**Presentation to the Park West School Advisory Council (SAC)**

**Presented and submitted by Laura Ankcorn**

For your reference, I’m providing an annotated bibliography of research on the effects of class size. I am also passing out a newsletter from Alberta which provides a summary.

The research is clear - larger class sizes translate to poorer long-term outcomes – for health, academic achievement, and socio-economic status. Furthermore, large class sizes have a disproportionate negative impact on low-income and minority populations, of which we have a high proportion here at Park West.

Class size has proven to be one of the strongest predictors of long term success – more so than the teacher to student ratio, which indicates that adding “overcap” teachers, like we have had here, does not produce the same outcomes as smaller class sizes.

Class sizes of 20 or less demonstrate a substantial improvement to long term outcomes, particularly for the early elementary grades. This is why the mandated class cap in Nova Scotia is set at 20 for these grade levels. The improved outcomes of lower class sizes diminish in the upper grades, which is why class caps are higher at these levels.

The government has allowed the flexibility of 2 more children beyond this cap. This flexibility has been built in so an extra class or multiple split classes don’t have to be created in the case enrolment is 1 or 2 children over the cap. It does not mean that that this hard cap is an acceptable limit.

I would like to recommend this committee receive regular reports on class sizes including the number of classes over cap and those over hard cap. The cap is where we want to be, as it is at that number the positive effects of smaller class sizes are most evident. Furthermore, we know that if we are nearing the “hard cap” we will soon be exceeding it, as we typically have more kids coming in to the school than leaving over the course of the year.

Park West School is the most overcrowded school in the province and one of the most overcrowded in the country. Overcrowding in schools unto itself brings a variety of concerns – the most studied of which is the effect of larger class sizes. Other schools within the HRCE and across the country are making changes to ensure their children have access to class sizes and environments that will support their learning and long-term success while they await the construction of new schools to manage overcrowding and increasing enrolment.

Given the mandate of this council is to “work in the best interest of the children at our school for their future success”. I urge you to reconsider your recommendation to not move a grade to another school. Moving one grade would allow all of our students to have the benefit of the class sizes that are mandated for them, as they do in all other schools across the province. Class size matters, there is no question of its importance and impact on the future success of our children.

Thank you. Can I answer any questions?

***Question for the SAC:***

Late last spring, the HRCE offered a solution to enable our school to meet class caps and help ease the severity of the overcrowding. Why did this council refuse this opportunity?

*Note: In June 2019, the HRCE provided the SAC an option to move the grade 9 class to either Fairview Junior High or Halifax West High School. The Halifax West option would have provided the least disruption to the school and the grade 9 students.*

Points for the SAC to Consider:

* Halifax West High School remains under capacity, while Park West is grossly overcrowded. A school is considered “severely” overcrowded when it exceeds 125%, Park West is currently at 145%.
* There are at least 5 high schools within the HRCE with a grade configuration of 9-12, this is not a new concept.
* Adding 2 portables to Halifax West would have enabled the school to maintain their current programming, while accommodating the grade 9 class. Even with the addition of the grade 9 class, they would have remained under capacity.
* The new junior high for the Clayton Park – Fairview area will not be ready for another 3 to 5 years.
* The Basinview Elementary School SAC supported moving their grade 6 class to the junior high when they were at 117% capacity, the SAC chair has stated she will support moving the grade 5 class should the new school not come soon.
* Last year, there was no other school in the province exceeding class caps to the extent we were at Park West. These are measured as of September 30th. At the time, we had 9 classes over hard cap. By June, there were an estimated 14-15 classes exceeding hard cap at Park West.