

New model for environmental learning

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COULD GET A SEPARATE, ALL-ELECTRIC, TWO-CLASSROOM BUILDING ON ITS SITE UNDER A SCHOOL BOARD PLAN TO BUILD ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTRES AT FOUR OF ITS SCHOOLS.

Westwood is the only Guelph school involved in the plan to build freestanding structures at four schools that would be constructed, heated, ventilated and services using "green technology to a significant extent," a board staff report says.

The objective of building the four facilities will be to "investigate, demonstrate and educate on environmental systems," it says.

While many components of the four buildings would be similar, each would have a dif-

ferent learning focus.

Although it's still very early in the development process, the focus at Westwood is seen as being on an all-electric building designed to illustrate off-peak electrical uses and to encourage conservation. Electric heating through thermal storage – taking electricity off the grid at off-peak times, storing it and using it during school hours – is being considered, the report says.

"This concept is particularly applicable given the planned introduction of time-of-use metering in Ontario by 2010," it says.

The province has confirmed that the Upper Grand

District School Board needs to add space for 1,173 students as a result of a provincial cap that has lowered the size of primary school classes in Ontario, the report says. The classrooms in the freestanding buildings at the four schools will provide part of this needed space. The other schools getting environmental learning centres are Rockwood Centennial in Rockwood, J.D. Hogarth in Fergus and Minto-Clifford in Harrison. The cost of each project is estimated at \$687,000.

A sketch for Westwood's two-classroom environmental learning centre suggests it be built near Willow Road at an

angle to the existing school – facing south to take full advantage of the sun.

On Tuesday, the school board approved development of concept designs for the four environmental centres.

On top of this freestanding centre, Westwood also needs a two-room addition built onto the existing school because of smaller primary class sizes. The junior kindergarten to Grade 8 school, now has a capacity of 362 pupils.

This addition should go up as quickly as possible within a budget of just under \$700,000, the school board decided Tuesday.