

1135 Prospect Street
Fredericton NB
E3B 3B9

April 28, 2023

To the DEC Members,

The Parent School Support Committee (PSSC) of Devon Middle School is requesting that a new replacement middle school be considered a priority for major capital improvement for the 2023-2024 year.

History

Devon Middle School is 74 years old. Construction on Devon Middle School began in 1947. **The school opened its doors in September 1950.**

Current Situation

Currently, the school is over capacity with 607 students, which require 30 classrooms for instruction, a minimum of 2 classrooms for students with exceptionalities, 1 classroom for EST-Resource (3 teachers share this space), 1 staff room and 1 space used for a library. This does not take into account the other professionals working in the building. Devon Middle has 3 EST school counselors, 1 Behavior Intervention Worker, 1 Intervention Worker, 1 English as an Additional Language Mentor, Child and Youth staff who require a private meeting space and weekly meetings from Social Development which also require a private meeting space. This also does not include space required for the schools 3 administration staff.

To meet the current needs, the staff room was converted into a classroom, the library was reduced to allow for space for a staff room, and the locker rooms were transformed into an office space and teaching location for 2 staff members. The school currently has 4 modular classrooms and there has been approval for an additional 3 modular classrooms. These modular classrooms will take up valuable parking space and will also result in the loss of outdoor play space for the students.

Community and Future Growth Concerns

The communities that feed Devon Middle School continue to grow. The City of Fredericton's 25 Year Growth Strategy and Development Plan (2017) predicted a minimum growth of 6,000-7,000 people in these communities. Recently, (February 14th, 2023) a building development of 700 residential units was approved to begin development on Cuffman Street in Marysville. These new residents will feed into Devon Middle School; however, the current school structure will not be able to support them.

In addition to future growth, we have numerous concerns in regard to the challenges that our students and staff are currently facing due to the lack of classrooms and space. **Due to the lack of professional**

space, the gym locker rooms were turned into teacher's office/learning spaces. Students can no longer change into proper attire for gym class as there are no dedicated changing areas. As Devon Middle School was designed for a smaller number of students, the gymnasium and balcony areas cannot safely accommodate the entire student body. During indoor lunch days, not all students are able to enjoy the gym and balcony, some must spend their lunch breaks in classrooms. There are also no lockers provided in the modular classroom areas making it challenging for students to be prepared for class.

Spatial and Resource Concerns

Devon Middle School is the only middle school in Fredericton that does not have a seating area in the cafeteria. Students must have lunch in their classrooms, resulting in reduced opportunities for students to mingle with their friends. Lunch in classrooms also requires more teacher supervision than it would if there was a cafeteria. This results in more supervision required by teachers and less down time for staff. With no dedicated space to contain students in the cafeteria, students wait in line in the hallway which causes congestion in the hallway.

The lack of classroom space creates problems for staff as there is not enough available space for students who have exceptionalities. Oftentimes staff is sharing this space which can make programming challenging. There are also very few spaces for students who require an alternate space to meet their needs. **Currently, the School Administrator's office spaces are being used to house students who are removed from class. This is not an optimal situation for the students or staff. It is also not of benefit to the student (s) to remain in class as disruptions can prevent/distract other students from learning and the individual student is not getting the dedicated resources they require.**

The current modular classrooms at Devon Middle School are not accessible to students with mobility issues. The new modular classrooms that are arriving also may not be accessible as it has been shared that this is not a requirement. This means that school administration must ensure that classes which contain students with accessibility issues are not in modular classrooms. This results in yearly shuffling of classrooms.

The National Building Code of Canada states that there should be 11 toilets per 250 students. Devon Middle School currently has 22 toilets for 607 students. The parents of Devon Middle School feel it is not ethical for the students to not have access to the minimum number of required washrooms.

Studies conducted by the Government of New Brunswick show that only 54% of Middle School students in the province are reading at what the Government has deemed "appropriate reading levels (2016)." Access to a school library that contains a wide variety of books to capture the interests of all students is an important part of promoting literacy. Although Devon Middle School has done fundraising in recent years to purchase books and revitalize the library space, due to the current demand for classroom space, the library has been reduced in size and availability to students. Students can no longer visit the library on their lunch break to spend time perusing books or doing homework.

As the population of students has increased at Devon Middle School, so have the number of teachers and support staff as well as the amount of public (parents) that visit the school. **The amount of parking**

spaces has not increased to match this demand as there is no room on the school property for expansion without taking away from the children's play space. Staff and parents must park along the roads that surround the school which is concerning as it causes traffic interruptions (in winter the roads are very narrow due to snowbanks) and requires staff, parents and students to walk along the road to access the vehicles.

The walls of Devon Middle School contain asbestos. This greatly limits any renovations or upgrades that can be made to the school. An example of this is the area used for the breakfast program. The Devon Middle School Home and School Association has been fundraising with the goal of updating the Breakfast Program area to house a larger fridge, a more efficient counter space to prepare food, and to upgrade the sink and pantry area. This program feeds approximately 125 children every morning and it is challenging to do in the current space. There was a desire to increase the functionality of the room for the volunteers to prepare and serve breakfast. However, the committee learned that the plans would have to be adjusted as the walls contain asbestos. The desired modifications can no longer be carried out meaning that the space will not be as functional as hoped. This is not the first time that asbestos in the school has caused issues. Please see Appendix 2 for articles from the Daily Gleaner.

The students of Devon Middle School have not been able to use the Soccer Pitch for several years due to the sink holes that have been a recurring issue on the grounds of the school. This limits the amount of time available for practicing and playing the sport as Devon Middle School students must practice on fields belonging to other middle schools. This also has an impact on school pride as Devon Middle students do not have an opportunity to be the home team and showcase their school and fields. The school did have support from The City of Fredericton and Anglophone West School District in the spring of 2022 to fix the problem. So far things look good and the school hopes to return to using the fields again.

Summary

Devon Middle School is over 70 years old. A lot has changed in education since the time of its design and construction and the school currently does not meet the needs of the staff and students. **Devon Middle School is an aging structure that was designed for a smaller community. Materials contained in the walls (asbestos) and the lack of available space around the school prevent the needed remodeling/updates that the school requires to meet the current needs of its 607 students. A new middle school is required to meet the needs of the expanding Northside community.** The parents of Devon Middle School support the current administration and the construction of a new school. **In the words of one parent: "I was thinking about it from a teacher's standpoint and if we are wanting to create 21st century learners who are problem solvers, community leaders and critical thinkers we need facilities that support the design of this. We need common learning spaces, break out rooms, learning labs etc. We also need supportive spaces for the mental health side (social and emotional). This could also tie into the inclusion model and supports meeting learners where they in terms of learning (English or French)." Sarah Bird Snow, Educator & Devon Resident.** Please see Appendix 2 for additional parent feedback. The PSSC Committee have met with Northside MLA, Honorable Jill Green, who supports our request for a new school. The school principal has had positive dialogue with our

current DEC representative, Michael Mazzerole. **A space audit was conducted by Pascal Landry from EECD, along with ASD- West Superintendent David McTimoney have both shared that the space issues are a concern and Devon should be considered a priority for replacement.** The question now is when. We look forward to providing the DEC Committee with a tour of Devon Middle School on April 27, 2023, where we will highlight and discuss the challenges and concerns that we have listed above.

Regards,
The Devon Middle School PSSC Committee

Appendix 1 – News Articles

Article 1: CBC.CA, publish date: January 7, 2015

Devon Middle School remains closed over air quality concerns

Asbestos issues addressed, but air circulation, spore count problems continue after flooding

CBC News · Posted: Jan 07, 2015 1:20 PM AST | Last Updated: January 7, 2015

Devon Middle School in Fredericton will remain closed for the rest of the week as officials struggle to deal with air quality concerns caused by last week's flooding.

Asbestos issues have been addressed appropriately, with test results "well within acceptable limits," according to a statement issued by the school late Wednesday afternoon.



Sections of Devon Middle School were damaged last week after a water pipe burst. (Fredericton Fire Department/Twitter) But air quality tests have identified some problems with "air circulation and spore counts."

Details about the results are not divulged, but they are "not drastic," the statement said.

School officials have decided, in consultation with the Department of Health, to try some alternate forms of remediation and then test again, it said.

"We are hopeful that the results will be better." Cleanup and repairs will also continue into the coming days, the statement said.

If the school has to remain closed beyond the end of the week to ensure safety, a contingency plan will be put in place to get students back to class as quickly as possible, it said.

School officials had hoped to be able to reopen on Wednesday. The school was flooded last week after a water pipe burst. It caused extensive damage to the library and most of its books, as well as some administration offices. The gym is expected to remain closed for at least another week. Meanwhile, an online fundraising campaign to help the school is underway. So far, 46 people have contributed a total of more than \$3,000 on gofundme.com.

The school has 491 students in Grades 6 to 8.

Students in other Anglophone West School District schools returned to class on Tuesday, following the Christmas holidays.

Article 2: CBC.CA, publish date: January 9, 2015

Flooded Devon Middle School will be safe before it reopens

'No red flags' yet over asbestos, air quality, medical officer of health says

CBC News · Posted: Jan 09, 2015 11:47 AM AST | Last Updated: January 9, 2015

A public health official is reassuring parents of students at Devon Middle School in Fredericton that measures are being taken to ensure the school environment is safe.

Tests done after flooding last week found air quality problems with mold spores and circulation.

There was asbestos in some of the building materials, but medical officer of health Dr. Cristin Mueck says she sees no red flags in the results so far.

"There's not a lot of literature out there on levels in children. For that reason, we take the lowest possible level and lower it even more because we do want to make sure that children in particular are kept safe," she said.

Mueck says regular air testing would create a baseline, but wouldn't be of much use without context.

She expects results of comparison tests from elsewhere in the school in the next day or two.

Staff will be on call this weekend to interpret them and help school officials make the decision about whether classes can resume on Monday, she said.

The school was flooded last week after a water pipe burst, resulting in extensive damage to the library and most of its books, as well as some administration offices. Students have yet to resume classes after the Christmas break.

Appendix 2 – Parent Quotes

"This school should have been replaced 20 years ago. There is **no proper cafeteria with a classroom currently being used for such purpose**. The "library" is a couple bookshelves as there is no room. **There is no adequate breakout space for dealing with special needs cases**. The school still has asbestos tiles. It **has mice infestation regularly**. It is overcrowded with more portables being added - but no additional bathrooms?! It lacks proper access for wheelchairs. The school does have an excellent administration who is clearly stretching every ounce of potential from the space - but this is beyond salvage. I can't help but reflect that IF the school was located in a higher socioeconomic community in Fredericton this would have been addressed a long time ago. Devon is a thriving growing community we are proud of and it is long overdue to have a middle school facility with the same basic amenities as other schools in the province."

Adam Harris
Parent

"Hello, I know my son is having a great year at DMS, that is because of the hard-working staff. But he often jokingly says "the building is older than my grandparents". **The community has grown substantially over the past decade and will continue to grow with the new elementary school & recently approved 600 unit building complex that will start construction within the next year**. That will make our school population skyrocket! I would love to see a new school facility for our students & future students. That being said, I do love how Devon is a community school and is doing a great job offering my son a positive year."

Sue Stickles
Parent

"The facility desperately needs replacement - **there aren't even change rooms for the gym.**"

Brent Hawrylak
Parent

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and concerns about the great need for a replacement building for Devon Middle School. We have had three of our children already go through Devon Middle and our fourth is currently in grade 7.

Thus, we have experienced the wonderful administration and staff who serve us so well at this school. However, we also have first-hand experience of the limitations and liabilities of this current facility.

There is a long list of troublesome issues that need to be documented, including the lack of a cafeteria, the loss of our library due to lack of space issues, locker rooms that had to become offices, portable classrooms that have accessibility issues, the lack of change rooms and washrooms for sports and after school and in school activities, the lack of parking which produces safety issues for both in school and after school activities, the lack of a proper playing field for sports and having to be relocated to a different location, issues of asbestos preventing needed physical changes, Band-Aid solutions for such things as ventilation, heating, and not to mention issues with mice, overcrowded hallways and gym/balcony areas. How do we address teaching and learning in 2023 and beyond in a facility that was built just after World War Two?

These issues are serious enough, but looking at the demographics of growth in this area and new elementary schools being needed in the Devon area, and the north side growing more and more, yikes, our problems will just multiply!

Therefore, the need becomes even more an immediate necessity, and not something projected 10 to 15

years into the future. As one who was on the PSSC at South Devon Elementary many years ago and on the planning team for the then new Gibson Neill Memorial elementary School, I've already been through the process and the frustration of seeing a school that we knew was going to be built too small. After opening, classrooms supposedly for specialized activities/areas, immediately were changed into regular classrooms, portables were added after year one, not enough parking, no sidewalks, etc.

Many of our concerns were shared and pleaded for years ahead of construction at GNMES yet seemingly fell on deaf ears. I do not want history repeated (I could also share a similar story about Leo Hayes High School) as many of those problems could have been avoided and saved both money and stress ahead of time.

We want the best possible learning environment for our students, and the physical building determines and influences many variables to reach that goal. **This current building is detrimental to the learning of our students, and negatively affects the efforts of our staff and administration. We want and need a building that is safe, accessible, adaptable, and provides room for growth.**

I urge all those involved in this decision-making process to please prioritize Devon Middle School by providing a new building quickly, and one that will be big enough to handle growth and the expansion of our community.

We thank you for your attention and listening to our concerns, frustrations, and struggles.

Joe and Angela Crummey
Parents