

Acton Schools Boundary Review Committee

Tuesday, January 28, 2020, 7:00-9:00 pm
Acton District HS - Cafeteria

Notes

Staff Present:

Scott Podrebarac, Domenico Renzella, Jeanne Gray, Leah Reynolds, John Pennyfather, Laureen Choi, Mitchell Gundy

BRC:

Bonnie Brake, Michelle Mattocks, Kathleen Bevan, Gina Adema, Maria Duckett

Regrets:

Anita Valvasori

1. Welcome to the Boundary Review Committee 7:04 pm
 - Reintroductions
 - Superintendent Pennyfather welcomes back the BRC.
2. Process Review of BRC rules
 - The process is currently on step 5 where BRC shares final recommendation(s) to BRSC and a recommendation is made to the Director by the BRSC.
 - Superintendent Pennyfather goes over the layout for the evening.
3. Principal Michelle Lemaire Burlington Central High School.
 - Michelle gives a brief history of Burlington Central HS
 - Grades 7 & 8 joined in 2005.
 - Burlington Central HS had a declining enrolment.
 - There is a separate hallway for the gr. 7 & 8s.
 - The facilities are shared (cafeteria, library, gym)
 - Michelle highlights Co-Curricular activities that can also take place.
 - Student parliament.
 - Stage plays.
 - Michelle goes over supervision and safety of the elementary portion.
 - The elementary staff supervise the elementary students.
 - There is a dedicated Vice Principal.
4. 10 minute Break - BRC and Gallery to record and post questions.

- A number of questions were posted by members of the BRC and the Gallery and many of the questions were answered by Principal Lamaire from the Burlington Central school experience and perspective.
- Q: Can you comment on the level of engagement and belonging?
 - A: We have the “Have You Say” and the “T.G.M.” data. The school has a sense of community.
- Q: How do you address concerns about younger students being exposed to older student behavior?
 - A: There is a high level of supervision at the school. They are also separated by space and time when they are not under “supervision”.
- Q: How much does the separation impact the mixing?
 - A: It is more so because of the supervision, scheduling and the timing of the breaks. There is always someone supervising the students.
- Q: How did you share successes with parents in the beginning months?
 - A: Parents are involved with the school (teachers, staff & admin). It is normal to have anxiety about something like this.
- Q: Will the gym facilities be able to accomodate the grade 7 and 8 students?
 - A: Yes.
- Q: How do you handle joint washrooms?
 - A: There are dedicated grade 7 and 8 washrooms. There was a situation when during construction students had to use the other washrooms for a time. There were no issues, as the staff were very specific on how to access the washroom and how to use them.
- Q: Will there be a seperate entrance?
 - A: Not at Burlington Central HS, there are multiple entrances.
- Q: How will they have recess?
 - A: Half of the break was nutrition and half was going outside.
- Q: Are grade 7 and 8 students allowed off school property at break?
 - A: No, there is a privilege to be signed out by the parent. And that is only the second nutrition break.
- Q: Do they still have food days?
 - A: They have a servery/cafeteria.
- Q: Do the kids eat in the classroom?
 - A: No, there is a cafeteria. Students only eat in classrooms if the cafeteria is closed for special events which are few and far between.
- Q: Are the 7 and 8 able to be integrated into special days?
 - A: Yes, the 7s and 8s are able to be as involved as well as come up with ideas.
- Q: Are there a lot of online courses?
 - A: Not a lot at Burlington Central but there are some.
- Q: Did you lose your auto shop?

- A: It was an empty room at the time Michelle became principal. It has since turned into a robotics club as well as an introduction to programming for the 7 and 8s.
 - Q: Does this model deliver greater results with academics and reduced behaviour?
 - A: There isn't an increase, it is about the same.
 - Q: Are there more course offerings?
 - A: It is based on course requests.
 - Q: What didn't go smoothly during the transition?
 - A: Michelle wasn't there at the time, she was surprised about the high level of supervision initially.
 - Q: What are some of the negatives about the 7-12?
 - A: Engage the students and get more integration between the two groups.
 - A: The different schedules between elementary and secondary make it harder for collaboration between the teachers and staff.
 - Q: How long have you been the principal?
 - A: 3 years.
 - Q: Are the budgets the same?
 - A: There are 2 budgets one for elementary and one for secondary.
 - A: Some items can be used for both groups, such as basketball equipment.
 - Q: What are some challenges at the start?
 - A: Michelle came in with a secondary mindset and had to learn about the 7-12 model.
 - Q: How long does it take for the 7-12 to get used to the new environment?
 - A: It is similar to the 8-9 transition but not as drastic, as they are still heavily structured and supervised.
 - A: All that is changing is the building.
 - Q: What has history shown about the 7s and their ability to adjust into the new system?
 - A: It has been consistent, there is no data that shows it is detrimental.
 - Q: Can you summarize the difference between Aldershot Elementary and Burlington Central Elementary?
 - A: There are a lot of similarities, however Michelle is not sure about the specifics at Aldershot Elementary.
 - A: The Acton model will be up to the integration committee.
 - Q: What are the supports for the 6 to 7s?
 - A: There are open houses for parents and students to come see the school.
 - A: There is also one for the 8-9 transition but they typically already know the building.

5. Questions for the BRSC

- Q: Is there a threat of school closings in Acton?

- A: No, there is no threat of any of the schools closing, they are small and will most likely remain small.
 - Q: What are the changes?
 - A: It is up to the integration committee to decide how separated the elementary portion is, if the option is approved.
 - A: Superintendent Podrebarac thinks there may be segregation initially but could be subject to change as time goes on.
 - A: There may be addition of lockers and additional changes to prepare the space for the 7 and 8s.
 - Q: Will the school be short on classroom spaces?
 - A: No.
 - Q: How does the school receive new programs?
 - A: Keeping the additional percentage of students (from 8 to 9) would over time add that additional percentage of students needed for those programs
 - A: Most of the students love the experience and choose to say.
 - Q: How long would it take to get those programs that are not offered?
 - A: It depends on the requests and interests.
 - A: However, bringing over the 7 and 8 staff brings the programs and interests with them.
 - A: If there were an extra 50 or so students that then enables the school to offer a wider selection of programs.
 - A: However, there needs to be that interest (what courses can we offer to meet the needs of the kids.)
 - Q: Student voice?
 - A: Yes, they are part of the integration committee.
- 6. Community Feedback Review by members of the BRC
 - Mitchell Gundy presents and goes over the feedback that was given from the Public Information Feedback Form.
- 7. Remaining points of clarification or issues.
 - Transportation - One sibling could get bussing for elementary and the other may have to walk to high school?
 - The way to address this is courtesy seat bussing.
 - The 11s and 12s typically avoid bussing.
 - Will there be renovations to Acton District??
 - It is something we could look at, "small capital projects".
 - Custody arrangements (locks and doors)?
 - The school has to abide by custody arrangements. The school is aware of who enters the school.
 - The principal will have to look at how we change the school to make it a safe environment.
 - Gym - M.S.B. has 2 gyms will Acton District be able to accommodate?

- Acton District has a double gym that is split currently. There is space at Acton District.
- Will there be Milestone events and grade 8 graduation?
 - There is still a grade 8 grad and a grade 12 grad.
- 8. BRC members discuss final recommendation(s) to the BRSC
 - Each of the five BRC parent members invited to speak and share their thoughts on the options
 - Recommend option 1 as it stands - Trust the process and that concerns would be addressed. It provides an opportunity of what could be. At the end of the day creates an easier transition.
 - On the fence but recommends status quo - The retention will happen from 8 to 9. The programs would be available. Would the 7s and 8s have their own area? Likes the idea of option 1 having less transitions and would make it easier for families.
 - Recommend option 1 as it stands - Son graduated, it benefits the community as a whole. Community supports, believe there will be sports in the school.
 - Recommend option 1 as it stands - The grade 8 to 9 transition will be easier as they gain experience in the school with strict supervision and eventual freedom at grade 9. Opportunity at M.S.B. provides a good hub for the parents in the community, Acton will never be the same as Georgetown as it is a small town. Like the mentorship and agree that the 7s and 8 will not have much interest in the 11 and 12s and vice versa. It creates a good pace to learn to make good choices.
 - Recommend option 1 as it stands - addresses programs over time and will provide a good school over time. 8 to 9 is the hardest transition for kids, from structure to freedom. Having them comfortable in the environment will make them have an easier transition.
- 9. Review next steps
 - Admin Council Meeting - Monday, February 10, 2020
 - Report Posted on Board Website - Friday, February 14, 2020
 - Board Meeting for Information - Wednesday, February 19, 2020
 - Board Meeting for Decision - Wednesday, March 4, 2020
- 10. Thanks and close
 - Delegation information can be found on our [website](#).
 - Meeting ends: 9:25 pm