry of Education's) investigations and intentions. Dr. James Gunn has been front and centre during the Fall of this school year (2012-13) and for all of those efforts the SAC at CAMS is grateful.

Open and honest communications between all stakeholders in this issue continues to be a hallmark of a democratically minded process brought forward by the SSRSB. We encourage the SSRSB to continue its policies of open communications and its forthright portrayal of the issues at hand.

The SAC at CAMS recognizes that the following quote from the above named report represents the governing ideas of same: “[T]he rationale behind this study is to consider the most appropriate placement of grade 9 students in terms of programming and social/emotional health; in other words, where their needs are best met.” And indeed the report spends considerable time investigating and describing the possible outcomes of locating the grade 9 student at Forest Heights Community School (FHCS).

The SAC at CAMS spent a good deal of time at their December meeting debating the merits of moving the grade 9 students especially regarding “where

their needs are best met." All members of the SAC were willing to consider the merits of the arguments put forward with respect to the transfer report.

Several members of the CAMS SAC expressed concerns about the preparedness of FHCS and that programming and preparation for the addition of Grade 9 students was at best, at a highly preliminary state. Future investments in FHCS have only recently been announced; the school is in a transitional position.

The transfer report briefly addresses the challenges a transfer of grade 9 students would have on CAMS, and it was this part of the report that the SAC eventually focused on, and that is because they are considerable and dramatic.

By the time we had finished our deliberations, the SAC at CAMS agreed that there exists no evidence in the transfer report that CAMS would be improved by the transfer of grade 9 students to FHCS, and in fact, we agreed that the school's overall ability to deliver all aspects of education would be greatly diminished by its implementation.

It is our belief that CAMS already employs a middle school philosophy, that it is committed to inquiry based learning, that its extra-curricular and co-curricular programs match those of other schools in the SSRSB, and that all the evidence we have tells us grade 9 students are excelling at CAMS.

Our school has concluded an exhausting but highly fruitful Accreditation process. It is worthwhile at this point to quote from the Accreditation Committee's report to the CAMS SAC: [CAMS] showed an improvement in many areas such as student suspension rates, detention rates, student placements, affective use of assignment completion referrals and student attendance. Overall, the school is a better place for students now than when the process started in 2008." The chairperson of our SAC can also attest to this assessment as after spending close to 7 years on the SAC, he has witnessed a marked improvement in this school.

Our school provides an environment where our students are well rounded and have proven opportunities for academic and personal success. Our school is more than a place of education, it is a tightly knit community and as quoted above, the accreditation data shows that students at our school have gone from strength to strength over the past few years.

We are concerned that removing the grade 9's will impact on our school community. It will change the dynamic, culture and ethos of the school that staff and students have worked hard to develop and foster and greatly improve for the past five to six years.

We believe that CAMS is an excellent school; we believe that it will continue to be excellent; and we believe that, as a matter of principle, excellence should not be sacrificed for any reason.

Given the above, the SAC at CAMS cannot offer approval for the transfer report.

Respectfully,

Warren Laws, Chairperson

Gina Green, Secretary

Anne MacDonald

Blaine Bond

Jackie Russell-Bond

Barbara Fisher

Terri Lynn Melvin

Debbie McAuley

Blaine MacKay

And the staff, faculty and administration of the CAMS who serve faithfully on the SAC