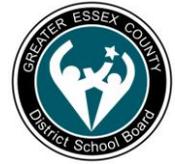


# Greater Essex County District School Board PROGRAM AND ACCOMMODATION REVIEW KINGVILLE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

Wednesday, May 16, 2012 at 7 p.m.

Report of a community meeting held at Jack Miner Public School



THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCOMMODATIONS CONDUCTS A PARC STUDY OF THE KINGVILLE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS TO:

- i. REDUCE THE NUMBER OF EMPTY STUDENT SPACES
- ii. IMPROVE THE UTILIZATION RATES WITHIN THE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS.

There were approximately 279 persons in the audience including the committee.

**Facilitator:** Terry Lyons, Superintendent of Education

**Recorder:** Lynne Hornby

## 1. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. by Superintendent Lyons.

## 2. Introductions

Several introductions were made including trustees Burgess, Gretzky, Bailey, McKinley and Taves, Director of Education, Paul Antaya, the Area S.O. and Giuliana Hinchliffe, the Board's Coordinator of Engineering

### Background and Review of Process

- A committee is formed with representation from every school participating in the PARC
- The PARC committee has regular meeting to review data and determine recommendations
- This evening's meeting is the third in a series of four public meetings
- This committee has worked extremely hard so far on behalf of the communities
- They will meet once more and review all the input before the final community meeting
- This committee works in an advisory role, and is not a decision making body
- The committee writes a report and submits the recommendations to the Director of Education
- The committee presents their report at a Board meeting, probably in June
- The Director of Education analyses the committee reports and submits recommendations to Trustees, probably in November
- Trustees vote and make the final decision

## 5. Presentation of the Program and Accommodation Review Committee's (PARC) draft recommendations

A powerpoint of the PARC Committee presentation is attached.

The committee outlined their common philosophy that was used as a basis for developing the recommendations, and how it was developed. There was a review of the data used, for the benefit of those members of the audience who were not in attendance at the previous two meetings.

It was noted that Pelee Island is one of only a few schools in the province that receives special funding and so the data relating to that school was not considered when developing recommendations.

## 6. Review of timeline

The fourth and final Community meeting is on June 7 at Kingsville DHS

**7. Presentations:**

**Mr. G. Queen, Kingsville resident former student/trustee of GECDSB**

Presentation attached – appendix 1

**8. Questions and Collection of input**

Superintendent Lyons stated that this is a public forum and minutes will be kept and then posted on the board website.

Should anyone be uncomfortable asking questions in public, we have provided cards to be completed which will be appended to the minutes on the board website.

Please be respectful of others during public meetings and refrain from making derogatory remarks about other schools and students.

Jack Miner parent:

Q. I recently was at Tecumseh Vista School and am concerned that there are no shops at Vista. Is it in future plans to build them?

A. Tecumseh Vista opened with the ability to house 500 secondary students, but will be expanded as required. There is an opportunity for consideration of the addition of shops, if required at that time. Not all secondary school have shops, however, there are opportunities for co-op education at all our secondary schools.

Ruthven parent:

Q. What are the plans for the future of Ruthven if it closes? Will the board sell it? No figures have been provided if that happens and costs for the school's future demolition have not been built into the analysis.

A. These are currently draft recommendations, no decisions have been made at this time. If a school closes, there are guidelines as to its disposal.

Costs of demolition of Kingsville PS have been provided, I suggest you should do so for the disposition of Ruthven and add that information to the recommendation.

Ruthven parent:

appendix 2

Local business owner:

Closing Ruthven School is a poor idea. We need to take a stance to preserve Ruthven Public School. We are building paths to Ruthven for walking and biking. We seem to want huge schools these days that are intimidating to children. We need to send the committee back to the drawing board. Ruthven seems to be half full but we now have new sewage and there are a couple of sub divisions in the works that will have 200-400 homes. These homes will provide children to fill those seats and keep our school open.

Patti Hayes, representative of Taras Natyshak, MPP:

appendix 3

Ruthven student:  
appendix 4

Local physician:

C. My children hopefully will be attending Ruthven in the future. The recommendations are disappointing. The committee should consider Mrs. Morris' recommendations. Ruthven's test scores and reputation are exemplary. I would like to know how we can expand on Ruthven and use it more with the strength of the staff and administration. If you close it then around 50% of the current families will consider taking their students out. In the recent South Windsor PARC, Central school was kept open to determine if the potential future growth actually will take place. Ruthven deserves that same consideration.

Senior citizen from the community:  
appendix 5

Ruthven student:

C. I was bullied at my previous school but I have been excelling in the small school setting at Ruthven.

Former Ruthven student:

C. I was upset to hear about the closure of the school. It is out of the question. I was bullied at my previous school but was never bullied at Ruthven. It is a wonderful school and my hopes are that one day in the future, my children will attend.

Ruthven out of district parent:

I home schooled my children for a while but when I determined I could no longer do so, I shopped around for a school and chose Ruthven. 15% of Ruthven students are out of district by choice. The teachers have real life relationships with parents and students. My son has an IEP and gets everything he needs at Ruthven. Education can be made up later. Values are the most important thing. Big schools scare me. My son is afraid to move to another school. We are still out of district after moving yet again. Kingsville DHS is a good secondary school that is also small.

Ruthven parent:  
appendix 6

Former Ruthven student:

My best subject isn't math but because the classes at Ruthven are smaller the teachers have more time to explain things. I have heard that the high school teachers say that the Ruthven students do very well in class because they have received small class instruction in elementary school.

Kingsville PS and Kingsville DHS parent:

C. My heart aches for all those involved because change is not easy or anyone. Thank you to the PARC committee members who volunteered for this.

My grade 6 daughter believes she is not ready for high school. We were welcomed at KPS when we chose French Immersion. I value everything and everyone at that school. I have concerns that the

gym at KDHS is not large enough as it is, without the addition of elementary students needing to use it. What about the grade 7 and 8 students functioning for French Immersion without the necessary resources? LST programs, band, sports teams, things like that. Thank you for taking everyone into consideration and good luck to the committee.

Kingsville PS parent and graduate of Ruthven PS:

Both Kingsville PS and Ruthven are great schools, but everyone should remember they are just buildings, and that every child in these three schools gets the best education is what is important to me. I want my child to excel all around. Keep that in mind, you can get an education everywhere but what matters is the value of that education. What's happening now isn't working, so, let's spend the dollars now for everyone to get the best education. The smaller class size at Ruthven is unfair to bigger classes in other schools, but I want to see all children have the best education possible.

Ruthven parent:  
appendix 7

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, local VP:

ETFO supports small schools, schools of 300-400 students. There seems to be a theme in many of the draft proposals of current PARCS; a theme of moving away from a K to 8 model for our elementary school students. ETFO has serious concerns with these models. An analysis out of the University of Michigan suggests that the quality of the junior high school environment is probably the most powerful explanation for the gradual decline in various indicators including academic motivation and self-perception. Moving students from one building to another is not simple and goes beyond accommodation of numbers. It is a complicated matter and questions need to be answered thoroughly. Before moving elementary students into a secondary environment, educators must ask: What are the developmental needs of early adolescents? What kind of educational environment would be developmentally appropriate in terms of both meeting these needs and stimulating further development?

Research points to the success of the K to 8 model in that students placed in relatively small cohort groups for long spans of time experience more desirable outcomes. In fact, the Philadelphia School District has taken a comprehensive evaluation, and is converting its schools to the K to 8 model. Philadelphia's data indicates that young adolescent learners in their K to 8 schools are outperforming students in their other grade-span configuration schools. This trend is occurring in other jurisdictions as well. Grade restructuring is of concern to ETFO. We also have concerns about basing decisions on EQAO results, a test that happens only at a particular time of year. Great things are happening in all our schools all the time. The funding formula is flawed; we can't fix that. ETFO wants to see K-8 schools maintained.

Kingsville DHS teacher:

C. I applaud the committee on wanting to keep the local high school open. There is always loss of some extra curricular activities with school closures. A K-12 school would provide even less extra curricular activities and less opportunities for students. I would request that the committee examine the input provided.

Q. What is likelihood of a K-12 school being constructed within 5-8 years?

A. The difficulty is that there are empty student spaces in the Family of Schools and because of that, it would not be easy for the Ministry of Education to approve a business case. We are concerned about securing funding for such a structure given the current empty student spaces. I have shared my reservations with the committee and they are aware that there would need to be a convincing case put forward to the Ministry for such a facility.

Ruthven parent:

C. Last year we lived in Vancouver and my daughter was enrolled in kindergarten in a school that was supposedly ranked as one of the top schools in Canada. It wasn't. It was a large school in the city. One day, they lost 2 kids for 2.5 hours and no-one was aware. At Ruthven every single teacher knows my daughter's name. In Vancouver, at the end of kindergarten year, less than half of the class of 20 didn't know their alphabet but now in grade 1 at Ruthven my daughter is reading at grade 3 level. Small schools are best.

Jack Miner PS parent:

Q. I chose Jack Miner School for many of the same reasons Ruthven parents chose that school. The connection the teachers have with the students is great but I think that if we combined Jack Miner's strengths with Ruthven's strengths, then there are amazing possibilities. What will be done to maintain the elementary school feeling in a high school?

A. The two panels are not usually on the same bell or transportation systems. High school students don't get recess. Lunch times are not common. Ability to interact is usually not that easy. As much as there is fear, there are some real positives that happen too. When we introduced the idea of a JK-grade 12 school the biggest fear for Tecumseh Vista community was their elementary students mixing with high school students; those very students who three months previously were elementary students themselves. What happens over the summer to cause those fears? A K-12 school provides growth opportunities for both panels. Nothing improves secondary students' behaviour more than being called to task in front of elementary students.

Ruthven students:

C. Our teacher drives all the way from Windsor just to teach at Ruthven.

Jack Miner PS parent:

Q. Have you considered the Discovery program at KPS and JMPS and how they would be affected? With the proposals, will there be room for daycare?

A. The committee reviewed at the School Information Profiles for all schools (available on line) and all these things will be considered before recommendations are finalized.

\*\*It was later clarified that Ruthven School has an after school daycare provided by Ruthven Montessori, although it is located in a building across the road from the school, and not in the school.

Jack Miner PS parent:

C. I am a strong supporter of small schools. Teachers will do great things at all our schools but I have concerns with grade 7 and 8 students going to high school. Why expose them to bad language, drugs, teen pregnancies earlier than we need to do? They are the leaders in grade school and will

lose that opportunity to be reading buddies, be on sports teams, sell pizza, etc. They won't have support of primary and junior teachers at a young age when they need it.

Jack Miner PS parent:

C. Thank you to the committee for their long hours of volunteering. We have heard a lot about benefits of small schools, I experienced some of those benefits but I am also interested in the best all round education for my child. \$800,000 annually is spent on maintaining empty student spaces in this family of schools. The board has \$300m of renewal needs that should be met. Funding is generated by enrolment so we must become more efficient in maintaining buildings but we don't want to cut programming needs.

A. The Board's focus has to be on the whole board and programming for the entire student population of the board. Our limited resources are based on student enrolment. Wherever we are in this board we are doing a very good job educating our students. If we aren't proactive and cut costs, then we will soon have to be reactive and our programming will suffer. Most peoples' comments are about the teachers and those very teachers will do those great jobs wherever they are in the system.

Kingsville PS parent and teacher:

C. If we put everyone's strength in this family of schools together we would be very powerful. In a small school we often don't have volunteers to run all the teams, to be in a large school from a teaching perspective it would be very exciting. To have colleagues in the same division for collaboration would be great. I assume that my kids' teachers can go to the new school. It would be great for my son to be at a school with a track, green space; those things which he doesn't have in a small school.

If we can take advantage of the opportunity to come together we could make one wonderful school.

Ruthven PS graduate:

C. At Ruthven, special relationships are built with every student and teacher. You can't guarantee that a teacher will have time for every kid in a large school. Every teacher gave me time at Ruthven. Due to the small classes there I have been able to learn as well as I have. I am continuing now in KDHS which is also a small school.

Ruthven student:

You are going to force Ruthven students to go to a super school and we will lose our great teachers.

Ruthven and Kingsville DHS graduate:

Ruthven students excel in EQAO and excel all through high school. Many are honours students. There are two new sub divisions planned that will expand the population in Ruthven in a relatively short time. I see a positive future for Ruthven.

Q. What will happens to the teachers?

A. The Board has a staffing process that the teachers must follow according to contractual obligations. Again, these are draft recommendations only; the decision makers are the trustees.

Jack Miner PS parent:

We have heard tonight that under the current funding model we need to become more efficient or start thinking about closing or amalgamating. Really, we need to be socially and politically active. I would encourage those here who are voicing their opinion to turn out at election time. If there is a funding gap then both voters and the board need to continue to make the government aware that the funding model is not keeping the schools viable. We have seen several benefits of small schools this evening and it is something we want to keep.

Local home builder:

We are starting our first development, a planned community, in Ruthven, as it is a small town. There has been no growth in Ruthven recently as there has been no infrastructure but the municipality has invested millions of dollars to bring sewers into Ruthven. We are months away from the first phase of 72 homes initially, for a total of 400 homes altogether. In the last year we built 5 homes in Kingsville where there are 6 children living. I am here to let the Board know that new development is coming.

Ruthven parent:

My son has auto immune disease and last year spent his first year of school in a larger school and missed more than half the year as he was exposed to too many viruses in a large school and so now he is at Ruthven. He is doing well and they are accommodating him. A big school will save money and for children without issues is wonderful but those with special need should be taken into consideration. Some children have special circumstances and can't attend a larger school so he will need to be home schooled.

Kingsville PS graduate:

This is extremely emotional and we all want the best for our children but the reality is that my grade 6 daughter appears to be excited at the prospect of going to high school. Children adjust to change but parents struggle with change. These schools are all wonderful but we want the best for everyone's children. We have to welcome change with open arms; teachers are good people in every building. Together we need to ensure our children have good values to move on. We need to take a deep breath and go with the flow. It will be okay and our children are going to be okay. I applaud the committee and the fine work they have done. The right decision might not make everyone happy but I know that overall it will be the best decision for our community.

Ruthven parent:

We want to preserve our school but not at the expense of other schools. A large school would be great but we would lose some small things that we find near and dear. We all pay a lot of taxes and are outraged when we see waste. This PARC committee is about reducing waste but Ruthven doesn't need to be thrown into the recycle bin. Your statistics show that Pelee Island enrolment will increase but at the same time we are going to see all the communities around Ruthven exploding and Ruthven is dropping – what is causing the reduction?

A. The statistics include the full impact of FDK and in a smaller school the impact is far less than a bigger school. We have a consultant who works with town planners to provide us with the demographic and future enrolment data.

That could be very well but after Kindergarten they go on to grade 1. Where is the data?

A.All the data is on the Board website

I want a copy of the consultants' report, I continue to ask for it. I want the raw data.

A.The raw data we have available is on the website and is in the annually produced Accommodation Report. It is all posted on the Board website. Last year we had an outside consultant do a detailed long term analysis of our Board. It is about 375 pages long and is also on the website.

Could you point it out to me, I have already asked for it 3 times. Do I have your assurance in front of these people that I will get it?

A.I am directing you to the website.

I have read the reports for the other schools and I understand that we are not going to be happy and parents are scared and our fears are passed on to our children. My questions remains, Why were some recommendations dismissed? There is no real explanation. What are the specifics about some schools that make them so appealing over Ruthven? What about this philosophical argument that schools have to remain intact? It is just a one-time occurrence. Why can't students be moved to multiple schools, why do they have to be moved as a whole? This philosophy precludes any option for Ruthven to remain open.

A.The committee developed a frame of reference that they based their recommendations on. It was a fundamental framework they worked from. It is difficult to close a school and even more difficult to split school populations.

I accept that but it has happened in other locations when boundaries change. It seems the philosophy is offered in such a manner that it doesn't offer an opportunity for the preservation of Ruthven. Finally, our elected official in the town of Kingsville has expressed concern about closure of schools that have a significant population of busing and cycling. We spend a lot of time in the classroom talking about nutrition and being active and the solution is to close schools where kids are actively walking to school and eliminating that possibility. In Ruthven I am sad that the crossing guard won't be around and the kids won't walk to school. I am a horrible researcher but if the data is on the website I need someone to point it out to me. Thank you.

Ruthven parent:

We moved here so my children could attend Ruthven. There isn't much data about transportation costs. We want hard figures.

A.Transportation is provided for all four local boards by a Consortium, so until decisions are made and routes are planned accordingly, it is difficult to determine hypothetical costs. We cannot give an accurate number. Once the committee determines its final recommendations, we should be able to provide more accurate data.

Everyone likes all these schools for the reason that they are small schools. There will not be the special contact between teachers and students in a larger school. Hard work is rewarded in our family. My kids know it. We worked hard to make Ruthven what it is and to reward us by removing it is not right.

Kingsville PS and Kingsville DHS parent:

I moved here from B.C. and am very happy with all the schools. I support all these schools staying open because it makes my life easier, but hearing the passion that the Ruthven parents have, I wondered if you have considered demolishing the old part of Kingsville PS, moving French

Immersion to Jack Miner (they are bused anyway) and putting everything else on hold for 3-4 years to see if the development takes place and there is a huge increase in enrolment?

A.The committee will consider all the input provided this evening.

Have they looked at it previously?

A.The committee has considered many options.

Does the final solution have to happen a year from now or could it be a two step process that allows it to happen a little more gradually?

A.It could be a two step process.

Jack Miner PS parent, teacher and former Harrow student:

I have gone through this process several times, growing up in Harrow. Harrow High school had limited programs and I often found it difficult to select the courses I needed. After I had children, I moved to the Kingsville community because it is a nice community and I am think that down the road when considering programming for high schools students, we need we need to consider putting everyone together into a large school. Opportunities are limited in a small high school.

Ruthven parent:

My child has special needs and could not function in a large school but can function and has a better quality of education in a small school. What do we do with these special needs students who thrive in a small school setting? Is there a plan?

A. We continue to work hard with every student in every school that we have. All students are treated equally. You may have experienced something special where you are now, but I can bring many Lakeshore Discovery parents forward who feel there are special things at a large school. For you to say that other schools don't offer the same thing would be inaccurate. Every one of our schools has something special.

I understand that it is the educators and not the bricks and mortar but I think mega schools lose something and there will be kids who can't make that adjustment.

## 9. Closing Comments and Adjournment

The Director noted that we had three PARCS last year and three again this year. He noted that this evening's audience has been very respectful and made some excellent points. The Board doesn't want to take away what these communities enjoy with their children but we have to make some efficiencies. It is difficult. He added that we look forward to bringing back the PARC committee's final recommendations at the next meeting. Superintendent Lyons reminded the audience that information pertaining to the PARC can found at [www.publicboard.ca](http://www.publicboard.ca).

There being no further questions, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.