



**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.
St. Joseph's High School
2425 Clover Ave., Windsor, ON**

REVISED

AGENDA

1. Call To Order
2. Opening Prayer
3. Recording of Attendance
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Disclosure of Interest - Pursuant to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.
6. Item
 - a. Report: Receive Input on the Director of Education's Report on the Accommodation Review Study for the Fontainebleau Area, including St. Alexander and W.J. Langlois Catholic Elementary Schools (P. Picard) 1-6
7. Delegations: --
 - a. Delegations Regarding Items On the Agenda
Individuals or groups wishing to make a presentation at the meeting are asked to contact Executive Assistant Beth Marshall by noon the day of the meeting at (519) 253-2481, extension 1289 or beth_marshall@wecdsb.on.ca. Information about the Board's accommodation review process and all reports relevant to the review are available on the Board's website at: www.wecdsb.on.ca. The public is also invited to provide written input to Paul A. Picard, Director of Education at the Windsor Essex Catholic Education Centre, 1325 California Avenue, Windsor, ON N9B 3Y6 or director@wecdsb.on.ca.
 - i) Parent, Sheryl Parent to speak on the potential closing of St. Alexander Elementary Catholic School. --
 - ii) Parent, Alison Kitts to speak on open concept concerns and W.J. Langlois as a virtual school. --
 - iii) Parent, Jerri Morris to speak on the potential closing of St. Alexander school and the possibility of converting W.J. Langlois school to a community centre. --
 - iv) Parent, Belinda Williams to provide her personal opinion on the recommendations. --
 - v) Parent, Dawn Caron to speak on the transition period if St. Alexander should close. --
 - vi) Parent, Elaine Boucas to speak about the positive points of St. Alexander and why it is the better choice for the school community. --
 - vii) Parent, Mark Williams to speak about the Director's recommendations and to propose an amendment to the recommendations. --

viii) Students, Candice Szaniszlo and Marisa Buchan to speak about the Director's recommendations, experiences at W.J. Langlois Elementary school, and would like to welcome the St. Alexander Elementary school community. --

8. Closing Prayer

9. Adjournment

Barbara Holland
Board Chairperson

Paul A. Picard
Director of Education & Secretary of the Board



1325 California Avenue
Windsor, ON N9B 3Y6
CHAIRPERSON: Barbara Holland
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: Paul A. Picard

Meeting Date:
May 15, 2012

BOARD REPORT

Public **In-Camera**
PRESENTED FOR: Information Approval
PRESENTED BY: Senior Administration
SUBMITTED BY: Paul A. Picard, Director of Education

SUBJECT: **DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S REPORT ON THE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW STUDY FOR THE FONTAINEBLEAU AREA, INCLUDING ST. ALEXANDER AND W.J. LANGLOIS CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board receive as information the Director's Report on the accommodation review study for the Fontainebleau area, including St. Alexander and W.J. Langlois Catholic Elementary schools;

and, that the Board receive public input concerning the Director's Report and the matters that are addressed in it, and in the Accommodation Review Committee's (ARC's) Report.

SYNOPSIS: The work of the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC), established by resolution of the Board on October 11, 2011 to study, report and make recommendations on future pupil accommodation options for the Fontainebleau area, including St. Alexander and W.J. Langlois elementary schools, has been completed. The Committee presented its final report to the Director of Education on April 16, 2012, and to the Board as information on April 24, 2012. Pursuant to Board Procedure Pr A: 05 Pupil Accommodation Review, the Director is required to review the recommendations of the ARC and to report to the Board on the results of the public consultation process, with analysis and recommendations.

The Board will hold a special meeting to receive the Director's report and to receive public input concerning the Director's report, and the matters addressed in it and in the Accommodation Review Committee's Report.

BACKGROUND COMMENTS: On October 11, 2011, the Board approved proceeding with the establishment of an Accommodation Review Committee to lead a public consultation process in studying, reporting and making recommendations on future accommodation options for the Fontainebleau area, including W.J. Langlois and St. Alexander Catholic Elementary schools.

At its first committee meeting on November 9, 2011, Administration provided to ARC members a background information package and a customized School Information Profile for each school in the study to support them in their mandate. The background information package and profiles are attached as appendices to this report.

Also, at the first committee meeting, the ARC was provided a copy of the Committee's Terms of Reference, as detailed within Administrative Procedure Pr A: 05 Pupil Accommodation. Upon review of the minutes of all committee and public consultation meetings (which are attached as appendices), it is evident that the Committee has been diligent in following its mandate to conduct a comprehensive and thorough public study.

The Committee conducted four public consultation meetings, pursuant to its Terms of Reference. The Committee also invited the community to provide written input to the Director of Education. Written input received, as well as Administration's responses to Committee or community inquiries were attached as appendices to the minutes of the meetings.

Senior Administration has carefully considered the ARC's Report delivered to the Director of Education on April 16, 2012 as well as the minutes and appendices reflecting input from the communities. As indicated in its report (attached as appendix), the Committee was not able to arrive at a consensus in providing an accommodation recommendation to the Director. The Committee was essentially split; the St. Alexander representatives supporting one recommendation and the W.J. Langlois representatives supporting another.

The Committee representatives from St. Alexander presented the following recommendation (with the committee representatives from W.J. Langlois indicating that they were not in favour of the recommendation):

Consolidate W.J. Langlois at the St. Alexander site, with a renovation and/or construction of an addition to the existing building.

The Committee representatives from W.J. Langlois presented the following recommendation (with the committee representatives from St. Alexander indicating that they were not in favour of the recommendation, but if the Board were to consider this recommendation, they believed that their school community may be more amenable to the option if the board undertook retrofitting at W.J. Langlois to make it more consistent with a traditional classroom setting):

Consolidate St. Alexander at W.J. Langlois, with the addition of portables and/or the construction of an addition and renovation to the existing school building.

The Committee has done an exemplary job in reflecting the input received from their communities within the value analysis (value of each school to the student, the community, the Board and the local economy) they have provided to support their recommendations.

Administration is very much in agreement that each of these schools is truly a benefit to their students, the community, and to the Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board. Despite facing the very difficult possibility of losing one of their schools to closure, throughout the public consultation process, both school communities have shown

understanding for the Board's need to address significant excess capacity, continual decline in enrolment and its resultant reduction in revenue. Both ARC recommendations include the closure of one of the schools and Administration agrees that this would assist in addressing the needs of the Board. After careful consideration Administration submits the following recommendation.

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board approve, effective September 2012, the temporary move of all students from W.J. Langlois to St. Alexander pending renovations and retrofitting of the W.J. Langlois building to create a blended open concept/traditional classroom setting, in consultation with an integration committee composed of representatives from both the W.J. Langlois and St. Alexander communities, with the new merged community then transferring together into the renovated facility at the W.J. Langlois building in October 2012; and that St. Alexander be officially closed and the building declared surplus to the Board's needs.

In support of its recommendation, Administration provides the following analysis:

Value to the Student:

In reviewing the ARC report, school profiles, and the proud testaments presented from members of each community through the public consultation process, Administration is extremely impressed with the quality of staff, programming, and services offered at both of these schools and believes that the decision between closing one or the other should be based on which location/building can offer the best physical accommodations for the merged community.

W.J. Langlois is the newer facility. With an on the ground capacity of 397 and a projected FTE for 2012/2013 of 184, it has 213 vacant pupil spaces available. With renovations estimated at approximately \$200,000, Administration believes the projected enrolment of St. Alexander for 2012/2013 of 207 students can be accommodated at the W.J. Langlois site. The Board's Facilities Services department has carefully inspected both facilities and believes the W.J. Langlois facility to be the better structural choice.

Both school communities currently have a very strong relationship with St. Theresa and St. Vincent de Paul parishes. With close proximity to churches, Administration is confident that this faith based community would continue in its partnership with the church to provide students with a catholic education that promotes positive involvement in church, school and community.

W.J. Langlois is also situated in close proximity to a library and park. As indicated through the public consultation process, students from both W.J. Langlois and St. Alexander, as well as members of the Fontainebleau community, have made wonderful contributions to these facilities and the proposed new merged community at the W.J. Langlois site would be able to share in these amenities, forming a continuing dynamic school/community partnership.

In reviewing the minutes of the public meetings and through written input received, it is apparent that many in the St. Alexander community have serious concerns regarding the open concept setting at W.J. Langlois. A "No to Open Concept" petition was presented with 211 signatures (attached with February 23 public minutes). It was noted that the concern

expressed within the petition was “not based on the location of the school over another but rather the layout of classrooms inside each building. Those that have signed this petition feel a closed classroom is a more adequate learning environment versus an open classroom setting.”

There were also current and past students, as well as staff from W.J. Langlois who spoke very positively of the open concept learning environment at the school. Research was cited both by members of the community and by Administration (referenced within meeting minutes and appendices). That research detailed comparisons between open concept and traditional classroom settings. Some of those findings included:

- Students perform slightly higher in traditional schools, but slightly higher positive attitudes and self-concept are evident in open concept schools
- Students performed slightly better on achievement tests in traditional compared to open teaching, but did worse on tests of creativity
- Concerns for level of noise in an open concept school
- One researcher concluded there was no significant difference in the noise level between an open area school and a conventional school setting.

Administration certainly acknowledges that there is conflicting opinion on the value of open concept schools. It believes, however, that the success of the staff, programming and students currently at W.J. Langlois is evidence itself of a well functioning school community. It is not to say that things cannot be improved. Administration understands the concerns of the St. Alexander community and believes that in working with an integration committee of both W.J. Langlois and St. Alexander representatives, and with the dedication by the Board of budgeted funds, the building at W.J. Langlois could be renovated, with improvements that could draw from the research, to create a blended system where students could reap the benefits of both the open concept and traditional school settings.

With minor renovations and the use of the two closed portables currently on site, all students can be temporarily accommodated at St. Alexander. The interim period of transition would allow the community to begin the year together and prepare for an appropriate and respectful closure of the school. Administration would consult with the integration committee through the summer months and in to the new school year to ensure a smooth transition where both school communities would be provided the opportunity for input in the establishment of a new merged school community in a building that would accommodate all of their needs. At the completion of renovations, the new merged community would then move into its newly renovated accommodations together at the W.J. Langlois site.

Value to the Community and to the Local Economy

These two schools are only one kilometre apart. As evidenced in the ability of the two schools to work so well together in the very difficult accommodation review process, these two school communities already have a very close connection and both have contributed and will no doubt continue to contribute as a merged school community to the Fontainebleau community and its local economy.

Value to the Board

Addressing Concern for the “cost drag” of maintaining two (2) underutilized schools

The Board's 2011-12 budget and capital plan considered the Ministry of Education's review of Board operations wherein the Ministry pointed out that approximately 40% of the schools operated by the Board have a utilization rate below 85% of available floor capacity. Below this level, the Board receives diminished grant funding, which is creating a cost drag on the Board's operations. The Ministry recommended that an accommodation review would be required to rationalize the Board's underutilized facilities in order to assist in the future with both the Board's operating and capital deficits.

The Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolment at W.J. Langlois for 2011/12 is 200 pupils. These students are currently accommodated in a facility with an on the ground capacity for 397 FTE, creating a utilization rate of 50% (the projected FTE for 2012/13 is 184 or 46% utilization). Full Ministry funding for a building is intended to cover all operating expenses for that school. Full Ministry funding is only realized where the school is at 85% utilization (that school would then qualify for a 15% top up to 100% funding). Because W.J. Langlois is operating well below the required utilization rate, much of its expenditures are unfunded and the school operates at a loss. The current school expenditures were provided to the ARC by Administration and indicate a total cost of operating the school of \$ 1,869,150 (summary attached to January 12 Committee meeting minutes). The unfunded portion of these expenditures creates a “cost drag” on the Board's operations as identified by the Ministry's review.

St. Alexander with a current FTE of 213, within a facility with on the ground capacity of 319 is operating at a 67% utilization rate (the projected FTE for 2012/13 is 190.5 or 60% utilization). The estimated total cost of operating the school is \$ 2,046,073 (summary attached to January 12 minutes). Similar to W.J. Langlois, much of St. Alexander's operating expenditures are unfunded and the school also operates at a loss. The unfunded portion of the expenditures create a further “cost drag” on the Board's operations.

In Administration's most recent financial report filed with the Board on April 24, 2012, the projected deficit for Facilities Services - school operations and maintenance is \$1.09 million dollars for the coming fiscal year. The Ministry of Education's June 2011 review noted that school operations for the WECDSB ranked in the top 36 boards of the most overspent in the province. The Board must look to reducing these costs. Estimated annual building and school based expenditures in 2011-12 at W.J. Langlois and St. Alexander are \$97,321 and \$88,835 respectively. Also funded from the School Operations and Maintenance allocation are custodial salary and benefit costs which are estimated at \$98,173 and \$107,374 at W.J. Langlois and St. Alexander correspondingly. With both schools below the 85% utilization threshold, neither generate full school operations funding to cover these costs. WECDSB is not maximizing the benefit it could be receiving from the allocation, which is causing a budget pressure.

The Board must anticipate renewal expenses for these schools. St. Alexander was constructed in 1960, and its projected 1 year and 10 year estimated renewal needs are \$2,455,432 and \$2,692,444. W.J. Langlois was constructed in 1970 with projected 1 year and 10 year estimated renewal needs of \$ 1,538,714 and \$1,932,463. Similar to the School Operations and Maintenance allocation, top up funding is also provided to supplement the school renewal allocation. However, with the existing utilization rates, the Board is not maximizing the eligible School Renewal grant.

The Board is in a position where it must reduce its deficit. In closing St. Alexander and merging the students with the student population at W.J. Langlois, the Board eliminates a situation where two (2) schools are operating under the Ministry's utilization threshold. The new merged community would be at the 85% utilization threshold and no longer would the unfunded operating expenses of the schools be contributing to the Board's accumulated deficit.

To assist the Board's deficit situation, closure of St. Alexander and the creation of a merged community, in addition to the savings of the operation, maintenance, and renewal expenses for the St. Alexander site, would result in the annual savings of 6.5 teaching staff salaries (\$563,212), 1 custodial salary (\$48,733), and 0.33 Learning Commons Specialist salary (\$13,048). Savings in employee benefit costs would be incremental to these salary savings. (This would be offset by the additional need for busing of approximately \$129,000 annually). The Board could also realize proceeds from the possible sale of the St. Alexander property, the property first being offered to other school boards and government organizations at fair market value, before placement on the market for potential third party purchase, in accordance with Ontario Education Act Regulation.

In Summary

Administration commends the ARC and the communities it represented for conducting and participating in a comprehensive and thorough public consultation study. Their input was invaluable to Administration throughout its analysis and formulation of its recommendation.

Administration's recommendation is respectfully submitted for community feedback.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Referenced in the Background Comments section.

TIMELINES: Renovations to begin in July in consultation with the communities. Interim move to St. Alexander September 3, 2012. Move to W.J. Langlois facility in October 2012.

APPENDICES: All appendices to this report can be found on the Board's public website at www.wecdsb.on.ca by clicking on "Accommodation Review Committees".

REPORT REVIEWED BY:

<input type="checkbox"/>	EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:	Review Date:	--
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EXECUTIVE SUPERINTENDENT:	Approval Date:	April 30, 2012
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:	Approval Date:	April 30, 2012