



**Ipsos Public Affairs**

# **Halton District School Board: Facilitation Services**

**Report of Findings from Public Meeting  
December 8, 2016**

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## Contents

1.0	Background	3
2.0	Executive Summary	5
3.0	Methods	7
3.1	Analysis .....	7
3.2	Session Objectives & Goals .....	8
4.0	Findings	9
4.1	Representation of Attendees by School Affiliation.....	9
4.2	Mandatory/Core Courses.....	10
4.3	Optional/Elective Courses.....	11
4.4	Learning Facilities and Space .....	12
4.5	Extracurricular Activities .....	13
4.6	School Transportation and Commuting.....	14
4.7	Funding and Capacity.....	16
5.0	Appendices	19
5.1	Appendix A: PARC Framework.....	19
5.2	Appendix B: Raw Keypad Data from Town Hall .....	20

## 1.0 Background

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In 2015, the Ministry of Education established minimum standards for school boards to manage schools by undertaking pupil accommodation reviews, given changes to enrolment, demographics, etc. The Halton District School Board is undertaking such a review, organized under the Board's Program and Accommodation Review (PAR) Policies. Central to the PAR is current and foreseeable enrolment decline in several secondary schools in the City of Burlington, as identified in the 2015-2016 Long Term Accommodation Plan (LTAP). The LTAP identified trends of under-utilization in the following schools:

- Burlington Central HS has a 68% On The Ground (OTG) utilization rate; projected to remain steady through 2025
- Lester B. Pearson has a 65% OTG utilization rate; projected to drop to 50% by 2025
- M.M. Robinson HS has a 54% OTG utilization; projected to drop to 46% by 2025
- Robert Bateman HS has a 60% OTG; projected to drop to 50% by 2025

To counter these enrolment trends a series of options were devised by staff of the HDSB. In total, 19 options have been drafted, with one, Option 19, having acquired a degree of consensus as the primary recommendation. Varying stakeholder groups will deliberate on the merits of Option 19, and whether it, or another option, should be implemented. Ultimately, any decisions will serve to safeguard the Board's fiscal responsibilities and present reasonable alternatives to students and their families that aim to minimize disruption to their secondary school experience.

Option 19 includes the following four recommendations:

- Close Lester B. Pearson Secondary School<sup>1</sup>
- Close Burlington Central Secondary School and redistribute students to Nelson Secondary School and Aldershot Secondary School
- Reduce overcapacity at Dr. Frank J. Hayden Secondary School by redistributing students to Robert Batemen Secondary School and by transferring its French immersion program/students to M. M. Robinson Secondary School
- Increase enrolment in Bateman by adding a French immersion program and absorbing students from Nelson and Hayden

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations will be used in this report for the seven secondary schools identified in Option 19: Pearson, Central, Nelson, Aldershot, Hayden, Bateman, MMR

Central to advancing any option requires input by the Program and Accommodation Review Committee (PARC), an advisory group comprised of parents or guardians of children who are enrolled in an affected HDSB school. From December to March the PARC is tasked with making varying decisions over the course of four working meetings. An adjunct to this process is public meetings. Both meeting formats are open to the public; PARC meetings permit the public to attend and observe matters that are discussed. Public meetings serve to elicit direct feedback from the public to inform the decision-making process. The dates of these PARC and public meetings are listed as follows:

- Public Meeting #1 – December 8, 2016
- PARC Meeting #1 – January 26, 2017
- PARC Meeting #2 – February 2, 2017
- PARC Meeting # 3 – February 9, 2017
- Public Meeting #2 – February 28, 2017
- Public Meeting # 3 – March 2, 2017
- PARC Meeting #4 – March 23, 2017

The data compiled from these meetings will be reported to the PARC and serve to inform any recommendations they make as part of the PAR. The PARC is not responsible for decision-making. Any decisions on school closures, etc., lie with the Board's Trustees.

This report reflects an analysis of the input gathered from the first public meeting, held on the evening of December 8, 2016 at New Street Education Centre, located in Burlington.

The report is organized into four main sections: Executive Summary, Methods, Findings, and Appendix.

## 2.0 Executive Summary

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This executive summary provides a synopsis of the findings located in the following sections of this report.

### Mandatory and Elective Programming

In regards to enrolling in mandatory and elective courses, the input from attendees affiliated to Central and Pearson suggests there is greater flexibility to attending a school other than the home school for courses. Attendees from Hayden showed less flexibility. Overall, a greater propensity to attending a school other than the home school was found in relation to elective courses. This finding may also suggest the lower level of importance parents and guardians place on elective, compared to mandatory courses.

### Learning Facilities and Spaces

The utilization of school space is important relative to the provision of adequate learning facilities. The topic of spaces being underutilized in high schools was largely overlooked by attendees. Given that Central and Pearson are encountering a declining enrolment, there may be little concern about the impact of empty spaces in a given high school. Attendees may be more inclined to respond to questions that directly affect them, rather than to consider issues that are more indirectly relevant or perceived as a Board matter.

### Extracurricular Activities

Attendees indicated that having a breadth of extracurricular activities at the home school was important. At the same time, and similar to the findings in relation to elective courses identified above, a majority of attendees indicated “Very likely” or “Somewhat likely” to considering sending their children to a school other than the home school to participate in extracurricular activities.

### School Transportation and Commuting

According to attendees, a large majority of their children walk to and from school. The Board’s policy of 3.2 kms as the maximum distance a child should be expected to walk was indicated as important, with the assumption that this distance should not be increased. Attendees also indicated as important that the Board should be fiscally responsible by reducing funding to transportation, and namely buses. School closures would compromise both of these positions – children would need to walk farther, or rely on bussing, to reach school.

### Funding and Capacity

Based on the questions asked in this section – whether the HDSB should fund empty pupil spaces to maintain schools with low enrolment, and if the HDSB should rely on its multi-year plan of 90% capacity to sustain its high schools – attendees’ responses suggest they want the HDSB to devote funding to maintain some high schools, even though the costs would increase over time, assuming enrolment decline continues, as has been forecasted in the Board’s current Long Term Accommodation Plan. The findings in this section, illuminate the challenges of drafting close ended questions where items may not provide sufficient context, options, or relevance to a given attendee.

## Conclusions

Overall, parents and guardians are highly vested in the outcome of the PARC, and the larger decisions on Option 19, assuming this is the mandate that the PARC will put before the Board's Trustees. The opposition to school closures is clear, particularly from the Central and Pearson contingents. There is also a degree of concern around over capacity, with Hayden being the centre of this issue.

Amidst these concerns, attendees expressed a degree of flexibility, particularly around attending programming at schools other than the home school, particularly for elective courses and extracurricular activities.

A greater understanding of the fiscal issues facing the Board is desirable by attendees. Given that budgetary matters are of a complex nature, and that the time in a public meeting is limited, sharing information on finances will continue to pose challenges. Another area where greater understanding is desirable is on school boundaries. Previous decisions on drawing boundaries have perplexed attendees, and the feeling is that these previous changes have led to deleterious effects on some of the HDSB high schools in Burlington.

In moving forward to subsequent public meetings, it will be prudent to reflect on the questions that were posed, and focus more directly on questions related to options or alternatives, and on matters of a fiscal nature. Presenting alternatives to parents and guardians will demonstrate a willingness to find common ground with the affected communities. Presenting more fiscal information will also illuminate the challenges facing the Board given its finite resources.

## 3.0 Methods

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The public meeting was organized to elicit maximum participation by attendees. To promote the public meeting, the HDSB reached out to parents or guardians directly using email. Notices were also posted on the Board's website.

The public meeting was held at the New Street Education Centre, located in the City of Burlington. The venue could accommodate approximately 500 people. There were nearly 300 people in attendance, and 263 keypads were distributed.

Keypads were used as the main mechanism to gather feedback. A series of 24 close-ended questions were posed, and presented through PowerPoint and projected onto a large screen. The questions were drafted by the HDSB and Ipsos. The questions provided real-time feedback through the presentation of bar charts shown on screen. The data served as a means of understanding attendees preferences for existing or proposed changes to programming, facilities, and funding. This data also served as a means to guide plenary discussions held during the public meeting.

The public meeting lasted for two hours. There were 24 questions categorized under themes<sup>2</sup> that included programming, facilities, transportation and fiscal responsibility (See Appendix B for raw data).

During the meeting time was allotted for open-ended feedback at the conclusion of each theme. Occasionally, questions or comments were fielded before the conclusion of a given theme. Those who raised their hand were given a microphone to share their views or queries.

The public meeting began with an introduction by the Ipsos plenary chair, and the superintendent, education, from the HDSB. The Ipsos plenary chair served as the facilitator of the meeting. The superintendent presented some contextual information near the beginning of the meeting, and answered questions during open-ended feedback, which occurred throughout the evening.

### 3.1 Analysis

The quantitative data is presented in aggregate as counts, with the use of percentages to add some context to a given response item. For ease of viewing and understanding, the top two and bottom two answer options in most questions are presented as one count each (e.g., Strongly agree and Somewhat agree are summed as one count, rather than two counts).

The analysis also provides disaggregated data by respondents' school affiliation. Only three of the seven schools had attendees in double digit figures, and these well-represented schools are given some focus in the analyses by school affiliation. Some of this disaggregated data is juxtaposed to the overall counts to illuminate respondent differences based on school affiliation. This adds some important context to varying issues under consideration (e.g., proposed changes to transportation to one school community are reflected as more important by attendees when compared to attendees from another school community).

The quantitative data is not representative of any population, and the analyses are not generalizable.

All qualitative data is analyzed using thematic analysis and serves to illuminate the quantitative findings.

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<sup>2</sup> The questions were derived from the PARC framework, which consisted of 13 items (see Appendix A).

### 3.2 Session Objectives & Goals

The town hall was organized as an information-gathering exercise. It is part of a larger process that will include two additional public meetings, and four PARC meetings, to be held from late January to late March. All of these meetings will be open to the public.

The objectives of the public meeting were to disseminate information on the PARC process, and to gather pointed feedback on the PARC framework. Questions were derived from this framework and served to augment understanding of the varying interests of attendees, that would be utilized by the PARC in its recommendations to the Board's Trustees.

The nature of the public meeting was to involve parents and guardians in a two-way dialogue with Ipsos and the HDSB. The participatory nature of the public meeting functioned to provide information on otherwise complex issues. This, and subsequent engagements, serve as a mechanism to facilitate deeper, more-informed, and possibly changed opinions about how the PARC, the HDSB, and ultimately the Board's Trustees, should make decisions that will impact the varying communities that attend the HDSB secondary schools in the City of Burlington.

Within this context, some goals of the public meeting were to:

- Provide attendees with an update to the PARC process
- Inform attendees of the organization of public events held in the coming months
- Assure attendees that no decisions will be made on school closures until late May or early June
- Gather feedback from attendees to inform the process, at this early stage of deliberation

To maximize engagement, three mechanisms were utilized as follows:

- Key pads
- Plenary discussion
- Email feedback



## 4.0 Findings

The Public Meeting was a means to gather attendees' input on metrics that would inform any recommendations made by the PARC. The primary means to acquire this information was through the use of keypads. Keypads resembled a handheld device and had a simple interface of numbers resembling a phone pad. Question items were assigned a numerical value to which attendees would press to indicate a response.

All keypad questions were close-ended and served to provide a quantifiable impression of the issues and options to consider relative to programming, etc. To complement data from keypad questions, attendees were also invited to offer verbal open-ended feedback. This feedback included commentary and questions and is utilized in this report to illuminate the quantitative data, where relevant. Finally, several attendees also were invited to offer email feedback, and this is also included in the analysis.

Given that the event was open to the public, without need for registration, the findings presented below are not scientific, nor generalizable. Instead the findings reflect the perceptions of the attendees present at the public meeting on December 8, 2016.

### 4.1 Representation of Attendees by School Affiliation

A breakdown of attendees, by school, is presented in Table 1.

Proportionally, the greatest number of attendees were representing Central with 150 attendees, followed by Hayden and Pearson, both of which had 43 attendees. Very few attendees were present from Nelson, Bateman, Aldershot and M.M. Robinson. The tally of attendees for these four secondary schools amounted to 20. There were 7 attendees who did not answer this question. These individuals are included in reporting on the aggregate data.

In total, 263 attendees were using keypads<sup>3</sup>.

Table 1: Attendee Representation by School

HDSB Secondary School	#	%
Central	150	57
Pearson	43	16.3
Hayden	43	16.3
Aldershot	7	2.7
Nelson	6	2.3
Bateman	5	1.9
MMR	2	0.8
Unknown	7	2.7
<b>Total:</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Q1. Which school are you representing?*

<sup>3</sup> Note: Seven attendees accepted a keypad, but did not indicate a school affiliation, and were therefore excluded from the data collection presented in these findings. There were also approximately six individuals who did not use a keypad.

## 4.2 Mandatory/Core Courses

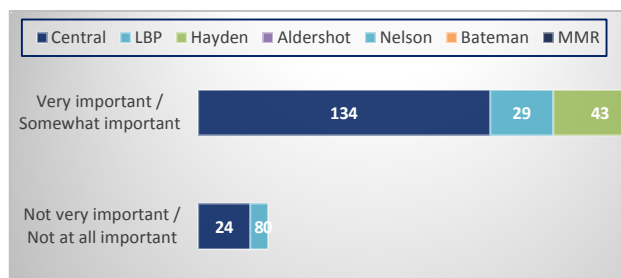
Attendees were asked three related questions on mandatory programming, as is presented in Table 2, and is comprised of questions 2, 3, and 6 (see Appendix B).

When asked about the importance of having mandatory/core courses within the home school, 245 of 260 (94%) attendees indicated “Very important” or “Somewhat important”. In the following question, the response in regards to acceptability of travelling to a school other than the home school to attend mandatory/core programming was somewhat complementary to Question 2. The aggregate response for “Not very acceptable” and “Not at all acceptable” measured at 199 of 263 (76%). Yet, 64 attendees, or 25% of total respondents, indicated that it was “Very acceptable,” or “Somewhat acceptable” to travel to another school other than the home school to attend mandatory/core programming. Among the schools with the largest representation at the meeting, the number of responses were 45 of 150 (29%), 8 of 43 (19%), and 3 of 43 (7%) for Central, Pearson and Hayden, respectively.

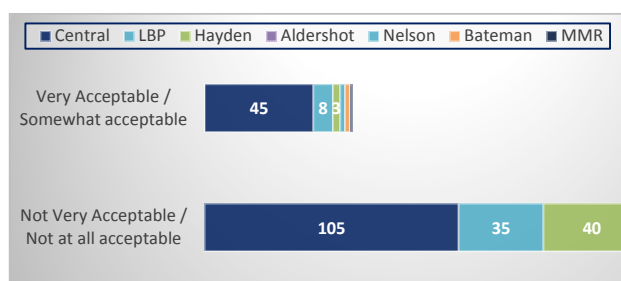
In regards to willingness to take mandatory/core courses (Question 6) in an alternative method (e.g., summer school, night school, e-learning or attend another school), responses were more mixed. Although 150 of 262 (57%) responses indicated “Not very willing” or “Not at all willing,” there were also 109 responses that indicated “Very willing” or “Somewhat willing” to take mandatory/core courses in an alternative method (e.g., summer school, night school, e-learning or attend another school). Among the schools with the largest representation at the meeting, the number of responses were 71 of 149 (48%), 19 of 43 (44%), and 9 of 43 (21%) for Central, Pearson and Hayden, respectively.

The findings from Table 2 suggest that attending mandatory/compulsory courses in the home school were important to attendees at the public meeting. There was some notable flexibility, particularly from attendees affiliated with Central, to have their child take a mandatory/core course in an alternative method.

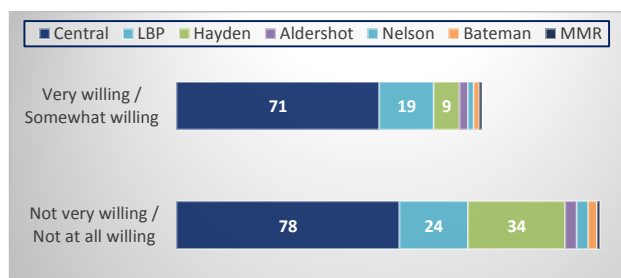
Table 2: Mandatory/Compulsory Courses Scenarios



Q2. How important is the availability of mandatory/core courses for your child(ren) within your home school?



Q3. How acceptable is it to attend a school outside of a home school for mandatory/core programming for your child(ren)?



Q6. How willing are you to have your child(ren) take a mandatory/core course in an alternative method, e.g summer school, night school, e-learning or attend another school?

### 4.3 Optional/Elective Courses

When compared to the findings presented in Table 2, the responses for the location of optional/elective courses was more evenly distributed, as found in Table 3 below.

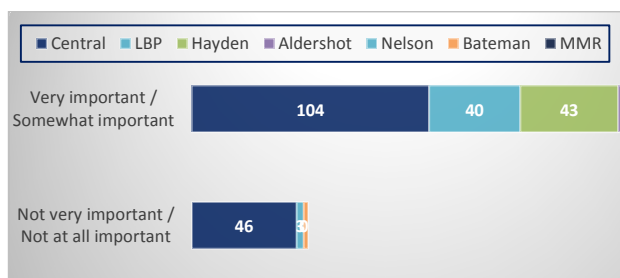
Although 211 of 263 (80%) respondents identified having optional/elective courses within the home school as “Very important” or “Somewhat important” in Question 4, almost half of respondents (129 of 261, or 49%) also indicated “Very acceptable” or “Somewhat acceptable” when asked about attending a school outside of the home school for optional/elective courses in Question 5.

When Question 5 is disaggregated by school, a majority of attendees affiliated with Central and Pearson also indicated “Very acceptable” or “Somewhat acceptable” for a child to attend a school outside of a home school for optional/elective courses. Attendees affiliated to Hayden countered this trend with the majority from this school (34 of 43) indicating “Not very acceptable” or “Not at all acceptable” to the same question.

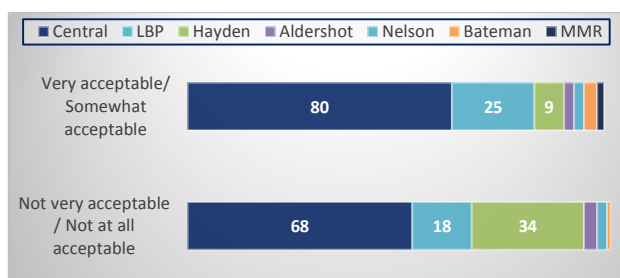
In regards to willingness to take elective/optional courses in an alternative method (e.g., summer school, night school, e-learning or attend another school) in Question 7, responses were also favourable. There were 164 of 259 (63%) respondents who indicated “Very Willing” or “Somewhat Willing” to take optional/core courses in an alternative method. Among the schools with the largest representation at the meeting, a similar pattern was observed in comparison to Question 4 and Question 5. A majority of attendees from Central and Pearson indicated “Very Willing” or “Somewhat Willing” to take optional/core courses in an alternative method, whereas a majority of attendees from Hayden indicated “Not very willing” or “Not at all willing” to the same question.

The findings in Table 5 suggest that attendees, particularly from Central and Pearson, may be more agreeable in considering alternative options when enrolling in optional/elective courses, as compared to a more rigid, or inflexible, response to mandatory courses, as was found in Table 2.

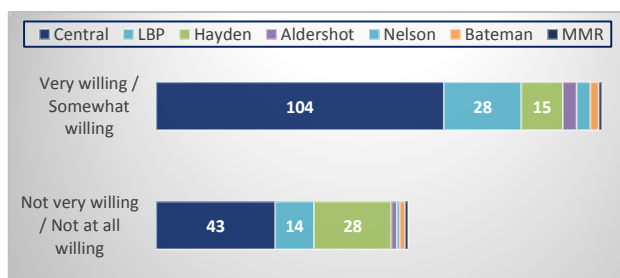
Table 3: Optional/Elective Courses Scenarios



Q4. How important is the availability of optional/elective courses within your home school for your child(ren)?



Q5. How acceptable is it for your child(ren) to attend a school outside of a home school for optional/elective courses?



Q7. How willing are you to have your child(ren) take an optional/elective course in an alternative method, e.g. summer school, night school, e-learning or attend another school?

#### 4.4 Learning Facilities and Space

The series of questions presented in Table 3 are centred on facilities and space. For Question 9, 223 of 259 (86%) of respondents indicated “Very concerned” or “Somewhat concerned” when asked about their children having access to appropriate learning facilities. When asked in Question 10 about secondary schools that have such spaces as being underutilized, 184 of 258 (71%) selected “Not very concerned” or “Not at all concerned”.

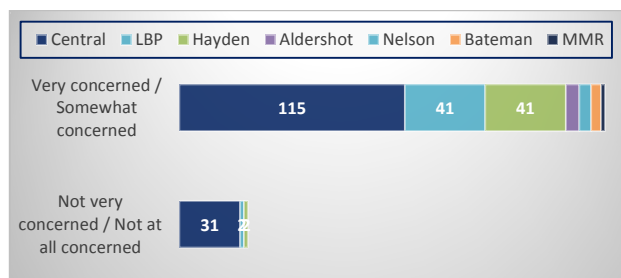
Of the three schools with greatest representation at the meeting, attendees from Hayden showed a proportionally different response pattern when compared to Central and Pearson – 21 of 43 (49%) respondents from Hayden indicated “Very concerned” or “Somewhat concerned” about spaces being underutilized.

The importance of preserving existing community partnerships, as asked in Question 16, produced a mixed level of importance. Of the 251 responses, 133 (53%) selected “Very important” or “Somewhat important” and 118 (47%) selected “Not very important” or “Not at all important”.

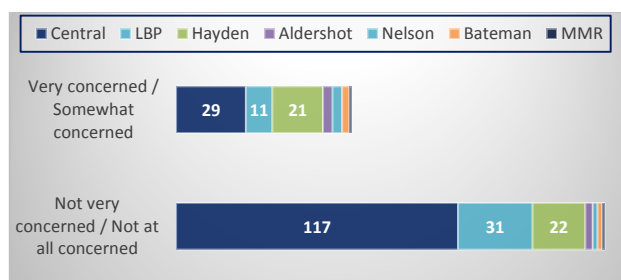
When asked about the importance to minimize the use of portables in Question 17, 186 of 252 (74%) respondents indicated “Very important” or “Somewhat important”. Proportionally, results from Pearson were higher than Central or Hayden with 36 of 42 (86%) indicating this issue was “Very important.” Proportionally, results from Hayden were notably lower with 26 of 43 (60%) indicating this issue was “Very important”.

The findings from Table 4 provide a clearer picture of attendees responding based on their personal, or their school’s circumstances. Whereas the majority of attendees indicated concern about having appropriate learning facilities, far fewer expressed concern with a secondary school having underutilized spaces. Drawing inferences into this finding leads to multiple interpretations. For attendees affiliated to Central or Pearson, underutilized space may reflect a degree of normalcy, given that these schools have low enrolment and presumably empty classrooms. By contrast, attendees affiliated to Hayden may have indicated a proportionally greater concern over this issue with concern that such spaces in other secondary schools could alleviate some of the enrolment pressures at Hayden, given its overcapacity in enrolment. The findings may also reflect the lack of direct relevance to an

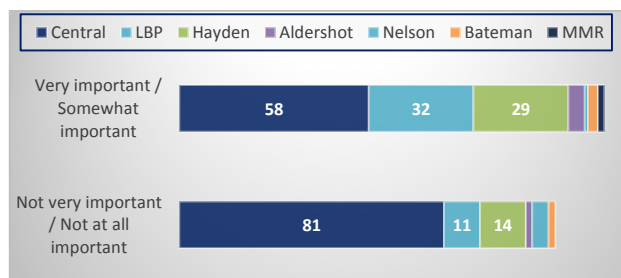
Table 4: Learning Facilities and Space



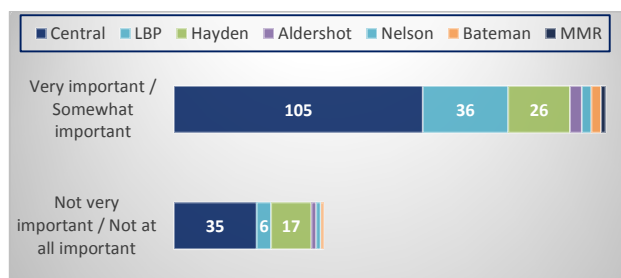
Q9. How concerned are you that your child(ren) has access to appropriate learning facilities (e.g., kitchens, science labs, gyms, libraries)?



Q10. How concerned are you that some high schools have large amounts of specialized learning spaces that remain underutilized?



Q16. How important is it to you to preserve existing community partnerships at your child(ren)'s current school? (e.g., swimming pool, library, community centre).



Q17. How important is it to you to minimize the use of portable classrooms?

attendee in Question 10.

### 4.5 Extracurricular Activities

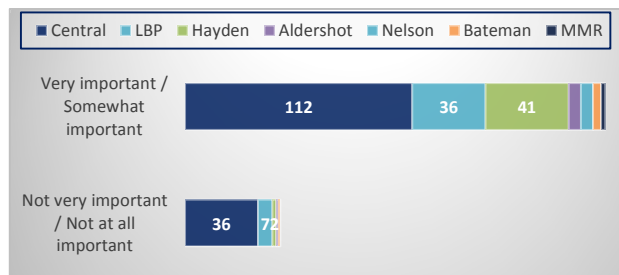
Table 5 shows the results of two related questions on extracurricular activities. For question 11, 213 of 261 (82%) respondents selected “Very important” or “Important” on having a full range of extracurricular activities for their children.

Respondents affiliated to Central, Pearson and Hayden selected “Very important” or “Important” 112 of 148 (76%), 36 of 43 (84%), and 41 of 43 (95%), respectively to Question 11.

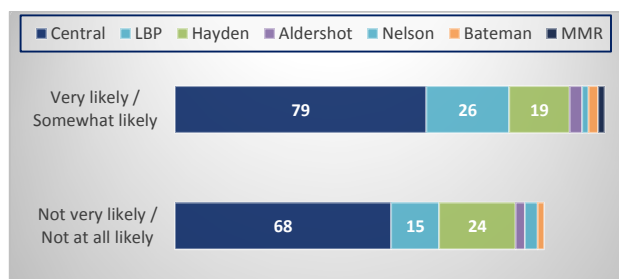
For question 12, the distribution was more even. On having a full range of extracurricular activities for their children, 141 of 258 (55%) respondents selected “Very likely” or “Somewhat likely”, and 117 of 258 (45%) respondents selected “Not very likely” or “Not at all likely”. Proportionally, results from Pearson were comparatively higher than the aggregate with 26 of 41 (63%) indicating “Very likely” or “Somewhat likely”. Comparative results from Hayden were lower with 19 of 43 (44%) indicating “Very likely” or “Somewhat likely” to Question 12.

The findings from Table 5 reflect similar results found in Table 3, and to a lesser extent in Table 2. Like course programming, extracurricular activities are important, to the extent that parents or guardians would support their children participating in extracurricular activities at another school.

Table 5: Extracurricular Activities



Q11. How important is it for your home school to have a full range of extracurricular activities? (e.g., drama, arts, athletics, clubs) for your child(ren).



Q12. How likely are you to support your child(ren) participating in extracurricular activities at another school?

### 4.6 School Transportation and Commuting

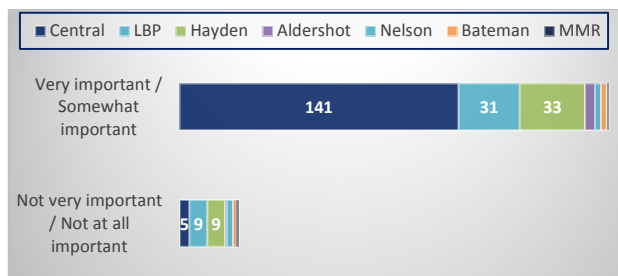
Table 6 shows responses to questions related to transportation to and from school. For question 18, regarding attendees’ children living within a maximum 3.2 km walking distance from their home school, 220 of 253 (87%) respondents indicated this issue as “Very important” or “Somewhat important”. Among the schools with greater representation at the public meeting, a clear majority of respondents affiliated with Central indicated “Very important” or “Somewhat important” (141 of 146, or 97%) to Question 18. Proportionally, respondents from Pearson and Hayden were comparatively lower with 31 of 40 (78%) and 26 of 42 (79%), respectively, indicating the walking issue as “Very important” or “Somewhat important”.

For Question 19, regarding the most common form of transportation to school, the distribution of respondents reveals that a majority of students walk to their home school (176 of 256, or 69%). Only 37 of 256 (14%) used the school bus, and no attendee selected public transit. Among the schools with large representation at the public meeting, the majority of respondents affiliated to Central and Pearson indicated walking, with 124 of 146 (85%), and 31 of 42 (74%), respectively, selecting this option.

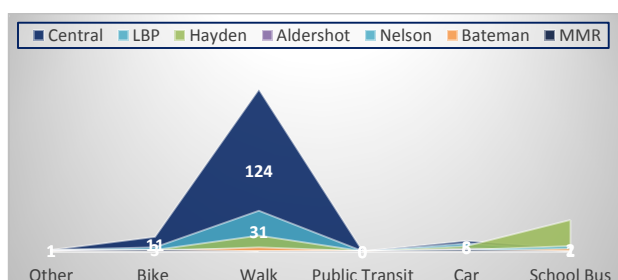
Question 20 asked respondents the degree of importance they assigned to the Board being fiscally responsible by reducing transportation (i.e., bussing) to reach school. A clear majority of respondents (195 of 247, or 79%), indicated “Very important” or “Somewhat important” for Question 20. A breakdown by school indicated that 128 of 139 (92%) of attendees from Central indicated “Very important” or “Somewhat important” for this option. Proportionally, 25 of 40 (63%) respondents from Pearson and 26 of 41 (63%) respondents at Hayden assigned the same degree of importance to Question 20.

Given that 69% of attendees indicated walking as a child’s most common form of transportation to school, it is not overly surprising that 87% of attendees assigned importance to maintaining the Board’s walk distance policy of 3.2 kms between a child’s home and school<sup>4</sup>. The fact that the policy issue in

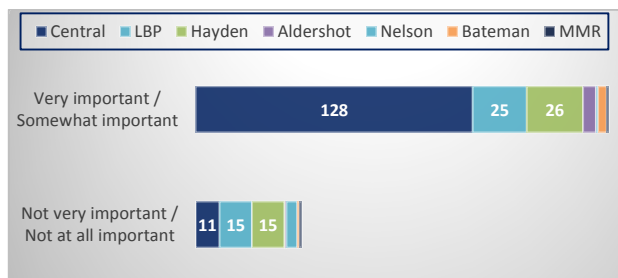
Table 6: School Transportation and Commuting



Q18. The Board’s current walk distance for secondary students is a maximum of 3.2 km. How important is it that your child(ren) are within the Board mandated walking distance to reach school?



Q19. Which of the following is your child’s most common form of travel to school currently?



Q20. How important is it to you that the Board be fiscally responsible by reducing transportation to reach school?

<sup>4</sup> Given that the main concern of the public meeting was school closures, the assumption made in the analysis of Question 18 is that shortening the distance of 3.2 kms was not being considered. Instead, the question was aimed at understanding attendees’ tolerance for lengthening this distance, given that some individuals would have to travel a greater distance if Central or Pearson were closed.

Question 18 garnered a higher number of counts relative to importance by attendees, compared to the counts of actual walkers to school, may suggest that attendees are keen to minimize costs for transportation, as was presented in Question 20, even if this is a method they rely upon. More pointed questions related to transportation may augment understanding on this issue.

Another point of interest is the comparative results to Question 10 in Table 4. Question 10 referred directly to underutilized space and indirectly referred to fiscal responsibility. The results from this question were largely dismissive of this issue. By contrast, the issue of transportation, linked directly to fiscal responsibility, garnered a high degree of importance as indicated by attendees. Moving forward, attributing associations of a fiscal nature to questions, where relevant, may garner attention from respondents and generate more accurate results.



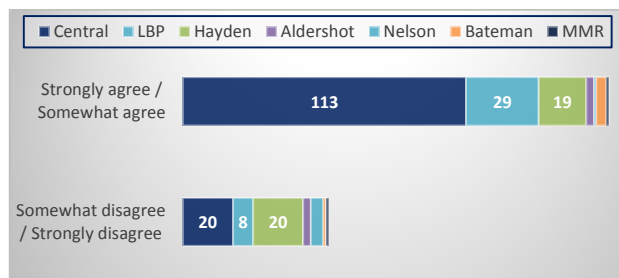
### 4.7 Funding and Capacity

Table 7 shows the results from a series of questions related to capacity of HDSB schools in the City of Burlington. For Question 22, regarding the extent that the HDSB should reallocate its limited budget to fund empty pupil spaces, 172 of 232 (74%) respondents indicated “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”. A breakdown by certain schools indicated that 113 of 133 (85%) respondents from Central indicated “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree” for this option, whereas only 19 of 39 (51%) respondents from Hayden assigned the same degree of importance to this option.

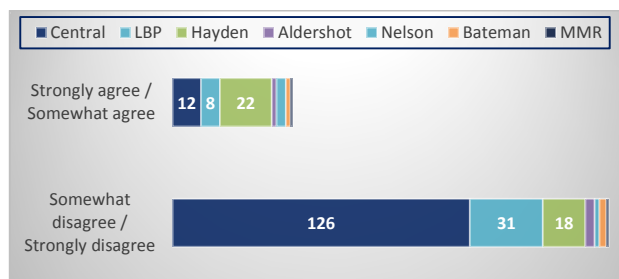
For Question 23, regarding the Board’s policy that it will maintain a 90% building capacity as part of its multi-year plan, respondents were asked to what extent do they agree with this goal as it relates to sustainability of HDSB high schools in Burlington. Overall, only 54 of 241 (22%) respondents indicated “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”. A breakdown by school indicated that only 12 of 138 (9%) respondents from Central indicated “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree” for this option, whereas 22 of 40 (55%) respondents at Hayden assigned the same degree of importance to this option.

The findings from Question 22 and Question 23, and the verbal feedback aligned to these questions, located in the following section, suggest that there was a degree of uncertainty when attendees were inputting their responses to these questions. The findings from Question 22, for example, suggest that a clear majority of attendees favour utilizing Board funding to maintain empty spaces in schools. Such an outcome would not be fiscally responsible, nor sustainable, particularly if forecasting on greater enrolment decline materializes. Question 23 reinforces the findings in Question 22. If high schools operate below 90% of building capacity, sustainability of Burlington secondary schools will be compromised. Given that one of the comments from the discussion period of the public meeting indicated that some questions seemingly forced individuals to vote against their own interests, it is necessary to re-evaluate the types of questions asked in subsequent public meetings.

Table 7: Funding and Capacity



Q22. The Ministry does not fund empty pupil places. To what extent do you agree that the Board should reallocate its limited budget to fund these spaces?



Q23. The Board's MYP states it will maintain a minimum overall average of 90% building capacity. To what extent do you agree with this goal around future sustainability of Burlington secondary schools?



## Discussion Periods and Emails:

Interspersed throughout the public meeting were short periods where attendees could offer comments or pose questions. At the end of the keypad session, there was also an extended discussion period. This section reflects some of the key points shared by attendees during this discussion period and from separate emails sent to the Ipsos facilitator.

Among the main concerns held by attendees was the organization of the public meeting and the premise of the close-ended questions being asked.

Attendees felt that they had been “misled” into thinking that they were attending a public meeting whereby their questions would be addressed or answered. The public meeting, however, was an exercise in gathering input that would later serve to inform the PARC on major issues held by attendees, and the degree of importance, concern, agreement, etc., with a series of close-ended questions informed by the PARC framework. As shown in the previous sections, when the data is disaggregated by school affiliation, some patterns appear that diverge from the aggregate results, and offer insight into considering changes to how schools are organized and operated.

Attendees also expressed frustration at the nature of the close-ended questions which were described as “loaded” and written to force attendees into voting “against their own interests.” More clarity of questions was desired with some examples including:

*“What does it mean by reducing transportation?”*

*“What is an empty pupil space?”*

*“What are innovative approaches?”*

In the broader context, some attendees felt that the decision to close Central and Pearson had already been made, with option 19 having been presented in advance of the formation of the PARC.

*“I’m surprised and disappointed that when the PARC was announced that there weren’t any schools named in that PARC, but that the Board was going to go through the process. Then this year Pearson and Central are targeted. Why not make it a level playing field across all schools?”*

Missing from the questions were understanding of the local context of a given school, and the detrimental impact on families if students were forced to attend another school. One attendee noted the role senior students play at Pearson in mentoring pre-school students at the nursery co-op, an arrangement that has existed for 35 years. Other attendees expressed concern over the challenges facing students if they are required to enrol in another secondary school, given the network they would lose from their existing home school, or the separation of siblings enrolled in different programs.

*“[Our child] will be enrolled in a whole new school right before university, what kind of letters of recommendation will our child get, what kind of clubs will our child be able to participate? You are putting kids at an extreme disadvantage for university.”*

*“With respect to French immersion being bussed to other schools, siblings in one household where one child is enrolled in French immersion, and the other is not, should still be going to the same school. It’s ridiculous to split up families.”*

The issue of boundaries was also frequently voiced during the public meeting. An example was the imbalance of feeder, or elementary schools, with six or more feeding into Hayden, and only one feeding into Pearson. The disproportionate distribution of feeder schools was perceived to be a main cause of overcrowding at Hayden. Coupled with the multi-year plan of targeting a minimum of 90% capacity of pupil spaces in a given school, it seemed sensible by many attendees to redistribute feeder schools in an effort to shore up enrolment at Pearson or Central.

*“Question 24 focused on the MYP of 90% capacity, with Option 19 being the closure of Pearson. This puts MMR and Hayden over 100% immediately, so we’re already against the plan. How does closing the other school north of the QEW make sense?”*

*“Is the Board amenable to re-doing the boundaries if schools get to stay open, will there be that kind of creative problem-solving, or will it be this school or that school [that gets closed]?”*

The crux of the issue is to accommodate individuals and families with competing interests, amid budgetary constraints and uneven enrolment across secondary schools in Burlington.

*“We all care about our children and it’s important to us that our children go to school near their home. How are you going to form a working group when there are three different groups who are diametrically opposed (i.e., from different schools). It is hard for me not to put my family’s needs above someone else’s. How is it that you’re going to give equal representation to the families that are going to be most impacted by the school change?”*

## 5.0 Appendices

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### 5.1 Appendix A: PARC Framework

1. Range of mandatory programs;
2. Range of optional programs;
3. Viability of Program – number of students required to offer and maintain program in an educationally sound and fiscally responsible way;
4. Physical and environmental state of existing schools;
5. Proximity to other schools (non-bus distances, natural boundaries, walking routes);
6. Accommodation of students in permanent school facilities and minimal use of portable classrooms;
7. Balance of overall enrolment in each school in the area to maximize student access to programs, resources, and extra-curricular opportunities and avoid over and underutilization of buildings;
8. Expansion and placement of new ministry or board programs;
9. Stable, long-term boundaries to avoid frequent boundary changes;
10. Cost effectiveness of transportation;
11. Fiscal responsibilities;
12. Existing and potential community uses and facility partnerships;
13. Goals and focus of the current multi-year plan.

## 5.2 Appendix B: Raw Keypad Data from Town Hall

Question	Response Options	#	%
Q1. Which school are you representing?	1 M.M. Robinson	2	0.8
	2 Burlington Central	150	58.6
	3 Robert Bateman	5	2
	4 Nelson Public	6	2.3
	Lester B. Pearson	43	16.8
	Dr. Frank J. Hayden	43	16.8
	Aldershot	7	2.7
Q2. How important is the availability of mandatory/core courses for your child(ren) within your home school?	Very Important	187	71.9
	Somewhat Important	58	22.3
	Not Very Important	12	4.6
	Not at all Important	3	1.2
Q3. How acceptable is it to attend a school outside of a home school for mandatory/core programming for your child(ren)?	Very Acceptable	22	8.4
	Somewhat Acceptable	42	16
	Not Very Acceptable	64	24.3
	Not at all Acceptable	135	51.3
Q4. How important is the availability of optional/elective courses within your home school for your child(ren)?	Very Important	94	35.7
	Somewhat Important	117	44.5
	Not Very Important	38	14.4
	Not at all Important	14	5.3
Q5. How acceptable is it for your child(ren) to attend a school outside of a home school for optional/elective courses?	Very Acceptable	37	14.2
	Somewhat Acceptable	92	35.2
	Not Very Acceptable	70	26.8
	Not at all Acceptable	62	23.8
Q6. How willing are you to have your child(ren) take a mandatory/core course in an alternative method, e.g summer school, night school, e-learning or attend another school?	Very Willing	55	21
	Somewhat Willing	54	20.6
	Not Very Willing	57	21.8
	Not at all Willing	96	36.6
Q7. How willing are you to have your child(ren) take an optional/elective course in an alternative method, e.g summer school, night school, e-learning or attend another school?	4 Very Willing	90	34.7
	3 Somewhat Willing	74	28.6
	2 Not Very Willing	46	17.8
	1 Not at all Willing	49	18.9
Q8. How important is it for you high school to offer a full range of pathway programming, eg. workplace, college, university?	4 Very Important	120	46.7
	3 Somewhat Important	89	34.6
	2 Not Very Important	33	12.8
	1 Not at all Important	15	5.8

Question	Response Options	#	%
Q9. How concerned are you that your child(ren) has access to appropriate learning facilities (e.g., kitchens, science labs, gyms, libraries)?	4 Very Concerned	165	63.7
	3 Somewhat Concerned	58	22.4
	2 Not Very Concerned	17	6.6
	1 Not at all Concerned	19	7.3
Q10. How concerned are you that some high schools have large amounts of specialized learning spaces that remain underutilized?	4 Very Concerned	18	7
	3 Somewhat Concerned	56	21.7
	2 Not Very Concerned	92	35.7
	1 Not at all Concerned	92	35.7
Q11. How important is it for your home school to have a full range of extracurricular activities? (e.g., drama, arts, athletics, clubs) for your child(ren).	4 Very Important	121	46.4
	3 Somewhat Important	92	35.2
	2 Not Very Important	35	13.4
	1 Not at all Important	13	5
Q12. How likely are you to support your child(ren) participating in extracurricular activities at another school?	4 Very Likely	72	27.9
	3 Somewhat Likely	69	26.7
	2 Not Very Likely	49	19
	1 Not at all Likely	68	26.4
Q13. How important is it for your child to have access to the highest level of competition in athletics?	4 Very Important	19	7.3
	3 Somewhat Important	30	11.5
	2 Not Very Important	70	26.9
	1 Not at all Important	141	54.2
Q14. How important is the physical condition of your existing school to you (e.g., environmental sustainability, energy consumption, safety)?	4 Very Important	75	31.4
	3 Somewhat Important	37	15.5
	2 Not Very Important	32	13.4
	1 Not at all Important	95	39.7
Q15. How important is it that the board ensures schools have an up-to-date, fully-accessible learning environment, eg. elevators, air conditioning?	4 Very Important	56	23.1
	3 Somewhat Important	38	15.7
	2 Not Very Important	32	13.2
	1 Not at all Important	116	47.9
Q16. How important is it you to preserve existing community partnerships at your child(ren)'s current school? (e.g., swimming pool, library, community centre).	4 Very Important	97	38.6
	3 Somewhat Important	36	14.3
	2 Not Very Important	49	19.5
	1 Not at all Important	69	27.5
Q17. How important is it you to minimize the use of portable classrooms?	4 Very Important	159	63.1
	3 Somewhat Important	27	10.7
	2 Not Very Important	27	10.7
	1 Not at all Important	39	15.5
Q18. The Board's current walk distance for secondary students is a maximum of 3.2 km. How important is it that your child(ren) are within the Board mandated walking distance to reach school?	4 Very Important	198	78.3
	3 Somewhat Important	22	8.7
	2 Not Very Important	21	8.3
	1 Not at all Important	12	4.7

Question	Response Options	#	%
Q19. Which of the following is your child's most common form of travel to school currently?	6 School Bus	37	14.5
	5 Car (drive or drop off)	22	8.6
	4 Public Transit	0	0
	3 Walk	176	68.8
	2 Bike	17	6.6
	1 Other	4	1.6
Q20. How important is it to you that the Board be fiscally responsible by reducing transportation to reach school?	4 Very Important	151	61.1
	3 Somewhat Important	44	17.8
	2 Not Very Important	22	8.9
	1 Not at all Important	30	12.1
Q21. How important is it for your child(ren) to spend their secondary school years in one school community?	4 Very Important	238	92.2
	3 Somewhat Important	14	5.4
	2 Not Very Important	6	2.3
	1 Not at all Important	0	0
Q22. The Ministry does not fund empty pupil places. To what extent do you agree that the Board should reallocate its limited budget to fund these spaces?	4 Strongly Agree	122	52.6
	3 Somewhat Agree	50	21.6
	2 Somewhat Disagree	32	13.8
	1 Strongly Disagree	28	12.1
Q23. The Board's MYP states it will maintain a minimum overall average of 90% building capacity. To what extent do you agree with this goal around future sustainability of Burlington secondary schools?	4 Strongly Agree	20	8.3
	3 Somewhat Agree	34	14.1
	2 Somewhat Disagree	53	22
	1 Strongly Disagree	134	55.6
Q24. The goal in the current MYP is to use innovative approaches to student learning spaces (e.g., classrooms, gymnasiums). To what extent do you feel the current situation of Burlington high schools is sustainable?	4 Very Sustainable	91	47.6
	3 Somewhat Sustainable	55	28.8
	2 Not very Sustainable	20	10.5
	1 Not at all Sustainable	25	13.1