

N.D.G.'s Willingdon School keen on annex to move Grade 5, 6 classes

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Willingdon is operating at 90 per cent capacity, with 549 students. *JOHN MAHONEY / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

A popular French immersion school in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce wants to open a senior campus in an under-utilized school building because of increased enrolment (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/emsb-wont-open-new-school-but-offers-plan-to-ease-west-end-overcrowding>).

Administrators and teachers at Willingdon School say taking over the former St. Ignatius of Loyola school will increase its student body and help maintain such programs as music, science, computers and resource help.

Willingdon's population has jumped by just over 100 students over the past five years (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/french-immersion-robotics-and-flexible-seating-boosting-enrolment-at-emsb-schools>) and the school is operating at 90 per cent capacity. There are 549 students at the school on Terrebonne St.

The additional students mean that two classes are sharing the gym and a kindergarten class shares space with the extended day program.

The school is proposing to move its Grade 5 and Grade 6 students to the senior campus on Coronation and Somerled Aves. in N.D.G.

In a letter sent to parents, the administration said it would insist that busing is made available to the senior campus and that the two campuses would have staggered start times so siblings could take the bus together.

"As the school becomes too crowded and resources too stretched, we need to be able to look beyond our narrow geography and imagine the potential of another campus," the letter says.

The students would have access to soccer fields, a park with play structures and green space. The Coronation Ave. site has fully equipped kitchens, which could be used for science and health classes.

Willingdon parents were invited to tour the school Monday night.

Commissioners at the English Montreal School Board have offered the building to Willingdon and to two other schools experiencing overcrowding: Edinburgh in Montreal West and Merton in Côte-St-Luc.

The Edinburgh governing board and many parents have rejected the offer of a campus and have asked the EMSB to install four modular classrooms (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/parents-at-emsbs-edinburgh-school-seek-modular-classrooms-to-ease-overcrowding>) on its grounds to solve its overcrowding problem.

The Montreal West school is operating at 123 per cent capacity. A spokesperson for Merton School was not available.

The board has asked the schools to consult with parents and report back to the council this week. A decision is expected to be made at the school board meeting on Feb. 20.

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