

Parents at EMSB's Edinburgh School seek modular classrooms to ease overcrowding

More than 400 parents at the Montreal West school have signed a petition against opening a junior campus in N.D.G.

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The overcrowding problem at Edinburgh School in Montreal West has forced it to cut its library space in half, hold music classes on a stage in the gym and have the science teacher walk from class to class pushing a cart full of experiments. *ALLEN MCINNIS / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

Parents at Edinburgh School want the English Montreal School Board to buy four modular classrooms to solve overcrowding problems (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/emsb-wont-open-new-school-but-offers-plan-to-ease-west-end-overcrowding>) at the popular French Immersion school (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/french-immersion->

robotics-and-flexible-seating-boosting-enrolment-at-emsb-schools)in Montreal West.

The proposal will be presented to parents at an open governing board meeting on Thursday at 7 p.m.

The EMSB has already turned down a proposal from the school's governing board to take over Mountainview School, a seven-minute walk away in Côte-St-Luc.

Instead, the board has suggested that Edinburgh open a junior campus in a former elementary school on Coronation Ave. in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

The plan would mean students from kindergarten to Grade 2 would attend school at the junior campus and the remaining students would stay at Edinburgh, which means siblings would be split up.

Almost 390 parents have signed a petition against the plan.

"Parents who have reached out to the governing board have told us that the prospect of having one child at one school and another child at another school is ripping them (the parents) apart," said Michael Rodger, chairperson of the school's governing board.

"Edinburgh as we know it would cease to exist if you split it up into two different schools. We owe it to the parents to find a solution where we stay under one roof."

The school's official capacity is 330 and there are about 400 students. The overcrowding problem has forced the school to cut its library space in half, hold music classes on a stage in the gym and have the science teacher walk from class to class pushing a cart full of experiments.

Teachers can only use the staff room during lunch hour because it's often occupied by students receiving tutoring.

Three options — creating a junior campus, buying modular classrooms or maintaining the status quo — will be discussed at Thursday night's meeting.

Meg Catalano, a parent who is spearheading the campaign, said they started the petition to unite the parents and make sure they are aware of the pros and cons of the junior campus option and the status quo.

Some prospective parents may support a junior campus because they want to get into Edinburgh, but they need to understand they will be in a separate building, she said.

"We are trying to explain that we would be creating a divide in our community," said Catalano, who has one child in the school and has just registered a sibling.

"Edinburgh will not be the same if we have a junior campus. Our resources, our volunteers and support staff will be stretched."

She said she wants the new parents to lobby for modular classrooms "so we can keep all the parents and families united."

A final decision will have to be made quickly because kindergarten registration starts on Monday.

Siblings of Edinburgh students began registering this week. Last year, some parents began camping outside the school the night before registration to try and secure a spot for their child.

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