

Briefing Note

To: District Education Council
From: Derek O'Brien, Superintendent
Date: October 1, 2025

Subject: Sustainability Study – White Head Elementary School

Purpose: To provide the DEC with the recent background of White Head Elementary School and to recommend a sustainability study according to EECD Policy 409

Issue

White Head Elementary School has experienced declining enrolment over the past decades and is at a point where the student population is two students. Since 2022, we have struggled to find a certified teacher. Providing an equitable education program is no longer possible.

Background

- White Head Elementary serves a small island community and has experienced a steady decline in student enrolment over the past two decades.
- Around 2015, ASD-S consulted the community and recommended a reconfiguration from a Kindergarten–Grade 5 school to a Kindergarten–Grade 4 school due to the difficulty recruiting a qualified teacher to deliver the Intensive French program at Grades 4 and 5.
- In the 2021–2022 school year, the school operated with four (4) students, 1 teacher, and 1 Educational Assistant.
- In 2022–2023, enrolment dropped to two (2) students, and the district was unable to recruit a certified teacher. As a temporary solution, the Educational Assistant was hired under a Contract “C” teaching arrangement. This was not financially viable for the employee and conflicted with her CUPE contract and career path, making it an unsustainable solution.
- In 2023–2024, the district was again unable to recruit a certified teacher or find a qualified candidate for a local teaching permit. As a result, the two students were relocated to Grand Manan Community School to ensure continuity of learning.
- In both the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 school years, the two students continue to attend Grand Manan Community School, currently enrolled in Grade 1 and Grade 4
- The district is aware of two students on White Head who have been home-schooled prior to 2020.
- At this time, no other school-aged children or children approaching school age have been identified, but this will be further explored during the upcoming community consultation process.

Next Steps

- DEC consider this recommendation to direct the Superintendent to conduct a sustainability study according to EECD Policy 409, Sections 6.5 and 6.6 (EECD Policy 409 attached).
- Chair of DEC inform the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, as per EECD Policy 409, Section 6.4.4, that our DEC intends to study the school's sustainability.