

ARC Meeting

Presented by Andrea Lefebvre

April 18th, 2017 @ 6:30pm

My name is Andrea Lefebvre. I am graduate of the NNDSB, attended Nipissing University and am a secondary teacher with the NNDSB.

I have been a secondary teacher in the board for 16 years and currently teach at Chippewa Secondary School.

My qualifications are History and English I am also a Special Education and Dance Education Specialist. I have junior, intermediate and secondary qualifications and most recently I have become an International Baccalaureate qualified teacher, I have principal's qualifications and have been involved in boards leadership programs. I have also had the privilege to work in a 7-12 school model since we began this arrangement at Chippewa many years ago.

Most importantly I am a mother of two boys who attend Vincent Massey in grade 3 and grade 6.

Based on my qualifications, experience and perspectives I felt obligated to share my thoughts on our current ARC process. I would like to make it very clear that my comments, ideas and suggestions are solely mine and that I am not speaking on behalf of the NNDSB, my school or any group of educators.

I did feel a need to speak tonight, even without finalized plans, I feel that the secondary voice is a crucial part of this Arc conversation and hope that my ideas, questions or concerns can help trigger discussion about programming, student success and educational changes.

I agree

- That our population and demographics are changing.
- That 3 schools belonging to one school board in a population of 51 000 people may be viewed as excessive.
- That the needs of our students and community are different then what they once were and continue to change with our changing world.
- Today's high schools are not the schools we remember from our own experience yet we all have our own expertise and experiences to compare to.
- That the government funding formulas are making our current arrangements very challenging to operate.
- That educators in all three NNDSB North Bay secondary schools want the best for all of our students and community. We have been able to have some meaningful conversations over the past few months and the one certain thing we agree upon is

basing all our decisions around student success, and that can look different depending on perspectives.

- I believe that as educators we want this process to be respectful, caring and considerate. I have had past ARC experiences that create a divide amongst colleagues when schools are forced to work against each other, instead of with each other.
- Safety is a priority for students, the public and staff.
- That we are experiencing changes in education and we should use this opportunity to discuss reform and possible progress. We may need to change perspectives to see all angles of the conversation.
- That we need to be transparent and financially responsible.
- That our students deserve the best resources, specialist teachers and programming in the finest facilities.
- That we must provide pathways, transition opportunities and supports for all learners (Arts, athletics, technology, essential, applied, academic and enriched streams, special education and more).
- That our buildings are a vital part of our community and each has a unique history and culture that should be respected through the process.
- Our buildings serve our community through community use permits. This is a vital part of North Bay's foundation and economy. Community use programs are not exclusive to local community but also to the broader spectrum, example... Jack.org, Free the Children, a community based, Sears Drama Festival, Dreamcoat Fantasy Theatre, Gateway theatre guild.
- We are not the only board experiencing this changes.
- That our facilities are continuing to age and some things may look very different in a new build.
- I have yet to come to any conclusion on what scenario I fully support, as I am still continuing to format an opinion through this discovery process. I am open to ideas, suggestions and dialogue.
- I will try to express each of the current scenarios and will begin with the 3:1 model

3:1

- This option is fair and equitable for all three current high schools. All schools will have the same fate and we will not have perceived winners and, for no better word "losers"
- This would allow a closure of all schools and their cultures and would bring forth a brand new, fair playing field where our educational community can be united.
- This option would allow us the ability to have teaching staff under one roof and would provide students the access to specialist educators for the course work.

- Our resources and budget lines would no longer be split in three or even two schools but would remain as one. Putting all the funds into one location can be very helpful.
- All of our magnet/speciality programs would be under one roof and can flourish. Dividing these creates competition and an unlevelled system.
- We will have a new build with the best facility design options. The facility can partner with current methods and ideologies to provide the best learning environments for students.
- Our Special Education programming will be enhanced with specialist teachers all in the same building and can work together to offer student success support.
- Our special education supporters such as Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Behavioural consultants, attendance councillors and more will be more readily available and will be able to spend more direct time with students instead of travelling between buildings to meet students needs. We need them to be focussing time on students.
- The new build would have space for our secondary co-ordinators who are currently located in the board office. This will allow for direct, hands on access and will help implement programs and supports.
- The new build can be designed for all special education needs (rooms, spaces, safe rooms, therapy needs).
- The building and property will be designed for todays safety standards.
- The new build will allow for collegial planning and meetings. Teachers work well together and we can build our community as educators. It can feel lonely in a building if there are no together teachers to collaborate with. Often in smaller schools, teachers do not have the ability to work with colleagues and cannot share ideas, suggestions and lessons. Under one roof we will see this change and thrive.
- I believe the new build should be located on the Chippewa property. It is central, offers a great green space, allows bike-ability and walk-ability options for many (Bike path, Green bridge over highway). The location is also close to other school board secondary schools and is a great community space with access to the YMCA, Memorial Gardens, Fire station, police station, businesses and more.
- To address the traffic concerns mentioned by some parents and the city, I recommend taking a look at options that we can control and manipulate instead of building new roads and routes. For example, data shows later start times for high school students are beneficial for learning. We could begin the daily timetable at Alliance a bit earlier then

its current start time and push back the start time for the secondary school on the Chippewa property. This would relieve traffic congestion along High St. during school start and end times. It would also allow parents that work the option of getting their young students to school a bit earlier, so they can get to work and can meet the needs of the teenage population by starting a bit later. Instead of road work, we could very well adapt timetables to meet the needs.

- The new Chippewa property build can also offer a proper bus loading zone and turn around to get buses off the road and lower congestion.
- Our current arrangement with three smaller high schools does not allow equal access to courses or timetable options. It can be very difficult to timetable senior students to meet all their needs for post-secondary in small schools. Keeping low enrollment hampers the options available to students.
- Smaller schools also often mean teachers need to teach courses they are not qualified for to make the timetable work. Coming together we can offer the subject needs, timetable options, flexibility and specialist teachers. This is what is needed for Student Success.
- Coming together will allow for clearer communication. We will be able to communicate our goals, perspectives and plans clearly and can change current structures such as department leaders and school organization to work for the new arrangement.
- If we progress to this plan, I highly recommend meeting with teaching staff and discussing needs for all programs. We have experience and the expertise needed to ensure a successful transition.
- If we are going to do this 3:1 option, we have one chance to get it right and our educators are an excellent resource to consult with.

3:2

- I believe that people tend to support this option, not because they actually believe it to be better but because they are unsure what a 3:1 could possibly look like and hold onto the belief that 2 would be better than 1.
- I believe that this option could be a stepping stone and may eventually become a 3:1
- I could see the benefits of this option if the two schools chosen were made to be equal and fair. I do think the concept of two equal campuses could work.

- I would like to discuss how the 2 could be divided fairly and equitably to meet the needs of all our learners.
- This option would mean two of our current three schools will remain functional and one, will sadly be lost. It could create a negative educational environment/climate. One school culture and learning community may feel absorbed. We can work on this with sensitivity.
- This scenario could allow for more teams and extra curricular options for students.
- 2 schools could operate with fair numbers for timetabling.
- This could be a 7-12 or 9-12 model.
- Not sure if this scenario will allow for the opportunity for a new build? Need to research funding options.
- The two building may require some facility upgrades.
- If programs like IB and French immersion are sent to one of the schools (As the programs compliment each other) what will be the draw to the other school? Parents often choose to send students to these programs either for the academic program or for the culture that tends to surrounds that learning community.
- Will two schools will pit two educational communities against each other no matter how hard we try to avoid it? How can we make 2 healthy schools (Lets design an outline)
- Two schools would mean splitting finances, resources, and staff but would be a savings compared to our current model.
- Two schools would joining/merge teaching staff but may divide specialist teachers and support staff that could be more productive together. How do we allocate staff? (discussions to be had with board and union)

Findings

- I do see the benefits to many scenarios and a mixture of ideas presented so far. I am encouraged by the interest in our community and education.
- I do believe that the 3:1 scenario may cause some anxiety due to the 7-12 model and number of bodies in the building. Therefore, I have tried to come up with some alternative plans to alleviate some of the numbers and anxiety.

- Although I have taught in the 7-12 model and believe it to be very successful, I feel that many parents I speak to may be nervous about a single 7-12 model with 2200 students in the facility.
- I believe the public has difficulties supporting the 3:1 (7-12) but could possibly consider the single (9-12) model building, or we can look at making 2x 9-12 buildings or 2x 7-12 buildings.
- I do think that timetabling a 7-12 facility with programming and room facility needs will be very challenging and that speciality rooms will be needed greatly, potentially more than 2x the gym spaces we currently have to meet the 7-12 curriculum needs.
- Whether the trustees determine a 3:1 (7-12) or a (9-12) plan or a 3:2 (7-12) or a (9-12) plan we could still consider the use of a repurposed Widdifield secondary school as a viable property to replace the Fricker ARC. This scenario may be a desired option as it could mean the board could maintain 3 secondary sized buildings, this may be a “comfort” while we discover our predictions and future growth plans and have a better politically understanding.

Thinking outside the box

- Instead of a new build on Fricker property maybe it would be more beneficial to convert Widdifield into a K-8 school consisting of EW Norman, ET Carmichael, Fricker and the 7/8's this would allow for either one or 2 9-12 schools and can save all three buildings.
- The current Fricker footprint is too small to add the the grade 7/8's to the new building and this may be a very viable option. Some community members believe the 7-12 single school would be too big with the addition of the 7/8's and this could be an alternative plan.
- By keeping Widdifield open we could continue to have three operational secondary sized buildings in our community, with conversions and retrogrades completed to make the best learning environments for all, while continuing to support community access and use.
- This scenario will allow the students access to amazing specialty rooms such as the three gyms, Library, café, theatre, studio, tech shops, LGI space and the building is accessible. Washrooms will need to be retrofitted and a play structure added to the field. Would need secure entrance and more.
- This school building is also greatly needed for community access and rental use.

- The school can be adapted to meet the needs of the younger generation. Separate floors based on ages and grades could be worked out and there is already an accessible elevator are also existing.
- The building is a great space and could possibly be larger than any new build that would be approved.
- This arrangement also allows for the current ARC community in the area to remain together in their “zone”.
- Using Widdifield as a K-8 school would allow us to turn over 4 buildings/sites to retrofit this (Fricker, ET Carmichael, EW Norman and a NNDSB maintenance shop near Trout lake, as a shop at Widdifield could serve this purpose). We could also look at options to add other board needs into buildings to help save property costs.
- This new “Widdifield” school will allow students at a young age develop pathways and interests as unique students.
- With this scenario we could create a new (9-12) build on the Chippewa or West Ferris property. Or we could operate 2 x (9-12) or 2x (7-12) schools at West Ferris and Chippewa (Which would be renamed). Doing this we could close more buildings while maintaining and even expanding our learning communities.
- We cannot be afraid of progress and change. We need to work together to explore all options and think creatively. I know that whatever the out come of this ARC, our professional staff will work their hardest to make the decision work as best as possible for everyone involved.
- Our board has fantastic programming, teacher’s, students and families. We can make many options work. Please remember the secondary voice in these discussions. We have very different needs from the primary and Junior divisions.
- Please continue to ask us questions, let us express what we know, we work with students daily and have their best interests at stake.
- Progress and change do not have to be negative. We can look at this situation as a great change to reform our community into the very best learning environment.