



BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK Catholic District School Board

Minutes

Catholic Education Centre
322 Fairview Drive
Brantford, ON N3T 5M8

Southwest Brantford (Elementary) School Attendance Boundary Review Monday, April 17, 2023 6:30 pm Cafetorium, Assumption College School 257 Shellard Lane, Brantford and via Teams

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

St. Basil Catholic Elementary School: Lexie Beaudoin, Donna Bozdarov
St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School: Amanda Gowan, Hillary Miles-Smilely
St. Theresa School: Alix Consorti

RESOURCE PERSONNEL:

Administration: Mike MacDonald, Scott Keys, Lorrie Temple, Jack Ammendolia
Principals / Vice-Principals: Joe Atanas, Kerri Chartrand, Jennifer McLaren-Gibbons, Giovanna Oviedo-Kinrade

1. Opening Prayer

Superintendent Temple opened the meeting with prayer.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Principal Chartrand gave thanks and acknowledged the land that we are gathered on today.

Superintendent Keys introduced resource personnel to the public and the school principals introduced the members of their School Boundary Committee. Mr. Keys noted that parent representatives are the initial voice for the parents of their school regarding feedback, suggestions for boundary changes, etc. until the Committee is able to obtain feedback from the larger parent community.

3. Presentation / Discussion

3.1 Why an Attendance Boundary Review?

Mr. Ammendolia noted that boundary reviews are conducted to create a balance as a result of one or more of the following:

- Enrolment imbalances.
- The opening of a new school.
- To relieve enrolment pressures as a result of demographic trends, border-crossing or grade structures.
- To accommodate program changes, i.e., French Immersion.

He noted that in southwest Brantford, all schools have experienced high enrollments and utilizations, relative to the schools' capacities. Therefore, it becomes increasingly difficult to alleviate enrollment pressures at one school, when the surrounding schools are experiencing pressures as well.

3.2 Possible Outcomes, Limitations and Considerations

Mr. Ammendolia noted that some of the possible outcomes may be to reduce overall enrolment at one of the schools, i.e., St. Basil School, or it may be to try to balance enrolment at the three schools. However, there will be limitations, i.e., the ability to move boundary lines.



The Board will need capital (new school(s)) and has submitted business cases to the Ministry of Education to receive funding for a new school(s). However, if the Board is approved for capital funding, it could take as long as four to five years before a school is opened. The Committee must determine what can be done in the interim; taking into account safety and bussing concerns, which scenarios are the least disruptive to families, the school community, student friendships, etc.

3.3 **Current Situation: Demographics, Maps**

Mr. Ammendolia reviewed current demographics in southwest Brantford and the schools' historical enrolments and utilizations. He briefly touched on current attendance boundaries and the anticipated residential growth areas in the City of Brantford. Specifically,

- The City of Brantford, and especially southwest Brantford, is experiencing incredible growth, both population and residential, and is attracting families.
- Anticipated residential growth areas, noted in orange and red, indicate areas of the City where concrete plans are currently being developed. Orange area development will be constructed in three-to-five years and red area development are currently underway.

Concern was raised regarding new development in Brant County and how this development would affect St. Theresa School. Mr. Ammendolia commented that currently, he is unable to determine the affects of new development in Brant County as he is unsure how quickly development will come on line due to the lack of infrastructure and resources in Brant County.

3.4 **Possible Scenarios**

Mr. Ammendolia provided a review of the existing boundaries and noted that the boundary review is not a long-term solution to rectify the issues at St. Basil and St. Gabriel Schools. The Committee must also resolve short-term and interim issues. He reviewed the following possible boundary options with the Committee:

Option #1: Southwest Brantford

- Extend the existing St. Basil School boundary into the St. Theresa School catchment.
- Extend the existing St. Basil School boundary into the St. Gabriel School catchment.
Mr. Ammendolia noted that, in previous years, in order to address some of the existing pressures at St. Basil School, students were given the opportunity to cross boundaries to attend St. Gabriel School. This option will make this scenario a permanent arrangement.
- Extend the existing St. Theresa School boundary into the St. Gabriel School catchment.

What does this boundary change mean:

- It will reduce the enrollment at St. Basil School.
- It will increase the enrollment at St. Gabriel School.
- It will equalize the enrollment pressures at St. Basil and St. Gabriel Schools.
- It will increase the enrollment at St. Theresa School to capacity.

Option #2: Southwest Brantford

- Extend St. Teresa School catchment into St. Basil School catchment.
- Extend St. Gabriel School catchment into St. Basil School catchment.



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What does this boundary change mean:

- It will utilize St. Theresa School to a greater extent by increasing the number of students attending the school.
- It will decrease the enrollment at St. Gabriel School.
- It will equalize the enrollment pressures at St. Basil and St. Gabriel Schools.
- Provides the community with more choices.

Option #3: Southwest Brantford

- Extend St. Teresa School catchment into St. Basil School catchment.
- Extend St. Gabriel School catchment into St. Basil School catchment.
- Extend St. Gabriel School catchment into St. Basil School catchment.

What does this boundary change mean:

- This scenario incorporates the boundary changes in Options #1 and Option #2.
- It will create an over-lapping walking web between St. Basil and St. Gabriel Schools.
- It will decrease the enrollment at St. Basil School.

Mr. Ammendolia asked parents to reflect on the following:

- The Board does not have the luxury of having an empty school to relocate all the students.
- Portable classrooms are the reality now, so a school that is at capacity will become over-capacity and portable classrooms will be utilized.
- Consider which students will be relocated or remain at their current school, i.e., Grade 8 students remain at their current schools?
- The Board and Administration will be contemplating boundary changes from an urgency point of view, i.e., utilization and capacity of permanent space, but they need to be informed about on-the-ground truths, i.e., parking, staffing requirements, safety measures, etc.

3.5 **Holding Zones**

Mr. Ammendolia noted that holding zones could be developed where significant development is expected. Holding zones would hold students at a school(s) with existing surplus space until a new school is built. For example, a boundary review would identify that School A is your home school. However, until a new school is built, students will attend School B, which is a school that has space.

3.6 **Out of Boundary / Cross Border Students**

Mr. Ammendolia reviewed the cross border / out of boundary scenarios for each school:

- St. Basil – 30 students from other areas attending St. Basil, 132 students from this area attending other schools, which equals a net crossing of -102 students.
- St. Gabriel – 116 students from other areas attending St. Gabriel, 17 students from this area attending other schools, which equals a net crossing of 99 students.
- St. Theresa – 19 students from other areas attending St. Theresa, 39 students from this area attending other schools, which equals a net crossing of -20 students.

Mr. Ammendolia noted that, in previous years, in order to address some of the existing pressures at St. Basil School, students were given the opportunity to cross boundaries to attend St. Gabriel School. This scenario will become important when examining boundary options as this situation is currently occurring and will be the least impactful.



If, due to boundary changes, it becomes necessary for a student to move from their current school to another school, parents can apply for an Out of Boundary Exemption and administration will examine the circumstances surrounding the request on a case-by-case basis. The Out of Boundary process is annual, so a student may not be permitted to stay at the school they are currently enrolled.

3.7 **Next Steps**

Mr. Ammendolia noted that

- a survey will be emailed to parents within the next few days. Please complete the survey and provide the Committee with as much feedback as possible, especially the on-the-ground truths, suggestions for other scenarios, school facilities, legacy, what you feel strongly about, etc.
- parents are welcome to provide feedback to swbrantford@bhncdsb.ca as well.
- A report will be taken to the Board of Trustees for a decision, outlining the recommended boundary changes.

3.8 **Questions, Concerns, Comments**

Boundary Changes

- It is the intention of the Board to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, boundary changes that affect students now and when a new school is built.
- The current boundary scenarios attempt to keep clusters of students together to minimize the impacts of the changes, i.e., if students are already travelling to and from school on a bus, this may be a consideration when changing boundaries as the students will be accustomed to riding the bus, have their routines in place, etc.
- The Board has done everything they can do to avoid changing boundaries, i.e., submitting business cases to the Ministry for a new school(s), the addition of portable classrooms on school sites, etc. However, the circumstances dictate that there is no other choice but to consider boundary changes to alleviate enrollment concerns.
- Out of Boundary requests should be submitted to the school principal for students with special circumstances or unique situations. The school superintendent will review the requests, on a case-by-case basis, and contact parents regarding their decision.
- Portable classrooms will become a more permanent type of fixture for accommodation.
- Southwest Brantford is not the only area in the Board that has been impacted by the pandemic, i.e., Paris, Caledonia, etc. Enrollment projections have been blown out of the water. St. Basil School is at a point of no return and the scenarios are not ideal, but the Board is attempting to spread the wealth of enrollment pressures as equitably as possible.

Community / School

- Trustees will make decisions regarding parent legacy requests. Administration is aware of the importance of school milestones and will make appropriate recommendations to trustees, i.e., Grade 8 students remain at their current schools, can family units remain at their current school, etc. Please ensure that you include these requests in the survey.
- The Board has a process for families who are non-Catholic and want their children to attend a faith-based system. The process is similar to the Out-of-Boundary process. Some parents felt strongly about non-Catholic students enrolled at their schools. They felt that, in some cases, it was unfair that non-Catholic students could remain at their current school, when their Catholic children were not able to remain.



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- My daughter moved from inside the school to a portable classroom and now it looks like she may be moved again to another school. I feel that she has been dealt a double blow.
- Students have been through a lot lately and are just starting to gain stability. The boundary changes could possibly jeopardize our students again.
- The technology base should be same or similar at the three schools.
- When students move from one school to another, the supports for the schools are moved with those students, i.e., budgets, number of classroom supports, staffing, facility considerations, etc.

Transportation

- The walking distance is 1.4 kilometers. However, Student Transportation Services Brant Haldimand Norfolk (STSBHN) also takes into consideration the safety of students. Please click on the link to the Board's *Transportation of Students Policy, 400.19*: [Transportation of Students Policy, 400.19](#) for further information regarding student transportation.
- STSBHN will make every effort to configure bus routes so that two school busses are not travelling the same streets on the same day.
- STSBHN will examine bus routes and transportation changes. Information regarding these changes and how they will affect students will be forwarded to parents shortly.

Other

- OTG is the acronym for *On the Ground Capacity*. It is the capacity of the school as determined by the Ministry of Education by loading all instructional spaces within the facility to current Ministry standards for class size requirements and room area.
- Research has shown that students who attend large elementary schools advance to large secondary schools, that become over capacity. Attendance at these mega-schools affect a student's mental capacity, their ability to build relationships, develop communities, etc. Senior Administration is very mindful to the student experience. However, based on current research and Ministry funding models, future schools will probably be large. The underlying principle will be to balance schools, so that the Board can improve the overall school experience for all its students.
- Currently, economists are asked for feedback regarding subdivision development, i.e., communities, sewers, sidewalks, fire stations, etc. and current legislation does not seek feedback regarding the construction of schools. New legislation will soon be enacted and, hopefully, the building of a school will be included in the new legislation. From a municipal perspective, school boards try to identify where school sites are needed.
- Students are more resilient than we give them credit for. A parent's attitude regarding boundary changes and what the parent projects onto their children will have a huge impact on their acceptance of the boundary changes
- Parents were asked that, if possible, to remove yourself from their own personal situations and try to look at what is best / equitable for all the students in the boundary review.

4. Future Meetings

- Thursday, April 27, 2023, 5:30 pm – Additional Attendance Boundary Review Committee



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5. Adjournment

The Meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 27, 2023, 5:30 pm