



Major work at FACE

Update on the work of the *Comité de Vigie de FACE* (CVF - FACE Monitoring Committee)
April 2018

Dear parents and members of the FACE community,

As you know, your representatives on the Comité de vigie de FACE (CVF) have been meeting regularly since December, 2017, to prepare for the eventuality of the relocation of our school. You should have received two communications to this effect by now, one in June and the other in December of 2017. If this is not the case, please write to ceecoleface@gmail.com so we can send them to you.

The meetings of the months of January, February and March allowed members of the Comité to proceed with various analyses. Below is an overview of our work so far, and, even further down, an invitation to contribute.

Presentation of past and forthcoming work

Since 2012, more than \$25 million has been invested in our building, a third of that sum to secure the exterior cladding and foundations. The structure dates from 1914, and despite certain renovations (most notably the ventilation), the original fixtures are still in use. The pipes, the plaster of the interior walls, the insufficient electrical capacity, not to mention the water infiltration that is damaging the walls, overhangs and main facade, are all factors contributing to a progressive degradation. For the moment the health and safety of occupants is assured, but all of this is subject to annual inspections, rather than the quinquennial ones of the past. The work that has been done in the last few years was urgent maintenance only, to keep the building operational.

The required work ahead of us is thus significant and complicated by several factors:

- 1- a particularly old building with heritage considerations;
- 2- a building downtown with very little space around it;
- 3- a very large building that is fully occupied.

If the sums requested are allocated, we are facing a minimum of six to eight years of renovation. Among the members of the CVF, no one believes that this work is feasible in “cohabitation” with the school population – in other words, while students and



staff are still using the building, even partially. How would we divide up the school, with all its major facilities (gymnasium, cafeteria, auditorium) and its asymmetry (large music rooms versus smaller classrooms)? How would we determine which students & teachers leave and which stay? How would we assure the safety and well-being of those who remained? Think of the noise, dust, machinery and constant disruptions of a construction site in progress. In our eyes, these are serious security risks to put upon our children and teachers, not to mention the fact a cohabitation would prolong the time it takes to accomplish the work.

We must therefore face facts: a relocation is inevitable.

When? That is another question that we are not yet able to answer.

Analysis of scenarios:

Our community is tight knit, and that is more than just a metaphor for how much we care for each other. École FACE is unique for its double special vocation: fine arts and the cooperation between the CSDM and EMSB, not to mention that it encompasses the primary right up to the secondary level. As a practical matter, that duality means teachers of subjects related to fine arts (and among them, mainly the music teachers) instruct both primary and secondary students, as well as CSDM and EMSB pupils. In addition, the students of the two boards share everything: the library, the gym, the cafeteria, classrooms, the daycare service and the school yard. For all of these reasons, our top priority is to ensure that the relocation occurs in a manner that keeps us all together, in one place.

That said, FACE is enormous: 1236 students, 58 class groups, well over 100 personnel, a collection of several hundreds of musical instruments and countless assortments of scores; sets, costumes and theatre accessories; large quantities of art supplies... We must consider that staying all together may be logistically impossible. So we have asked ourselves the question: which is more important, maintaining the cohabitation between secondary and primary? Or the EMSB and CSDM? In our view, it's the latter that should be the absolute priority; if the CSDM and EMSB sides are separated during a temporary relocation, there is a high risk that we will not manage to reconstitute our environment once the construction is finished. Over the years, staff changes, habits evolve, know-how is lost... We want to avoid all this! Under this scenario, FACE would thus move to two different locations, primary at one site, secondary at the other. Preferably, these two locations would be as close to each other as possible.

Portrait of FACE families:

Some 41 % of you responded to the poll prepared by the CVF and conducted during March Break in order to give us a precise idea of how our families live the FACE reality. The analysis of the responses showed that it was a representative sample, and



we have some interesting statistics to bolster our arguments when it comes time to defend our positions:

- The majority of families have two children at the school, generally both at the primary level; 70% of these families come by public transit
- 21% of our families have a child in both primary and secondary
- 47% of our population lives to the east of the school and 32% to the west
 - 59% live in the natural catchment areas of the school (Plateau, Ville-Marie, Sud-Ouest)
 - 23% live in “bordering” neighbourhoods (Rosemont, CDN-NDG, Mercier, Westmount)
 - 16% live further away
- 32% of students come by car – of these 77% are in kindergarten or primary
- 68% of students come by public transit or active transportation, of these 48% are primary
- 35% of students come to school on their own steam or with an older brother or sister at FACE, including 15% in primary
- Two-thirds of families combine the children’s school commute with the parents’ work commute. The majority of these parents work downtown
- Almost a third of students have not yet chosen their musical instrument, thus they are in 4th grade or younger. This figure is interesting since families with the youngest children are likely the most concerned about the relocation. Those who see the end of their children’s education in sight are naturally less preoccupied.
- Among students who attend after-school daycare, 75% go to the one at the school. In the event of a relocation, and depending the site chosen, the daycare program could see an increase in its clientele, another issue to take into consideration in exploring scenarios

These statistics are interesting for many reasons:

For starters, it demonstrates the capital importance, in the case of a relocation, of a site in close proximity to public transit. The CSDM normally provides school bus service to primary students in such cases, even to schools with special vocations. But 45% of our students are in secondary and will have to be able to get to the school!

It also demonstrates that, despite the attraction of FACE’s special arts vocation, the majority of our clientele still come from the neighbourhoods closest to the school. Combined with the significant proportion of families for whom the proximity of the parents’ workplace to FACE is an argument in favour of attending, these are important reasons not to move very far from the centre of the Montreal island.

Work of the CVF to come and how you can contribute:



In the coming weeks and months, we must continue to detail our technical needs (minimal number of rooms for the exercise of our special vocation, particular criteria related to their functioning, etc.) but also continue to develop a list of potential sites for our relocation. In this regard, we will soon receive lists of extra buildings from the CSDM and EMSB, and we have also, of course, started to put together our own list of alternative sites.

It is in this way that you can help us! Given everything you have read above, do you know any potential locations that could accommodate FACE while this major work is being undertaken in our school? It's a very broad question, with innumerable implications, which is why we are curious and want to know what the community suggests. The most obvious are the recently vacated hospitals waiting to be converted, but there are surely other possibilities. Let your knowledge and your imaginations run free! Whether it's one place or two (according to the scenarios explained above), all suggestions are welcome at ceecoleface@gmail.com. Give us as many details as you can: address, accessibility, estimated capacity, ownership if known, as well as their coordinates, etc.

Despite all the uncertainty, we remain confident that FACE will manage to confront these challenges head on: it is rare – perhaps a first, even? – that a school has prepared so thoroughly in advance for what could happen. Unforeseen circumstances aside, we hopefully won't be left in the lurch, like so many other schools.

The members of the CVF are working to ensure this transition occurs under the best possible circumstances, if it comes to pass.

Regards,

The members of the Comité de Vigie de FACE

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Federico De Medina, Geneviève Dodin, Jennifer Giron, Allison Hanes (parents)
France Arcand, Julie St-Pierre, Marie-Ève Arseneau (teachers)
Taowa Munene-Tardif (student)
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For any questions contact: ceecoleface@gmail.com