



**WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

Student Achievement K-12

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CHAIRPERSON: Barbara Holland
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**Minutes of the
1st Public ARC Meeting
St. Theresa, St. Bernard and Stella Maris
Friday, December 9, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.
Location: St. Thomas of Villanova High School**

PRESENT

Area Trustee:	Mary DiMenna
Trustee ARC Chairperson:	Frank Favot
Superintendent:	JoAnne Shea
Administrative Resource:	Colleen Norris, Policy Coordinator
Principals:	Mike Pannunzio, St. Theresa LeeAnn Poisson, St. Bernard Bridget Russo, Stella Maris
Teachers:	Victor DiNardo, St. Theresa Teresa Marrazzo, St. Bernard
Parents:	Katera St. Louis (Chair), St. Theresa Jessica Barron, St. Theresa Anne Fox (Chair), St. Bernard Nicole Bedard, St. Bernard Jane Little (Chair), Stella Maris Rob Way, Stella Maris
Pastor:	Rev. Fr. Brian Jane St. John the Baptist Church
Community Representative:	Jean Beneteau, St. Bernard Dante Pagliaroli, Stella Maris
Regrets:	Donna Maitre, Teacher, Stella Maris Amy Just, Non-Teaching, St. Theresa Jim Fox, Non-Teaching, St. Bernard Annette Jones, Non-Teaching Stella Maris Tonya Jackson, Parent, St. Theresa Nicole Brush, Parent, St. Bernard Rick Fryer, Parent, Stella Maris Denise Bondy, Community Rep., St. Theresa
Recording Secretary:	Simone Lira

1) The meeting began at 7:07 p.m. with a prayer led by Trustee and ARC Chairperson, Frank Favot.

2) **Welcome & Introductions**

Trustee Favot welcomed everyone to St. Thomas of Villanova High School and thanked Principal Hickson for accommodating and arranging setup for the ARC meeting. The Amherstburg ARC includes St. Bernard, St. Theresa and Stella Maris Schools and was established to study, report and make recommendations on the best accommodation options for maximizing educational opportunities, factoring in province-wide declining enrolment and the Board's significant excess facility capacity. Introductions were made of the following personnel: Trustee, DiMenna (Vice-Chair of the Board), Reverend. Fr. Brian Jane, Pastor at St. John the Baptist Parish, and the Principals of St. Bernard, St. Theresa and Stella Maris elementary schools. Principals LeeAnn Poisson, Mike Pannunzio and Bridget Russo introduced the members of the ARC Committee for their respective schools.

3) **Outline of study process/data and issues to be addressed**

As Administrative Resource for the ARC Committees, Colleen Norris, Manager of Human Resources and Policy Development outlined the study process, data and issues to be addressed. She explained that accommodation options may include reorganization of the schools, change in boundaries, renovations to existing schools or new school construction. ARC does not mean a school is scheduled for closure, although school closure is an option that can be considered. There have been no decisions made until the ARC process has been completed. The committee and public then viewed a PowerPoint Presentation, which explained the Accommodation Review Process. The presentation included background information, an overview of the process, a timeframe for the process, an explanation of each public consultation meeting, guidelines for public input, matters to be addressed in the ARC report and the school profiles. **(See Addendum A)**

4) **Presentation of School Profiles**

Superintendent Shea referred to the revised School Information Profiles made available to everyone at the meeting. The valuation framework assesses each school in an ARC review study in accordance with the following criteria, where **value to the student** is weighed above all of the other components:

- Value to the Student
- Value to the Community
- Value to the School Board
- Value to the Local Economy

Superintendent Shea went through and explained the valuation and information profiles of all three schools, which were established with input from administration and the ARC community. She indicated one of the purposes of this meeting was to welcome community input on the profiles. It was explained that the information in the handouts has recently been revised and would continue to be changed and amended as required by the communities and personnel involved. All of the information profiles are posted on the Board website and will be updated as changes/addition of information are received and considered.

5) Delegations

a) Abbie Barron, Former Student, St. Theresa

Abbie is a graduate of St. Theresa School and recipient of the Athlete of the Year award. She has two brothers who are presently attending the school. Abbie extolled on the wonderful athletic program at the school and the tremendous impact the program had on her personal, academic and athletic abilities. Abbie spoke of the success of many of the school teams, and mention was made of students who have excelled in the athletic program at the school and who have gone on to further success in secondary and post-secondary participation of sports. Due to the size of the school, there is ample opportunity for all students to participate in physical activity in the gym and on sports teams. She believes the St. Theresa school community benefits from the great atmosphere and the programs at the school.

b) Charlene Salmon, Parent, St. Theresa

Ms. Salmon is a mother of three students at St. Theresa School. She spoke about the dedicated music program at the school, which has been in existence for ten years, where students as young grade two and upward are able to read music and play instrumental music at the school. There are presently 55 instruments purchased by the school. There is no itinerant music program at either Stella Maris or St. Bernard schools. Ms. Salmon fears the loss of the program if the school is closed. She feels it would take years to reconstruct the culture and calibre of the present program at another school location. She requests that the committee consider the value of music in education at St. Theresa, which extends into other curriculum being taught.

6) Question & Answer Period

At this point, the floor was open to questions from the public.

a) Lisa - Parent from Stella Maris

The ARC committee speaks of the value to the local economy. Why is St. Joseph Elementary School not being considered in the ARC process? At present, Stella Maris has one empty classroom and St. Joseph has three empty classrooms. Is it because of the boundaries and the fact that the majority of the students are from LaSalle that St. Joseph's is not in this ARC process?

Response: Colleen Norris advised that this question was previously raised at the first committee meeting. Having spoken to Sr. Administration and the Director of Education, it was determined that based on a number of considerations, it was not logical that St. Joseph could be merged with one of the other schools. When they looked at which schools formed a community and could reasonably be contemplated for consolidated, the three schools were identified for this ARC, based on a number of factors.

To be part of the Amherstburg ARC, consolidation was a factor of consideration. All issues were looked at specifically, i.e. – location to secondary school, location to development of the community, location of nearest public schools. There is a definite community in Amherstburg. ARC can still look at the boundaries of the schools involved and at those of St. Joseph. Surplus space is only one of the huge number factors that were considered for the ARC process and the schools involved.

- b) Angela - Parent at Stella Maris
Was concerned that consideration should be made to the fact that the JK and SK students do not attend school every day, as in some schools. She is also concerned that schools are being pitted one against the other and full-day JK/SK numbers should be considered.
Response: Trustee Favot assured all present that the Board is not here to pit schools against each other. We are here to solve the problem of inefficient delivery of education. The ARC is what came out of an extensive financial review and the Board needs to arrive at a way to educate our students in a more efficient manner.
- c) Stella Maris Parent
Asked about the time-frame in site for full-day JK/SK at Stella Maris.
Response: Superintendent Shea advised that they are slated for 2013. She advised that Early Learning information is posted on the Board website. Trustee Favot advised that it is the Ministry of Education that makes the final decision on the full-day early learning in the schools.
- d) Tina - JK/SK Teacher at Stella Maris
Advised that she and the parents in the community are concerned that the public system is getting full day early learning. They wonder why our schools are lagging behind. She feels it would make a tremendous impact on enrolment.
Response: Trustee Favot reiterated that the Ministry of Education is in charge of the process. It is not the Board making the decisions. Superintendent Shea advised that she would pose the question to the Superintendent who works with the Ministry regarding full-day early learning and ask for her input on this question.
- e) Angela - Parent at Stella Maris
Asked why we don't wait on the ARC process until 2013 when full day early learning is instated.
Response: Trustee Favot responded that in the face of declining enrolment with no change until approximately 2015, if we as a Board avoid doing anything, we will face greater financial pressure.
- f) Kim - Parent at St. Theresa
Regarding geographic boundaries for the schools, she asked if there will be a study of the number of students who are out of district and attending other schools. She asked if there will be reinforcement of boundaries and enforcement of boundary regulations.
Response: Ms. Norris suggested asking the school communities if this is valuable to address and how we get this corrected.
- g) Michelle - Parent at St. Theresa
If there is a school closure or boundary realignment in the final ARC decision presented in June, how much time will she have to make a decision as to what school her child will attend?
Response: Ms. Norris advised that this is difficult to answer, as it all depends on what the recommendation and the final decision is i.e. – closure, consolidation, rebuild a new school for all three communities, renovations

etc. It is not out of the realm of possibility that something could happen by September of 2012. There will however, be a smooth transition regardless of the final outcome, and the Board will keep the public apprised.

h) Lisa - Parent at Stella Maris -a lot of concerns

Asked that if the final decision for full day early learning is made by the Ministry, why are they not here to hear the concerns of parents for this ARC? If the main issue is money/ funding and it is all about the dollar, how can our concerns make a difference?

Response: Trustee Favot reiterated that the final ARC decision will come from the Trustees. The Ministry is not involved in the ARC process, but mandates the process and guidelines. As far as full day early learning, there is no consultation with the Board. The Ministry makes the decision. The Board is here to listen to all concerns.

i) Sarah - Parent at St. Theresa

If it is all about money and funding, she feels we are forgetting the faith factor. Is the Board considering that people may decide to send their children to the public board? We could lose a good number of students and tax support that are presently going to the Catholic Board. This should be considered seriously.

Response: Trustee Favot reiterated that all aspects of the process are being considered, despite the obvious financial factors. The final decision will be based on **all** factors. None have less value than others, but what is driving the process and the final decision is declining enrolment and surplus space.

j) Vic - Teacher at St. Theresa

The Board says that no decision has yet been made, yet St. Joseph School has not been included in the ARC, so part of the decision has already been made. He is concerned that the Board does not understand the demographics of the area like the community members themselves, i.e. empty land parcels, growth patterns, economic development, etc. The Board needs a more comprehensive study of the area, and should include St. Joseph School. He is concerned parents will move their children to public schools. He also believes that Sr. Administration is making the decision, not the Board of Trustees.

Response: Ms. Norris referred to her earlier response, that the geographics and the community of the three schools in the ARC determined the logic in keeping St. Joseph out of the ARC process. It was not in the realm of possibility that the Board would be moving the population of St. Joseph into an Amherstburg School or the population of an Amherstburg school to River Canard. There was however, recognition that a review of the boundaries could be looked at and the ARC will have the discretion to consider the boundaries between St. Joseph and the Amherstburg schools. Sr. Administration and the Board of Trustees place the issue in the hands of the committee for consideration. Trustee DiMenna suggested that as a member of the ARC Committee and to assist in fulfilling the committee's mandate, the speaker bring these issues and his knowledge of the community forward to the next Committee meeting.

- k) Ken - Parent at St. Theresa
Coming from an impersonal “super school” situation in Mississauga, they felt advantaged to have their children in a smaller, more personal school at St. Theresa. If it is determined to create a “super school” for this ARC group of schools being studied, it will not only be costly to build, but costly to maintain and the payback will possibly take 30-35 years. His suggestion is that to foster proper learning, the Board keep school sizes down and consider the cost of the alternative.
- l) Trace - Parent at St. Theresa
Suggested that we send out a questionnaire to see how many students we will lose if we close one of our schools. She believes that we are assuming parents will keep their children in our system, but that may not be the case.
Response: Trustee Favot stated that this is a good suggestion, and perhaps a study should be done at the schools, to determine what our ratepayers would do.
- m) John - Parent at Stella Maris
Asked if the dollar figures that are being spoken about at this meeting are published somewhere for public perusal. He would like to see how much is being lost to the school board.
Response: Trustee Favot suggested that those interested can find the information in the Board Meeting documents on the website. There are audited financial statements published in the minutes each year.
- n) Sabrina - Parent at Stella Maris
Presuming one of the schools will be closed, how do we get more parents out to these meetings and involved in the ARC? It was suggested that a Friday night was not a good night right before Christmas to hold a public meeting.
Response: Ms. Norris advised that we tried to get an evening that was acceptable to most of the members at the Committee meeting on November 7, but the Church had their mission this past week. She apologized for the Friday night meeting, but reminded everyone that there are still three more public meetings and invited them ask other parents to come out to the next public meeting, which will be determined at the next Committee meeting on January 9th. Ms. Norris suggested that if someone could not attend a meeting, they could communicate by sending letters or notes, and their questions and suggestion would be considered.
- o) Parent at St. Theresa
This parent stated that she and other parents work shift work and cannot always make the meetings because of this fact.
Response: Ms. Norris stated we do the best we can and must go with the majority. She advised that with the timelines involved in the ARC process, it is not easy to determine dates for the meetings, when all concerned can be in attendance, and she reminded that written feedback will also be considered.
- p) Teacher at Stella Maris
Stated she is concerned that parents reading about the ARC in the paper and through other media sources might already be deciding to register their children with the public board in anticipation of a closure/ consolidation.

She suggested that we need to consider the importance of our Catholic faith-based schools, and the loss of our students.

q) CATERA - Parent at Stella Maris

Suggested to those in attendance that the parents at Stella Maris held a meeting at the school before tonight's meeting to give people an idea of what to expect. In response to an earlier concern about recruitment, she thought this might work for other schools.

Response: Trustee Favot suggested this was a great idea and would make the meetings more efficient.

Mr. Favot advised that input received this evening will be considered by the Accommodation Review Committee and they may modify the profiles based on this information. The Committee will then formalize the profiles and they will be presented again with any amendments at the next public meeting.

At the next public meeting, the Committee will present for input any accommodation options presented by Board administration or proposed by the ARC. Mr. Favot welcomed everyone back to the next meeting. Notification of the next meeting will be made public. Administration will be updating the ARC page of its public website at www.wecdsb.on.ca on a regular basis. Everyone was advised to refer to the web site for up to date information on the ARC process.


The next **Committee** meeting is January 9, 2012. At that time the next public meeting will be determined.

7) Closing Prayer and Adjournment at 8:30 p.m.

NOTE: Please see attachments below for written submissions.

“Learning together in faith and service”

From:  Colleen Norris

Tuesday, December 06, 2011 8:52:45 AM 

Subject: Re:

To:  "Jessica Barron" 

Thank you Jessica. Abbie will be noted as delegate on the agenda.

Colleen

"Jessica Barron" 

hello colleen, here is a copy of the speech that Abbie Barron would like to present at the public meeting on Friday December 9, 2011 at Villanova high school.

Colleen Norris
Manager of Human Resources and Policy Development
Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board

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Hello, my name is Abbie Barron, I graduated from St. Theresa's last year, and I have two brothers who are still attending school there. I wanted to speak to you today about the great athletic program that St. Theresa has. Being a recent graduate and recipient of Athlete of the year from St. Theresa I can personally testify to the tremendous impact the athletic program has had on my academic and athletic abilities. Having the opportunity to partake in all of the athletic programs available at St. Theresa, since I was a junior at the school has enabled me to develop a self-confidence that I know I would not otherwise possess. Even having the courage to come and speak before you today, is a result of the impact that the St. Theresa athletic program has had on me personally.

The athletic program at St. Theresa's speaks for itself with the many championship and finalist pennants displayed on the St. Theresa gym wall. We have won more championships and been finalists more times than any other school in the system.

Our coaches do not focus on just one sport, we have been successful in all areas. In recent, and past years, St Theresa teams have won city and county championships and finalist pennants in track and field, basketball, soccer, badminton and volleyball.

Many past graduates have gone on to find immediate success at both the high school and post secondary level. This year, three of our girls started on the Villanova junior girl's basketball team. Two started on the General Amherst junior basketball team. Two girls have just made the volleyball team at General Amherst, and When General Amherst won the Provincial gold medal in basketball three of their five starters were from St Theresa. We have some former students at the post secondary level who have been achieving great success; one who has been invited to play on the national 19 year old and under team this year; which is a development team for the Canadian Olympic team.

While we have been fortunate to experience many successes in the area of athletics there have been games where we have struggled. In those times and when we have been victorious we have always been encouraged to promote excellent sportsmanship skills and work together as a team. Our coaches have consistently stressed to us the importance of having a positive attitude and respect for our opponents. Through this guidance we have been able to develop not only into better athletes but into better people as well.

At St. Theresa maximum participation is strongly encouraged. Rarely do students need to be cut from school teams, which allows students to feel confident in the try out process and in turn helps to not only develop our skills but promote healthy active living. The size of our school allows for **every class to engage in daily physical activity within our gymnasium** as opposed to other schools that need to do so on a rotating basis, due to student population.

I recognize that all schools have many athletic programs, but what stands out for me is that at St. Theresa, we have been afforded the opportunity to play at a young age in an environment where everyone knows and encourages each other. The Teachers, support staff, students and parents of St. Theresa are not just a school, but a community, and this has been a wonderful atmosphere for myself, my friends and my brothers to grow up in, and i hope that many more students and families can benefit from the same wonderful programs at St. Theresa!

I would like to thank you for your time and for listening to **one** of the many reasons that St. Theresa school is so important to me.

From:  Tammy Williams  Tue, Dec 06, 2011 10:56:05 AM 

Subject: St. Theresa school

To:  Colleen Norris

Attachments:  Attach0.html / Uploaded File 4K

Hello Colleen,

I'm writing you about the possible closure of St. Theresa school in Harrow/Amherstburg. Although the numbers are down at St. Theresa school it really is our little gem in this area.

Last December I moved my children from the Malden public school, to St. Theresas. After some discussion with the principal at the time I discovered it was the right move for my children's education & I have not ever regretted it since.

The small class environment, the county attitude of the school, the dedication of all the teachers and the phonics programs that start in JK are truly assets. Later in the year, we discovered my oldest son has a learning disability and I have received a great amount of support from the teachers at the school. Also due to his disability, the small classroom environment is one that helps him succeed. Often times in our 'hurried' lifestyles we often overlook the small things and only focus at the financial aspects. Even though, the numbers are very low at the school, I feel it is an asset to those students who would not be able to handle larger class settings. Due to this, I believe it would not be in the best in interest of our children to shut such a great school down due only to the numbers and the lack of funds.

Although I live in Amherstburg, our sub division falls in the boundaries' of the county/country schools which I know now is such a blessing, I guess you can say once you go to a 'county/country' school you do not want to change to a in town school. In saying this, I believe that if the school is replaced by St. Bernards or if it becomes our school, I feel that a majority of the parents will make a switch to Malden Public School due to the location, which in turn will take away from the attendance at the Catholic board.

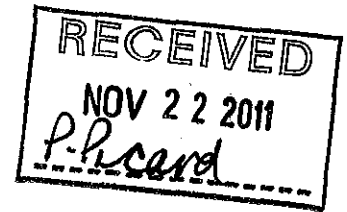
I understand that you must have had many letters from parents, I really feel that St. Theresa school is worth the fight. I can only pray that what I have said here will help in this fight.

Please save St. Theresa school.

Thank-you for your time,

Mrs. Tammy-Lynn Moore.

Julie



November 15, 2011

Dear Mr. Picard:

Hello! My name is Yvonne Chappus. I have three boys that are presently attending Stella Maris School in Amherstburg. My husband and I have nothing but praise and gratitude for the great school that we have been blessed with. Stella Maris is not just a school but a family.

We have heard the many rumours and speculation as to what might happen to our school in the future. We heard of boundary changes or the idea of a super school combining all three etc. I thought maybe you would be interested to know the feelings of our neighbours and friends in our community. We reside near the Kingsbridge subdivision on Front Road. I have spoken to many families in that area and the majority of people have decided that if anything happens to Stella Maris they will be placing their children at Anderdon Public. If you are not familiar with the Amherstburg area; Anderdon Public has a wonderful reputation. It is a school that has great parent involvement and activities. In our area it is known as the "school that is well off". This makes a very attractive offer for people in our area.

When speaking with these families I mentioned the ARC committee but they feel there is no need to voice their opinion as they feel the decision has been determined already.

I do not envy the position that you are in and the challenges you face of trying to accommodate everyone's feelings and concerns but I did want to inform you of the situation as it stands in our community. It would be sad to see a large group of people leave the Catholic system. Good luck with your decision!

Thank you for your time!

Yvonne Chappus