

ARC Meeting – Tuesday, February 5, 2008

St. Therese Catholic School

REVISED: FEBRUARY 28, 2008

This document is not a verbatim transcript. Questions and answers have been paraphrased for the sake of clarity and brevity.

Question and Answer Session

Question: What do the EQAO results have to do with the possible closure of schools?

Answer: EQAO scores are included in the Valuation Instrument under the direction of the Ministry of Education.

Question: How do EQAO scores impact the decision to close schools?

Answer: EQAO scores reflect the program that exists in the school and the challenges that are faced in the school. System EQAO scores will be provided at the next meeting.

Question: Mr. McKenzie's presentation tells us how much funding has been lost due to declining enrolment. Can you tell us how much funding the schools currently receive?

Answer: Elementary School Budget Allocations

- Formula - \$6,000 base amount per school plus \$90 per FTE student (projected enrolment at time of budget development)
- 2007-08 allocations for South Sarnia schools
 - St. Benedict - \$28,995
 - St. Margaret - \$17,790
 - St. Peter - \$27,150
 - St. Therese - \$34,035

Presentation: Philip McMillan, Paul Wubben and committee members, I bring forward the beginning of a petition currently being circulated. To date we have 347 signatures. The petition is addressed to the Minister of Education for Ontario and the St. Clair Catholic District School Board. We the family and friends of schools up for consolidation are bringing this petition forward to remove any trustee with possible personal gain and/or an appearance of bias in participating in the final voting process of the student accommodation and boundary review in the area in which they have a personal connection. We the undersigned in our everyday lives are affected by the changes made by the Ministry of Education and the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, petition the Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne and/or Paul Wubben, Director of Education and Philip McMillan, Chair of the Accommodation Review Committee to address any possible bias on behalf of the Trustees. I am speaking on behalf of people who have signed this petition and I believe they would like to know how you are going to respond to this petition.

Answer: *Petition received.*

Question: Regarding grade participation rate, was the public board counted in the percentage and what is the significance?

Answer: Reference was made back to the slide presentation. A comparison of the numbers between south Sarnia population and the number of students in our schools was made.

Question: Will the proposed change to full-time JK/SK alter the FTE?

Answer: We have not received official confirmation that the ministry will fund full-time JK/SK. The information presented represents the current model. Should full time JK/SK become a reality, some additional classroom space will be required.

Question: Regarding the prohibitive to repair (PTR) findings, only one school – St. Benedict – was identified as qualifying for PTR funding under the ministry formula. Are any other schools approaching that status?

Answer: St. Clair schools currently not subject to an ARC process with high Facility Condition Index (FCI) rating

- St. Agnes, Chatham – FCI 56.68%
- Sacred Heart, Port Lambton – FCI 50.64%
- St. Vincent, Chatham – FCI 42.28%
- St. Joseph, Chatham – FCI 41.38%

Question: Please clarify the role of the four principals on the ARC committee. Are they advisors or observers, and as such, do they actually have co-participant functions like the rest of the committee members?

Answer: As identified by Board policy, the principals are to act as a resource to the committee. They will not assist in the formulation of recommendations.

Question: Most of the statistics presented reflect the status quo. Have statistics been used to formulate possible scenarios of one or more schools being closed?

Answer: The ARC will work to develop recommendations. ARC members will probably want to look at a number of options. We will provide the ARC with any pertinent information requested to help members develop their recommendations. At the same time, the administration will be developing its own recommendations.

Question: As a member of the school community who is not on the Accommodation Review Committee, how do I make my views known to the ARC?

Answer: Talk to ARC members who represent your school community.

Question: We are looking at the current school boundaries. At the last round of school closings (which included St. Joseph school) it appeared that many children who live in an area which is directly adjacent to St. Margaret were sent to St. Therese and St. Peter.

Answer: All St. Joseph students were transferred to St. Therese Catholic School.

Question: Our question is, why would these students not have been allocated to St. Margaret? This would have resulted in a greater enrolment at St. Margaret, rather than a school with 48% occupancy.

Answer: The board did review an option to transfer St. Joseph students to St. Margaret; however, this option would have created disruption to a greater number of pupils.

Question: Does the reference to buses at St. Peter include a special needs bus?

Answer: Yes, it does include a special needs bus.

Further information provided by Manager of Transportation Services

SPECIAL NEEDS vs. REGULAR BUSES

	Regular Buses	Special Needs Buses	TOTAL Buses
St. Peter	2	1	3
St. Benedict	4	1	5
St. Margaret	2	1	3
St. Therese	7*	1	8*

* an additional regular bus was recently added to St. Therese since the data was reported

EXPLANATION FOR LONGER RIDE TIMES AT ST. PETER CATHOLIC SCHOOL

* The one bus at St. Peter with a longer ride time services the rural area.

* The St. Peter boundary covers a residential area of approximately 61 sq. km. The other three schools combined cover a residential area of approximately 17-18 sq. km.

Question: With the declining enrolment in the Catholic school system, would you allow non-Catholics to come into the schools to bring up the enrolment in the future?

Answer: Board policy requires that one parent must be a baptized Roman Catholic. Religion is taught throughout the program – our Catholic school system is not just about education, but also about the formation of our young people in the Catholic faith. It should also be noted that enrolment at the public board is declining at the same rate as in the Catholic board.

Question: When you talk about EQAO results, are you talking about the percentage of children who are above levels 4, 3, 2 and 1? What are you calling the ‘provincial average’?

Answer: We are referencing the board average. The board average is not the same as the provincial average. St. Clair students achieve at levels significantly higher than the provincial average. *More information will be provided at a future meeting.*

Question: Can we have five years worth of data instead of three years?

Answer: *Yes. To be provided at a future meeting.*

Question: Schools which experience declining enrolment and increased maintenance costs, obviously pose a financial concern. Are students of such a school funded differently by the board as a result?

Answer: No. The board ensures that students in all schools are funded at the same level. As a result, students across the system are helping to subsidize students in under-enrolled schools.

Question: In board policy, one of the triggers for school review is the cost per student versus the system average. Is this information forecast from now until 2013 and if so is it available?

Answer: No, we do not have those statistics forecast through 2013. There are ten conditions which can lead to a school review process being undertaken. If any one of these conditions is met, the ARC process can be triggered. In this instance, it is the enrolment for all four schools being under 80% of the Ministry of Education's On The Ground Capacity, which has resulted in the review.

Question: Is there a time limit on when the decision is made and when it will be implemented once a decision is made?

Answer: The board will make its decision in June. All timelines will be established by the Board of Trustees as part of its final decision; however, the ARC can make recommendations regarding school closure timelines.

Question: If we are not allowed as parents to have meetings outside of this open forum, how are we going to get our opinions to the ARC?

Answer: It is the members of the ARC who are not permitted to meet outside this public forum.

Question: Can you clarify the use of the 'Prohibitive to Repair' funds for St. Benedict? How is this money allocated and where does it come from?

Answer: The ministry provided allocations to us from a process made a year ago. It does not mean we have the money. As the committee goes through the process, they can propose solutions to the use of the money. It must be spent on facilities.

Question: So, it goes to the facility and not to the student body?

Answer: Yes, that is correct.

Question: In the event that we determine which schools are going to be consolidated, will boundaries be revamped and in that event, will the children from the schools that have been closed necessarily go to the one remaining open, or would they go to the other schools in the city?

Answer: This is an opportunity to look at the boundaries and make recommendations for change. We will look at how it would affect the transition of students. There are a number of things to consider. Your ARC can help make this recommendation to the Board of Trustees.