**Facilities Update**

As much as this is often the perception, School Council isn’t all about the money. One of our vital roles is in representing parent voices in correspondence with administration and the Board.

Last week, the Chairs of Roden and Equinox’ School Councils, together with Ms Pollock, met Trustee Jennifer Story, Superintendent Mary-Jane Mcnamara and representatives of the TDSB Planning department. We had a fascinating and productive meeting, including a tour of the building.

The main issue on the agenda was the question of space as Roden’s population continues to grow. Our building houses roughly 465 Roden students, 200 Equinox students, on-site childcare and the Early ON centre. Equinox’ population is capped by TDSB in order to reduce the risk of overcrowding, but Roden is a neighborhood school, so is expected to house any child living within our geographical boundaries. With recent changes to the area’s demographics together with anticipated future developments, that means we are now a large and growing population.

TDSB has official numbers of ‘capacity’ for every school building. Those numbers are very high by most people’s comfort standards, so when 80% capacity is reached, the Planning department, together with the Principal and the rest of the Board, start looking at steps to be taken restrict further growth. There are a series of options, starting with closing the school to option attendance and passing through repurposing rooms to adding portables. Removing facilities (whether that means relocating Equinox, the Childcare or the EarlyON Centre) is considered a *last resort*and everyone was keen to stress that those are not on the table for our school. Roden will be closed to optional attendance next year; rest assured there will be several layers of changes, many of them very noticeable before any of these facilities would be relocated.

As well as administrative rooms, we are entitled to retain our gym and Library, plus one relief room. In Roden/Equinox’s case, that would almost certainly be the large music room on the main floor. Roden is fortunate in that all three of these rooms are very generous in our school. They are protected. However, we are currently using two classrooms as a dedicated Roden French room and an Equinox Music / French room. In addition, two of our Grade 6-8 rooms are actually double rooms with the divider removed. And there is a possibility that our over-sized Staff Room might be divided into a Classroom and a smaller Staff room. Nobody wants to take away these valuable spaces, and in particular everyone present agreed that 38 Grade 7/8s would not comfortably fit into a single class area, but those are some of the options for expansion to avoid class sizes exceeding the official caps and allow for expansion.

The Principal will always have control over which spaces would be used, and Ms Pollock has a number of creative ideas to better use the space available to us – just as she did when converting the Early ON centre into a new Equinox Kindergarten room. However, if she gets allocated an extra homeroom teacher, she will need to find somewhere to put that class.

To answer a couple of specific Council comments:

* As mentioned above, everyone is keen to keep the double rooms for our older students.
* The common areas at either end of the 2nd and 3rd floors would NOT be converted into classroom space. However, more storage may need to be created in these areas as the school is severely short on storage and that problem will get worse as closest have already been converted into a music practice room and Special Ed and ESL rooms.
* There is no rule that a classroom is required to have windows. The only rule seems to be >700 square feet.
* Yes, band and strings are currently rehearsing in the ‘Girls Dressing Room’ – the room at the top of the gym stairs (This is never used as a dressing room. The parallel Boys Dressing Room is a storage space / dumping ground!). While this is not a great space, and would not be large enough to house the groups Ms Pollock has ambitions to recruit, it is working at the moment, and there is nowhere else for them to practice at present.

Other Issues

The long-running saga of carpet replacement is not yet over. Ms Pollock, with Council, continues to push for the upstairs and Library carpets to be replaced.

Most of you will also be aware that the new heating system, installed over the summer, has gone through some regulation challenges. The second floor, in particular, has been extremely hot. Our new head Caretaker, Darren, and Ms Pollock, have been in daily communication with Facilities and each week seems to bring a new theory and a slightly improved environment. All classrooms have fans and teachers continue to find creative ways to help students cope with the temperature, but please also remember to send your children in layered clothing, especially as the outside temperature drops.