

Accommodation Review Committee

PUBLIC INPUT

An accommodation review is taking place for Honey Harbour Public School. Members of the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) would like to invite you to give your input.

There will be two (2) public input meetings during the 2016-2017 school year.

Thursday, December 8, 2016	6:30 p.m.	Baxter Ward Community Centre
Tuesday, February 21, 2017	6:30 p.m.	Baxter Ward Community Centre

Individuals or groups wishing to speak at a public input meeting need to fill out an Input Form and send it to one of the schools or to the school board. The form is found on the TLDSB website at www.tldsb.ca or at Honey Harbour Public School or Glen Orchard Public School.

1. Presentation by an individual

Individuals may present to the ARC at one of the public input meetings listed above and are given up to 5 minutes to speak. Please bring with you a written summary of your presentation for the ARC.

2. Presentation by a group

One person representing a group or organization may speak for up to 10 minutes at one of the public input meetings listed above. Please bring with you a written summary of your presentation for the ARC.

3. Written Submissions

Individuals and organizations are welcome to submit input to the ARC in writing at any time. Input forms are available on the Board website and at each of the schools.

4. Questions at Public Meetings

There will be an opportunity to submit questions in writing at each public input meeting.

For more information please contact Karen Franke in the Director's Office at 1-888-526-5552 ext 22104.

Accommodation Review Committee

PUBLIC INPUT FORM

Please indicate how you would like to provide input:

I wish to present as individual

Individuals may present to the ARC at one of the public input meetings listed above and are allotted up to 5 minutes to speak. Please provide a written summary of your presentation for the ARC.

I wish to present as an individual representing a group

One person representing a group or organization may speak for up to 10 minutes at one of the public input meetings listed above. Please provide a written summary of your presentation for the ARC.

Name of group: _____

I wish to submit my input in writing (please attach submission)

Individuals and organizations are welcome to submit input to the ARC in writing at any time throughout the process.

Topic: _____

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

Email: _____

Please send this Input Form and your written submission to Honey Harbour Public School or Glen Orchard Public School, or to Karen Franke in the Director's Office:

Email: karen.franke@tlds.on.ca

Mail: Trillium Lakelands District School Board, P.O. Box 420, 300 County Road 36, K9V 4S4

Fax: 705-324-4323

For more information please contact Karen Franke in the Director's Office at 1-888-526-5552 ext 22104.

Good evening,

Thank you to the members of the ARC committee for your time and dedication to this process and thank you to the members of the community who are here tonight in support.

I wish I could say that it was a pleasure to be here presenting to you again on behalf of S.O.S Save our Schools in Honey Harbour, but it's definitely not. However, I do thank you for hearing my delegation regarding the Pupil Accommodation Review of Honey Harbour Public School this evening.

I had a difficult time composing this delegation as everything that needs to be said has already been said.

By multiple people; by multiple organizations; over and over again.

All I can hope for this evening is to perhaps present things in a different perspective so that our concerns can be heard with a new outlook and provide the ARC committee some additional information for their final report that may appeal to our Trustees.

I'd like to deconstruct the proposed conditions that were provided as validation by the TLDSB for the Pupil Accommodation Review to take place at HHPS this year. They are:

1. The school or group of schools is unable to provide a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities for students;
2. Reorganization involving the school or group of schools could enhance program and learning opportunities for students;
3. Teaching/learning spaces are not suitable to provide the program needed to serve the community and retrofitting may be cost prohibitive. And of course:
4. The consolidation of schools is in the best interests of the overall school system. The consolidation of the schools would result in overall reduction of operating costs in facility operations and staffing requirements.

Where to start? First, the continued success of HHPS graduates simply invalidates the first two conditions proposed by the Board.

To hear that the School Board feels that our school is unable to provide suitable and an equitable range of learning opportunities and that the reorganization (or consolidation with Glen Orchard) would result in better

programing and learning for our children was incredibly demoralizing. Frankly, it is an insult to the teachers, the students and the families of HHPS and I couldn't disagree more.

So, what is the purpose of an elementary education? We send our children to Primary School so that they can:

- Learn the basic skills to start their education;
- Receive a basic foundation for learning the core subjects (such as math, science, spelling, reading and social studies);
- Learn social skills and about their environment and society (this might include How to get along, work together, and resolve differences without fighting);
- And finally to help foster a student's interest in duty and responsibility within their own community.

Ultimately the goal is to teach students HOW to learn and to prepare them for their next level of education: High School.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Honey Harbour Public School and the teachers there accomplish all of these things. For the TLDSB to suggest that our school is unable to provide suitable learning opportunities for our students is ridiculous and a failure on the part of TLDSB. From my experience over the past 8 years as a parent of a student of the school, I would suggest that the teachers and staff accomplish an impressive and exceptional level of teaching DESPITE the Board.

Our children are learning and experiencing things in a unique and balanced situation that better provides them the ability to learn, think for themselves, tolerate, collaborate, support each other every day. These are core competencies that are critical for their futures.

My son Colin was a student at Honey Harbour Public School from grade one through to his graduation last year from grade 8. He is now in Grade 9 at GBDSS and he received just his first report card with honours. Here is what a few of his current teachers say about his preparedness for High School.

From Rob Wickett, Geography teacher: I found Colin to be very adequately prepared for high school. His academic knowledge and skills, problem solving skills, and ability to work with others would suggest an effective elementary school education.

From Scott Fuller, Technology teacher: My name is Scott Fuller, and I am Colin's Grade 9 Integrated Technologies teacher. I have had Colin in my class for a few weeks now, and believe that he is not only adjusting well to a larger school environment, but academically on par with the higher-level students in my class. He has shown himself to be a self-starter; he works well independently, and has no problem asking for help when needed. I am looking forward to having him in my class for the rest of the semester.

From Mike Adamson, Science Teacher : It is very unfortunate that Honey Harbour Elementary could be closing this coming September. It will be devastating to the community and will discourage young families to move to the area. Colin transitioned from Honey Harbour Elementary to Georgian Bay District Secondary extremely well. He was in my grade nine academic class and showed no signs of struggling or having difficulties in my class. His learning skills were very impressive and he was able to keep up with the pace and content of my course. It was a pleasure to have Colin in my class and I hope to have him in future science courses.

Colin is just one example of the many successful graduates from Honey Harbour who have NOT suffered from any lack of programming or suitable learning opportunities.

When Colin started at HHPS in grade one, there were four classrooms: a Kindergarten class, the Junior Room for grades 1-4, a Senior Room for grades 5-8 and a fourth room for French classes.

Which brings me to the 3rd condition the TLDSB has used for our review: Teaching/learning spaces are not suitable to provide the program needed to serve the community and retrofitting may be cost prohibitive.

HHPS was built to be a small school. Its full capacity is 46 students. If the Board is concerned that the teaching and learning spaces are not suitable then I ask them to consider why, over the past several years, have they reduced the number of teachers that has turned it into the now two-classroom school? If the Board were truly concerned, then it would re-instate the resources needed to provide a more balanced environment. Instead, they recommend closure?

Regardless, as I have just expressed, this is beside the point as the students are at no disadvantage - academically, physically or socially.

The teachers of HHPs - Mrs. Shepardson, Ms. Shelley, Ms. Bell, Mr. Kemp, Ms. Coulter, Ms. Hopley, Ms. Lauder along with assistants Ms. Devine, Ms. Lawley and their caretaker Marie – have made sure of this. They have dedicated themselves with the most outstanding commitment to the children of our community and in our eyes, have received little to no recognition by the school board.

They have been hung out to dry by this whole unfair process. In fact, they have not been included at all. Who better to speak about our children and the education that they receive than the teachers who spend all day, every day with them? Of course, the board will tell you that the teachers have the option to attend and speak at these meetings. But who are they kidding? If your job were on the line, would you publicly speak against your employer and their recommendations?

As a parent and as Co-chair of S.O.S., I would like to publicly recognize and thank them for their service to our children and our community.

The Trillium Lakelands District School Board's website states that they believe:

- Students are the focus of our system

And consistent with this belief and with the resources available, a few of the things that the Board strives to are:

- Provide an education specific to students' needs;
- Make a safe and positive environment for students;
- Provide a diversity of programs;
- Promote extra-curricular activities for all students;
- Expect each student to learn and to achieve to full potential;
- Consider students' needs in all decisions.

Closing Honey Harbour Public School will defy ALL of these beliefs that the TLDSB purports to strive to.

Which leaves one and only reason that TLDSB wants to close our school – number 4: The consolidation of schools is in the best interests of the overall school system. The consolidation of the schools would result in overall reduction of operating costs in facility operations and staffing requirements.

Which means it's best for them. They are unable or unwilling to adjust their budget in order to keep a small school of 40 students open. This is the bottom line.

There is an African Proverb that goes – “It takes a village to raise a child...”. It reflects the emphasis African cultures place on family and community. In North America and in modern times, the saying is used to evoke feelings of community on the small scale as well as on the national and even global scale.

Our community is willing and able to raise our children and most probably help provide for their education. However, given the \$4.1 million dollars our Township generates in tax dollars for the School Board I'm sure that most feel that our community's small school shouldn't be a drain on the Board.

If the school has a shortfall of funding in order to run it in the black, then why haven't we as a community been approached about fundraising to make up the difference? Is this even a possibility?

I recognize that funding for schools follows the “provincial model” and is mandated. However, as HHPS is frequently told – we are an “anomaly” and regular rules & practices do not always apply. This has occurred in many areas. From not being able to qualify for a Mident number (even though the school was built to house less than the required enrolment number), and not receiving full funding, to not being able to determine simple bus cancellations in the winter. So, if regular rules do not always apply, how convenient for the Board that they suddenly are critical with regards to the conditions for a Pupil Accommodation review that will result in the closure of our school.

The ARC Committee is tasked with responding to the Board's report and recommendation to close the school, and to provide viable possible alternative solutions that may be derived from these meetings and public input. This is quite a stressful responsibility to put on four parents from the two affected schools so once again, I thank you.

In conclusion, given all of the above mentioned points, along with the reasons provided at the previous meetings, I ask the ARC committee to recommend and the Trustees to vote NOT to close Honey Harbour Public

School at this point in time and to delay the PAR process for the next 5 years.

We need time. Time to see what happens with Our Lady of Mercy School's potential closure. Time to build and implement a better plan and perhaps a better school as a result – one that meets the needs of everyone invested including the School Board, the students and the community.

Thank you.

Katherine Breeson
Co-Chair, S.O.S. Save our Schools in Honey Harbour