

EMSB won't open new school, but offers plan to ease West End overcrowding

A building could be used as a junior campus for kindergarten to Grade 2, but that could split up siblings who are in elementary grades.

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Edinburgh in Montreal West is operating at 127 per cent capacity, Merton in Côte-Saint-Luc is at 107 per cent and Willingdon in N.D.G. is 90 per cent full. *JOHN MAHONEY / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

With kindergarten registration two weeks away, the English Montreal School Board (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/emsb-chair-ordered-to-apologize-amid-ethics-code-violations>) has shelved plans to open a new school in Notre Dame de Grâce and will instead use an existing building to try to solve overcrowding problems at some of its most popular French immersion schools (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/french-immersion-robotics-and-flexible-seating-boosting-enrolment-at-emsb-schools>).

The plan to open a Français Plus school, which would have provided students with French instruction from kindergarten to Grade 4, was put off after representatives of Edinburgh, Willingdon and Merton schools told commissioners that their overcrowding issues need to be addressed.

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At a meeting last week, the governing boards of the three schools were told that one of the schools could take over a building on Coronation Ave. and use it as a junior campus for kindergarten to Grade 2.

If one of the schools accepts the board's offer, students who are currently in kindergarten and Grade 1 at that school would move to the Coronation site. Students in Grade 3 to 6 would remain in the existing school, which means that siblings could be separated.



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"We want to hear from each school about whether they're interested in the concept," board spokesperson Michael Cohen said. "The parents have to make a decision."

Edinburgh is the school that needs the space the most, Cohen said.


The popular French immersion school only has space for two kindergarten classes for the 2019-2020 school year. With siblings receiving priority, the school will only have about 12 spots available when kindergarten registration starts Feb. 4. Sibling registration is the week before.

Last February, some parents camped outside overnight to try to obtain one of the coveted spots.

The Edinburgh governing board had asked the EMSB if it could take over nearby Mountainview School, which is 400 metres away.

But the school board decided that the at-risk high school students who attend Mountainview need their own building. "We wish we had another option for them, but we don't," Cohen said.

Edinburgh's governing board held an emergency meeting Monday night to discuss the board's offer of a junior campus.

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"We need to get input from parents as this is a major decision for Edinburgh," said Michael Rodger, president of the school's governing board.

The governing boards of the three schools will discuss the plan and the EMSB will make a final decision Feb. 20.

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If one of the three French immersion schools takes over the Coronation Ave. site, students who attend two alternative high schools in the building — Focus and Outreach — would move to James Lyng High School in St-Henri.

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The EMSB is also proceeding with plans to move more than 700 students out of Westmount (<https://domain.com/tag/westmount>)_Park Elementary School for two years so the building can undergo major renovations slated to cost about \$12.5 million.

The students will be split between Marymount and St. John Bosco. Both buildings will have Pre-K to Grade 6 so that siblings can remain together.

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