
Colborne-Holmesville ARC Meeting

Wednesday, November 23, 2011

7:00 p.m.

Colborne Central P.S.

MINUTES

Present:

Committee Members: Rebecca Ingham, Colborne; Darlene Hewitt, Colborne; Bryan Olson, Holmesville; Helen Lobb, Holmesville; Connie Black, Municipality of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh; Alison Lobb, Municipality of Central Huron

School Admin Liaison: Christina VanPoucke, Principal Colborne; Dave Bennett, Principal Holmesville

Admin Liaison: Hugh Cox, Information and Reporting Analyst; Mike Ash, Superintendent; Steve Howe, Manager of Communications; Janet Baird-Jackson, Superintendent of Business; Peggy Blair, Superintendent of Education

Trustees: Al Sygrove, Robert Hunking

Chair: Wayne Tessier

1.0 Welcome

Chair Tessier welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the second meeting of the ARC. He reminded the audience to sign in so we have a record of who attended each meeting. The committee and delegates were reminded to use a microphone when speaking as the meeting is being recorded.

2.0 Approval of Agenda

Chair Tessier asked for a motion to adopt the agenda.

Moved by Bryan Olson, Holmesville, seconded by Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH

CARRIED

3.0 Approval of Minutes of October 26th Meeting

Chair Tessier asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Moved by Helen Lobb, Holmesville, seconded by Connie Black, Municipality of ACW

CARRIED

4.0 Chairperson's Remarks

- Chair Tessier - thank Christina VanPoucke and Dave Bennett for hosting meetings, extra work for them, nice to have everything set up - thank principals for taking time to conduct tours

5.0 Business Arising from the Minutes

5.1 Response to questions/requests at last meeting

- enrolment stats for a rural option for Holmesville & Colborne

- Chair Tessier - move to 8.2 as they will be presenting rural option, would be repeat of information - any objection to moving

- tour all buildings
 - Chair Tessier - committee requested to tour a number of buildings, started tonight, still a few to be arranged
 - Superintendent Ash - this evening were able to go through Goderich, GDCl-Elementary, this building - are finishing cleaning up at Colborne, hopeful we can arrange tour at Colborne and Brookside as early as the end of next week - tour of Clinton is arranged for prior to December 14th meeting, will be at 6:00 p.m. on the 14th, will be in touch - would like to get all of the tours done before December 14th meeting
- contact Dan Mathieson to investigate SWEA possibilities
 - Chair Tessier - third thing that came out of our last meeting, contact Dan Mathieson to investigate SWEA possibilities
 - Superintendent Ash - director, myself, Superintendent Baird-Jackson, Chair Wagler, Vice Chair Sygrove, Trustee Hunking, Dan Mathieson, John Grace met on Monday to discuss SWEA - based on that discussion Dan Mathieson reported back to chair of SWEA, provided letter that is in package this evening - SWEA was conceived in 2006 to support economic development in south-western Ontario, structure sponsored in past by Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, primary task is research and advocacy around economic development - last paragraph, SWEA has not developed positions regarding education at K-12 level, has not looked into school funding which lead to rural school closures or consolidations - Dan and John made clear SWEA mandate does not include K-12 education, thought would be unlikely would entertain any consideration for funding - funding goes more to development of businesses, branding for communities, those sorts of things

6.0 Comments from Committee Members

- Chair Tessier - opportunity for each member to raise issues, reflect on things that have occurred since last meeting, might be a discussion around town you'd like to report on - time for comment, not debate - debating can happen at end of meeting at #9, that's where you get to question, debate, discuss things in greater detail
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - thank you for getting back to us with information, answers on what we've asked for last meeting - still outstanding a few things, think will come up in the course of tonight - don't have new comments at this point
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - thank everybody for coming out and supporting, welcome aboard Rebecca and all members - Colborne and Holmesville going to be staying together as a united front, sitting together as we weren't the last time - hopefully can get a rural school for our area
- Helen Lobb, Holmesville - would like to welcome Colborne, like to work as united front between Colborne and Holmesville
- Darlene Hewitt, Colborne - don't have a lot to add, nice to see everybody working together, hope continues
- Connie Black, Municipality of ACW - after last meeting, went back to council brought them up to speed - they would like to see rural school, what they'd like to support
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - pretty well reporting same thing - council supportive of option of rural school, want to push that - have a motion, presume that's later in evening
- Chair Tessier - that would be #9

7.0 Public Consultation Session

- Chair Tessier - went over guidelines for delegations - hope is that presentations are helpful to ARC - ARC has large job, very important that they know what community wants, if community has suggestions for achieving, that is very important - other occasions when community can address board, any board meeting before final decision made there will be opportunities for community to address board members - board will make final decision, this group is trying to come up with alternative solutions that they can present to board on your behalf, so need to know your thoughts and how those aims can be achieved
- Individuals – see attached presentations
 - Tom Trick
 - Karin Mabon
 - Annerieke VanBeets
 - Mike Fleming
- Group
 - Local Council Members – B. Barnim’s presentation attached; J. Ginn submitted the attached Rural Schools document as his presentation
- Chair Tessier - thank all delegates for their thoughtful presentations

8.0 New Business

8.1 Board Report - Membership

- Superintendent Ash - procedural step in process, included in package

8.2 Rural Option

- Superintendent Ash - staff were asked to put together, #5 in package - will run over summary page on front, Hugh will speak to numbers - when we received request at last meeting to put together possible rural option, looked at both Colborne and Holmesville, landed on option that would close Colborne and keep Holmesville open - but it’s not a “move all kids from Colborne to Holmesville” option, talk about our rationale - went over option - know you may have recommendations or tweaks you want to make to option, starting point for discussion about what’s possible, make sure you are aware of assumptions we used when we put together proposal
- Hugh Cox - go over map first, before look at numbers - went over map - go through numbers, explain some modifications that could be considered, just an opinion - went through numbers
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - what is the board’s maximum bus time
- Hugh Cox - current standard is no more than 60 minutes one way
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - have had five children who have gone through this school, live within three miles of school, our bus ride was always a full hour - picked up first, delivered home last, always had an hour coming and going, that’s been forever
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - clarification, kids in Saltford don’t have to drive through Goderich to get to Holmesville - is that what you were proposing, driving by another school, other routes to take
- Hugh Cox - no not proposing buses would travel through Goderich
- Darlene Hewitt, Colborne - clarify reasoning for red area to go to Goderich rather than Holmesville
- Hugh Cox - currently are some students already border-crossing from that area to Goderich so we took those students to Goderich, bus ride would be shorter - total number students in that area is about 46 - could look at adding them, not sure if best option but it’s possible

- Darlene Hewitt, Colborne - red area includes VLA , correct
- Hugh Cox - comes just shy of VLA, currently part of Holmesville, that's what's replicated here
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - in north, Blyth has option to go to Wingham or Hullett - could it not be up to parents where they send their kids
- Superintendent Ash - Blyth situation is unique based on history that goes back to old Huron County days, established many years ago - have not established dual enrolment zones since then, tried to align bus routes to avoid duplication - parents always have choice to go to school other than the area in which they reside, have to agree to assume transportation to nearest stop, has to be space in school to accommodate them without incurring additional staff - when we do our staffing, if a parent requests border-crossing and children can be accommodated in classroom that existing staffing provides, parent gets to designated bus stop to drop children off, generally approve border-crossing - will not add staff to allow for border-crossing request
- Hugh Cox - dual enrolment in Blyth is confined to the town boundary, not large rural area - students congregate and walk to those bus stops - not two bus routes running around country collecting students to go to two locations, in a confined area
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - rationale section, touched on something I wanted to discuss tonight, repairs/upgrades and cost associated with Colborne original site - other notes, implementation looking at 2013-14, transition period also something I would like to discuss - is this the time for that or wait until #9 in agenda
- Chair Tessier - almost running into same area - wondering if we should take a break and then go into it, whatever is best
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - instead of doing that, maybe continue with items in #8 then take a break

8.3 Response to Funding/Budget Questions

- Hugh Cox - had questions in remailer, answers are in item #6 in package - went over document - our funding driven by Technical document put out by Ministry, haven't included hard copy, will be posted to remailer and website - this is 140 some odd page document describing education funding, what we have to use to come up with our calculation - for this reason, we say staff will do calculation for you because there's more to it than cost per student - that being said, Ministry does advertise a per pupil amount, more of a show of what they're spending, more of an indicator of what they're spending per pupil, certainly no indication of how we receive the money example, in 2010-11 they gave figure of \$10,730 per pupil across province, but will restate, that number not going to change depending on where student located, can't use per pupil amount to calculate savings on anything - that's what I can give for answer, Technical document there to show how funding arrived at - can answer questions if you have any
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - if pupil foundation grant is based on number of students in entire board, other grants individual to school, correct
- Hugh Cox - not entirely - school operations and school renewal for example are based strictly on size of school, what classrooms are there, what are loaded spaces - other grants we get as lump sum based on total enrolment of board
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - recall in original proposal a figure mentioned as saving for closing those schools, how did you come up with that - if figure

for number of students is for whole area, who does allocation to individual schools and how

- Hugh Cox - savings arrived at through teacher allocations to those schools reformulated through whatever option chosen, if fewer schools, fewer teachers, we would get salary savings because possibly fewer teachers - outlined on that cost savings
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - thought they were being reallocated somewhere else, going to be no loss of jobs
- Hugh Cox - maybe should go to that document in staff option
- Superintendent Ash - in terms of that statement that there would not be loss of jobs, wouldn't be a direct savings to board - accurate in that we will reallocate that staff to achieve lower class sizes - going to have to achieve those lower class sizes anyway - is a savings to the board as we wouldn't have to incur the expense to achieve those class size reductions - is it a net reduction in expense, no, but not a gain in expense to get to the same point
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - but being done at expense potentially of Colborne, Holmesville
- Superintendent Ash - currently staff ratio at Colborne and Holmesville is higher than at some other schools, those other schools are currently staffing the smaller classes at Colborne and Holmesville - it's an issue of equity of resources across district as opposed to just in two schools
- Chair Tessier - not sure answered questions Alison started with
- Hugh Cox - point out on financial impact analysis that's part of staff option - column 6 shows net result with and without teacher savings, trying to answer that question, showing what savings are considering there's fewer teachers or not considering that there's fewer teachers - they'd be redistributed throughout the board to help other schools with their class sizes
- Superintendent Baird-Jackson - speak to funding, there are two parts, one is revenue, the other is expense - revenue calculations, those 140 some pages we work through is the generator, those funds have some restrictions, covered at training session – we have to provide staff, ministry has strict requirements that we report to them we are meeting class size aggregates, various other components - funding is generator, allocator is something else - approach budget holistically, everything we need to do to deliver good program for students then go through all mechanics of calculation of revenue and hope it matches - historically there has always been a gap, serious discussions about where we have to make cuts, try to do so away from classroom - historically you would see facilities get cut, have to provide staff, try to protect school budgets, see cuts in other places - don't attribute the revenue or expenses to individual schools - example, don't want to get into argument where a school would say they want young inexperienced teachers because they cost less, get rid of senior that are more expensive - when do costing look at snapshot of what we have currently, use averages for costings, in scenario look at the change and cost the difference, incremental amount as opposed to doing absolute costings of new scenarios - does that begin to address your question
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - gives better understanding
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - what size does a school require for a vice principal, number of students
- Superintendent Ash - isn't a set figure for allocation of vice principals to a school - use a guideline that is adapted every year we do staffing, based on individual situations at particular schools, could be affected by number of special needs students in a school for example, historical needs within a community - have allocated additional vice principal time in schools that have

undergone a change like a transition as a result of accommodation review - calculated cost usually for limited time to ensure transition works - definitive figure, we tend to use 300 students as a guideline, could allocate portions of a vice principal in schools that have fewer than that because of some of the factors I've mentioned

- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - are my numbers right, budget 2010/11 from funding grant based on number of pupils at \$170 million - breaks down to 80% wages, 10% transportation, 10% to run school board
- Superintendent Baird Jackson - when look at expenditures, have estimated salary costs for all groups around 80-81%, slice that's transportation, slice that's facilities - central administration goes back to one of those operating rules that ministry mandates, have specific grant for board administration which we cannot exceed, this board historically has spent well under that amount, try to put into classroom - don't have exact numbers in front of me
- Hugh Cox - continued with 8.3
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - are washrooms required to be size appropriate for junior kids
- Hugh Cox - have a few different configurations - some schools will have half sized fixtures for Kindergartens, not required - new schools we're putting in full sized fixtures with idea they use full sized at home, would use at school as well - is that what you were getting at
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - are they provided stools to make it accessible for them easier
- Christina VanPoucke, Colborne Principal - have low riders in Kindergarten room, have stool at sink where kids wash hands, have sinks outside classrooms - little ones that can't reach will get up on stool, we supervise while they wash hands

8.4 Staff Impact

- Superintendent Ash - #7 in package - has been shared with staff prior to being shared with you, there were no errors or omissions - this is their input, will leave for you to read at leisure

8.5 Facilities Report

- Hugh Cox - #8 in package - went over document
- Darlene Hewitt, Colborne - where are the rest of schools, Brookside, Goderich
- Hugh Cox - will have, these are the ones we have ready for tonight - have done physical reviews of those schools, reports not together yet - hope to post before Christmas break
- Darlene Hewitt, Colborne - ask that they be sent as soon as you have them
- Hugh Cox - would be reasonable
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - in list for civil, one item in both Colborne and Holmesville, what would that be
- Hugh Cox - civil could be anything from tarmac in play area that is broken, could be curbing or sidewalks, could be other areas of playground that need attention
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - Holmesville you've got \$100,000 as Priority 2, so that's 5-10 years - can you tell me what that is
- Hugh Cox - don't have that detail in report, can find out
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - also for Colborne, \$150,000 Priority 3
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - if these costs were to go to tender would they be considerably cheaper, it's just an independent study by one person

- Superintendent Baird-Jackson - this is third cycle we have undertaken this comprehensive building review - with same people and use unit costs so we're applying standard costs to all of the various building elements - when we go to tender, don't break work out into individual building components - costing is fairly accurate because using as an example current work that's been underway so can get extremely accurate figures for various unit costs
- Chair Tessier - further questions - take 15 minute break

9.0 Questions/Comments from Members

- Chair Tessier - last section of agenda, questions/comments from members, open forum for members to discuss, debate, pass motions, ask questions
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - pleasantly surprised with information we got tonight - had a long motion prepared, you've provided a good deal of that, appreciate that, will help us in what we're doing - we're committed to idea of rural school - quote article that Jim quoted from, talks about advantages of small schools, enhancement of personal and academic self-concepts of students, general sense of belonging, less feeling of alienation, more positive attitude of teachers and administrators, significantly higher participation rates in extra-curricular, higher attendance rates, less dropout rates, less behaviour problems - that's what we're working toward, feel very committed to that - looked over motion that we drafted, a good deal does not apply - make a comment from it, won't do in form of motion, not sure if needed - if financial information or other information requested couldn't come by December 10th which would have given us a few days before the December 14th meeting, would have asked for extension of other deadlines of a comparable number of days allowing us extra time to put our material together - you have supplied quite a bit of what we were hoping to get, appreciate that
- Connie Black, Municipality of ACW - two questions - has this school been inspected for asbestos
- Superintendent Baird Jackson - we're required to do asbestos inspection annually, done for all schools, data kept at both at school for any contractor that would come on site to do work, copy kept centrally with facilities team
- Connie Black, Municipality of ACW - second question - Melissa Peterson would like to know, was looking through correspondence between school board and parents - explanation why Holmesville was included in ARC and why Brookside was removed
- Superintendent Ash - that message came in late today - answer by explaining process, how ARC established - Ministry guideline and board policy speaks to boards doing accommodation reviews in planning areas - in this case planning area includes schools in Goderich, Colborne, Brookside, Holmesville - when start looking at potential schools for review, that's the group we look at, knowing had issue to deal with at Colborne, knew had low enrolment issues at Holmesville - staff recommended in report to trustees in September that Brookside be included in review - did not include Goderich because it had recently undergone review with consolidation of Victoria and Robertson - based on Ministry guideline and board policy, school didn't have to be named in review if the only potential outcome was they might receive some students - not about to close a newly renovated very full school in Goderich, only thing that could happen to that school is might receive some students, that's why wasn't included in review - that left Colborne, Holmesville, Brookside - when staff took recommendation to trustees, trustees had discussion about whether or not to include Brookside as one of three to be reviewed - end result of that discussion was a sense that because of Brookside's location it was unlikely would be closed as a result of accommodation review - again, the likely outcome would be receiving students if there were any changes - based on that rationale, trustees chose to remove Brookside from the motion - motion that was passed was to include Colborne and Holmesville in an accommodation review

- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - quote Goderich Signal Star, don't know who made this comment - Brookside considered a unique case - why aren't all schools considered unique
- Superintendent Ash - don't know what was meant by unique, only thing I can think of would be geographic location and the school had sufficient numbers to be stable, not full but enrolment wasn't going to drop below 70% - might be unique as compared to Colborne and Holmesville - you're right, all schools in district are unique, have unique characteristics - only thing I can think of is geographic location and loading
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - geographical pertaining to being so close to Bruce school board
- Superintendent Ash - that's part of it - catchment area where that school draws students from is at the very north end of our board boundaries, if that school were not there we'd be into some very long bus rides for those students
- Darlene Hewitt, Colborne - couple of questions - how many students from Saltford area cross border
- Hugh Cox - don't have off top of my head, can add to list of information we can provide
- Darlene Hewitt, Colborne - second question relates to number of times that we have been doing accommodation reviews over the last several years - someone mentioned in their speech tonight about a long term sustainable solution - these buildings are all about 50 years old, to prevent disrupting these kids again what guarantee or commitment can be provided that we will not be back here because one or more of the receiving schools becomes prohibitive to repair
- Chair Tessier - who wants to try that one
- Superintendent Ash - can't give guarantee or commitment on something that might or might not happen 15-20 years down the road - we do a very good job of maintaining buildings - for example, when Victoria, Arthur Meighen and St. Marys Central were declared prohibitive to repair, was difficult for us to make case to have those schools declared prohibitive to repair - Victoria wasn't declared prohibitive to repair until after accommodation review process was completed - one of the messages that told us from ministry was they felt our buildings were in good shape - we do our five year cycle of inspections to try to catch things before they get bad and apply our limited capital resources to ensure our buildings are sustainable for the long haul - one of the challenges this board had and Huron and Perth board before, funding for capital maintenance on buildings hasn't kept pace with age of the buildings, not unique to our board, not unique to rural Ontario, it's the case across the province - if we ask our municipal representatives what they're dealing with in terms of maintaining infrastructure that is 50-70 years old, they're in the same boat - maintenance of civil water, sewage and road systems that have now come of age is a significant burden to all levels of government, board not immune to that - continue to do the best we can - one of the things that came out of our last formal facilities review was an analysis that Janet and our architect did for us, what we see happening in terms of our ability to maintain our buildings - Janet coined it as a snowplow effect - reality, you saw in facilities review information you received tonight, categories of items, when we go into budget with the capital dollars we have to maintain our buildings, first Priority is #1, go through all of our buildings and try to address the #1 Priority items - reality has been for the last ten years, we don't have enough capital money to address all of the Priority 1 items and even begin to contemplate Priority 2 and 3 - we do the ones that are the most critical, get to rest of Priority 1s next year, some new Priority 1s have cropped up before we get to next year - that snowplow effect, that building of items we need to address continues to get worse - has been one of the drivers for board as it tries to manage its resources, one of the ways is to consolidate some of our buildings so we can use capital dollars we do have to maintain buildings that are left - can I make a promise, no - can I tell

- you we will do the best we can with the money we have, most certainly - do we have mechanisms in place to try to catch problems before they get too big, yes - are they perfect, no
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - item 8 Facilities Review Summary you have \$2.2 million listed for Colborne - clarification that it's \$1.1 million needed for the immediate fix, the balance being over the course of ten years - is an issue that's come up in discussions with Colborne parents - the \$1.1 million, is there any recourse we have to have an independent study, second opinion on that number - general opinion is that the number is more than likely a little inflated - would like to see something done by a local firm, there are a couple of well-respected local firms that could do the same sort of assessment that was done by T. Harris - what are our options when it comes to the repair costs we've been given
 - Superintendent Baird-Jackson - first point, review of environmental issues conducted by T. Harris, T. Harris then recommended building science review, done by experts, lead from NA Engineering in Stratford and our architect we use, done in great detail - architect works for our board and four boards in area so his costing is accurate, never inflated anything, we feel have gotten accurate data from those consultants - isn't something we would want anybody else to investigate in terms of getting into argument about what is or isn't valid
 - Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - so the answer is we are stuck with figures we've been given, no other recourse, no further assessments we can do self-funded
 - Superintendent Ash - discussed this request with our director and chair of board before responded to Bryan's email - concern is that any additional assessments would not necessarily follow the same criteria or have the same experience with buildings as the folks that did our assessment - our architect has been working with us for 20-30 years, he knows our buildings intimately, he knows what the issues are because in many cases his firm (not him directly) was involved with some of the original construction, knows materials used - external assessment may not have that degree of knowledge - making comparison, in formal facility review as example, when staff or trustees look at comparisons between buildings, make those comparisons based on the same people that did assessment based on same criteria as they went from building to building, assessments done same way five years ago as they're done this year - there is a degree of confidence that we're comparing apples to apples as we look at potential costs - as Janet has indicated the architect works for four boards in area so when costings are done they're based on similar work being done in other jurisdictions, work that's been done over last 3-4 years - costs associated with any projected work is based on actual costs in other rural situations, not urban situations like London or Toronto, take into account geography of where costs coming from - concern is that if an independent company were to do an assessment, that information could be presented to trustees, when it comes to actually doing the work we're required to go through tendering process, open process, doesn't mean local contractors will get job - that means we have to deal with market value prices that our architect is familiar with which is the one that gave costings in the first place - experience has been that actual cost related to tender costs over last number of years, actuals have been very close to tenders but in every case have been slightly under, within \$50,000 of total
 - Superintendent Baird-Jackson - think about context, it is the same people using same format, same eyes doing same analysis for all buildings in a short space of time, doing all same unit costing for all of the elements - comparison one school to another is valid, how board uses that documentation, comparison one to another as opposed to looking at an absolute figure - comparison gets at reasonability of whether figures are accurate or not - suggest that once we get the rest of figures for schools you've requested that's going to help you as well - have previous two cycles, copy of each in schools, can produce that as well if you want comparison - as we do

- that cyclical review, as we do each subsequent one, we're finding we have at least addressed the Priority 1s, we're doing what we've identified as problems
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - rural option, states repairs to Colborne are significant given current economic climate do not believe eligible for funding - has board applied for funding or looked into funding or are you just thinking we're not eligible
 - Superintendent Baird-Jackson - two components to that answer - first, capital funding in general, director of Capital Branch made clear to all boards that there was limited funding, focus would be first on growth areas primarily GTA where they have more kids than spaces - second, additions required because of consolidation, made clear that boards should not anticipate new schools coming out of consolidations - know that ministry looks at our live data, they know where we have space - extremely limited funding - have had the experience in another school where we found problem once we were into renovation, made case to Ministry that would not have known because it involved intrusive testing, did not make any difference to Ministry, ruled that we could not get additional funding - we'd already asked that, that's going back eighteen months when there was a little more capital than what we're being told there is now, no funding there, arguably this would be a parallel case
 - Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - in October 28th Focus was an article about board putting schools up for auction, Mitchell, Arthur Meighen, St. Marys Central, Victoria was on auction block but now is not because Colborne here - what is happening to funds from sale of schools - states that they will go into proceeds of disposition reserve fund - what is that and what do we use that for
 - Superintendent Baird-Jackson - ministry has rules around capital in general and proceeds from sales of schools that have been deemed prohibitive to repair - once board has approval from Ministry to dispose of those schools, proceeds are required to be put into a capital reserve - has to be used for another capital project, requires ministry approval as well - where we have sold schools in past, put into proceeds of disposition reserve then wanted to use it, has been on go forward basis, paying forward in terms of work we are undertaking - example could be that some of proceeds from disposition of St. Marys Central and Mitchell go towards gap in funding for new north Huron school - know what we've been funded, have been required to work with costing consultant, know there's a gap between projected cost and funding we've gotten - an example where we could apply for Ministry approval to use reserve, they would not unreasonably withhold that approval
 - Bryan Olson, Holmesville - what is the amount of money sitting in that account
 - Superintendent Baird-Jackson - don't have exact figure in my head right now, some of it is already committed to the north Huron project - we're in midst of doing capital report to ministry, that will provide more summary - because ministry wants to know where money coming from if the cost of a project exceeds allocation they've given us - those dollar amounts are going to be flagged there
 - Bryan Olson, Holmesville - why would cost exceed budget
 - Superintendent Baird-Jackson - Ministry has standard benchmark on a per square foot that they have allocated for construction, benchmark does not address costs of construction - example, north Huron site conditions that have to be addressed that funding doesn't cover - example at Little Falls - Ministry funds elementary classrooms at 750 square feet, made decision that area should be 800 square feet, Ministry told us school board would have to come up with funding to cover that difference - they fund no more than 750 square feet, we build 800 square feet because we believe that's the right thing for kids
 - Superintendent Ash - other reason why there will be a differential, ministry benchmark is based on cost per square foot that are averages across province - when building in Halton for example can get closer to average because when doing tendering there are a number of competitive bids, costs of supplies is relatively lower, transportation costs are lower, as a result gets closer to final benchmark costs -

- experience has been, not just our board but other rural boards, we can't approach that benchmark because of additional costs associated with building in rural Ontario
- Superintendent Baird-Jackson - one more thing - space we're building is much smaller when looking at overall square footages and still building to 800 square feet, in total space what we're adding is significantly less than a GTA board - they're getting economies of scale on a per square foot basis for construction, so that's another difference in terms of our costs vs Ministry allocation
 - Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - rural option you've presented as starting point, that would take Holmesville out of the accommodation review process, correct
 - Chair Tessier - not sure what you're saying
 - Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - the rural option presented tonight is to close Colborne and send students to Goderich, GDCI - Elementary, Brookside or Holmesville - if we have option to send kids to Holmesville, are you saying Holmesville is not part of accommodation review process anymore
 - Chair Tessier - no don't think that's what's being said - both schools are part of ARC, remain part of overall process - you will make recommendation to board in conjunction with staff, option might be the same, might be different, board will vote on what they want to do, can be bits and pieces or the whole proposal that is accepted, that remains with board
 - Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - transition period, in rural option you're quoting 2013-14 as year of implementation - that's what we were told from beginning, is that what we're looking at - have had parents wanting to know if we are going to have a year transition or is this going to be sped up for implementation this coming September
 - Superintendent Ash - decision around implementation time would be open to input from community - biggest challenge is because of timing of process, decision isn't made until June, becomes challenging to reconfigure schools and get everything ready for September 2012 - staff would be recommending September 2013 to allow time for getting everything in place, experience has been that communities need that time too to get their heads around final result - if took option presented tonight and didn't make any changes that resulted in for example renovations or additions, certainly September 2013 is doable - September 2012 may be doable, would be very tight - realize rural option presented tonight is starting point, fully cognizant that you may wish us to adjust boundaries, if you want us to do that and get to point where there's an option you want us to cost out, would be worthwhile tonight to get some of that direction from you so we can start thinking about where boundaries land and what that means for enrolment - if we could get that input from committee, we could do the enrolment projections, classroom usage projections for the next meeting - wouldn't be able to do the costing per se but want to make sure that's what you want to see happen, but at least could give you that other iteration of what it might look like - before we go to #10, might be worthwhile to get that kind of direction
 - Bryan Olson, Holmesville - what are you building on to Clinton PS
 - Superintendent Ash - there was special money from Ministry of Children and Youth Services for a community hub, daycare facility, not funded by school board, funded by another Ministry in conjunction with Huron County to make Clinton PS a hub that includes a daycare facility, not education space
 - Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - if talking about potentially changing some of those boundaries, have those people been surveyed to find out where they'd like to send their children, would that not be the first step
 - Superintendent Ash - have not done that, potentially something that ARC members do as part of their deliberations - staff don't generally do that as part of the process
 - Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - heard from parents at Saltford, would probably choose Goderich as it's closer - thinking we'd like to be talking about boundary changes

- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - Colborne is going to be putting out surveys, one question will be where choose to send child if had option - Holmesville has already done surveys
- Chair Tessier - any sense of timeline
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - not really, would like to have finished by end of week - going to have online survey as well as paper copy - if not end of this week, looking at week after, week of December 5th
- Superintendent Ash - potentially we could look at in absence of that survey, what this group thinks might be a preferable lay of land in terms of boundaries then survey information could inform is it what the staff proposed or what ARC proposed or something in the middle
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - think it would be the people who know routes, roads, weather, if they're going to suggest change today or in near future without benefit of survey
- Chair Tessier - do you want to see map, would that help
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - Hugh, said working on compiling information, facility review numbers for rest of schools affected, did we pin down a date that we can have that information by
- Hugh Cox - had suggested before Christmas break, Darlene suggested we send out as soon as have available, wouldn't wait until next meeting, if have before then will send out - intention is to have as soon as possible
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - are reviews done, just a matter of compiling information
- Hugh Cox - almost done, have part of one school to finish - left to do is creating reports
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - would it be unreasonable to ask that we have all that information by December 10th, earlier if possible but no later than December 10th
- Hugh Cox - clarifying what all included is, it's the other schools Darlene had mentioned plus two reports that are missing for Colborne
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - right
- Hugh Cox - it's not board staff that prepares those reports, architects, mechanical, electrical engineers do these reports - wouldn't want to commit something that I don't have direct answer from them - will find out what that date is and let you know if 10th is possible, will put out on remailer
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - that is satisfactory - were going to put forth motion that we wanted information by December 10th, but understandable that without talking to them - satisfactory at this point, wait to see what response is through remailer
- Chair Tessier - Mike, still looking for direction to be able to move forward
- Superintendent Ash - if it's possible, may not be possible - want to keep process moving along, that's why asking the question
- Hugh Cox - is there any map or graphic we can provide for your questionnaire that would be helpful, if there's a map of a specific area or a blank map to add to your questionnaire - found helpful in boundary reviews we've done in the past, doing similar questionnaires for boundary reviews to have map, gets more accurate response
- Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - have copies of staff option map, rural option map - blank map would be handy, could create own boundaries - is that something you can send
- Hugh Cox - will provide blank map
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - if looking for options we might consider, what about dotted line that was Colborne outline and including all red above that line
- Chair Tessier - you're asking the committee
- Alison Lobb, Municipality of CH - we haven't had chance to discuss - if they wanted idea of potential changed boundary, suggesting potentially if look at map and go with

- Colborne line north of Goderich and move red into our area - we haven't had chance to discuss so you're getting my view rather than all of them
- Bryan Olson, Holmesville - think we would like to get our surveys we've sent out, two surveys from Holmesville and they're working on theirs - get surveys back and consolidate our findings and boundary options as part of our proposal
 - Chari Tessier - sounds reasonable
 - Superintendent Ash - request that the sooner we have that information the better chance we have of meeting the next meeting date - don't say to make excuses but accommodation review is one of jobs we're working on now so have to work doing this stuff into other things we have to do - more time we have the better chance we have of making deadline
 - Bryan Olson, Holmesville - could have information compiled for next ARC meeting in December, is that soon enough
 - Hugh Cox - if you had available before then, could you send through remainder - I could start putting those numbers together before next ARC meeting, would be beneficial
 - Chair Tessier - anything further - you've worked hard tonight, made some progress
 - Bryan Olson, Holmesville - propose motion that we would like cost of consolidating Colborne and Holmesville into Holmesville site
 - Superintendent Ash - go back to discussions at training session, is that then your staff +1 option, is that the option you're going to put forward - we cost one option from the ARC
 - Rebecca Ingham, Colborne - so that would be using up one of our scenarios - retract motion for now
 - Chair Tessier - not on floor yet
 - Superintendent Ash - not necessarily your final motion, in terms of keeping process going we want to provide you with information you can use to then say this is option to flesh out - if we have a better idea of where you want the boundaries, example for that rural option, the sooner we have that, the sooner we can get you the information, then you can make your decision

10.0 Adjournment

Moved by Rebecca Ingham, Colborne
That the meeting be adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

CARRIED

Holmesville Colborne ARC Meeting Goderich. Nov 23 2011

My name is Tom Trick. I am a parent of two current and one future student of Holmesville Public School. I'm also a graduate. My home town is Clinton, my family and I live closer to Clinton than Holmesville. When I first heard rumblings of this ARC process beginning, I was somewhat indifferent. I began with warm fuzzy logic that followed the idea that my children should be entitled to the same education experience that I had. I know that warm fuzzy logic doesn't make for sound decisions. I crave decisions made by the public sector that I can see good sense in. I was getting my head around my children going to Clinton Public School. Enrollment everywhere is declining, tax dollars have to be used wisely. Many public facilities that exist now are underutilized. I began to search for a reason why my children should be treated to the same opportunity to education that I had. I remembered the EQAO figures that were in my daughter's monthly newsletter. They were positive. I looked over the EQAO results online. I have come across solid reasons why the route to improved efficiency proposed by the board is not the way forward.

To begin -- Holmesville has few enough students to not have their EQAO results published. Anyone who disputes my statement that the Holmesville EQAO performance is not equal to or greater than the board or province average is welcome to present that information, until then, I assume my statement to be correct. Holmesville students within the proposed boundaries of Clinton Public School will be moving into a school where the productivity, as gauged by impartial province wide standards is exceptionally poor. This to me as a parent is akin to telling my children that at the first slushy snowy day in fall, no, you don't get winter boots, here's a pair of sneakers, it's what's best for you. If the EQAO results are an objective measurement of the level of student achievement -- I will not be sending my children to a school that is quite likely in competition for the bottom spot in the AMDSB. If I were a parent within the current boundaries of CPS, I would have trustees on speed dial and be making life challenging for the board administration that has allowed for such poor performance to exist. The AMDSB, according to the EQAO results, has substantial remedial work to do at CPS. The notion of adding more students to this situation is bizarre. Despite legal disclaimers by investment firms to the contrary, historical results are an indicator of future performance. I would suggest that AMDSB address the performance issue at CPS before mincing it on CPS students.

To mitigate some of the negativity here, I would add that Holmesville gives the impression to me^{as a parent} as being a well oiled machine that is providing an educational experience that lives up to the catch phrase "Excellence in Education" Again, I would repeat – past results are in fact an indicator of future performance.

The same relative situation it appears exists to an extent between Colborne and Goderich public school. While it appears that the performance of GPS relative to the board and Province is not at all out of line, the performance of Colborne students, with the exception of the grade 3 2010-2011 results, is amazingly high, to the point that I think they're rigged. Out of the 19 children in Grade 6 at Colborne in 2010- 2011, all of them, 18 of them and 18 of them were at or above the provincial standards in the respective Reading Writing and Math. What are the chances? What type of a teaching staff, school administration and student body do you need to have those results happen. It is something to ponder. I would suggest that the discrepancy in performance between Colborne and Goderich is at least as large as the difference in performance between Holmesville and Clinton

My ideal vision of the outcome of this ARC process is that the students of Holmesville and Colborne be under the same roof.

I firmly believe that the board option presented is not a positive step forward. A substantially more productive, effective, efficient and palatable option exists, everyone must use vision to see it and make it happen. To be successful it will take cooperation and compromise between Holmesville and Colborne parents and students. It will take a continuation of the excellent work the staff at the schools are doing. It will also take some willingness on behalf of the parent reps, the community reps and the board reps to put their heads together and work out the details. - to accept and to give a little in order to all agree that a joining of Holmesville and Colborne in a rural setting is the ideal solution to current situation.

Mr. Fleming
#1

I have attended the ARC meetings for Holmesville Public School as an observer and concerned citizen of Holmesville. A perusal of previous minutes and agenda items has brought to my attention reoccurring issues. The concerned parents and citizens of both schools affected are "fully involved" and are willing to assume an advisory role and be happy to provide recommendations on the final decision made by the Board of Trustees.

Are these ARC committees charged with providing a "rural option" to present to the school board, and, if that be the case this has become an impossible task without answers pertaining to funding, ratios, bussing, and last but by no means least facility reviews.

I note that the "Terms of Reference" states that the board administration will provide material, support, and analysis - does this reference include the information requested by the ARC members?

My personal question is what statistical base are we compared to ie. Other rural areas or are we compared to a city for numbers of students per density of population to establish our classroom sizes and distance to travel to a school?

Reference material:

Requests for information from Melissa Peterson:

1. What is the amount that each school gets per pupil in total, and could you please break that down to more specific areas such as bussing, books, and whatever other way it is broken down to reach a final cost?
2. Is there a ratio as far as students vs greenspace and student vs class space allowed as far as standards. And could we please have the numbers for this for each school involved in the ARC, including the receiving schools?
3. When creating classrooms, for instance Kindergarten, is there a ration that must be met pertaining to washroom space?
4. Can we have the cost and breakdown of the existing bus routes and the bussing costs for the Staff Option bus route?

Request for information from Rebecca Ingham:

1. Facilities review for Colborne Public School pending, when will report be ready?

Karin Mabon
Concerned citizen

ARC

November 23, 2011

At the last ARC meeting every person at the introduction stated to get to a solution at the end of the ARC review which is in the best interest for the children. Research has shown that violence in rural schools is lower as urban schools. To my understanding there is an issue at one of the town schools with a higher incidence of bullying. When children go to school with a positive attitude due to a positive atmosphere at the school they are therefore able to achieve higher marks in their education. Holmesville PS and Colbourne PS are schools both well known in the community for their excellent education and great atmosphere at the school. Besides Holmesville has a well known good music program and is the school with a band that is well known in the community which is worth preserving. This all seems to me why it is important to have a rural option in Central Huron. As a parent I am very concerned that if we do not have this option, that we have to send our children to one of the town schools where for example bullying is an issue, that this issue will become a bigger problem. Besides, if the board has statistics in regards to the bullying in the schools of the Avon Maitland District School Board, I would like to have these presented as I believe that the bullying in the two rural schools named above is far less than in the town schools.

Annerieke van Beets

M. Fleming

Colborne – Holmesville Accommodation Review Committee

Wed Nov 23 2011, 7:00pm, Colborne central (Victoria Campus)

(Greetings)

As per the Avon Maitland District School Boards own written policy, a School Information profile is to be provided that addresses 4 considerations about any school undergoing Pupil Accommodation review:

- **Value to the School Board**
- **Value to the Community**
- **Value to the local economy**
- **Value to the Student**

After sitting in on recent review discussions, I am compelled to make a few observations that I wish the ARC to consider, and that just happens to cover those same four items.

I'll start with the **Value to the School Board**:

Declining enrolment.

We all get the part that declining enrolment impacts program delivery, and the ability for teachers to develop professionally. We get it that a building facing upwards of \$2 million in renovations and repairs is cause for concern, and we get it that it's really about the balancing act of service delivery and dollars. I humbly submit that the Boards biggest concerns are really in regards to its budgets...

I'll come back to this point in a minute...

Next is **Value to the Community:**

The Boards Staff recommendation is to close both Schools.

The absence of a Rural School Option in the Staff proposal speaks to the future of the Rural community in this province. We know that Huron County may be 1 of only 2 counties in the province with declining population, so perhaps we need to look at the role this review could have in hastening this trend.

No schools, no hospitals, people leave.

A Rural School option that examines the combining of these 2 schools into 1 school would allow the Community to retain its Rural Heritage. If you're not familiar with our take on Rural heritage and identity, have a look at the message Rural Ontario sent Queens Park at the last Provincial Election. Not enough listening to the rural residents over issues like Industrial Wind Turbines played havoc with some MPP's political careers...

We define ourselves by the soil beneath our feet, our daily Work, our Neighbours, and our Communities, inclusive of the Schools that we choose for our Families.

Value to the Local Economy:

No Jobs, no Hospitals, no Schools, people leave. We need to leave these things intact or soon Ontario will be without Rural. I listened last evening as I heard the word "urban" being used to describe Huron County because "urban" is apparently any area with a population of 100,000. That definition must have originated in Toronto because Rural Ontario would never use such a term; the Urbanization of Rural Ontario didn't start in Rural Ontario. The Local Economy will be perfectly fine if there are people still in the area. Start removing schools and people will follow. Leave these services intact and people will remain.

Lastly and most importantly, **Value to the Students:**

I've recently sat through Holmesville School's Remembrance Day services, and was amazed as to the purposeful inclusion of every single child; their obvious sense of contribution and accomplishment. This episode was nothing new, but has been a regular occurrence over the years that we've been part of the school community. There is evidently more than just "ABC's and "123"s at play here. It's the Environment that these children are being Educated in. Not the Building... not just the prescribed Ministry of Education programs... but the Environment...

This is the value of these Rural Schools.

This is why we desire another Option from the ARC, a Rural Option.

We, the Community as well as the Parents, are buying into the reality that change is in the wind. And this time of change is the opportune time to remind the Board of what it indicates is its #1 priority, The Students.

If the Board needs to work within its budget constraints while working to do what's really best for the Student's, let's allow them to do so, but accomplish that task with a Rural Option...

The Option of letting these 2 schools, Colborne and Holmesville, work as 1.

Thank-you

B. Barriera

I am here tonight as a parent of a child attending Holmesville Public School as well as a Municipal Councillor for Central Huron. I feel it is important to emphasize that I am a parent first because it has been mentioned on many occasions by the staff and board of trustees that this review is about doing what is best for our children, "first".

Our children are our most valuable resource that we have in our lives, our communities and our County. Children must come first in any and all decisions that are made. We are their voice. Our children are counting on us as parents, as a community, and as Municipal leaders and a board of trustees to advocate for them and their future. This decision goes far beyond their school years.

I am asked every night after returning home from an ARC meeting "is our school closing"? The short answer is "we are doing our best to keep a rural country option"; the long answer is we are doing our best to keep a rural "country" school open for you and your friends to continue the education that you have become accustomed too and to be able to sustain a vital part of our rural infrastructure that is the heart that provides the pulse for the rest of the County.

It may not be both schools which remain open but our option should be nothing less than the inclusion of a rural country school. It is easy to say that its children first but it has become quite evident that it really is about the money. I do

not want to make this personal in my presentation to the staff and board of trustees but the published sunshine list is quite impressive considering we are talking about possible ways to save money; after all this is about the children first.

People/parents are allowed to make decisions based on choice and that is why we choose to live in this country. It is no different in Huron County and more specifically ACW and CH. I choose to live where I live because I put my children first and this is what my wife and I chose like so many others, as “our rural option, for our children”.

Although I grew up in Oxford County and my wife in Huron County it was still rural “country” Ontario. We were separated by several kms yet our values and traditions were the same. I attended Burgessville Public School and Shana attended Holmesville Public School both small rural schools and both remain open today contributing to a very important part of our rural infrastructure. I believe a country school is every bit as valuable to our Municipal infrastructure as our water, sewer, arena or firehall services; none of which we would ever consider taking away because they exist somewhere else in the County.

As Municipal leaders we are presented with tough decisions, many of them based on finances. Long meetings packed full of emotions are real however at the end of the day when the people have spoken we have listened, became creative and figured it out. When our community speaks we listen and

respond as we were are elected to do; compromises are often the result.

In this case asking the staff and Board of Trustees to provide a rural option may require some long days, maybe even some soul searching and some advocacy for what is morally and ethically right not based on the figures dictated by the Province. I believe a long term sustainable option is obtainable without degradating our community. I do not believe this staff or Board of Trustees has the right to decide what our or any Municipality will look like as a result of "choosing" to close our rural country schools. We all know that our population is struggling to sustain, let alone increase in numbers however compounding the extra strain of country school closures on top of what we are already facing is irresponsible and short sighted thinking on any ones part.

Think of it this way...millions of dollars are spent by all levels of Government in Canada to save endangered species many of them in other countries around the world. We have our own endangered specie right here in Huron County, CH and ACW and that is our rural country schools and our rural country heritage which is a way of life and our right. Be a part of the solution and not part of the problem by lack of advocacy which is everyone's responsibility.

My question to you as staff and a board who are elected trustees and receive a stipend and compensation for travel and meetings as you well deserve and who will eventually

vote on the “final” decision; will you truly make the children the most important part of your decision or will it be based on the figures you have been presented with by the Province? Our children are the future of rural country Ontario and the economic impact longterm has far greater costs than what you are faced with today; remember this is about our children and freedom of choice. It is my hope that my children have the choice and option to rural country living including education because we advocated for them today. Come back with a sustainable long term solution that you can be proud of for years to come. Your legacy could be that you were part of saving that endangered specie that we so fondly call rural “country” Ontario.

I leave you with this thought and question. Last month the Provincial election took place. Rural Ontario has spoken loud and clear based on a number of issues. Education is no exception. AMDSB has staff hired, a board in place and parents working together towards our mission and vision. Others have experienced rural school closures, went through the same process as we are faced with however I question, “why is this relationship so strained when it is supposed to be inclusive? Parents are a key component to our children's education however the staff and Board of Trustees clearly are armed for battle as opposed to listening and becoming creative advocaters. It is your job as staff members and paid elected officials to advocate for our children using our messages not simply accepting the figures presented by the Province. They do not hear our messages if you are not our

voice. Negotiating is when there is no clear winner. Both sides leave the negotiations with a compromise; that is the difference between negotiating and dictatorship.

Thank you

**Rural Schools and Educational Reform:
Should We Keep Rural Schools Open?
A Review of the Literature**

Prepared by
Dr. Allan C. Lauzon and Ms. Danielle Leahy
School of Rural Extension Studies
University of Guelph
Guelph, Ont.
N1G 2W1

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Introduction

Rural school closure is not new. Educational reform in the Canadian context has been characterized by a continual process of reform and consolidation since its inception as a public service. Originally, in the earliest days of public education in Canada, the structure for school governance was quite simple. According to Gallagher (1995), schools were an essential element of the social and cultural fabric of community life. People, even those who did not have school age children, were still close to the school and in many ways part of school life. Organizationally, schools were governed by a board of elected trustees whose job was to govern and manage the local school, ensuring that it adhered to the provincial guidelines. Typically, each community had one school and one board of trustees, except for those larger urban communities where one board of trustees might be responsible for the governance and management of several community schools (Gallagher, 1995). While this structure served both children and communities well, school does not operate independent of the larger social and economic forces. At the end of World War II Canada was increasingly becoming urbanized and consequently patterns of schooling and school board activities changed. It is during these years that education is radically altered through its *professionalization*. The increasing use or need for professional managers in education leads to undermining any sense of community ownership. Furthermore, with education becoming professionalized there are further changes in governance with school boards moving from being local to regional. The consequence, according to Gallagher (1995: 67) was that "Schools were now more distant, in many respects, from many of the community members whose children they were intended to serve." Also during this period the cost of education increased. Some communities, unable to raise sufficient funds to cover the cost of education, became dependent upon provincial grants in an attempt to ensure educational equity. Subsequently, community members become even more detached from schooling and there was a rapid decline in commitment to education, causing a rift between those who have children and those who do not. Gallagher (1995) argues that the consequence was further marginalization of parents and community members from the educational process and the school. Howley (1997: 2) characterizes education during this period as "part of the march of progress toward an inevitably better future - a progressive, postwar and increasing post-rural future." Between 1971 and 1991 there was a significant growth in the number of teachers and administrators employed as the professionalization of education continues. In response to the further estrangement of parents and community members from schools, there were attempts made to involve lay constituencies in education. However, despite the collaborative rhetoric, community members still remained passive spectators to the educational enterprise. Gallagher (1995: 69), in summarizing this period of education, concludes that

What had been community-based schools became the domain of hired, professional, expert teachers and administrators, and of school trustees whose personal agendas often went well beyond the establishment of school policy.

What had once been a community based and supported enterprise had been transformed into a professional activity where those who had the greatest interest - parents of children - had the least power or authority to play an active role in the educational enterprise.

Recently we have once again embarked on another round of reform and consolidation of education in Canada. In a time of increased need for economic efficiency in order to combat provincial deficits, Canadian provinces have turned to the idea that by increasing the size of administrative units within education a savings can be created while at the same time providing

an education of greater quality (Gallagher, 1995). Many of these changes, according to McEwen (1995), are being driven by demands for greater accountability, with a particular emphasis on economic performance. Much of this can be attributed to the effects of economic globalization (McMurtry, 1998) and the fact that education is increasingly influenced by the business community (Levine, 1999). Education has become, according to Howley (1997), the handmaiden to economic globalization and this is actively undermining the vitality of rural communities. Part of this can be understood as part of an agenda for global changes as a result of economic globalization, and this impacts negatively on rural communities and rural life (Lauzon and Hagglund, 1998). Miller captures the essence of this when he writes that

Many rural communities now face a decline in their quality of life due to the 1980s economic downturn and the 1990s globalization of the marketplace. Businesses have closed and many young well-educated citizens have left for urban areas. Additionally, social services, including schools, have been regionalized or consolidated as cost-cutting measures. These trends have led to high levels of unemployment and the deterioration of rural economic, social and environmental well-being (1995: 1).

Miller (1995) further states that in response to these changes there is a misguided belief that the focus of community development should be on economic development. However, in the absence of looking after the social fabric of the community, and ensuring the integrity of the biophysical basis of community, it is unlikely that any advances in economic development will be sustainable. As Hay and Barasan (1992) note, the very nature and fabric of rural communities is being altered and the problems of this are further exacerbated by the fact that “rural” is seldom a dimension considered in the formulation of national or provincial policy. As Pinder (1994) notes there is an implicit bias in policy formulation that actively excludes the consideration of the unique characteristics, qualities and needs of rural community life.

From an education perspective, this has the potential to be disastrous for rural communities. First, consolidation of boards and schools is often skewed in favor of urban values and the needs of larger communities (Burlingame, 1979; Sher, 1981; Brown, 1996; Ribchester and Edwards, 1999). Second, as Howley (1997) argues, a different logic is needed in considering rural schooling if the development of these institutions are to actually benefit rural communities. Again, this points to the need to consider the unique context of rural communities and the impact that restructuring or consolidation has on the quality of rural life. Howley (1997) further argues that in general, there is a scepticism that rural school needs are different. This, he maintains, is a result of three assumptions. First, the very notion of the school is problematic. He argues that the concept of school is based upon the platonic ideal of what a school should be and subsequently all schools are, by definition, lacking. This is closely tied to his second reason and that is that in general, in a highly urbanized culture, there is a general disregard for rural places and their diversity. Subsequently, they are not important, and hence not considered. Third, research in education promotes universal themes and recommendations across differing contexts, hence “ruralness” is rarely considered a variable in the context of educational research. This he notes mean that often educational researchers fail to ask the right questions if they wish to understand rural education and the implications consolidation may have for rural communities. Furthermore, if the research community does not ask the right questions and policy makers draw upon the research community to inform policy development, then rural, as a variable, will be left out of

the policy development agenda.

The remainder of this literature review will examine empirical literature as it relates to the issues of rural school closure and board consolidation.

The Economics of Educational Reform and Consolidation

Since the inception of public education the trend in educational reform has been toward, larger schools and boards (Sher, 1979; De Young, 1991; Brown, 1996, 1999; Ministry of Education and Training, 1996). This trend is indebted to an organizational model that is rooted in the 19th century model of industrial production that is based upon *economies of scale* (Fanning, 1995). Simply stated, economies of scale refers to the ability to reduce production costs by increasing the scale of the operation, thus reducing the production cost of each unit without incurring a decline in product quality. By borrowing this production model, administrators and politicians believe they can lower the costs of education while maintaining a quality education, just as industrialists have reduced costs without suffering any change in the quality of their product. This has been the driving force in much of the educational reform and consolidation over the history of public education in Canada. Furthermore, the public, in general, has historically accepted this argument without demanding that administrators actually demonstrate the cost savings. For example, there was very little public outcry as a result of the closures that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. There were a variety of reasons for this. First, it was assumed that “bigger is better” and the transfer of students from small schools to larger schools would afford them greater educational opportunity and provide them with an education of greater quality and value (Sher, 1977). Furthermore, the professionalization of education that happened during the post war period was still dominating whereby lay people would not challenge the expert; they invested significant trust in professionals and assumed that any action they advised would be beneficial for their children. Despite the trust of the sixties and seventies, and the cynicism that has emerged in the eighties and nineties, the question still needs to be asked: Does this organizational model translate across contexts (industrial production to education), and is there empirical evidence for the alleged benefits? For the purposes of this section we will only explore alleged benefits in terms of cost savings. Pedagogical outcomes and opportunities will be explored in the next section.

First, there are two areas to potentially save money through the application of this type of organizational model and the associated savings as a result of economies of scale. They are teachers salaries and administration costs (Giessen, 1998). First, is there a savings associated with teacher salaries? Giessen (1998), in exploring this issue, argues that there is a ceiling on the savings that can be realized as a result of school consolidation if teacher student ratios are increased. For example, rural schools may only have a small number of students and hence their teacher/student ratio is low and costs high on a per pupil basis. If these students can be assimilated into a larger system without having to increase staffing there will be a savings. However, assuming that there is maximum ceiling on class size, for example of 30 student per class, then the 31st student means that a new teacher would have to be hired and this begins to cancel out the savings. The question is can a savings be realized through closing rural schools and re-locating the students to larger schools? The answer is it is depends on the circumstances of consolidation, the number of students being moved, and the number of students currently enrolled in the school that will receive them. There will be a savings if students are re-located to a school in which no or few additional teachers will need to be added and still retain acceptable student/teacher ratios. For each teacher that needs to be added the actual savings will decline. For

example, in West Virginia more than 25% of its schools were closed yet it still has the same teacher/student ratio in 1995 as it did in 1990. In other words there was no savings with regard to teacher salaries as a result of consolidation. The savings that arise as a result of reduced teacher salary costs is, at best, open for debate and not in anyway definitive.

The second area for potential savings was a reduction of administrative costs. Assuming fewer schools means assuming fewer administrators, and hence a savings. However, again the research findings are ambiguous as to whether there is actually any savings. Marshall (1988) found that after consolidation administration costs were reduced as a percentage of the budget but the actual costs increased. Nachtigal (1992) found that the number of administrative staff actually increased as a result of the greater bureaucratic demands of the consolidated system. While there may be a savings in some cases, like the savings associated with teacher's salaries, it will be dependent upon the specific context. Furthermore, Monk (quoted in Witham, 1997) found that after a secondary school population reached 400 students any savings due to the elimination of small classes is exhausted. Geissen has argued that 400 - 499 pupils is the optimal size for economic efficiency and that after this level is reached costs start to rise. For example, according to Geissen, schools of 800 or more pupils are as expensive to run as those with 200-299 students. De Young and Howey (1990) have noted that almost all jurisdictions that force consolidation of small rural schools have failed to document or evaluate the improvements that are alleged to result from these school closures. The financial gains may be difficult to establish. Furthermore, school closures often mean only slight savings because the vast majority of a school budget is for personnel costs (Howley, 1997; Purdy, 1997; Brown, 1998). An argument can be made for administrative savings, however, as stated previously, often there is a significant increase in the bureaucratic structure required to run a large educational system, negating any savings (Irmsher, 1997). In fact, there may in fact be diseconomies of scale as a result of an increase of in the number of staff needed to meet the demands of a bureaucratic system. Brown (1996) argues that add to this the increased costs of transportation and any savings is significantly decreased if not eliminated.

Irmsher (1997) makes a very interesting point, arguing that in order to understand any cost-savings you must understand how the numbers are calculated. For example, in examining high schools she states

Standard operating costs are usually computed by dividing the total amount spent by the number of students enrolled. But when cost-effectiveness judgements are based instead on the figure derived by dividing dollars spent by number of students graduating, the results are totally different (Irmsher, 1997: 2).

Raywid (1999: 2) would also support this, arguing that

The issue of relative costs is receiving attention and a first cost-benefit analysis of New York's small schools found them to be a good value, with the quite small additional budgets...well worth the improved outputs. When viewed on a cost-per-student basis, they are somewhat more expensive. But when examined on the basis of the number of students they graduate, they are less expensive than either medium sized or large schools.

Smaller schools have more positive educational outcomes. Perhaps it is Witham (1997) who

makes the most interesting and important point; changes in the educational system, such as consolidation, must ultimately include learning outcomes as part of the cost savings equation. If consolidation leads to saving money but impacts negatively upon student performance, then what has really been saved. It is to this issue that we now turn.

School Size: Is it Important?

As stated previously, there are assumptions that larger school units can offer increased educational opportunity while lower operating costs. This section will explore the idea of enhanced opportunities and learning outcomes..

First, while it cannot be denied that increased size does offer more types of programming opportunities, they may not be as great as one would think. For example, Cotton (1996) found that only a 17% increase in the variety of program offerings is realized as a result of a 100% increase in enrollment. Furthermore, it is found that most students rarely utilize the opportunity for a more diverse program. It has also been argued that often larger schools can offer special programs for disadvantaged and disabled students. Despite the presence of these programs, Irmsher (1997) reports that they often lead to isolating these students and cutting them off from the main culture of the school, In fact she further argues that larger schools lead to social stratification where it is the academic and athletic stars who benefit from close daily contact with adults. This means that within the school the other 70-80% of the students belong to social groups whose membership does not include any adults. Fanning (1995) maintains that consolidation and increase in school size often worsens the social problems that teachers, school administrators, politicians and adults in general often worry about. For example, Giessen has reported that larger schools are more likely to have a greater number of suspensions and more long term suspensions than smaller schools. Furthermore, he reported that larger schools are more likely to have a greater number of teen pregnancies than smaller schools. This problem is further exacerbated, according to Giessen, because further increases in size decreases parental involvement. Giessen goes on to state that "Not only do small schools and smaller districts educate as well as larger schools, but evidence suggests better (1998: 4). Marion and McIntire (1992) in a study which examined 710 schools in the United States demonstrated that smaller high schools had greater levels of achievement and attained more years of post secondary education after graduation. Irmsher (1997) concludes that larger schools:

- have poorer attendance than smaller schools;
- dampen enthusiasm for involvement in school activities;
- have lower grade averages and standardized scores;
- have higher dropout rates;
- and have more problems with violence, security and drug abuse.

In addition to the above, there is also the negative impact of being bussed. While the empirical literature in this area is sparse, there is, however, sufficient literature to at least warrant a cautionary note that consolidation that leads to bussing, particularly across long distances, may have negative impacts upon student performance and health. For example, Fox

(1996 quoted in Zars, 1998: 3) writes that

as time on the bus increases, students participate in fewer non-essential activities (those activities other than sleep, personal care, school, and the bus ride)....The individuals with large average times on a bus report lower grades and poorer levels of fitness, fewer social activities and poor study habits. The universal complaint by all students is the loss of choice in activities and the overall loss of sleep.

It may also impact in other ways according to Zars. For instance it may have a negative impact on lifestyle (i.e. skipping breakfast) or parents may be more likely to keep a child who is not feeling well home, knowing that if the child becomes sicker it may be difficult to see that the child gets home. Zars also reports that she has failed to find any state reports that seriously consider the effects of bussing . It remains an unknown. She states that there are three essential questions to ask:

1. What is the impact of long bus rides on children (greater than 30 minutes one way)?
2. What is the effect of long bus rides on families?
3. What are the true costs of bus rides (including the costs of child travel time)?

She concludes by writing

Bussing policy choices have been made and expanded without regard to the impact on the central enterprise of schools which is student learning....research is scarce and where it exists on school bussing in this country, insubstantial (Zars, 1998: 6).

While this is in reference to the United States, the literature here in Canada is no better.

While large schools have many disadvantages associated with them, small schools seems to fair much better in their assessment documented in the empirical literature. For example, Meir (1996) argues that optimal school size is between 300 and 400 students. She argues that there are a number of benefits that can be realized from this size of school. First, there is the general issue of administration, management and governance. Communication is easier and more efficient and effective in this size school. Second, there is an opportunity to enter into relationships with others and therefore children and teachers truly get to know one another and it is only in relationship that respect is generated - the very foundation of education. Third is the issue of simplicity; a smaller, less bureaucratic structure allows more readily for the individualization of instruction in response to individual needs which is also enhanced by relationships and ease of communication. Fourth is the issue of safety and security. A smaller school means everyone knows everyone and hence intruders who do not belong are easily identified. Furthermore, there is a greater sense of community and hence a greater sense of responsibility for the school. Students and teachers are more likely to engage in responsible and constructive community action when there is sense of belonging and community present in the school. Fifth, parents are more likely to be involved. Given the greater ease of communication, establishment of relationships, and less bureaucratic protocols, parents are more likely to form alliances with

teachers who they believe care about their child's progress. Sixth, there is improved accountability. In a small school that is characterized by ease of communication, established relationships and a sense of community, and parental involvement, then everyone knows how students are doing. McEwen (1995: 3) defines accountability as "Who is responsible for what and to whom." In the small school where there is respect and open communication it becomes apparent that teachers, administrators, parents and children all are involved in the educational process and in that sense must be accountable. In other words they are accountable to each other. Seventh, is the issue of belonging or feeling connected to a community and this means eliminating social stratification so that all members belong to social groups that consist of students and adults. This is more easily realized in small schools for all community members are needed in order to have sufficient levels for participation - not just the stars. This is supported by Irmsher (1997) who argues that smaller schools provide an atmosphere and culture that encourages teachers to innovate and students to participate. Roellke (1996) found that participation rates are greater in small schools with more students participating in a diversity of activities. Cotton (1996: 3) argues that

Many practices common in small school are in operation largely because they are much easier to implement and manage in small environments than in large ones. Looking at instructional practices in small schools, researchers find that teachers are more likely to form teaching teams, integrate their subject-matter content, employ multiple grouping and cooperative learning, and use performance assessments. Finally, small schools tend to exhibit greater emphasis on learning that is experimental and relevant to the world outside of the school.

The result is greater commitment from both groups, more positive attitudes and satisfaction, higher grades and test scores, improved attendance rates and lowered dropout rates (Irmsher, 1997). Cotton (1996: 3) further writes that

...the need, in small schools, for everyone's involvement in school activities appears to be related to other social and affective areas. People in small schools come to know and care about one another to a greater degree than is possible in large schools, and rates of parent involvement are higher. Staff and students are found to have a stronger sense of personal efficacy. Small-school students tend to take more of the responsibility of their own learning, learning activities are more likely to be individualized, classes are typically smaller, and scheduling is much more flexible.

One of the common points of agreement is that those students who can best be considered marginalized have better academic outcomes in small schools than in large ones. For example, Irmsher (1997: 2) argues that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, progress adequately when they are part of a "smaller, more intimate learning community"; in other words no one suffers academically from being in a small school. Howley (1996), however, argues that while school size may not matter for the performance of affluent students, small schools do benefit the performance of the impoverished. This leads Howley to conclude that relative poverty or affluence then becomes an important variable in the context of school consolidation and that consolidation may work against those communities that are most in need of help. Levin

(1995) notes that an increasing number of the poor are single parent families and that 90% of single parent families are headed by women. He argues that while single parent families constitute a significant proportion of “disadvantaged” students, it is not their single parent status that contributes to the problem but the fact that a significant proportion of single parent families live in poverty. Thus educational policy intersects with social policy and social and educational policy cannot be treated nor created in a “policy vacuum.” Levin further argues that one of the strongest links for alleviating poverty’s effects is the forging of stronger links with families and communities. Yet as has been demonstrated in this review of the literature, school consolidation creates distance between the school and parents and the community, the very things that Levin argues are essential in alleviating poverty’s effects on educational outcomes. Thus school consolidation actively discriminates and disadvantages those who are most in need. As Levin continues, socio-economic status is the best predictor for how much schooling a person will receive, how well they will perform, and what their life prospects will be beyond school. He concludes that “Poverty has such an enormous negative influence, however, that it must be part of the education reform agenda whether justified on grounds of economic interest or social justice (1995: 211).” Cotton cites the following advantages of small schools:

- enhancement of personal and academic self concepts of students;
- greater sense of belonging and less feelings of alienation;
- more positive attitudes of teachers and administrators;
- significantly higher participation rates in extracurricular activities;
- higher attendance rates;
- less dropout rates;
- and less behavior problems.

Clearly all of these qualities and characteristics are likely to enhance the performance and the success of the disadvantaged student and the affluent student alike.

Raywid (199: 1), reflecting on the many studies conducted during the 1980s and 1990s that compared small schools with large schools, writes

These studies, involving large numbers of students, schools, and districts, confirmed that students learn more and better in small schools. Students make more rapid progress toward graduation. They are more satisfied with small schools, and few of them drop out than from the larger schools. Students behave better in smaller schools, which thus experience fewer instances of minor and serious infractions. All of this is particularly true for disadvantaged students, who perform far differently in small schools and appear more dependent upon them for success than do more fortunate youngsters....As these studies-of-studies show, it is rare indeed to find empirical support or justification for the large high school.

She continues

All of these things we have confirmed with a clarity and at a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research (1999: 1).

But the impacts of small schools also have positive impacts on other aspects in terms of school personnel and the institution. Raywid (1996) reports that teachers have a growth in commitment to the school and students, engage in reflective practice, and expand extra efforts in ensuring that students are active and succeed. In addition, she states the result is improved school organization, effective and appropriate governance, stronger student supports, improved staff effectiveness and satisfaction, better advisement, and enhanced curricula. Raywid (1996) also argues that in times of change small schools are easier to restructure and reform strategies easier to implement. Clearly the benefits of small schools are indisputable.

School Consolidation and the Rural Community

In the above section it was demonstrated that one of the most important variables in considering school and board consolidation is the relative affluence or poverty of particular communities. This section continues that discussion, examining what the impact of rural school closures and board consolidation has on rural communities.

In many areas in Canada and the United States, the school has traditionally been the focal point as community meeting place and resource. This is found to be especially true of rural regions where the schools have long been central in community activities and the shaping of local identity (Miller 1995). Fuller (n.d.) describes that schools served as sources for entertainment for the community, as a "catalyst for democracy" as the setting for political debates, as a forum for community problems and an opportunity for community members to take an active part in the political process. A school community centre also helped to improve the "climate for education" (Fuller n.d. p. 430). It is in the rural school that the "innovative" practices, such as cross-age grouping and the use of the local community in the classroom, now being used in urban settings originated (Sher 1981). Rural schools are typically a source of pride, identity and stability for their communities (Sher 1981) and usually reflect and shape the social, economic and cultural outlooks and conditions of their communities (Seal and Harmon 1995). Howley (1997) has argued that rural schools sustain local communities as thoughtful and expressive actors. Salent and Waller (1998) have argued that schools have positive social and economic impacts upon their host community and provide a fundamental element of ongoing community development. However, as they have suggested, the literature actually suggests this rather than demonstrating it. There is little research of what the impact is on rural communities when schools have been closed and boards consolidated. The questions, according to Salent and Waller (1998) that need to be answered are:

- What happens to rural communities when consolidation results in the closing of a local school?
- Do these communities lose their economic vitality?
- Do these communities become less cohesive?

- Do these communities experience a decline in political involvement?

In a search to address some of these questions Salent and Waller (1998) reviewed the pertinent literature and found only three studies which examine the economic effects on rural communities. A summary of these studies revealed that:

- The school district payroll ranged from 4-9% of the total county payroll.
- Total take-home pay from school district jobs ranged from 5-10% of the counties retail sales.
- The school district expenditures ranged from 1-3% of all employed people in the counties.
- People employed by the school district ranged from 1-5% of all employed people in the counties.
- Realtors reported that they believed that the school was essential in order to maintain property values.
- Schools are fundamental in promoting social distinction and community identity.
- Schools are the source of a significant number of community events.
- Schools unite communities.

In a study undertaken by Sell et al. (1996) that compared communities where a school was closed with the communities who were the recipients of these students in their community schools, they found that:

- The host communities' community organization participation increased while vacated communities' participation declined.
- The quality of life scores for each of the vacated and host communities declined but the vacated communities' scores were significantly lower than the host communities' scores.
- Parents in the vacated communities had less parent-teacher contact than the host communities and participated in less school activities.

Clearly, in this study, vacated communities reported a significant decline in the quality of community life, not to mention playing a less active role in the education of their children.

Lane and Dorfman (1997) and Salent and Waller (1998) maintain that the community relies on the school and in the time of economic downsizing and restructuring, the rural school is often the strongest community institution and may play a prominent role in the development of social capital and community development. Salent and Waller (1998: 5) capture this when they write

There is more to schooling than meets the eye of teachers, legislators, and academics who conceptualize purposes for schooling not fully shared by those who constitute a community. There is a school's noneducative, community-maintenance function, which usually becomes apparent to its support group only when it is threatened. ... As schools have become more professionalized and centralized, they have tended to distance themselves from their local communities. The vital links between experience, work, and education have been weakened. As a result, public and private schools in many urban and rural communities have lost their power as a valuable community resource.

Failure to acknowledge school community relationships also negates the potential role that the community may play in the educational function. Miller (1995) argues that the community can serve as part of the curriculum where it can be examined in its complexity - its history, its economy, its ecology to name a few. It becomes a living laboratory through which students learn. Furthermore, it enhances their sense of connection to place, an important, and we would argue essential ingredient to developing sustainable rural communities. Second, it can be a source for the development of entrepreneurial skill, leadership development, and a sense of civic responsibility. Furthermore, it gives the children a context in which to develop these whereby they can see the potential of their own community. One of the challenges that rural communities face is the outmigration of their brightest and best youth. Perhaps this would provide them with the incentive to look to their own home community as a potential future.

We believe Miller (1995) is right when he suggests that rural schools are the cultural center of the community, serving many functions that cannot be quantified or calculated in a cost/benefit analysis. As Giessen (1998: 5) wrote, "These costs are much more difficult to put dollar figures on, but they do play a significant role in the local community." Shannon (1992: 1) provides a fitting closure to this section of the review. He writes that

I am convinced that the fundamental problem with public education is that our schools are divorced from their communities; education is divorced from everyday life. ...The price of separation has been high. It has cost educators a wealth of resources and potential support. It has alienated adults, diminishing their understanding of education, their interest in lifelong learning and their ability to help their children learn. But most detrimental to society as a whole has been the weakening of children's ties to their parents, to their communities, and to the idea of learning as part of life.

Governance and Organization

As stated earlier in this review, the central organizing principle of educational reform has been tied tied to 19th century notions about modes of production and further extended by Henry Ford's model of mass production and Fredrick Taylor's scientific management whereby control and knowledge of the production process was centralized within management. Taylor believed that knowledge and responsibility should reside with management and those who actively engaged in the production process on the shop or factory floor should have as little responsibility/authority as possible, and knowledge should only be shared with them that was necessary for them to carry out their designated functions. The question that arises, at least for

us, is bigger really better? Or to frame it another way, is this anyway to manage education? Since education's organizational structure was inspired by developments from the 19th century private sector, it might be interesting to look at contemporary changes in organizational design and development.

Lauzon (2000), in a study that examines the literature from organizational development, with a special emphasis on learning organizations and its application to rural communities, found that (1) organizations had changed and this was in response to the *changing nature of change*; (2) organizations need to be readily able to adapt to a changing environment; (3) the ability to adapt requires reflexivity and a capacity for organizational learning; and (4) that highly centralized hierarchical organizational structures were dysfunctional, unable to respond to change rapidly, and were being replaced by decentralized networked structures whereby the flow of resources could be easily redirected in response to change. It is ironic that although business is a driving force behind educational reform, it continues to promote changes that are based upon outdated industrial models of organization, hardly suitable for a knowledge based economy.

Gallagher (1995), in his book *Changing Course: An Agenda for REAL Reform of Canadian Education*, has argued that educational reform has, in the nineties, been characterized by two approaches: increased centralization, as characterized by educational reform in Canada, and increased decentralization, as characterized by educational reform that has taken place in New Zealand. Commenting on recent changes in education in Canada, Gallagher (1995:71) writes that

This move to another round of consolidation of school jurisdictions in Canada, on the grounds of savings and efficiencies, is an excellent example of first-order change or of trying to "do more with less." It does not consider doing different things with less, or doing things differently. This approach is constrained by the perspectives on an industrial society. It suggests that the solution to excessive administration and inefficiency is larger (and therefore more efficient) units of administration. It sets aside the non-financial but real costs of further distancing parents and other community members from what once were their schools. In truth, many school boards, particularly in the larger school districts, are already as remote from the people they represent as provincial and regional governments are. The argument that school trustees are still the voice of local government is, in many cases, naive.

Gallagher argues that reform needs to be characterized by second-order change, radical change that challenges the very foundation of how education is organized in Canada. He recommends that Canadian education, to meet the challenges of a post industrial age, must adapt a decentralized approach to public education whereby communities take responsibility for schools through school councils who are invested with real authority and resources. This would be in alignment with the types of organizational changes that have taken place in the private sector and would lead to greater flexibility and adaptability to meet local needs and reintegrate schooling back into the community.

Discussion and Conclusions

The literature has highlighted a number of issues that need to be considered in the context of rural school closure and board consolidation. First, there is little empirical evidence for cost

savings that can be realized through consolidation and board closures. The literature reveals that this is a contentious issue and that differences in outcomes are dependent upon on how administrators and politicians calculate the costs and savings. The alleged savings that can be realized at this point appear to have more to do with rhetoric and ideology than it has to do with the empirical realities of what we currently know. There is a need to have clear principles for making these calculations and it must account for the consequent educational outcomes. This is particularly important given the preponderance of evidence supporting that small schools are more effective pedagogically than larger schools, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized youth. Furthermore, there needs to be accounting of the impact upon student's lives and their development. Education is about more than simply class room learning, but much of the education of students occurs as a result of being an active and participating member of a community. It is here where students learn their first lessons in civic and social responsibility. It is here where students learn lessons in compassion, empathy, and leadership. Not through textbooks and classrooms but through their active participation and involvement in their school community. Consolidation often negates this opportunity for many students to participate in these activities as a result of long rides to and from school, or as a function of school size. As stated in the review, it is only a select group of students in large schools who have the opportunity to become members of communities that share time and space with adults. Giessen (1998), reflecting on the nature of large schools and paraphrasing the Carnegie Council, characterizes large schools as "mills" whose main function is to "process" the masses of anonymous youth into an endless stream of students.

Furthermore, decisions with regard to closure and consolidation cannot ignore the positive reciprocal relationships that can be developed and cultivated between communities and their schools (Miller, 1995). While the evidence is not great, the uncertainty is and we simply do not know what happens to rural communities when we close their schools. Certainly economic globalization, government restructuring and industry downsizing have taken a significant toll on the quality of rural community life (Lauzon and Hagglund, 1998). Is it the case that the closure of rural schools is simply another "nail" in the "coffin" of rural life? Policy makers must recognize that the complexity and intersection of policy is played out in rural communities in very real and tangible ways. As stated before, educational policy, if it is to consider its impact upon rural life in a significant way, cannot be written in a "policy vacuum." Furthermore, there is much that community has to offer schools. The cultivation of this relationship as a true partnership offers benefits to both the community and to educators and students.

Few would refute the educational reform is necessary. However, it needs to be acknowledged that education is often used as a scapegoat, relieving of us of our collective responsibilities for that changes that we all need to make (Shannon, 1992). Reform is necessary, but as Gallagher (1995) suggests it needs to be radical; trying to do more with less will not solve the problem. We need to do things differently. Lauzon (1998) has suggested that we are at a fundamental turning point in our collective history, that the changes that we are encountering are on par with the changes that were brought about by the scientific and industrial revolutions and that these changes will facilitate structural changes. Part of this change is a need to change our metaphor of education from organization to community and this has implications for size (Raywid, 1999). Fanning (1995) suggests that leaders, politicians and citizens have invested significant faith in technical and structural solutions to social and economic problems, failing to recognize how the fundamental assumptions of modern life have shifted. Senge (1990: xii) captures the essence of this in his book the *Fifth Discipline* when he writes that

I have come to believe that there is an opening today for a new movement of meaning and change. Our traditional ways of managing and governing are breaking down. The demise of general Motors and IBM has one thing in common with the crisis in American schools and the "gridlock" in Washington - a wake-up call that the world we live in presents unprecedented challenges for which institutions are ill prepared.

We need to challenge the very assumptions upon which public education has been built and the relationship of school to community. If rural communities are to not only survive, but thrive, then educational solutions must acknowledge and account for the necessary relationship between rural communities and their schools. Technical solutions are not enough. As Fanning (1995: 4) writes "The sound development of children is closely linked to the well-being of communities. Consolidating often destroy these links." If we wish to "produce" more than technocrats to work in the global economy, but whole humans interested in community life and engaged in responsible citizenship, then we need to forge linkages between students and communities, between students and place. Giessen (1998: 6) writes that

If one thing is clear from the research it is that small schools are worth saving and that small schools are worth the cost.

Having completed this review of literature, we would agree.

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