

**Greater Essex County District School Board
PROGRAM AND ACCOMMODATION REVIEW
FORSTER FAMILY AND CENTURY SCHOOLS
Tuesday, May 22, 2012 at 5:15 p.m.**



Report of a committee meeting held in the library at Dougall School

Attendance: Dave Garlick, Karen Albu, Forster; Kristie McKim, Lisa Bastien, Century; Patti Oshar, (left at 7:15 p.m.) Michelle Landry, Danielle Yaholnitsky (left at 7:15 p.m.) Benson; Chris Inverarity, Mark Paterson, Brock; Debra Laforet (arrived at 6:50 p.m.) Taylor; Clayton Callow, Nancy Bruce, Robin Fletcher, Dougall; Ron Brown, Michelle Dereniowski, Lisa Cunningham (left at 7:50 p.m.) Marlborough; Sharon Pyke, John Howitt, Area Superintendent: MaryAnne Cuderman, community representative

Chairperson: Sarah Gall, parent rep, Brock School (arrived late)

Regrets: Kim Rocheleau, Jamie de l'Eveille, Cindy Mitchell, Christine van Lare, Petrina Bayliss, Cindy Theriault, Cindy Wark

Facilitator: Terry Lyons

Recorder: Lynne Hornby

There were 2 observers.

THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCOMMODATIONS CONDUCTS A PARC STUDY OF THE FORSTER FAMILY OF SCHOOLS AND INCLUDE CENTURY DUE TO ITS GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION TO:

- i. ADDRESS CAPACITY ISSUES AND AGING INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS WITHIN THE FORSTER FAMILY OF SCHOOLS**
- ii. CONTINUE OUR INVESTIGATION FOR A PERMANENT FRENCH IMMERSION SITE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH BOARD DIRECTION FROM THE SOUTH WINDSOR PARC.**

1. Call to Order and Welcome

In the absence of the Chairperson, the meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Superintendent Lyons thanking everyone for their attendance. He noted that some community input has been received since the third community meeting and everyone was provided copies with today's handouts.

2. Review of minutes of April 30

The minutes of the April 30 meeting were reviewed. There being no changes, they will now be posted to the Board website under the PARC icon.

Chairperson Gall arrived at 5:40 p.m. and assumed the chair.

3. Debrief – community meeting of May 9

The committee broke into working groups to further analyze the three recommendations that were presented at the last community meeting.

- (a) New construction dual track K-12 on Marlborough campus (Giles campus students + Marlborough and Forster) Giles campus boundary remains as is.

Close Century: AB students relocate to Western and diploma students relocate to home schools.

One committee member had concerns for the families of Adaptive Basic students; particularly in the areas of transportation and their transitioning. Change is often not easy for this group of students.

It was explained that everyone gets bused to Western, currently from all over the county and the reality is that most parents do not attend the school to pick up students. Sick students are often sent home by cab. Similarly, Century School also relies on taxi cabs for sick students. It was felt that some Century students living in the east end of the city might find it easier to access Western. Staff in both schools (and all our schools) work very well to assist students with transitioning. Parents need to be aware of options available to them.

Transition will be involved for some students whatever recommendation is brought forward.

A student distribution map detailing student distribution for Century AB students indicating the location of Western was requested. This will be requested and provided to the committee electronically, if possible.

In this scenario, we are looking at 1200 students for a JK-12 dual track school. The Marlborough site would suffice in terms of hard top and play area but the playing field across from Forster would be available (approx. a 6 minute walk). There would not be a lot of green space. It should be noted that Tecumseh Vista is on over 30 acres while the Marlborough site is 9 acres. The site provides little play space for early years' students in a K-12 situation.

The committee felt that dual track vs. single track French Immersion had been sufficiently addressed. The Superintendent once again reinforced with the committee it would be difficult to request funding for a new school when there are still so many empty seats in this family of schools.

A K-12 facility without French Immersion would be a much smaller school with declining projected enrolment. There will be difficulties programming for a secondary school with a student body of under 300. The students will have a difficult time getting all their options. Someone felt that we should not be limiting our students in any way, with any of the options going forward.

Are all the programs offered at Century right now available at the home school for those students?

Culinary programs and cosmetology are not available in the home school but students requesting those particular courses could apply to go out of district to attend a school that might have that program. At this time we do not know what will happen to the culinary equipment; it may be relocated to another site. Not everyone in the culinary program is graduating as a chef but rather with kitchen prep. and other hospitality services skills. All our high schools offer food and nutrition courses which offer some of the same food prep skills.

It was felt that if the Board builds a new facility, some students will attend a new building just for that reason but some parents who are opposed to dual track may not attend.

It was noted that 900 to 1,000 students is the optimum number for programming a secondary school.

The committee reached the conclusion that the only way to maintain a west end high school is to merge and if one or more groups of students out of one of the two secondary schools there would not be enough students for a viable robust secondary school.

A committee member noted that many parents feel that the west end should have a high school. Many do not have the financial means to bus their students to another school outside of the west end. On the other hand, there are many parents who also do not send their students to Forster. Others felt strongly that the local community feels a need for a public high school in the west end.

The prospect of building a business case to be presented to the Ministry of Education was discussed. The Board would be closing Century, Marlborough, Forster and Giles, four schools, some with poor FCIs for a new brand new building.

The committee made some changes to the wording and intent of the recommendation. Moving forward it will now read:

- (a) **Close Marlborough and Forster Schools and the temporary French Immersion site at Giles Campus:
Construct a new dual track K-12 facility on the Marlborough site to accommodate Marlborough, Forster and Giles Campus students. All boundaries remain as current.
Close Century School:
Adaptive Basic students transition to Western Secondary School. All other Century students transition to home schools.**

The committee went on to discuss the next recommendation

- (b) Marlborough and French Immersion (Giles Campus) students to Century (730 students); Forster and Century students at new building on Marlborough site (849 students); close Forster and Marlborough.

A committee member felt that it would be costly to transport students across Huron Church Road. It was noted that students will be transported according to the Board's transportation policy. Century combined with Forster would have Locally Developed Compulsory Courses (LDCC), applied and academic courses. Diploma students from Century would take LDCC courses with Forster. An LDCC course at Century does not necessarily resemble the same LDCC course at Forster. Class size also has some relevance.

If the Century/Forster LDCC courses look the same as other schools, why are students being transported across the city?

Theoretically, there is only one specialized program at Century, Adaptive Basic. Because families wanted the LDCC courses offered in the home high school, they have been introduced. Attendance at the home high school may cause some concern for some Century students. It was noted that we endeavor to integrate elementary students as best we can, and maybe this practice should be continued in secondary.

Historically, Western and Century were trade or vocational schools. It is important to highlight that all our high schools offer co-op programs. Century has fewer shops now than ever before. Co-op opportunities are available at all our high schools. Also, important to note is that the program delivery model offered at Western and Century is not common throughout the province. The Board is committed to providing necessary programming to meet the needs of all our students. Western Secondary does have room to accommodate the AB students.

By consensus, the Committee determined to eliminate option (b) due to transportation costs, additional costs of retrofitting a secondary school for elementary school (removal of shops etc.)

The committee moved on to discuss the next recommendation:

- (c) Close Forster - 9-12 @ Century
Close Marlborough - new K-8 dual track on this site. Giles closes.

It was felt that this is still a viable option to move forward, using an existing high school that currently has the high school facilities (shops and specialty areas), and we would be adding students to fill empty spaces.

It was felt that eventually there would be a natural attrition away from the school back to the home schools. There are no closed boundary high schools; in accordance with the "Out of District Attendance policy" students can apply to attend a school other than the home school as defined by residential address.

The committee made some changes to the wording and intent of the recommendation. Moving forward, it will now read:

- (c) **Close Forster and Century Schools:
Create a neighbourhood secondary school on the former Century site with applicable programming to accommodate all Forster and Century students.
Close Marlborough School and temporary French Immersion site at Giles Campus:
Construct a new dual track K-8 facility on the Marlborough site to accommodate Marlborough and Giles Campus students. All boundaries remain as current.**

4. Review period for committee:

Examination of community input received to date

This took place at the beginning of the meeting. A period of time was provided for the committee to review the input package and then there was discussion and clarification.

Superintendent Lyons explained the mandate from last year regarding French Immersion at Bellewood. It was always the intent that the permanent site for French Immersion would be in the western part of the city as this is the only area of the city without its own French Immersion site. If the Giles Campus FI school was to have had representation, it would be difficult to determine who would represent the school; it exists only on paper at present. The PARC regulation states committee representation will be comprised of the principal, a teacher and three parents from a school. The point they make that they feel they should be sitting at the table is well taken and understandable but the challenge is also that French Immersion is also referenced in the Herman PARC. When you commence a PARC, you do not know what the outcome will be. The Board's past practice is that if another school outside the scope of the PARC is affected, we advise that school of any recommendations affecting them. Letters were sent home with the Bellewood and Glenwood students who are transitioning to Giles. Those families have every opportunity to provide input, they can present at community meetings and send e-mail to the PARC mail box just like everyone else.

This particular group was not excluded, they were just not members of the committee. The Herman PARC committee is also suggesting a boundary adjustment for McCallum and transitioning some of their students to the Giles campus.

The South Windsor PARC was very emotional for the Bellewood-Giles group last year. They just got their students used to the idea of transitioning to Giles and now they perceive we are looking at moving them again.

It was noted that if the committee felt they could not provide an appropriate solution for Giles, then it would be so stated in the report.

Was there much discussion about dual track vs single track and did parents assume it would be single track?

It was clarified that the Board never promised a permanent site in South Windsor, nor did they promise single track, for the Giles FI students, while it was made very clear that Giles is a temporary site. Temporary can't be defined at this time.

There was no conversation that single track would be the final outcome. Last year, lots of options were examined, one of which was Marlborough as a dual track site. It was struck out by the South Windsor PARC committee. Three years ago, Benson was being considered for dual track but the site was not big enough.

Research has been provided on merits of dual and single track French Immersion schools.

Giles parents were aware of the current PARC review as all those to be undertaken are published in the annual Accommodation Report. They were also aware from the recommendations that the Board would continue to search for a permanent site.

There is a considerable amount of conversation regarding single vs dual track. Some research provided suggests that single track has more benefits but there is just as much research that suggests dual track is preferable. When reviewing research, one must compare apples to apples; some research may not do so. We have not reviewed all the programs referenced in the research referenced by the writer of the email. Superintendent Howitt spoke about the fact that the research provided by Mr. Johnson was likely exhaustive research on the topic and some referenced is local. Perception is one of the main issues and in particular which is better, dual track vs single track. In a dual track school it takes some work to assure that culture is blended. The quality of our programs is exceptional. The cultural piece is huge, there is the assumption that there is more opportunity for French in single track and to a degree it is true. This is also true in a dual track. Teachers endeavor to use appropriate language for either stream. Announcements are done bilingually. At single track schools announcements are also done in both language eg safety or anything you want to ensure kids aware. It takes a great deal of effort but it is up to the community and administration etc. in a French Immersion school there are 20 programs, 10 in each language as opposed to 10 programs in single track – English or French.

Bellewood does exactly well – the purpose of EQAO scores is not to compare schools. We need to review qualitative research. There is no consistent answer; as many administrators, and teachers who argue one is better than another and vice versa.

GECD SB runs both single and dual track and feel they are both equally successful and do equally well.

Dual track programs are staffed independently according to the percentage of French students at a particular grade level.

JK-12 would depend how many students are enrolled. Secondary French Immersion looks very different from elementary. A comment was made that dual track F.I. puts a much greater value on the core French program in a school.

A committee member noted that she understood why the Giles parents are feeling slighted but we could not have perceived in advance that the final recommendations would affect them. It is one specific group of parents we are hearing from who are putting forward their views. It was felt that a dual track program prepares students for real society. In the world of work they would not be in a situation where only French is spoken.

5. Update on status of draft report

The Report writing team is meeting on May 28 to work on the draft and will circulate to the committee by May 31 for input.

6. Questions and clarifications

Superintendent Lyons made clarifications as required throughout the meeting

7. Timeline

The final community meeting is June 4 at 5:30 p.m. at Brock; the committee will meet prior at 4:30 p.m. to finalize the presentation.

The Committee will present at a Special Board meeting on June 25 at 5:30 p.m.

Communications will be forthcoming from the Superintendent's office.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Distribution:

Minutes of April 30 meeting

Minutes of May 9 community meeting

Input collected via email box

Reminder – common philosophy

Current three draft recommendations on the floor