



**WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

**Student Achievement K-12**

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**Minutes of  
2<sup>nd</sup> Public ARC Meeting  
Fontainebleau Area  
St. Alexander and W. J. Langlois  
Monday, February 6, 2012 – 6:30 p.m.  
Location: St. Joseph High School**

**PRESENT**

Area Trustee:	Fred Alexander
Trustee ARC Chairperson:	Lisa Soulliere
Superintendent:	Mike Seguin
Administrative Resource:	Colleen Norris, Policy Coordinator
Principals:	Joan Schell, W. J. Langlois Bill Vaillancourt, St. Alexander
Teachers:	J. P. Trepanier, W. J. Langlois Mike Nadalin, St. Alexander
Non Teaching Staff:	Maria Charles, W. J. Langlois Nancy Shangi, St. Alexander
Parents:	Tracey Daidone, W. J. Langlois Danielle DeBergh, W. J. Langlois Catherine Johnson, W. J. Langlois  Belinda Williams, St. Alexander Elaine Boucas, St. Alexander Dawn Caron, St. Alexander
Community Representatives:	Gina Antogiovanni, Community Representative St. Alexander
Not Present:	Rev. Fr. Andy Dwyer, Pastor, St. Theresa Church Ron Marshall, Community Representative, W. J. Langlois Andrea Palmer, Member of Business Community
Recording Secretary:	Beth Marshall

## **1. Prayer**

The meeting began at 6:39 p.m. with a prayer led by Trustee and ARC Chairperson, Lisa Soulliere.

## **2. Welcome and Introductions**

Trustee Soulliere welcomed everyone to the second public ARC meeting for St. Alexander and W. J. Langlois schools. Principals Joan Schell and Bill Vaillancourt, introduced the ARC committee members from their schools.

Trustee Soulliere introduced area Trustee and former Chair of the Board, Fred Alexander, Superintendent of Education Mike Seguin, Policy Coordinator and Board Administrative Resource, Colleen Norris and recording secretary Beth Marshall.

Trustee Soulliere thanked those in attendance and also individuals who attended the first public meeting. She mentioned the purpose of tonight's meeting is for the public to provide input, in a respectful manner, on the accommodation options presented by the ARC committee and administration.

## **3. Presentation of additions/amendments to School Profiles made since last public meeting**

- Superintendent Seguin briefly outlined the recent W. J. Langlois school profile amendments and mentioned the school profiles for both schools can be found on the board's website.

## **4. Presentation of Accommodation Options**

Superintendent Seguin explained the two preliminary accommodations options presented by Board Administration, namely:

- **Consolidate W. J. Langlois at the St. Alexander site**
- **Consolidate St. Alexander at the W. J. Langlois site**

## **5. Delegations:**

- a) Avery Lauzon & Marcel Caron - Formers students of St. Alexander

Avery Lauzon and Marcel Caron spoke about the St. Alexander family atmosphere and how it impacted their lives. Attending St. Alexander promoted their faith and developed leadership skills through the many family orientated activities and events.

- b) Stacey Parent - Parent, St. Alexander

Stacey Parent spoke about her unsuccessful experience attending W.J. Langlois as a child due to open classrooms and is concerned if St. Alexander's consolidates with W.J. Langlois her developmental child will experience the same difficulties.

c) Gary Groulx - Retired Teacher, St. Alexander

Gary Groulx spoke about his teaching experiences at schools with both traditional and open classrooms. He believes the St. Alexander building with its lockers and ample space would better suit the needs of students and staff. Mr. Groulx mentioned the community use at St. Alexander and believes closing the school would eliminate an east end community asset.

d) Marc Williams - St. Alexander

Marc Williams distributed copies of the National Research Council Canada report “Does the classroom assist or impede the learning process?” As presented in the report, Mr. Williams spoke of the link between noise and poor academic progress and believes the open concept environment would not provide the students, especially special needs students, the best opportunity to succeed.

e) Sheila Filipetti – Parent, St. Alexander

Sheila Filipetti commented on the activities and services provided at St. Alexander. She mentioned the Kiss ‘n Ride program, Snack program, houseleague teams, recycling club, student council, athletic teams, monthly liturgies, student of the month, and charitable events, and believes in the partnership of school, home, and church.

f) Jill Bundun – Teacher, St. Alexander

Jill Bundun outlined the academic learning environment at St. Alexander and how it positively affects the EQAO test results.

g) Linda Donivan, Kristine Kelly & Monica Szaniszlo - Parents, W.J. Langlois

The above listed parents from W. J. Langlois School commented on the benefits of the school. Such items were mentioned, but not limited to:

- The ability to accommodate students from both schools with limited additions or portables
- Air conditioning
- School condition improvements
- Full Day Early Learning Program
- Open concept model effective as evident with generations of families attending

h) Brent Peters – Parent, W.J. Langlois

Brent Peters spoke about the location of W.J. Langlois. The school is next to a library, park, track and playground. He mentioned compared to St. Alexander, the school is newer and therefore less upkeep resulting in less financial costs. Mr. Peters commented on the strong parent volunteers and community involvement such as Friends of Fontainebleau.

- i) James Kennedy – Parent, St. Alexander

James Kennedy spoke about experience, effectiveness and economics. The experience of a traditional school setting prepares students for the next step, questioned effectiveness of learning in an open concept setting and economics based on past board decisions to continue with traditional settings. Mr. Kennedy believes St. Alexander meets the three criteria.

## 6. Question and Answer Period

1. *Question:* Numerous rumours the decision has already been made and W.J. Langlois will remain open.  
*Answer:* At this juncture no decision has been made. The purpose of the public meetings is to receive input for the committee to review and if required amend the accommodation options to bring back to the public for further consultation, and eventually present a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.  
*Response:* If St. Alexander closes will not send children to an open concept school and will enrol children in the public board.
2. *Question:* Director of the Board, Paul Picard was a former principal of W.J. Langlois. How can we be assured Mr. Picard's decision will be impartial?  
*Answer:* The ARC committee will forward their recommendations to the Director, who will prepare a report, working with administration, and that report will also be presented for public input. Mr. Picard will not make the final decision, the elected Board of Trustees will do that.
3. *Question:* Understand W.J. Langlois requires repairs such as \$30,000 for doors and \$150,000 to replace windows. Wondering if the repairs have been completed.  
*Answer:* All schools are Ministry audited and should consider the suggested repairs in the context of the entire system. In some instances plans are adjusted.
4. *Question:* Understand the red alert procedure at W.J. Langlois involves bringing all students to close classrooms. Wondering how an extra 250 will fit in the closed classrooms and how long will the procedure take?  
*Answer:* Every school has the same response procedure. Specifically at W.J. Langlois, the school is divided into four (4) areas; JK/SK, primary, junior and senior. Students and staff are aware of the designated areas. It takes approximately forty-five (45) seconds, the same amount of time to exit the school during a fire drill.  
*Response:* Will still be able to implement the same plan with an additional 250 students?  
*Answer:* If portable(s) the plan will change. The students will not leave the portable(s). The plan will also be reviewed with the Board's Risk Management Officer and amended if required.
5. *Question:* Commented that W.J. Langlois students and staff know almost immediately if an unknown person is in the building due to the open concept. Questioned whether St. Alexander portables were in use.  
*Answer:* Presently, the portables are not in use.

6. *Question:* Clarification of maximum population at each school. Figures presented indicate St. Alexander cannot accommodate the combined students and yet in the past St. Alexander's student population has been as high as 500 students.  
*Answer:* Particularly in the primary grades, class sizes and combined grades have changed within the last five (5) years due to Ministry requirements. Combined with other Ministry factors such as square footage, building design, and space (which are consistent measurements throughout the province), the figures represent a number of indicators. It is important to know that both sites may be impacted.  
*Response:* What is the classroom square footage in each school?  
*Answer:* No standard classroom size.
7. *Question:* What is the timeline?  
*Answer:* A total of four (4) public meetings, tonight is the second (2). The committee will present their recommendations to the Director early April. The Director and administration will compile a report and the ARC report will be presented to the Board of Trustees in June.  
*Response:* Implementation by September 2012?  
*Answer:* The committee is still studying the recommendations and public input. Uncertain at this point in time but September 2012 is a possibility.
8. *Question:* What is the number of parking spots at W.J. Langlois?  
*Answer:* Presently there are twenty (20) parking spots.  
*Response:* With very little parking and no Kiss 'n Ride program it is very difficult to drop off and pick up students.  
*Response:* W.J. Langlois parents use the library and church located beside and across the street from the school.
9. *Question:* Would like to hear from teachers at W.J. Langlois on the merits of open concept.  
*Answer:* Teachers prepare for workplace and basically get use to the noise level. Mentioned the school does have dividers similar to walls but due to heating and cooling could not extend the walls to the ceilings.  
The teacher encouraged parents not to give up on their Catholic education due to the closing of either school. Catholic education does make a difference. W.J. Langlois staff is willing to visit new programs such as Kiss 'n Ride.  
*Answer:* An educational assistant from W.J. Langlois believes open concept assist special needs children. All students from JK to grade 8 are familiar with one another developing a family atmosphere.  
*Question:* Will programs from both schools be merged?  
*Answer:* A Transition Committee will be developed to review such specifics. Every effort will be made to try and incorporate programs from both schools.
10. *Question:* Will the cost savings be presented at the next public meeting?  
*Answer:* Cost depends on needs of the school. Consolidation will save funds. Premature at this point to determine actual costs due to a number of factors such as enrolment numbers, needs of schools, reconstruction. Cost savings will be addressed in the Committee's recommendations and will be provided for public input.

At this point, Superintendent Seguin commented on the research of John Hattie. Mr. Hattie's textbook discusses many facets in education including open concept. According to the research, open concept classrooms make little difference in role of the child in learning, diagnostic evaluation, use of manipulative materials, and individualized instruction. Parental involvement is important regarding student achievement.

11. *Comment:* Does not want her child to attend an open concept school fearing her child will not do well.
12. *Comment:* Would like children to attend post secondary school (university or college) which have traditional classrooms. If post secondary institutions do not have open concept classrooms neither should elementary or secondary schools.
14. *Comment:* Teacher from W.J. Langlois believes open concept prepares students for the workforce and indicated the school does have a closed area for students with no distractions.
13. *Question:* Would like to children to continue their Catholic education, would the board be willing to change the boundaries to possibly attend St. Jules?  
*Answer:* The committee is open to recommendations. Currently the Board is reviewing boundary adjustments in other areas.
14. *Question:* Would the students at W.J. Langlois be sitting at tables or desks?  
*Answer:* Usually teacher preference, some like tables other prefer desks. Classroom structure could also be a factor.
15. *Question:* If St. Alexander closes, will a survey be distributed to the parents asking whether they will enrol their children at W.J. Langlois?  
*Answer:* Committee has discussed the possibility of a survey and will discuss again to determine whether such a survey will assist in completing their study.
16. *Comment:* John Hattie's research conducted during the early 1980's in Australia. The conditions are different. Suggested Hattie research is outdated.
17. *Comment:* Will not send child to an open concept school, will enrol at a public school.

Trustee Soulliere advised that input received this evening will be considered by the Accommodation Review Committee and may amend the accommodation options based on tonight's public input. Updated ARC information will be posted on the board's website [www.wecdsb.on.ca](http://www.wecdsb.on.ca) on a regular basis.

Trustee Soulliere thanked everyone for their comments and questions and encouraged all to attend the next public meeting February 23, 2012 at 6:30 pm at St. Joseph High School. If interested in becoming a delegation, please contact Colleen Norris.

## 7. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

**Note: Please see attachments as information for this meeting.**

# Avery Lauzon + Marcel Caron

"Family"-Webster's Dictionary defines family as a group of people united by certain convictions or a common affliction.

Good Evening—my name is Avery Lauzon and my name is Marcel Caron. We are both grade 9 students at Brennan High school. We are here tonight to tell you about St. Alexander School—our family. Even though Marcel and I recently graduated from St. Alexander we still consider ourselves part of the St. Alexander School family.

Avery

Avery and I were both fortunate to attend St. Alexander School and this has had a huge impact on our lives. Inside the walls of St. Alexander school amazing things are always happening—where do we begin—from every sports team to daily house leagues, from student council to recycling club and drama productions, from student of the month assemblies to the healthy snack and milk programs, from our monthly liturgies and masses and our mentoring and partner classes and lets not forget our dance and skipping teams—we were so fortunate to be able to experience all these wonderful things because of the amazing staff and parents who are all part of the St. Alexander School family.

Marcel

Marcel and I wish that every child could be as lucky as us to have learned our values of leadership, faith, acceptance and community from our St. Alexander School family. We were able to learn with minimal distractions from other students. Our teachers were able to better control the level of noise and guide us through individual, partner, and group learning activities without disturbing others students in adjacent rooms. Having Langlois join our St. Alexander family would be amazing. Throughout our years at St. Alexander School many students from Langlois have joined our St. Alexander School family. They have always been welcomed and accepted.

Avery

We believe all students will benefit from the experiences and opportunities provided at St. Al's. The Crusader spirit resonates throughout the halls at every grade level. Because this has been fostered in us we continue to be leaders and faith ambassadors in our new school setting.

Marcel

"Community"-Webster's Dictionary defines community "as a group of people with common characteristics or interests living together within a larger society". St Alexander School would gladly welcome Langlois into our school to make a new community.

Thank you

Good Evening:

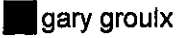


My name is Stacey Parent and I myself have gone through this same situation. My grade school St. Vincent de Paul closed down when I was in Grade 2 and our receiving school was W. J. Langlois.


I did try the open concept school but it did not last longer than one week. I myself found it very hard to focus on what my teacher was instructing us to do. I found my eyes wandering around the school and watching what all the other children were doing and what all the other teachers were teaching. Overall it was not easy, very loud and hard to focus. So that resulted in a change of schools where my academics would be put to best use.

Now years later I have a daughter with developmental delays. I am here today as a voice for her and all children in her situation. She has a hard time focusing on her task at hand so putting her in an open concept school would spell disaster.

She deserves an education that would bring her to her full potential. St. Alexander School can provide an environment to answer these needs.

Thanks very much.

From:  gary groulx   
Subject: copy of my presentation  
To:  **Beth Marshall**

Wed, Feb 08, 2012 9:50:51 AM 

Attachments:  Attach0.html / Uploaded File

5K

It was so great to see you.

Hello,

My name is Gary Groulx. I am a retired teacher from this Board. I taught for 35 years, the majority of them being at the Gr. 8 level. In my career, I taught at both an open concept School and in closed classrooms. I spent 9 years at C. G. DeSantis under 3 principals. I personally found my first year DeSantis a difficult adjustment having come from an closed Classroom. Two to the principals there deemed it necessary To put the Gr. 8 classes into closed classrooms, in order to get them ready for what they would experience in high school. As a teacher, I also dealt with students who could not cope in An open concept area, and with parents who often would take Their child to another school or school board, one that had Closed classrooms.

I also experienced the journey of dealing with the closing of a School. This occurred at St. Wilfrid School. As a teacher, with All the end of the year duties that we must complete, it was An extremely emotional time, of packing up your classroom Into boxes and realizing the finality of that last day of June. My last 9 years were spent a St. Alexander, perhaps my most Favourite school. When I arrived, we were quite full, but soon After we found ourselves bursting at the seams. Two portable Classrooms were added to accept all the students. Although the school looks quite small from the front, its two Long hallways have ample space. St. Al's was a junior high School at its creation in Sandwich East. The fact that students Have lockers in the hallway gives more room in each Classroom. St. Alexander would definitely be able to Graciously accommodate the students from W.J. Langlois. During those nine memorable years at St. Alexander' I, as well As The dedicated staff and administration strove to create a Family-like experience that students and their parents Greatly appreciated. In my daily life, I often run into former Students who tell me that their years at St. Al's were

formative, exciting, and rewarding. They comment on the excellence of education that they received, right from JK to Grade 8. Students that come to St. Alexander from other schools, no matter what grade, retell of the warm reception that they received and how caring the staff was. There is a tremendous pride taken in Being a St. Alexander Crusader, one that former students still talk about today.

This school is regularly used as a polling station for Federal, Provincial, and Municipal elections. It has also been rented Out by groups and organizations for multiple purposes, ranging from mixed evening volleyball leagues to outside Teams needing a gymnasium for a training spot during the Winter months. To close this school would be taking away A solid community asset, as well as much needed funds for the School board.

In conclusion, St. Alexander School is a viable and purposeful Building, not only for the education of our students, both Present and future, but also for this established East end Community. Closing it would be a huge mistake. I hope that I have given you some personal information for your Consideration.

Thank you for your attention.

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*From Marc Williams*



National Research Council Canada  
Conseil national de recherches Canada

# **NRC - CNRC**

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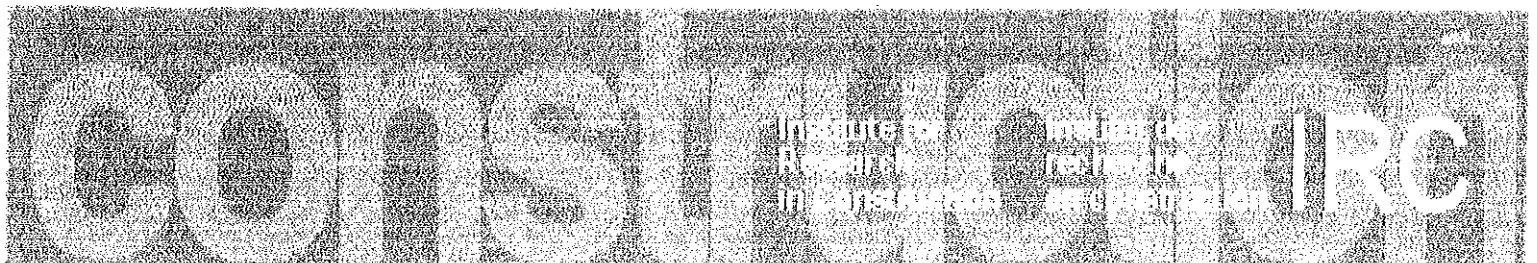
**Does the classroom assist or impede the learning process?**

**Bradley, J.S.**

**NRCC-47710**

**A version of this document is published in / Une version de ce document se trouve dans:  
Canadian Association of Principals Journal, v. 13, no. 1, Winter 2005, pp. 32-34**

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# Does the Classroom Assist or Impede the Learning Process?

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## Introduction

Even moderate levels of noise and poor room acoustics can impair children's ability to understand clearly spoken words. In many everyday classroom situations, children will only understand a portion of the words that are spoken to them, even if they are clearly spoken simple words. The problem becomes more acute for younger children and others such as hearing impaired and second language listeners.

Most learning activities in classrooms are verbal and involve listening to speech. This is especially true for younger students whose reading and writing skills are still developing. Learning activities in classrooms involve verbal communication between teacher and students as well as among students. If students cannot readily understand all of the teacher's words due to interfering noise or poor room acoustics, then the learning process is made more difficult. While some students may be able to cope with a situation where they can only understand a portion of the words that the teacher is speaking, many others cannot and they are more severely handicapped. When difficult listening conditions persist for some time, some children will 'turn off' and stop trying to understand the words.

It is therefore very important that the acoustical conditions in classrooms be specially designed to encourage and not impede the learning activities that take place in these rooms. This is best done with the assistance of a knowledgeable acoustical consultant. It is equally important that during critical teaching periods, where verbal communication is important, that student activity noise be controlled. An ideal classroom should not detract from or impair the learning process for any child. Classrooms should provide an environment that completely supports the needs of verbal communication in teaching activities.

## Why is Noise a Problem?

From speech recognition tests, we know that the fraction of the words understood by listeners, (that is, the intelligibility of the speech), is most influenced by how loud the speech is relative to the level of ambient noise. For near-to-complete understanding of speech, the speech must be at least 15 decibels louder than other interfering sounds. Teachers can talk louder to overcome noisy situations, but there is a limit to how loud teachers can comfortably talk for long periods. Therefore classrooms (and various meeting rooms) must be relatively quiet for maximum intelligibility of spoken words. The new Classroom Acoustics standard in the US recommends that ambient noise levels should not exceed 35 dBA. This is very quiet and not easily attainable without serious consideration of the complete acoustical design of the classroom. However, since the main purpose of a classroom is to support verbal communication for all students as part of the learning process, it is obviously important that efforts should be made to maximize the performance of the classroom.

## The Consequences of Too Much Noise

If the classroom is not quiet enough, then the students may not understand all of the words spoken by the teacher, adding to their difficulties of learning new concepts and new information. New results from an ongoing CLLRnet study show that in typical classroom conditions, where

the students are attentively listening to a teacher, the average grade 1 student will not understand about 1 in 6 simple, clearly spoken words. About one quarter of grade 1 students will be less successful and will not understand 1 in 5 words spoken by the teacher. This is true for the average conditions found in apparently typical good classrooms. Of course many classrooms are below average and in them students would understand less of the teacher's speech. Although older students are better able to understand speech in noise, the typical level of noise found in classrooms clearly interferes with the learning process, making it more difficult for students to learn new information. This increased difficulty will be further exaggerated for certain groups of students such as: hearing impaired, second language listeners, students with colds or temporary ear infections etc. and students with various learning disabilities.

Excessive noise also creates problems for the teacher. Talkers naturally talk louder to overcome the masking effects of noise. (This is known as the Lombard effect). Many teachers talk significantly louder than the levels used in normal conversation to ensure that students can better understand them. The CLLRnet classroom acoustics project found the average voice output of teachers to be almost always above a 'raised' voice level. Teachers are known to have a much larger incidence of voice impairment problems due to their prolonged use of higher voice levels. Moderate amounts of noise in the classroom, not only impede the learning process for students, but also increase the incidence of voice strain in teachers.

### **Room Acoustics**

Voice levels in rooms are naturally enhanced by reflected speech sounds that arrive at the listeners within a small fraction of a second after the sound travelling directly from the talker to the listener. Consequently sound levels at the rear of a typical classroom are not so much lower than at positions closer to the teacher. These early-arriving reflections of speech sounds are not heard separately by the listener, but enhance the apparent loudness of the speech sounds. This makes the speech effectively louder relative to noise levels and increases the intelligibility of the speech. When the teacher turns and talks away from a particular group of students, they can still usually hear well because of the early arriving reflections of the speech sounds. It is important to design rooms to preserve and strengthen such useful reflections of speech sounds. They are essential to ensuring that speech is loud enough relative to various interfering noises.

In some rooms, speech sounds can be heard reverberating around the room for more than a second after the talker has stopped. A gymnasium is an extreme example of a room with too much reverberant sound that may persist for more than a second after the speech has stopped. Such reverberant sounds cause one word to blur into the next and decrease the intelligibility of speech. The reverberant character of a room can be assessed by its reverberation time. (This is the time it takes for a loud sound to fade away to inaudibility after the source has been stopped). For typical classrooms, intended for 20 to 35 students, the reverberation time should be about 0.6 s. Although it is not important to get exactly this value, you can have too much or too little reverberation. Too much sound absorbing material in a classroom reduces reverberation time (which is good), but at the same time will reduce useful early-reflected speech sounds and hence will reduce effective speech levels (which is bad). It is very important that the room enhances the effective levels of the speech sounds for all listeners by providing useful early reflections of the speech sounds.

Although this seems a little complicated, in practice conventional construction tends to lead to classrooms with acceptable room acoustics. Cost concerns usually dictate that the classrooms are

not too large (less than about 250 m<sup>3</sup>) and conventional (inexpensive) construction usually leads to a suspended acoustically absorbing ceiling. With the added absorption of students, teacher, and furnishings, most classrooms tend to have close to ideal reverberation times. Problems occur when more extravagant architecture is used with larger room volumes.

Excessive noise is a much more serious and widespread problem than poor room acoustics. It is quite common for noise energy to be 10 times greater than optimum; it is almost impossible for reverberant sound to be 10 times too high.

### **Student Activity Noise**

Noise from student activity is also an important concern. Even well behaved students attentively listening to the teacher make noise, and occupied classrooms are always noisier than the unoccupied room. While it may be quite acceptable to have higher levels of student activity noise during many classroom activities, it is important that teachers understand the importance of controlling student activity noise when critical teaching activities are happening. To ignore this problem is to place an additional burden on children trying to learn new concepts and ideas.

It may not be obvious to the teacher that the students are having increased difficulty, because adults can understand speech in noise much better than younger children. Although grade 6 students can discriminate speech in moderate noise almost as well as adults, grade 1 students require, on average, conditions that are 7 decibels quieter to understand the same percentage of clearly spoken simple words as would the grade 6 students. Thus many teachers probably do not fully appreciate the problems that the younger students experience in moderately noisy conditions because they as adults do not have the same difficulty.

### **Open Concept Schools and Other Bigger Issues**

The new results referred to in this article were obtained from enclosed elementary school classrooms of quite conventional designs. Not all schools are like this and some have much larger problems. One school included in our study had been originally built as an open concept school with no walls between groups of 3 classrooms. Over the years there had been various attempts to create some form of partitions between the classrooms. However, these attempts were not successful because the various temporary partitions were not effective barriers to sound and because large areas had to be left open to allow adequate ventilation to the spaces. The result was a disturbing cacophony of sound. Sometimes the voice of the teacher from the adjacent space was louder than that of the teacher situated in the space. Students had great difficulty deciphering the confusing mix of messages, and teachers found the experience very frustrating. Open concept architecture for schools is completely incompatible with providing environments where children can easily understand speech. Since verbal communication is a significant part of the educational process, one must conclude that these schools are a major impediment to academic achievement for many students.

There are a number of studies in the scientific literature that also report much larger problems than found in the Eastern Ontario schools that we tested. In warmer climates very high noise levels have been measured in schools in high-density urban areas. For example, an Italian study reported high noise levels due to the combination of a school with normally open windows located close to very busy road traffic. While such extremes may not be common in Canada, there are probably many schools in urban areas exposed to significant levels of outdoor noise. In these situations, the building façade and especially the windows must be designed to be effective

barriers to the unwanted outdoor noise. This would typically require that the windows not be opened and hence would involve at least a very quiet ventilation system. In most parts of Canada, keeping the windows completely closed in warmer seasons would also need a quiet air conditioning system. For new construction, a better approach would be to locate the school away from high levels of outdoor noise.

### **What to do?**

The new results from current investigations will be used to more precisely define ideal criteria for classrooms according to the age of the students. However, initial results suggest that the conclusions will not be very different than the recommendations of the new US Classroom Acoustics standard. That is, for ideal conditions for accurate speech communication; noise such as that from heating and ventilating systems or that intruding from adjacent spaces, should not exceed 35 dBA. Although not ideal, a little higher level (40 dBA) may often suffice for older students. This will normally require ducted ventilation systems with the fans (and any other noise producing components) located outside of the classroom.

For normal sized classrooms (less than 250 m<sup>3</sup>), the inclusion of a sound-absorbing ceiling along with typical classroom furnishings will probably provide an acceptable combination of beneficial early-arriving reflections and reduced reverberant speech sound. Where calculations of expected conditions are to be made, a reverberation time goal of about 0.6 s should be the design goal. Surfaces that can provide strong early-arriving reflections to many listeners such as the central portion of the ceiling are to be encouraged and large room volumes should be avoided.

Measurements of noise levels in classrooms show, that the noise levels of attentive students during a teaching activity are 5 to 10 decibels louder than the noise levels found in the unoccupied room. It is therefore very important to control such student activity noise during periods when accurate speech communication is critical. For example, if a teacher wishes to explain a new concept to the entire class, he/she will be much more effective if the students are as quiet as possible.

### **Conclusions**

There are many factors that can interfere with a child's academic development. Many of these may be difficult to control. However, acoustical conditions in classrooms are completely under the control of teachers and school authorities and can be optimized to maximally support accurate speech communication in the classroom. Being able to understand the words of the teacher's explanation must be an essential first step towards understanding the message too.

### **References?**

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Sato, H. and Bradley, J.S., "Evaluation of acoustical conditions for speech communication in active elementary school classrooms", Proceedings 18<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Acoustics, Kyoto, April 2004.

Bradley, J.S. and Sato, H., "Speech intelligibility test results for grades 1, 3 and 6 children in real classrooms", Proceedings 18<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Acoustics, Kyoto, April 2004.

## Noise and Classroom Acoustics

<p><b>The Problem</b></p>	<p>If children are unable to hear and understand the words spoken by the teacher, they cannot learn the new concepts and ideas being taught.</p> <p>If only some of the words are understood, learning becomes more difficult depending on the child's own abilities to cope.</p> <p>(Classrooms should fully support the learning process and not impede it.)</p>
<p><b>Speech Recognition Tests</b></p>	<p>Speech recognition tests can measure children's ability to recognize clearly spoken, simple words in various classroom environments.</p> <p>From these tests we know that noise and any other clearly audible sounds will reduce children's ability to understand spoken words.</p> <p>They also show that less than ideal room acoustics can further degrade speech communication in rooms.</p>
<p><b>Noise</b></p>	<p>For accurate speech communication, the speech sounds must be noticeably louder than noises and other interfering sounds.</p> <p>The recommended ideal for noise to not exceed 35 dBA in a classroom is very quiet and indicates that most clearly audible sounds interfere with speech communication.</p>
<p><b>Sources of Noise</b></p>	<p>Heating and ventilation system noises. <i>Solution: use quieter ducted central ventilation systems and avoid units located in the classroom.</i></p> <p>Student activity noise from adjacent spaces or from outdoors. <i>Solution: Move or reschedule the activity causing the noise; improve the sound insulation of walls and windows.</i></p> <p>Other outdoor noises. <i>Solution: Better sound insulation of exterior walls and windows, and locate new construction away from noisy roads and other noise sources.</i></p> <p>Student activity noise in the classroom. <i>Solution: When a critical teaching activity is in progress, the teacher must ensure that students are quiet and attentive.</i></p>
<p><b>Room Acoustics</b></p>	<p>Some reflecting surfaces are essential to enhance speech sounds at positions far from the talker and also when the talker turns his/her head away from a listener.</p> <p>If a room is too large (&gt;250 m<sup>3</sup>) speech sounds may reverberate around for more than a second and degrade intelligibility as occurs in many gymnasias.</p> <p><i>Solution: Classrooms should not be too large and should include some sound absorbing surfaces.</i></p>
<p><b>More Problems</b></p>	<p>The concept of open plan schools is inconsistent with any rational attempt to have accurate speech communication. It is not possible to meet the ideal goal of no more than 35 dBA of noise in an open plan classroom. Since the interfering sounds are often speech from adjacent teaching spaces, they are likely to be more disruptive than most types of noise.</p> <p>While noise interferes with a listener's ability to understand speech, it also causes talkers to raise their voices. The fact that many teachers talk with raised voice levels for long periods of time contributes to their frequently experienced voice problems.</p>

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/admin/admin158.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin158.shtml)

## New Standards Should Help Children in Noisy Classrooms

**For more than two decades, research has established a link between noise and poor academic progress. New standards for classroom acoustics will be the first step in the effort to change all that. Taking control of noise in the classroom and in other places in the community is part of International Noise Awareness Day --- April 12, 2000. Included: Research establishes the effects of noise on classroom learning!**

Teachers in schools near airports have two choices when airplanes take off or approach for a landing: They can raise their voices or stop talking until the roar abates. The same holds true for teachers who teach in schools near train tracks and noisy highways.

Many factors affect how well children learn and teachers teach -- and chronic noise is one of them! New standards for classroom acoustics will be among the first steps to help teachers and students do their jobs better.

Taking control of noise in the classroom and in other places in the community is part of International Noise Awareness Day April 12, 2000.

Although outside noise caused by trains, planes, and automobiles can make hearing more difficult for teachers and their students, inside noise can be just as serious a problem. For example, the sounds heating and air conditioning units make can also muffle teacher's voice.

"Poor classroom acoustics may be one reason Johnny can't read and Janie can't get her homework assignments down correctly," David Lubman told members of [Acoustical Society of America](#) in 1997. An acoustical scientist and a consultant in California, Lubman didn't tell the society anything unfamiliar to the membership. Substantial research has linked noisy classrooms with poor academic performance for the past 25 years.

Efforts to bring attention to the issue of noise pollution in America's classrooms are beginning to make a difference. The [Access Board](#), the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, is an independent federal agency that develops minimum guidelines and requirements for standards issued under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The board will support the development of standards on classroom acoustical design by the [American National Standards Institute](#) (ANSI) Committee on Noise under the secretariat of the Acoustical Society of America. The committee hopes to agree to the proposed standards, [Response to Petition for Rulemaking on Classroom Acoustics](#), at a meeting in June 2000. The proposed standards will be presented to the Access Board for approval before the end of 2000.

Lubman co-chairs the committee of 30 people, which includes parents of hearing-impaired children, audiologists, acoustical experts, architects, educators, and members of ANSI.

## **NOISY CLASSROOMS CHEAT CHILDREN**

Interpretation of ADA opened the door for establishing classroom noise standards, said Michael T. Nixon, coordinator for the Coalition for Classroom Acoustics. The ADA prohibits architectural barriers, such as the physical obstacles stairs pose to a student in a wheelchair, he said. Noisy classrooms present similar architectural barriers to children with a hearing impairment.

Noisy classrooms impede learning for other children as well. Noise also affects children who have middle ear infections, for whom English is a second language, or who have learning disabilities, speech impairment, or central auditory processing disorders.

Standards for classroom acoustics will help all students, said Lubman. "For young children just beginning school, everything is so new," he explained. Studies show that young children are inefficient listeners who don't have the experience to fill in missing words or phrases. "So in a sense, they are disabled because they don't have the context to understand," Lubman pointed out.

## **TURNED OFF, TUNED OUT**

The long journey to improve classroom acoustics has perplexed its proponents. "We have become a visually dominated society," Lubman stated. "We're not even aware when we can't hear. We put kids in classrooms where they can't hear, but we'd never put them in a classroom with the lights turned off."

Lois Thibault, coordinator of research for the Access Board and a member of the ANSI subcommittee on classroom noise, is also puzzled that the negative impact noisy classrooms have on learning doesn't alarm school administrators and the general public. "Why this doesn't capture the population's attention, I don't know why," she said. Years of solid research about the harmful impact of noisy classrooms have been largely ignored, according to Thibault.

Although enforcing new standards may be a few years away, they will provide guidelines for school districts and parents of hearing-impaired children. "This sort of gives a recipe of how to do it," Thibault said.

## **ROLLER COASTER RIDE TO IMPROVEMENT**

People seeking acoustics standards in the classroom have been on a roller-coaster ride. The new standards have been a long time coming, according to Michael Nixon. "It took us five years to get the government to act on what had already been mandated by Congress with the passage of the American Disabilities Act of 1990." It then took another two years for the Access Board, established by the ADA, to support the development of mandatory and enforceable guidelines.

There have been many obstacles to improving noisy classrooms. "Architects are not trained in architectural acoustics, and school administrators are not, either," Nixon continued. "Moreover, both groups do not have the foggiest idea of the devastating effect that excessive noise and reverberation have on hearing and understanding correctly what is being said in the classroom."

Architectural design's role in impairing "hearability" in a classroom setting is not new. More than 100 years ago, Harvard University faculty discovered that no one could hear anything in the new Fogg Art Museum lecture hall. The president of Harvard asked a physics professor, Wallace Clement Sabine, to do anything to improve the intolerable conditions. Sabine began exploring architectural acoustics and developed an equation for calculating the reverberation time in a room. That equation is still used today and will be cited in the proposed classroom acoustical standards.

## **COSTS VARY TO IMPROVE CLASSROOM ACOUSTICS**

The cost of improving classroom acoustics varies, Nixon explained. "We waste more money each year than what it would cost to fix up 50 percent of all classrooms in this country," he told Education World. The one-time investment can range from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars, he said.

"School officials are the greatest barriers to greater academic achievement," Nixon said. "School administrators will tell you that there is no money in the budget, as was the case in the brand-new high school in the district in which I live and pay taxes. If kids can't hear *and* understand properly, they can't learn well or to their potential."

There was money for landscaping and a student parking lot though, Nixon pointed out. "I never saw a tree yet that contributed anything to the academic achievement," he said.

## **RESEARCH SUPPORTS CHILDREN SUFFER**

According to people who do the research, noisy classrooms have greater costs that cannot be measured in dollars. "Whether the noise is interior or exterior, student learning suffers," said Nancy B. Nadler, director of the [Noise Center and the League for the Hard of Hearing](#). "Deficits in reading and language skills due to poor classroom acoustics are cumulative the effects of poor classroom acoustics on the very young student can be devastating."

In a 1975 study, Arline Bronzaft and Dennis McCarthy, compared reading scores of children in a New York City school whose classrooms were located adjacent to elevated train tracks with the reading scores of students on the quiet side of the school. By the time the students reached sixth grade, the students in classrooms on the noisy side of the school tested one year behind those whose classrooms were located on the quiet side. In a follow-up study six years later, noise abatement had reduced the noise and reading scores were equal.

According to [Cornell University Science News](#) researchers, children didn't learn to read as well if they were subject to chronic noise at home and at school. Gary Evans and Lorraine Maxwell, both environmental psychologists in the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis in the College of Human Ecology at Cornell University, showed that children living and going to school in noisy areas have difficulty acquiring speech-recognition skills. They found that kids tune out speech when contending with a racket.

The 1997 study compared 116 grade 1 and 2 children in a noisy school on the flight path of a New York international airport with children of the same age in a "quiet" school. Planes soared by the noisy school at peaks of 90 decibels of noise every 6.6 minutes. The quiet school was located in the same urban area but in a quiet neighborhood.

The new proposed ANSI classroom standards will cover background noise from outside and inside the classroom. Noise will not exceed 30 to 35 decibels, and the reverberation time will not be more than 0.6 seconds. The average American classroom (unoccupied) registers at 50 decibels and gymnasiums exceed 60 decibels, according to Lubman.

Evans and Maxwell suspect that other factors related to noisy schools and neighborhoods cause lower reading scores. Noise may make teachers and parents grumpy and unwilling to talk over the roar, so they may not use as many complete sentences and read aloud as often compared with other teachers and parents.

"When teachers have to raise their voices over background noise, their voices can become fatigued," Nadler said. "Working in this environment on an on-gong basis can contribute to teacher frustration and even burnout."

When teachers compete with noise in the classroom, they go home exhausted, Lubman noted, and "they don't even know why." Teachers lose about two days per year for vocal fatigue, which costs \$567 million annually, Lubman said, referring to a study by Jewell Gould for Educational Research Services.

## **WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO?**

Nadler, of the Noise Center, recommends teachers notice that improper wall, ceiling, and floor finishes can muffle their voices. Acoustical tile ceilings, wall coverings, and bookshelves that absorb sound can help, she said. If there is chronic outside or inside noise in a classroom, such as the noise from ventilating and air conditioning units, advice from an acoustical consultant may be necessary.

Teachers can also teach their students about the dangers of noise. The Noise Center offers an educational anti-noise program for children in grades 4 to 8, called [Stop That Noise!](#) This multimedia program includes lesson plans with a variety of activities at a cost of \$35.

How much do your students know about noise and the impact it has on them? Have your students take a [Noise Center Fun Quiz](#) on the League for the Hard of Hearing's Web site. For the correct answers, click the bar at the bottom of the page that says **Click To Continue After You Submit Your Fun Quiz.**

## **ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES ABOUT NOISE**

- [Noise Pollution Clearing House Quietnet](#) This site provides information about noise organizations, publications, and other resources. It includes an online mailing list and

forum about noise pollution and also provides information about sample ordinances and the latest on legislation that pertains to noise control.

- [Homepage of Classroom Acoustics](#) This Web site is a resource for those concerned with meeting the proposed standards for classroom acoustics. It is updated with research information and current events pertaining to the proposed standards.

#### Related Articles from Education World

- [Have You Heard? Noise Can Effect Learning!](#)
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Article by Diane Weaver Dunne

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04/17/2000

## A QUIETER SCHOOL: AN ENRICHED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

ARLINE L. BRONZAFT, PH.D.

It is common knowledge to anyone administering a school that lunchrooms, gymnasias, and schoolyards are noisy and, in some cases, actions have been taken to lower the decibel levels in these facilities. However, are administrators aware of the noises to which children are exposed within their classrooms - from the hallways, nearby classes, heating and ventilation systems, adjacent highways, overhead jets, holes cut in walls for electrical wiring or sprinklers, appliances, or over crowdedness? Even if aware, have they done enough to quiet these classrooms? The aim of this article is to alert school administrators to the effects of noise on children's cognition, reading skills, and learning ability and to suggest ways they can participate in the growing worldwide effort to lessen the din - not only in the school but in children's homes and wherever else children are exposed to noises. Noises are not only hazardous to our children's mental abilities but to their overall well-being as well.

### Noise and Hearing

That loud sounds may be harmful to hearing has been accepted for many years but do we realize the number of people suffering actual hearing loss from noise is huge (Bronzaft, 2002)? Of the over 28 million people suffering from hearing loss in the United States, it has been estimated that approximately ten million of these people suffered damage to their hearing because of exposure to noises, primarily in the occupational setting. However, with the introduction of headsets, video arcades, stereo systems and outdoor recreational vehicles, loud noises are not simply confined to the occupational environment. Many people, including children and adults, are now being exposed to very loud sounds in their homes and recreational settings, making them more vulnerable to potential hearing loss. Children attend movies that are too loud, play their video games with loud audio attachments, often walk around with headsets set at high levels, and in too many schools eat in lunchrooms and play in gymnasias that are far too loud. Even at very young ages, children are playing with toys that have been measured at levels exceeding 120 decibels.

### Noises Don't Have to Be Loud

Noise has been frequently associated with loud sounds but sounds need not be loud to be disturbing, intrusive, and bothersome. Rather noise should be defined as unwanted, uncontrollable or unpredictable sounds that intrude upon our activities. Noisy neighbors can make it difficult for a child to read, do homework or fall asleep. Several children whispering in the classroom can make it especially difficult for the teacher to transmit information to those children who are listening. A passing elevated train or an overhead jet can bring classroom teaching to a halt.

### Impact of Noises on Children's Mental Development

Thirty years ago, Cohen, Glass and Singer (1973) found that children who lived on the lower floors of an apartment complex, which exposed them to nearby traffic noise, had poorer reading scores than

children living in the same complex but on higher floors. In their study conducted over twenty years ago, Wachs and Gruen (1982) found that noise in the home impaired a child's cognitive and language development. Noise in schools can also impede the learning process. Bronzaft and McCarthy (1975) examined the reading scores of children attending classes facing a noisy elevated train structure and compared their scores with children attending classes on the quiet side of the building. They found that by the 6th grade, children on the noisy side of the building were nearly a year behind the students on the quiet side. Children exposed to the noisy trains complained that the noise made it difficult for them to think and their teachers complained that they came home more exhausted after teaching in these noisy classrooms. Several years later, after noise-absorbing materials were installed by the Board of Education in the ceilings of the classes facing the tracks and the Transit Authority installed resilient-rubber pads on the adjacent tracks, lowering the noise levels in the classrooms significantly, the reading scores of the students on both sides of the building were examined and now both sets of children were now reading at the same level (Bronzaft, 1981). When something is done to lessen the noise in classrooms, students do better! Bronzaft (2002) provides a more extensive review of the studies that have found that noise interferes with learning.

By contrast, in interviews of older high academic achievers, all members of Phi Beta Kappa, Bronzaft (1996) found that they tended to be reared in homes that respected quiet. These academic achievers remembered that their parents provided them with quiet places to study, read, and think; that television and radios were not blasting in the background, as so often is the case today, when the family sat down for dinner; and that their parents did not generally discipline them by shouting or screaming but used soft, firm voices and disapproving looks. In homes where parents and children share quieter times, there are also more opportunities for parents and children to talk, e.g. at dinner time, children can discuss their work at school or ask for parental advice on numerous matters. One could conclude that the quiet in the households of these high academic achievers contributed to their academic success, as well as to the professional and personal success most of them attained in later life.

Quiet learning environments are a benefit to all students, but most important to students with a hearing disability. These students need a signal to noise ratio on the order of 20 decibels (the teacher must be 20 decibels louder than the background noise). Students in general need at least a 10 decibel signal to noise ratio. By contrast, a survey of actual classroom conditions in schools indicated a Speech to Noise ratio range from +5 decibels to -7 decibels.

### **Despite Knowledge of Noise Impacts, Remedies Lag Behind**

Despite the information provided by the many studies that have confirmed the adverse impact of noise on classroom learning (Federal Interagency Committee on Aviation Noise, 2000), too many of our nation's children are still attending schools situated near noisy highways and elevated trains and within the paths of roaring overhead jets. Although there are funding programs to abate intrusive aircraft noises at schools, those parents and school administrators who are aware of such funds have to put up a good fight before these funds are received, if at all.

Additionally the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has decided that qualifying schools must lie within a determined noise contour. This stringent standard has disqualified schools from receiving funding even though they are still exposed to unseemly aircraft intrusions. In their recent study of aircraft noise impacts at several schools near International Newark Airport in New Jersey lying outside the FAA accepted noise contour, Chen and Charuk (2001) found: "Noise during aircraft fly-overs can impact school instructional areas even if the school is not within the DNL 65dBA contour line." Aircraft noise is very likely interfering with learning in these schools.

Many of the most disruptive noise sources are not external to the school, such as jets overhead, but

internal. Heat pumps, air-conditioners, and air-handling systems are major classroom noise sources, sometimes located only feet from students. A host of classroom appliances may distract students and make hearing the teacher difficult, including computers, printers, and projectors. Finally, poor acoustical design unnecessarily creates poor learning environments. Open school plans, poor choices for walls, ceiling, and floor materials and inappropriate location of noisy equipment all lead to impoverished learning environments. Good acoustical design seeks to minimize noise while enhancing the sound transmission between the teacher and students.

## **Promoting a Quieter School Environment**

### **Designing a Quieter School**

Educators should be more actively involved in the design of school buildings and familiarize themselves with design features that emphasize quiet. Several resources are available: [Classroom Acoustics I and II](#) and "[Classroom Design for Good Hearing](#)" by Ewart A. Wetherill provide an excellent overview of good acoustical design and its importance. It is critical to realize that classrooms are either quiet or noisy by design. New standards just adopted by the [American National Standards Institute](#) provide important guidance for school administrators considering school construction or renovation.

### **Abating Noises from Outside the School**

With so many schools located near noisy highways, railroads, and airports, principals need to become advocates for lessening the noises from these outside sources. For example, they should inquire as to whether their schools are entitled to city, state or federal funds for noise abatement if these schools are situated too close to a highway or airport. They should be aware of projects to widen highways or expand airports and inform the authorities of the potential impacts on their schools. Twenty years ago, when the principal of P. S. 98 in New York City learned that the Transit Authority was installing noise abatement materials in subway stations, he attended public hearings to urge the transit agency to consider installing abatement materials on the tracks adjacent to his school. He also garnered the support of parents and public officials in his undertaking. As a result, P.S. 98 was the test site for the installation of a new rail fastener to lessen noise on elevated train tracks.

### **Fostering Quiet in School**

Not only should schools design for quiet, they should teach the value of quiet. The League for the Hard of Hearing's Stop the Noise program and their viewer-friendly website ([www.lhh.org/noise](http://www.lhh.org/noise)) with educational materials that can be printed for distribution should be very helpful to teach children the positive effects of quiet in their lives and the hazards of noise. The children's book, Listen to the Raindrops, that I have written with illustrator Steven Parton to teach young children about the beauty of good sounds and the dangers of noise is highlighted on the League site. This book can serve as a teaching aid in the classroom and the school library.

So many of the noises that intrude upon us stem from a lack of respect for the rights of others to quiet. By teaching our children to respect others, they will come to understand that they cannot turn up their home stereos loudly or run through a school hallway shouting or speak loudly in a classroom. Should students lower their voices, then teachers may have less need to shout or use loud whistles and bullhorns to control their students. This does not mean that students can never raise their voices at school games as

they root for the home team; there are indeed times when being somewhat louder is tolerable.

Principals and teachers should also examine ways that they can lessen the noise in the school. Teachers have often complained about the piercing sounds of fire drills and principals could investigate whether these sounds could be softened and still serve their primary goal to alert students to danger. Principals can indeed set the tone that a quieter classroom benefits both the teacher and the student.

A Final Word Parents, educators, and caring citizens must join together in abating the noises that are engulfing our children. Then all of us will reap the benefits of a quieter, saner and healthier environment.

Good evening. My name is Sheila Filipetti. I am a mother of four children, three of whom presently attend St. Alexander School. I would like to share some of the wonderful things that St. Alexander School offers and has achieved since I began as a school mom seven years ago.

I feel that we, the school community are extremely fortunate and blessed with many opportunities that St. Alexander gives its students, both in and out of the classroom. The teachers and staff are extraordinary.

Each day, staff and volunteer parents wait at the schools drive through lane to safely meet arriving students as their parents drop them off for the school day. This program is called Kiss n Ride and it runs throughout the school year, no matter what the weather brings!

A snack program is offered 3 days a week. Volunteer parents work to clean/cut fruit and vegetables, serve cheese, crackers, cereal and other healthy snacks. This program ensures that all students have the opportunity of having a nutritious snack in both the morning and afternoon on snack days.

St. Alexander's is home to The Healthy Hut, selling healthy snacks and milk over lunch time. This is operated by the Grade 8 leaders and students with special needs. The Crusader Green Team helps keep the school environmentally aware. The recycling team work very hard with Acts of Green. Earth Day activities have included litter less lunch days and school and neighbourhood clean-ups.

The school 'House' league program is a fun program where all students and staff members are a part of a team or 'House' for the school year. Games are played during recesses several times a week. Challenges are held throughout the year for fundraising and other school activities. Points are awarded for participation, acts of kindness, leadership, homework completion and more. This program encourages enthusiasm, co-operation, and mutual respect and shows off tremendous Crusader spirit!

The students at St. Alexander have the opportunity of being a part of some great athletic teams including soccer, cross country running, basketball, volleyball and track and field. Other clubs include the student council, choir, dance crew, chess club, skipping club, and peer-pal program. Many staff members give their time after school for both practices and games. These coaches lead their teams and demonstrate great sportsmanship and school spirit. These teams and clubs offer students opportunities to get involved. The staff encourage students to become involved in extra-curricular programs, as participation helps to build confidence, friendships and leadership skills.

Classes prepare and lead monthly liturgies or mass in the school gym and at our neighbourhood parishes of St. Theresa and St. Vincent de Paul. Families are welcome to join the school for these celebrations.

St. Al's has a Student of the Month Program which recognizes two individuals in each classroom who have exemplified a specific quality that particular month. A school assembly is held at the end of each month where these students are recognized in front of their peers and families. Examples of some themes are Great Beginnings, Responsibility, Co-operation, Kindness, Volunteerism and Academic Excellence.

In 2010, St. Alexander was chosen to receive the Bea DeBernardi Award. This award recognized St. Alexander to be an inclusive neighbourhood school that welcomes all students to learn and participate together, especially those with an intellectual disability.

Just last year, our school received the Rotary Club of Windsor Peace School Prize for displaying peace within the school and community. Our school was chosen because it encourages and promotes a safe, caring and welcoming environment. A peace pole was put in place at the entrance of the school and each student received a peace bracelet which reads, 'MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH' and 'MAKE A DIFFERENCE', both powerful messages that are promoted every day at school.

St. Alexander supports many wonderful and deserving groups throughout the city of Windsor. A sneaker drive is held annually to raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in Windsor and Essex County. This not only raises money for a great cause but also educates the students on the challenges that many children face on a daily basis who live with juvenile diabetes. The school participates annually in The Terry Fox Run/Walk and generously donates to the Cancer Foundation.

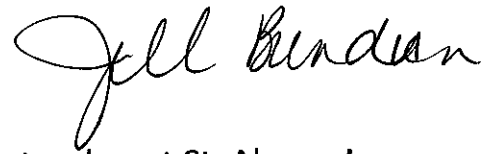
St. Alexander has donated hundreds of non-perishable food items to St. Vincent de Paul and other local food banks with their Can Food Drives during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. This past Christmas, St. Alexander collected over 500 new toys that were given to our neighbourhood fire station for Sparky's Toy Drive. Other organizations that our school has been recognized by for their generous donations of money and food include, Make a Wish Foundation, The Goodfellows Organization and The Humane Society.

One of my favourite projects was several years ago when the school collected mittens and gloves of all sizes and decorated the school Christmas tree with them. Boxes were filled with mitts and gloves that were brought to school by staff and students for the many people in our city who needed warm hands that winter.

I believe that its projects and examples like these that teach the students, our children how to be better leaders in their classrooms, the school yard and in our community. It shows them how to be kind-hearted and compassionate and to think of the needs of others before themselves.

St. Alexander School is an environment that fosters these exceptional values. It is through partnership of school, home and church that makes St. Alexander such an amazing school. The staff involvement and parent volunteers offer so much to the school community and make all of these programs, activities and contributions possible.

This coming September, my last child will be starting his school journey at St. Al's in the JK program. He is very excited, as he'll soon be joining his sisters in the hallways and classrooms they love and what I believe to be a terrific school. A school that I hope to see all four children of mine graduate from in years to come. St. Alexander School continues to lead the way in Fountainebleau and I feel very lucky to be a part of it. Keep it up staff, students and parents because we do great things!



Good Evening. My name is Jill Bundun and I've been a teacher at St. Alexander School for seven years. I'm here to speak to you tonight about academics and the learning environment at our school.

The Ministry of Education develops the curriculum in our province. It expects each school to use standardized tests to collect data which is used for academic planning purposes. These tests, such as EQAO, CASI, and PM Benchmarks, provide accurate and reliable information about student achievement in publicly funded schools. At St. Alexander, we use our academic data to guide our instructions and set the framework for improvement.

Over the past two years, the students at St. Alexander School have out-performed all other schools in the Fountainbleu area in the grades 3 and 6 EQAO tests. Looking at a cohort analysis over the past ten years, St. Alexander has out-performed other schools 80% of the time in reading, writing, and math in both grades three and six. These test scores are a direct result of the efforts of a knowledgeable, hard-working staff that is supported by a family unit.

The school received an OFIP grant in the 2006-2007 academic year. Thousands of dollars in books were purchased to be used in the classroom to assist in improving students' reading comprehension and writing skills. After these new resources were carefully catalogued and organized according to reading strategy and grade, the implementation of a school-wide effort to instill a greater love of reading in our students began. The results show that after this grant was received, St. Alexander's reading and writing scores had increased. In fact, during the past two years the students out-performed the other schools in Fountainbleu 100% of the time in reading, writing and math in both grades three and six.

All available academic data is used to guide the learning process. Teachers use the scores to help plan their lessons to focus on areas that need to be strengthened. Many strategies are used to help students become better learners. Teacher-led lessons, guided reading, group work, and hands-on activities that require students to move around and create are only a few of the many ways students acquire new information. At times during partner and group

discussions, the teacher can just close the door to prevent other classes from being affected by an eager, enthusiastic class who are engaged in an activity.

When a teacher follows a well-planned reading, writing, and math program in a classroom, it's important that students are able to focus on the lesson and the instructions. This is particularly important for younger learners who must clearly listen and hear letter and word sounds to develop fluency in listening and reading. Loud, open-area learning environments inhibit a student's ability to clearly focus and can disrupt learning during this critical period of academic development. This situation would significantly be amplified for a student with special needs.

1/5 of all students suffer from some form of special need. A child who is challenged by Attention Deficit Disorder or who has a hearing impairment will be faced with yet another hurdle in the academic progress in an open learning environment. During my time at St. Alexander, the staff has been able to assist the learning of many students with these needs, including several from W.J. Langlois who transferred to St. Alexander and found academic and social success in our closed-classroom setting.

Many colourful visual tools are used in classrooms. Anchor charts that contain components of the strategy being taught are posted in the room so that students may access key information to be used when practicing a new skill. It's important that there be enough wall space to post these anchor charts. The closed classrooms at St. Alexander provide ample places to display these tools.

The goal of education is to produce confident, knowledgeable problem solvers who become active members of a community. The community of St. Alexander have dedicated themselves to instill a love of learning in its members. The test scores have indicated that we have been very successful in this regard.

Higher academic scores produce more competent learners and leaders. In the last few years, several of the past Student Prime Ministers at St. Joseph's High School were graduates of St. Alexander School. Over the past few years, the parents of past students at St. Alexander have comprised the majority of the Catholic School Council at St. Joseph's High School, including the past president. The

commitment of past graduates and their families to the community of Fountainbleu, St. Alexander, and St. Joseph High School has always been strong.

A building shouldn't make a difference in a child's ability to learn but we at St. Alexander believe that the closed classroom configuration of our building is a better learning environment. All students, including those who have special needs or difficulties focusing and concentrating on a task, have an advantage in a room where noise levels are less and distractions are limited. Quiet places to read and respond are vital for new, experienced and ELL learners alike. On the other hand, noisy, boisterous and energetic lessons can also take place without disturbing the quiet lessons in the classroom next door. Flexibility is the key to effective learning and St. Alexander School is an excellent place to learn.

Thank you

February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012

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

**RE: ACCOMMODATIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 6 PUBLIC MEETING**

Guidelines for Public Input the Committee requires notice in writing of a delegate's intention to speak and a brief indication of what you would like to speak on.

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Ms. Norris,

Please accept this document as my intention to speak as a delegate at the ARC meeting.

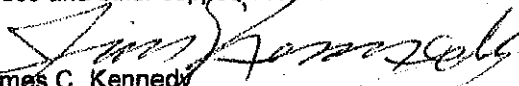
Summary of Core Content

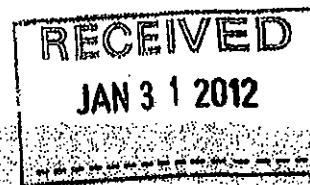
**PREPARING OUR CHILDREN FOR THE NEXT STEP**

- Open education is a philosophy which values the natural development and experience.
  - St. Alexander School has a more traditional classroom learning format that gives you the old-fashioned, hands-on learning that most of us require in order to succeed.
  - Classroom settings give more support, because you can form study groups and your fellow classmates can assist you when you need help if the instructor is not as readily available as you would like her to be.
- Open education schools prompted the examine issues of control within their traditional philosophy, notions of curricula, and protocols of teaching and learning.
  - At St. Alexander school students also get the social interaction to help them acquire good people skills, and which is similar to what you'll experience on the job. More and more schools like St. Alexander are adopting the "learning team model" where self-governed and self-directed teams are formed and assignments must be completed by the teams.
- The construction of open classroom schools declined by the mid-1970s. Concerns about noise and distraction encouraged educators to return to a traditional approach.
  - The existing open concept schools that remain in the school board have all put some kind of wall or dividers up between
  - The last five schools built by the board have gone in the direction of building new schools with contained classrooms
- Research has indicated that the open classroom approach may not have significantly improved learning or achievement.  
*Education Encyclopedia – Stae University*

- Traditional classes tend to be less expensive and more effective for child growth, confidence and development.;
- If there is "no discernible difference "in a child's ability to learn and achieve in an open concept school compared to a school with traditional closed classrooms, why has the school board not built anymore open concept schools?
- If open concept schools make "no difference "in a child's ability to learn and achieve why are there dividers and walls being put up in the existing open concept schools?

These and other support documentation will be covered.

  
James C. Kennedy  
Parent Representative St. Alexander School



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# On the matter of record

January 25, 2012

Dear Sir or Madam:

As a member of this community, and an attendee of W.J. Langlois myself in the 1980's, it is regrettable that the trustees are burdened with the decision of having to select a school for closure. I think it is relatively clear to all of us involved that enrollment (and several other financial constraints) make this impending decision difficult but necessary. It is plain to me that we must step back, remove emotion, and view the landscape before us with a measure of impartiality and balance. In fairness, both St. Alexander and W.J. Langlois have served as long standing social and educational beacons to our local community, it is however undeniable that demographics and population distributions have shifted over the past 15 years, leading in part, to the imminent predicament we are now facing. Having mulled over the positions of both sides based on Appendix B for both schools, I feel that the key relevant factors for consideration are as follows:

- A public library is uncommonly and conveniently close to W.J. Langlois, serving to enhance and further assist with the advancement of learning afforded to the student population attending this institution.
- In assessing the 2 buildings: W.J. Langlois is the newer building, with half of the Facility Condition Index rating compared to St. Alexander, making it without emotion, the most obvious and sound financial choice.
- Both provide unique and necessary programs, however, W.J. Langlois has extended it's banner by entrenching itself in the community through outreach programs such as Big Brothers, and the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program.
- The W.J. Langlois structure is a full 10 years newer.
- A housing project located just adjacent to W.J. Langlois guarantees through it's family placing, and in lieu of neighborhood demographical shifts, a consistent and relevant population source will ever remain available to justify the school.

Please know that while I am a firm supporter of W.J. Langlois, my support is not emotional, rather my position is fervent based on the facts to consider.

Sincerely,

Kristen J. Hallewick  
Concerned Citizen