

Pentz Elementary School

Response to the Impact Assessment Report January 31, 2013



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Introduction

This document is the required Response to the Impact Assessment Report for Pentz Elementary School prepared by Pentz Elementary School's Study Committee. The preparation and information included in this response are a result of input received through public meetings, student and community surveys, School Advisory Council contributions, analysis of Deloitte's Impact Assessment Report prepared by the South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB), and the gathering and review of substantiated research and other information with respect to our school's costs and transportation, as provided by the SSRSB.

The South Shore Regional School Board presented Pentz Elementary School with five options as part of the Impact Assessment Report prepared by Deloitte. It is important to note this report was commissioned by the South Shore Regional School Board. The data collected was provided primarily by the SSRSB with the exception of one instance when personnel from Deloitte met with the Pentz Elementary School Advisory Council for approximately 2 hours. It should also be noted that, in each criterion, Deloitte identifies "possible" rather than "actual" areas of concern.

Our vision for Pentz Elementary School is **Option 1** which keeps our school open and our children in our community. As a last-resort, we would support Option 5, a new (P-6) school for the students of Pentz and Petite, **with the full understanding that the new school would be built in a location that is central for all students, and that all students would remain in their respective schools until the new school is ready for occupancy.**

Our vision is based upon a review of the criteria as outlined in the Impact Assessment Report, in addition to, and most importantly, in consideration of the best interests of our children and the ensuing impact on our community.

Pentz Elementary School is a vibrant, thriving, academically accredited school, rich in academic and extra-curricular programming, enriched and embraced by a variety of community individuals and groups.

Throughout the course of this response, we will address the nine categories of the Deloitte produced Assessment Criteria and provide an overview of research supporting 'rural education' in the best interests of our students and their community.



Criterion 1 – Education Program Delivery

The Impact Assessment Report confirmed that Pentz Elementary School is meeting the requirements of the Public School Program (PSP).

BUT, in fact, provincial tests show that we are exceeding provincial standards. Pentz Elementary School's Data, in relation to our Education Program Delivery is exceptional. It illustrates our ability to meet, and in most areas, exceed provincial standards.

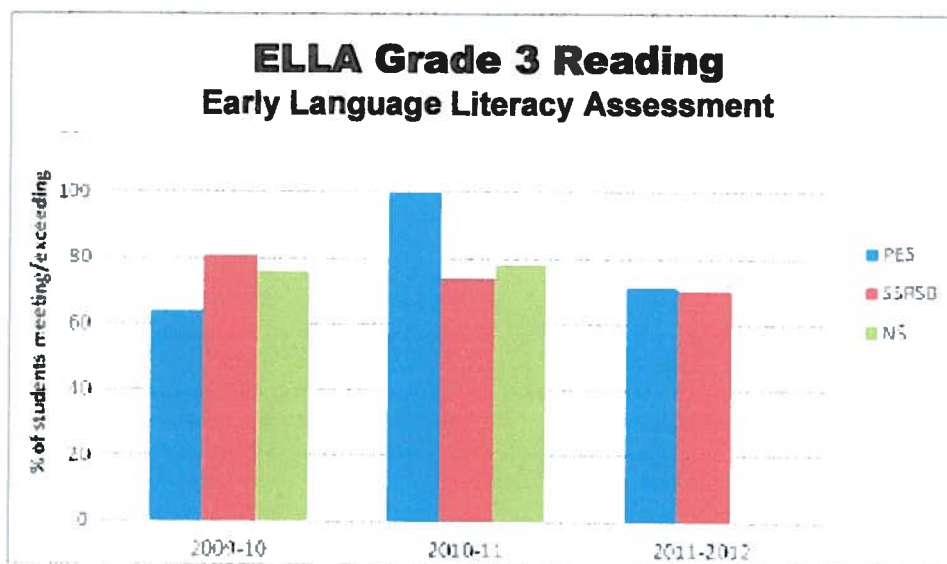
In addition, research has shown that *“For economically disadvantaged children and children with specific learning profiles, in particular, small community schools are a distinct advantage”* (Howley, 2000, Truscott and Truscott, 2005).

The graphs on the following pages provide visual support for Pentz students' success in literacy and numeracy, showing results for provincial testing at grades 3 and 6:

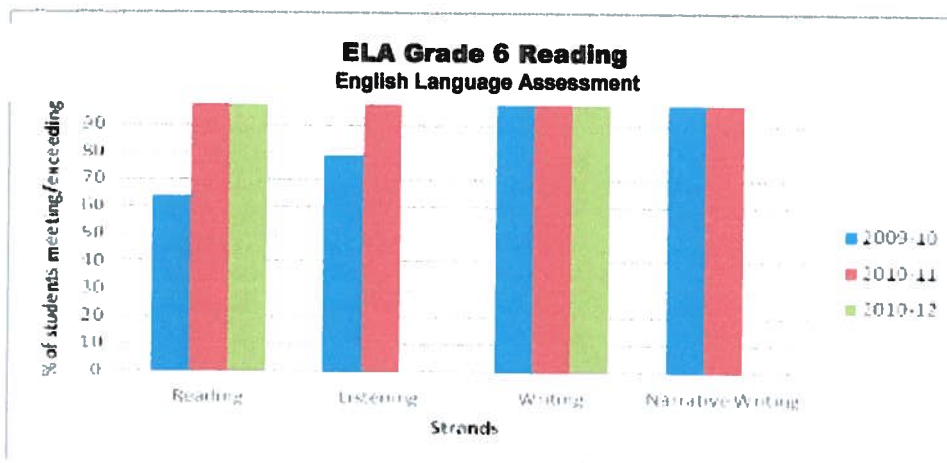
ELLA	Grade 3	Early Language Literacy Assessment
ELA	Grade 6	English Language Assessment
SELL	Grade 3	Supporting Early Literacy Learners
ExSELL	Grade 6	Extended Support for Early Literacy Learners
EEMLA	Grade 3	Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment
EMLA	Grade 6	Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment



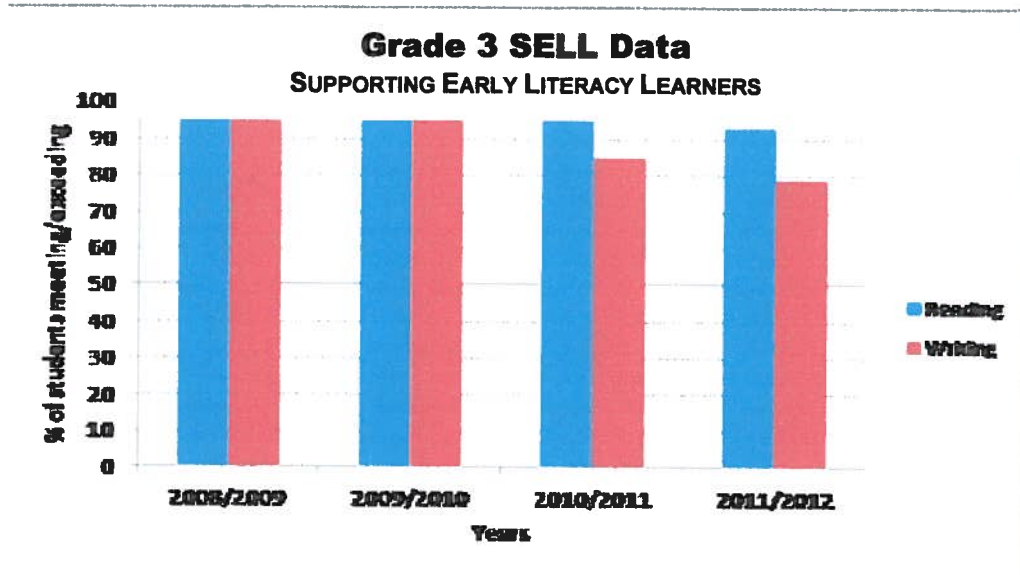
Our Literacy Data...



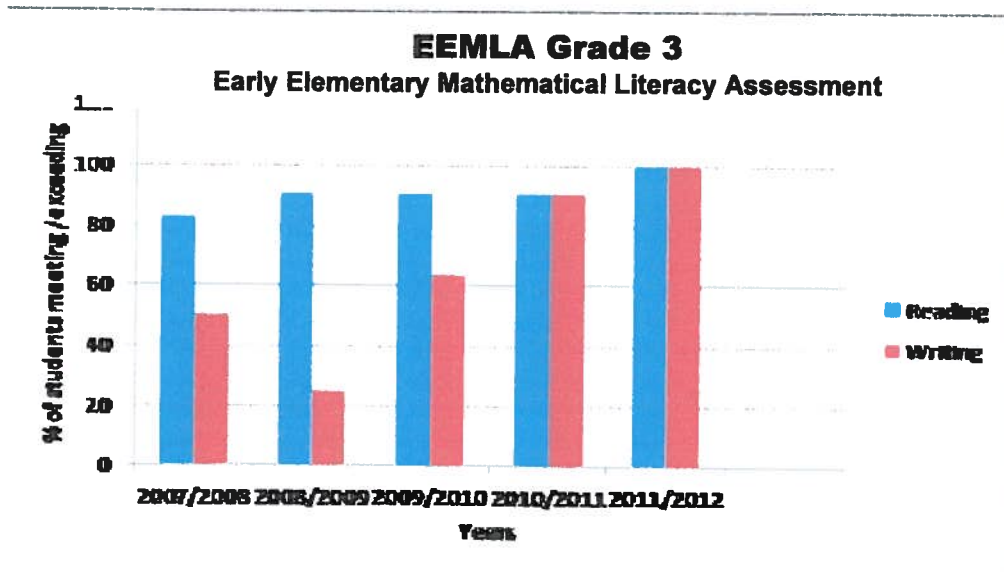
Although Pentz grade 3 literacy scores in 2009 were below the board and provincial averages, test results for the two following years exceeded both SSRSB and Provincial averages.



Grade 6 students have consistently maintained reading and writing scores of 100% of those students meeting or exceeding expectations on provincial assessments.

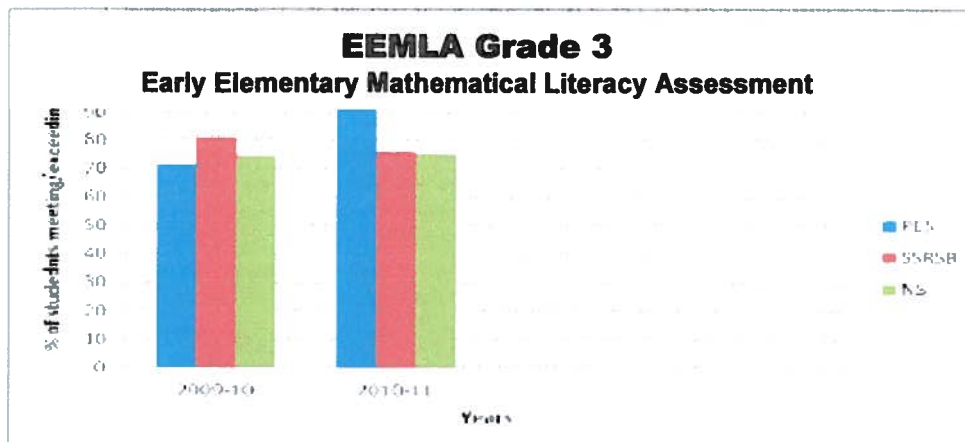


Grade 3 SELL data also demonstrates student success in reading and writing. Pentz students have consistently scored well above board averages for the last four years. Board averages (2011-2012) on SELL assessments were 75%(reading) and 71%(writing). Pentz student results **exceeded** those board averages each year.

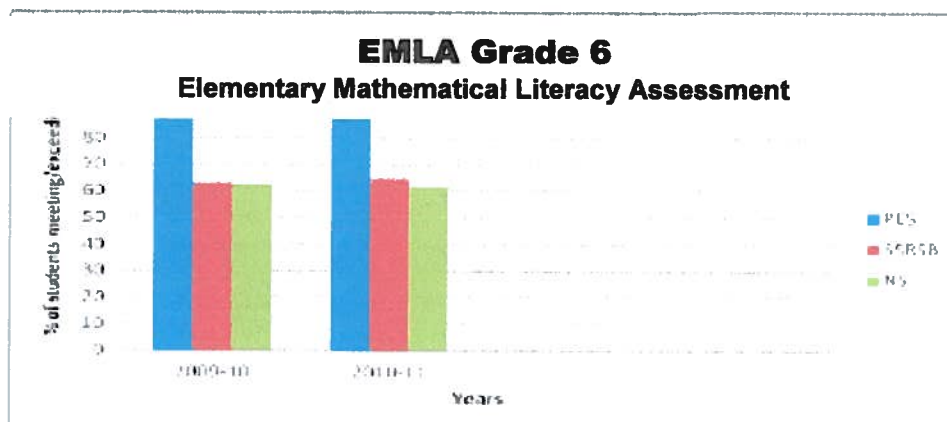


Pentz Grade 6 student data supports provincial assessment data. The graph above demonstrates the **strong, consistent gains** in reading and writing skills that Pentz students have achieved.

Our Mathematics Data....



The above graph demonstrates Pentz student improvement in math at the grade 3 level. In just one year, Pentz went from 71% of students performing below the SSRSB and Provincial averages, to 100% of students meeting or exceeding expectations and exceeding SSRSB and Provincial averages.



Assessment results for Pentz Elementary demonstrate that 100% of students in grade 6 met or **exceeded** board and provincial expectations in numeracy for both years.

Comparisons were drawn between Pentz Elementary School, the South Shore Regional School Board, and the Province of Nova Scotia averages. The data presented was all that was available to this point in time. Overall we are meeting and exceeding expectations for student success in literacy and numeracy. By the time our students complete grade 6, **ALL** of their scores are at 100% for literacy and numeracy. This demonstrates that not only is Pentz exceeding Board and Provincial averages, we are an **IMPROVING** school, demonstrating strong growth from grade to grade.



Any organization that does not improve or change is destined to fail (Fullen, 2005). Schools are organizations. Fullen (2011) argues that schools that make student achievement and working together a priority will be successful in the improvement process. He states that even schools with strong student performance data still need to focus on improvement. Pentz Elementary School's focus is on student success through improvement. This success is supported in the school data.

Pentz Elementary School has achieved this success through working closely with students, their families and the communities it serves, to best support student learning and social development. The staff has a strong team of professionals who work effectively, and whose focus it is to support families and student success in school and life.

Research supports the concept that a focus on the learning tasks of individual students raises the achievement of all students in the classroom and the school. The most significant, and often the most substantial learning gains in this process are for low achieving students (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

The staff of Pentz Elementary School has successfully developed a core group of professionals who work extremely effectively in this capacity, and have created the individual supports that enable students to achieve success at school.

Researchers indicate that resilience, resourcefulness, reflection and reciprocity are paramount in learning and that not a lot of this level of learning is happening in schools (Claxton as cited by Fullen, 2005). This type of learning will only occur if teachers begin to work smarter, not harder, and this learning must be distributed and engaging among educators



Criterion 2 – Operational Expenditures

In the overall board budget, it is not expensive to operate Pentz Elementary School.

Both the Impact Assessment Report and the Building Condition Study (2009), commissioned by the SSRSB and produced by SP Dumaresk, established the 5-year average for Pentz Elementary School operational costs to be in the range of \$69,000 annually.

Assuming an overall budget of approximately \$74,000,000, operating costs for Pentz Elementary School are **less than one thousandth of one percent** (.0009, or 9/1000) of the school board's budget. ($\$69,587/\$74,000,000 = 0.0009403$)

Pentz operational costs are the lowest board-wide, with the exception of the Big Tancook, Greenfield and the P3 schools.

School	Operating Costs (5 yr)	Operating Costs (2012)
Pentz	\$69,587	\$70,454
Petite Riviere	\$70,361	\$65,929
Mill Village	\$78,170	\$73,904
Hebville Elementary	\$95,059	\$88,970
Gold River-Western Shore	\$101,294	\$98,994
New Ross	\$119,579	\$108,134
Milton		\$133,496
West Northfield		\$148,838
New Germany Elementary		\$179,035
Chester District		\$241,551
Bridgewater Elementary		\$341,012
J.C.Wickwire		\$366,271

In terms of the estimated financial impact of the options (table 6-p. 10), and using the following table, the Study Committee would like to comment on some of the figures relating to the status quo (Option 1) versus a new school (Option 5), and to clarify a definition:

The term, "**MATERIAL INCREASE**", as was noted several times in the Impact Assessment Report, has been described by board staff as \$5000 or less).

Item	Option 5 - New school for PES/PRES		Comment
	Savings	Net gain	
Reduction in property service costs	-139,948	UNKNOWN	While the operating costs of PES/PRES would disappear, the saving would need to be measured against the increased operating costs of the new school, which are unknown.
Increase in property service costs – receiving school	TBD		
Reduction in teaching staff costs – old school	-731,135	\$93,154	The difference between the reduction of teaching staff in PES/PRES and teaching staff in a new school is \$93,154. Staffing allocations are unknown at this time. The addition of 1.5 FTE, or another specialist position, would erase this
Increase in teaching staff costs – receiving school	637,981		
Reduction in Admin staff (principal) costs –old school	-157,538	\$62,837	These items include the removal of two principal positions, to be replaced with one. However, the creation of a vice-principal position could seriously erode this saving, or even eliminate it altogether, depending on the license and experience of the person hired.
Increase in admin staff (principal) costs – receiving school	94,701		
Reduction in non-teaching staff costs – old school	-75,308	-\$5,251	This figure represents an increase in staffing, and could be considered "No material increase".
Increase in non-teaching staff costs – receiving school	80,559		
Increase(decrease) in Bussing costs	No material increase	UNKNOWN	While the table states that there will be no material increase in bussing costs, this statement is not based on actual data. No proposed bus routes were generated. The Transportation Department has the capability of creating "what-if" scenarios, both with possible new school locations and different variations of bus runs. This was not done, and it merely guess work to state that there will be no material increase in costs, not to mention the times that students spend on busses.
Reduction in principal's operating costs (supplies) and SAC fixed amounts (see criterion 2.2 below)	-2,875	\$200	This is an erroneous saving. While the \$200 SAC cost will be eliminated for one school, the number of students will not decrease, and the amount spent on supplies should remain roughly the same. Instead of a \$2,875 saving, the actual saving will be \$200.

Item	Option 5 - New school for PES/PRES		Comment
	Savings	Net gain	
Hogg Formula Sq. Ft. reduction (in revenue) – 25% (see criterion 2.3 below)		-\$6,880	This amount will be eliminated upon closing PES.
Hogg Formula principal funding reduction (in revenue)		-\$62,837	This figure reflects a loss to the board of \$62,837. The loss could be increased by the addition of a vice-principal position, by the addition of 1 more FTE in the teaching staff, or an additional specialist position.
Small isolated school teaching funding reduction (in revenue)		-\$143,940	<i>"To date, the small isolated school funding is only for calculation purposes. It is not targeted and has had no impact on our total funding. We have no confirmation that this will change."</i>
Small isolated school funding reduction (in revenue) – additional		-\$9,804	Pentz & Petite schools are eligible for small school funding (71,970 each). A new, larger school would not be eligible. Pentz & Petite, 4,902 each
Transition period funding offset		\$153,744	Because small school funding is not targeted, it becomes part of the Board's overall, general fund. Not all of the monies received would be needed to cover PES operating costs. In the past, this was considered a net gain in revenue, to be used elsewhere.
TOTAL YEARLY COST SAVINGS	TBD	\$81,223	

Operational Factors for Status Quo (Option 1)

The operational costs of maintaining the status quo, Option 1 (keeping the Pentz Elementary School open) have remained stable over the past 5 years at roughly \$70,000 per year. There is no reason to believe that Pentz's stable costs will change any more radically than any other school in the district.

Operational Factors to build a new school for Pentz/Petite Riviere (Option 5):

Based on the figures in the preceding chart, there is a very small net financial gain (\$81,223) in closing the Pentz Elementary School. In building a new school for PES/PRES, this small financial gain would be quickly eliminated by the addition of another teacher, a vice-principal position, and/or another specialist position, which would inevitably be necessary.

The operating costs of a new school are unknown and unpredictable at this point in time. The estimate given for building a new school for PES/PRES, \$12,500,000, will undoubtedly increase as time elapses between a decision to build and the actual start and completion of the building. It is nearly impossible to comment on any of the financial aspects of such a decision.

Option 5, building a new school to house Pentz and Petite Riviere students together, was the second choice of those families that responded to a survey sent out through the school. However, this option was the preferable alternative only should it be impossible to keep the Pentz Elementary School operating.

A consideration that has not been factored into the operational costs in the Impact Assessment Report, but which should be weighed against the insignificant cost of maintaining the status quo, is the cost of dismantling Pentz Elementary School should it be closed. These costs are estimated to be in the range of \$300,000 – \$500,000, depending on the materials used in the original construction of the building. It is important to note that, according to the Department of the Environment, simply demolishing the building is not an option.

The negative impact of the upheaval and stress on students, staff, families and communities cannot be measured in dollars and cents. The Study Committee feels that the small net financial gain for the Board is insignificant when compared to the destruction of the excellent and well-established academic and social foundations at Pentz Elementary School.

Criterion 3 – Capital Expenditures

The Impact Assessment Report states that

“Although there were several items that SSRSB staff found to be in need of repair or replacement, the only area of concern for our assessment, outside of regular cosmetic upgrades, was accessibility. Providing wheelchair access to the front entrance and washrooms is a requirement to meet the standards of access adopted by the Board. In the absence of a detailed engineering assessment, we based estimates on previously obtained engineering estimates for other schools. Costs are estimated to range from \$23,000 to \$49,000”.

The Study Committee has looked into previous estimates for completing the required accessibility upgrades for Pentz Elementary School. We have found that those costs described above are excessive and do not reflect what might be the true costs of such upgrades. The 2009 Building Condition Study, states that the costs associated with upgrading the accessibility of the front entrance and the school washrooms are as follows:

■ Front entrance (PEN53)	Install automatic front door opener	\$4,000
■ Student washrooms (PEN54)	Make student washrooms accessible	\$6,000
■ Staff washrooms (PEN55)	Make staff washrooms accessible	\$6,000

Based on these figures, and taking 10% inflation into account, the cost is still well below \$20,000.

The Impact Assessment Report implies that, aside from items identified as in need of repair or replacement, the costs stated above, if completed, would meet code requirements for the next 5 years.

- It would not take a large investment to maintain the school for the next 5-year period. The School Board’s Facilities Management Study (2009) reported that it would require \$188,000 to bring Pentz up to standard for the next 5 years (including the accessibility costs).

This would require only three hundredths of one percent (.003 or 3/100) of the board’s budget to maintain the school for that period. ($\$188,000/\$74,000,000 = 0.0025405$).

If this 2009 figure is adjusted to account for inflation since that time, using a 10%

increase, bringing the figure to \$206,800, which still represents only a very small percentage of the overall Board budget.

The assessment report states that

“A substantial increase in long-term capital costs will have to be incurred to keep PES open long term”.

The length of “long-term” is not defined, but the Building Condition Study in 2009 defined long term as 25 years.

- Costs long-term (undefined) in assessment report \$ 790,000
- Costs 25 years, facilities study \$1,017,000

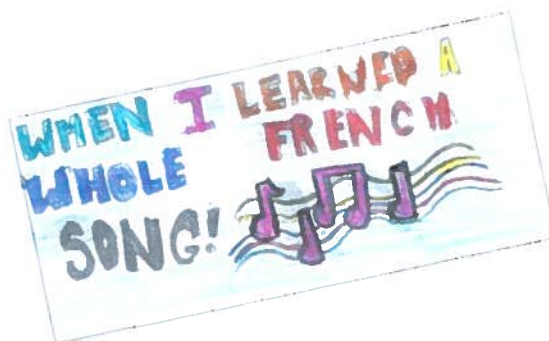
While it is not practical to look so far down the road for any one school, the costs associated with maintaining the Pentz Elementary School building for the long term do not represent a significant amount of the school board budget.

Indeed, even were this not the case the assessment report further states that

“...for the purpose of this assessment, longer-term requirements should not be considered a determining factor for closing the school,.....” (p.13).

In summary,

- Capital expenditures to keep Pentz Elementary School open do not represent a significant amount of the school board’s financial resources.
- The enormous negative impact on the students, staff, families and communities of closing the Pentz Elementary School is neither warranted nor justified by the capital expenditure costs of keeping the school open.



Criterion 4 – Staffing Allocation Efficiencies

An analysis of the Staffing Allocation table (Appendix E in the Impact Assessment Report) shows that with either option 5 (new school for Pentz and Petite) or Option 2 (close Pentz and send students to Hebbville), there will be a loss of four and one half (4.5) FTEs.

Classes will be much larger in most cases, and resources will be spread much thinner among the students, especially among those needing the most help.

In terms of French, music and physical education, the gains are so small as to be non-existent, and some of the losses (regular classroom teachers) are fairly large.

Table 1 (below) shows the details of staffing gains or losses with Option 5.

TABLE 1	Option 1		Option 5					
	Status Quo			Gain Loss				
	PES (P-6)	PRES (P-6)	PES PRES (P-6)					
Enrolment	86	92	178					
Classroom teachers	3.68	3.64	6.37	-0.95	saves less than 1 classroom FTE			
Phys Ed	0.44	0.36	0.59	-0.21	big decrease; teacher doesn't have to travel, but more kids in classes,			
Music	0.22	0.17	0.31	-0.08	small decrease, and teacher doesn't have to travel, but more kids in cla			
French	0.22	0.22	0.44	0.00	stays same FTE, but larger classes			
PST Resource	0.51	0.55	1.06	0.00	stays same FTE, but larger classes			
guidance	0.30	0.25	0.40	-0.15	large decrease and larger student body			
Behavioural Support	0.11	0.12	0.24	0.01	miniscule gain for larger student body			
Succeeding in Reading	0.25	0.25	0.38	-0.12	large decrease for twice # of students			
Admin	0.90	0.80	1.00	-0.70	increases workload by more than 50%, for double # of kids			
Literacy Intervention	0.11	0.11	0.11	-0.11	FTE halved for twice # students			
Formula Adjustments	0.27	0.30	0.51	-0.06				
Jr. High Staffing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00				
Total Staffing	6.86	6.77	11.41	-2.22				
			Gain/Loss of FTE's	-4.59				

Table 2 (below) shows the details of staffing gains or losses with Option 2.

TABLE 2	Option 1		Option 2					
	Status Quo			Gain Loss				
	PES (P-6)	HA (P-9)	PES & HA (P-9)					
Enrolment	86	519	605					
Classroom teachers	3.68	9.03	11.84	-0.87	no financial gain-saves less than 1 classroom FTE			
Phys Ed	0.44	0.88	1.12	-0.20	large decrease, and teacher doesn't have to travel, but more kids in cla			
Music	0.22	0.43	0.57	-0.08	small decrease, and teacher doesn't have to travel, but more kids in cla			
French	0.22	0.66	0.77	-0.11	small decrease, and teacher doesn't have to travel, but more kids in cla			
PST Resource	0.51	1.44	1.95	0.00	stays the same			
guidance	0.30	1.00	1.30	0.00	stays the same, but seems to include jr. high			
Behavioural Support	0.11	0.69	0.80	0.00	stays the same, but seems to include jr. high			
Succeeding in Reading	0.25	0.38	0.63	0.00	stays the same, but seems to include jr. high			
Admin	0.90	2.75	2.75	-0.90	increases workload by more than 50%, for double # of kids			
Literacy Intervention	0.11	0.11	0.11	-0.11	FTE halved for far larger # students			
Formula Adjustments	0.27	1.06	1.30	-0.03				
Jr. High Staffing	0.00	16.28	16.28	0.00				
Total Staffing	6.86	34.71	39.38	-2.19				
			Gain/Loss of FTE's	-4.49				

Criterion 5 – Impact on Educational Staff

Pentz Elementary School currently employs a team of highly effective, qualified teachers. Teaching Staff report their caseloads to be highly manageable, and furthermore, allow for their participation in extracurricular activities within the school and community. Their effectiveness has been illustrated in the provincial accreditation of the school. Additionally, the provincial assessment results shown in Criterion 1 illustrate that the academic accomplishments of students attending Pentz Elementary School surpass other schools in our region in all areas. Such findings would not exist without skilled teaching staff, supported administrator practices, manageable case loads and effective collaborative teaching practices.

Deloitte's Impact Assessment Report notes the above, and also notes that there is "specific evidence to conclude that the ability to attract suitably qualified teachers is a problem...". The report further notes that

"...there can be problems in attracting specialist teachers..."

However, there are **NO** problems to date and nothing to support this assumption.

Staff at Pentz Elementary School currently includes a French teacher, music teacher and a physical education teacher, none of whom is itinerant.

Specialist services, such as guidance, PST/Resource, Behavioural Support (PATHS), literacy intervention speech-language pathology and Succeeding in Reading, are all available at the school on a regularly scheduled basis.

Additionally, the number of unemployed teachers in the province of Nova Scotia is at an all time high. The market will continue to be saturated with professional educators well into the future, as schools are downsizing and as numbers decline. As a result, unemployed teachers within the province are willing to accept positions which require their relocation to rural areas.

The Impact Assessment Report assumption that it could be difficult to find teachers willing to teach at Pentz Elementary School is not a viable concern.

Also, due to Pentz Elementary School's collaborative teaching environment and manageable class sizes, teaching assignments and assignments of students to any particular class are not problematic. Teaching staff and administrators ensure that any concerns in relation to such assignments are addressed and effectively resolved. Due to small class sizes, teaching staff are not over-taxed. They have the capability and willingness to assist where their strengths are evident and appropriate, to ensure the best interests of the students and their individual needs.



Criterion 6 – Student Transportation

The issue of students travel time on busses is an important consideration for parents when faced with the possible closure of Pentz Elementary School. Written and verbal feedback both from school families and the general public indicate that this is an area of deep concern.

There is very little information regarding this important issue in this section of the Impact Assessment Report.

“It was agreed by staff that a full and detailed route review of the transportation plan would be required to determine the exact impact on student travel times and costs.” (P.21)

6.1: Increase or decrease in time/distance on bus for students.

In order to have a basis for discussion regarding the status quo, the Study Committee requested information about times and bus stops for the current bus routes for Pentz/Hebbville/Parkview.

According to that information, the time that Pentz students spend on their bus currently ranges from 20 minutes to 31 minutes in the morning, and 11 minutes to 34 minutes in the afternoon. These riding times are not excessive for elementary students, and allow for alert children going to and from school.

Regarding this important issue for the option of building a new school for PES/PRES (option 5), the only comments contained in the Impact Assessment Report concerning any increases or decreases in travel times are:

“The site of a potential new school is still unknown, which makes it difficult to estimate the impact on student transportation. Site selection and a complete route review would be required before any estimates could be made.” (our emphasis) (p.22)

Even estimates are not possible without more information.

It is true that, without a specific location for a new school, no actual routes and times could be generated. However, the Board’s transportation personnel, using the software and data at their disposal, do have the capability to generate multiple “what-if” situations, based on possible locations of a new school. Indeed, **right at the beginning of the assessment report**, the report itself states that

“the ‘ new school’ being referred to in these options is expected to be a newly constructed elementary school that would be located somewhere in the Hebbville area or in a location that would facilitate the most optimal transport option for PES and PRES students.” (p.5)

Without any “what-if” scenarios, we are left with guesswork and unsupported statements as to any possible impacts. It is impossible to know how these times will change for Pentz Elementary School students, but it is a predictable certainty that many will substantially increase.

A decision to close the school, and move the students to another school, should not be made in the absence of this critical information.

6.2: Increase or decrease in time/distance for families to attend school activities

Generally speaking, the time/distance with the status quo (Option 1) is satisfactory to the families of children currently attending Pentz Elementary School. The farthest distance from any home in the catchment area to the school is approximately 12.5 km. There has been no indication that this is a problem for most families, and in cases where it may present a problem, arrangements have often been worked out to minimize it.

Regarding a new school for PES/PRES (option 5), we are again faced with the fact that there is absolutely no information, nor even any speculation, regarding any impacts on families for this new school. It is reasonable to expect that the farther away the school is from the students’ home community, the less interaction there will be for students, volunteers and families.

“The site of a potential new school is still unknown, which makes it difficult to estimate the impact on time/distance for families to attend school activities.” (p.23)

In a catchment area for a new school, placed optimally for PES and PRES, the shortest distance from the outside edges, could be approximately 16km, and ranging up to 21 km.

Again, the Study Committee feels that a decision to close the school, and to move the students to a different school, should not be made in the absence of so much critical information. It is fairly safe to predict that increasing time and distance from the school will have a negative impact on attendance at the activities that take place there.

We must ask how a logical, fair or even economically sound decision can be made.

6.3: Impact on bell times

The status quo (Option 1), our preferred option, will produce no change in bell times.

Regarding the construction of a new school (Option 5), and the impact on bell times, the assessment reports that

"The site of a potential new school is still unknown, which makes it difficult to estimate the impact on current student bell times. Site selection and a complete route review would be required before any estimates could be made." (p. 23)

There is no information on which to base a decision.

6.4: Ongoing annual reduction or increase in student transportation costs.

There are no figures regarding this item for the status quo, although current and historical costs are readily available.

The Study Committee looked at the current bus routes for Pentz Elementary School and concluded that there could be possible cost savings to be made within the current configurations. On the face of it, it appears that savings might be achieved with some reconfiguration of the routes.

The option of a new school for PES/PRES (option 5) has no data to support a decision to build a new school.

"The Transportation Department of the SSRSB cannot determine transportation costs associated with these options. To do so, a complete route review would be required and without a definite location of the new school it is impossible to determine the costs of these two options." (p.24)

The only statement regarding any impact is:

The experience of other Provincial School Boards suggests that when integrating new schools into a district there is no material impact on transportation costs, however, this is site and situation specific." (p.24)

This statement is not supported by any data, nor referenced as to its source. It does not seem to provide a sound basis for a decision to close an existing school.

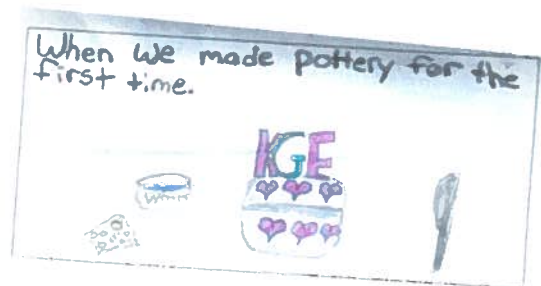
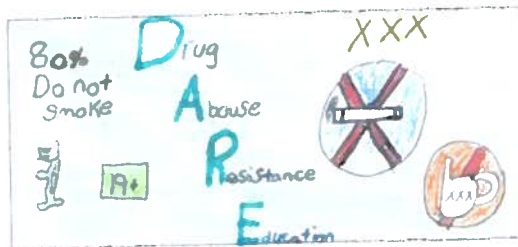
Summary – Criterion 6:

The time that students spend on school busses is an important consideration for families when contemplating school closure.

The student transportation section of the assessment report contains little or no transportation data to support a decision to close the Pentz Elementary School in favour of building a larger school in a different location, while the available data regarding the status quo does support keeping the school operational.

The Study Committee feels that a decision to close the school, and move the students to another school, should not be made in the absence of such critical information.

Times and/or costs could increase greatly -no one knows - but concrete information will come only after the decision has been made – too late to go back, despite any subsequent, possibly severe negative impacts to both the students and the Board’s bottom line.



Criterion 7 – Extra Curricular Activities

Research notes that small, community schools are more likely to provide all learners with opportunities to get involved. An important element of student life as research also links student participation to likelihood of graduation (Cotton, 1996; Corbett and Mulcahy, 2006).

Pentz Elementary School has a long history of supporting culture and athletics. According to the Impact Assessment Report (2012), our school has a “tradition of providing successful and extensive extra-curricular programs”. Our children participate in a host of intramural and extra-curricular activities such as soccer, basketball, cross-country running, baseball, skating, skiing, sledding, dodge ball, floor hockey, yoga and choir. They’ve taken field trips to the Lunenburg Fisheries Museum, Tancook Island, HB Studios, and Upper Clements Park, Noggins Farm, Ross Farm Museum and many other places. They have also enjoyed visits from local artists, authors, musicians, an outdoor survival enthusiast, theater troupes, as well as skateboarding, cycling, fitness and gymnastic instructors. Each grade 3 student in our school completes the Swim to Survive program designed by the Lifesaving Society of Nova Scotia teaching them to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. The Impact Assessment Report (2012) states that our programs are supported by “a high level of commitment from staff and families of the school in terms of both offering/supervising each activity and in raising the financial, material and human resources to the support the activities”. There is no question, our strong program brings our school and community together, building a sense of school and community spirit that would not otherwise exist. The Impact Assessment Report (2012) also notes that:

“having a larger number of staff members and families, with a broader school community could potentially enhance or extend what is already offered”

The report itself also points out that:

“the impact on some families of PES, and perhaps the majority, would be one of disadvantage and inconvenience, compared to the status quo”.

Criterion 8 – Community Relationship & School Usage

Community is important for our children. If you don't have it, you don't know what we're talking about. If you do, you know what we stand to lose.

Children need supportive parents, safe neighbourhoods, adult mentors, and caring teachers. Children need role models who will help them to develop a sense of civic and social responsibility. Children need to feel that they belong.

Pentz Elementary School recognizes this and has reached out to local businesses, churches, fire departments and residents to help develop a greater sense of community and belongingness for our children. The benefits to our children have been immeasurable. Whether it is a safe, warm, dry place to go in an emergency, a home-cooked meal, a host of volunteers assisting with a range of school-related activities, or a benefit to assist a struggling family, our community supports our school.

There is no greater example of this than each Remembrance Day when we welcome veterans and other members of the Armed Forces to join us for our ceremony. Frank Hammond landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. He is a piece of living history and has come to talk to the children of Pentz Elementary School every year for the past 13 years. This is community. If Frank Hammond, didn't see the value of our rural school, he would have stopped visiting when his grandchildren graduated.

Our community also supported our efforts to build an outdoor rink, a kitchen garden and storage shed to house the necessary tools and equipment. Our outdoor rink creates an opportunity for families to play together, provides a **free, unscheduled** and well-lit recreational skating opportunity for the entire community, promotes healthy lifestyle adding to the overall safety of the community, and fosters neighbourhood spirit.

We bought cross-country skis; enough for an entire classroom of children to go out together. We have a full range of sizes so every child in the school has equal opportunity to participate in a sport they might not have access to otherwise.

Our kitchen garden offers our children the opportunity to engage in experimental learning and promotes concepts of ecology. Integrating the school garden into the curriculum encourages lesson plans that literally take our students from seed to table. Our children learn where their food comes from. Our garden fosters better nutrition as students are eager to consume their produce in our school's hot lunches. Gardening is also considered a moderate to intense form of exercise requiring endurance, flexibility and strength. It provides all our students with a source of fruits and vegetables, including those who may not have access. Our garden beautifies our school property, provides a sense of community, and increases feelings of safety, community and school pride.

We are also a Healthy, Active Living School with one of the few remaining hot lunch and breakfast programs run completely by volunteers. Each time we make food, we ensure there is "extra in the pot", so that NO CHILD GOES HUNGRY, regardless of whether they can pay or not. Do large schools do this? Do they even recognize there are children who have nothing in their lunch boxes?

We have always come together before the Christmas holidays for a turkey dinner. For years, a group of parent and community volunteers prepared and served it at the school. Last year, we were invited to have it at the Pleasantville Fire Hall. This year, the fire departments from Pleasantville, Conquerall Bank and Lahave worked together to provide the children of our school with a turkey dinner and all the trimmings. The meal was completely paid for by the participating departments and made completely from scratch by volunteers. The feeling of community and belongingness was palpable.

When there is a greater sense of community, it creates a greater sense of responsibility for the school. Students, teachers, family and community members are more likely to engage in responsible and constructive behaviour.

One of the most notable characteristics of our school is the lack of bullying.

When students have a strong attachment to their school, they experience fewer emotional and behavioral problems and have better educational outcomes. A stronger attachment to the school develops increased feelings of security and acceptance with the school. These outcomes lead to

improved academic and behavioural functioning and increased literary skills (Canadian Public Health Association, 2003,b).

The size of our school and its proximity and connection to our community has made Pentz Elementary a quality school. That is why there is so much support to keep our children in our community.

Some might argue that if our children were to move to another school outside our community, community will follow, but we all know this is not the case.

Our children have been graduating from Pentz and moving to junior high at another school for years and community has not followed. Our community is here. Here where our churches are. Here where our fire departments are. Here where our elders are. Here along the river, that leads to the sea. Our community is here. It is strong and it is supporting our school as it has done in the past and will continue to do for many, many years.

Surveys

Community Survey - The Study Committee conducted a random community-wide survey regarding awareness of the school review and opinions as to whether or not community members felt that the school should stay open or not.

- Most of the residents surveyed (83.2%) were aware, to varying degrees, of the review process and the possibility that Pentz Elementary School may be closed permanently.
- Most of the residents surveyed (72.6%) did not currently have children or grandchildren attending the Pentz Elementary School.

Of those 72.6% of households that do not have anyone currently attending Pentz, **94% stated that they did not want to close Pentz Elementary School.** This figure indicates a very high degree of community support for maintaining Pentz Elementary School as a viable educational institution.

- Most of the residents surveyed (78.8%) will not have children or grandchildren attending Pentz within the next 5 years.

Of those 78.8% of households that will not have children or grandchildren attending Pentz within the next 5 years, **91% of them indicated that they would prefer to keep Pentz Elementary School open.** Again, this high

percentage indicates strong community support for maintaining Pentz as an operational school.

Overall, 90.3% of all households surveyed stated that they prefer to keep the Pentz Elementary School open.

See appendices A and B.

Parent Survey sent from school - a survey was sent home to parents, asking which of the 5 options they would prefer. There were 32 surveys returned to the school. Given that many families have more than one child in the school, this could be considered to be a fairly respectable rate of return. The results are in the following table:

Option	1	2	3	4	5
		all to	split between	3 schools	2 schools
	Status Quo	Hebbville	HA and Petite	P-5	PES/PRES
1st choice	26	1	0	1	4
2nd choice	3	3	0	11	14

81% of respondents prefer Option 1, the status quo, to keep the school open. Option 5 had a narrow lead as the second choice, with Option 4 coming very close to Option 5.

Tell Them From Me Survey

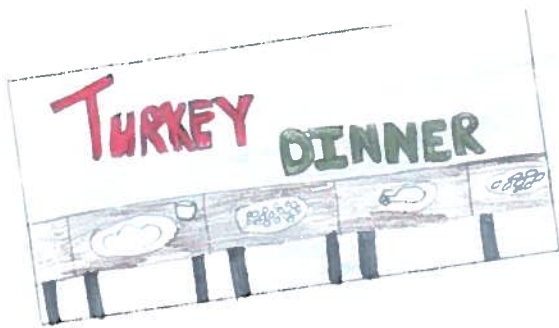
“Tell Them From Me” is a student survey completed by all Pentz Elementary School students in grades 4 through 6. It is a means of allowing students to give their input into school improvement initiatives in an anonymous way. The survey topics include such measures as social/emotional outcomes (e.g. physical fitness, high risk behaviors), and drivers of student outcomes (e.g. quality instruction, classroom context). The survey also allows students to give their thoughts and feedback in an open-ended question response. Data from this survey was used extensively in several of the School Improvement Plans produced by the School Advisory Committee and school staff in previous years.

The SAC/Study Committee submitted the open-ended question, “If Pentz Elementary School were to close, what would you miss the most?”

The data from this survey has not been quantified, but is very interesting in presenting a student-eye snapshot of how they feel about the school environment. Their responses are included, for the Board's information, in Appendix D.

Support from the Community:

The Study Committee has received letters of support from various community members and organizations. Several comments were also posted on FaceBook. They are included in Appendix E.



Criterion 9 – Impact on Receiving School

The status quo (Option 1), keeping Pentz Elementary School open, has no relevance regarding comments about a “receiving school”.

Pentz Elementary School has substantiated that students attending the school are receiving exceptional educational programming. Provincial Assessments confirm that the school is meeting and in most cases exceeding provincial standards. Assuming that data is the dominant factor being used in making decisions regarding school closure, Board Members are encouraged to look closely at what Pent Elementary School has in place that results in strong and consistent student success.

The supports that are in place for struggling learners, the multi-faceted supports and differentiated instruction, are highly successful and effective.

“...they should be putting a glass wall at the back of our school so that other schools could come and see some of what we do” (anonymous)

In considering the possibility of a “receiving school” becoming a reality, Board members should be asking questions and making comparisons with what is currently provided by the Pentz Elementary School.

- Is the receiving school able to provide the type of environment that our students and families are accustomed to?
- Is the receiving school able, or will it be able, to meet or exceed existing educational standards as are currently provided by Pentz Elementary School?
- Would necessary support services increase or decrease as a result of an increased number of students?
- Would challenged learners receive the necessary individual services, both academic and behavioural?
- Would students have the same accessibility for participation in sports and other extracurricular activities?

- Would transportation be a barrier in participation?
- Would families receive the same level of support from the school in relation to their children's academic and social needs?
- Would students and community have the opportunity to overlap when students are being removed from their communities daily for school attendance?

The answers to these questions, as well as the data that has been presented in this response, could suggest that closing Pentz Elementary School is solely a financial decision, and not a decision which should be made in the best interests of the students. A "receiving school", such as proposed in Option 5, may only succeed in eroding, or even destroying the progress that has evolved at Pentz Elementary School.



The “Unwritten” Criterion 10 – Declining Enrollment

Although declining enrolment was not directly addressed as a criterion in the Impact Assessment Report, it is the single most dominant factor, whether stated or not, in each of the nine criteria in the assessment.

What is “declining enrolment”?

In our present context, a reasonable definition would be that declining enrolment is the result of population decline within the catchment area of the school.

A closer look shows that the fact that there are fewer students in the school is not necessarily a matter of people leaving the area, or of few to no new people moving in.

Although some family members leave the area to find work, their families are generally staying put, where their roots are, and where they are settled.

New people are moving into the area all the time. In fact, due to the aging population moving on to more suitable housing, and today’s somewhat depressed economy, more properties are becoming available for sale, and prices have steadily been going down.

Other factors have contributed to the decline in enrolments that have been recorded over the past few years.

Not the least of these causes is that of board-facilitated transfers to other schools in the district. In the last 10 years, Pentz Elementary School has lost many students to this particular factor. French Immersion and the transfer of multiple children in one family are two of the most notable large-scale transfer of students. There was no net loss of students, as another school in the district would record a corresponding increase in enrolment.

Another significant factor in declining enrolment is the movement of students to other educational institutions that are not associated with the South Shore Regional School Board. These institutions include the Waldorf School, the French first language school, L’Ecole de la Rive Sud, and the rise of home schooling. These educational institutions have diverted a significant number of our students from the mainstream public school system, but they do not represent a decline in the number of school age children in the region.

When taking these factors into account over the last 8-10 years, a different picture emerges.

Taking the above factors into account, and accounting for those students who changed schools within the district, it can be seen in the following chart that the **enrolments at Pentz Elementary**

School have remained stable. From '05-'06 to '12-'13, there was little to no significant percentage change in the number of students in the school. In fact, the one large change was in '06-'07, when there was an increase in the student population.

Percentage of Enrolment Change			
Year	# students	% change	Comments
98-99	167		
99-00	163	-0.02	
00-01	159	-0.02	
01-02	151	-0.05	
02-03	137	-0.09	15 kids to Fr Imm
03-04	114	-0.17	
04-05	96	-0.16	
05-06	90	-0.06	
06-07	102	0.13	big gain in number of students
07-08	103	0.01	
08-09	103	0.00	
09-10	98	-0.05	added back in 5 kids transferred to another school in district
10-11	99	0.01	
11-12	98	-0.01	
12-13	104	0.06	added back in 8 kids transferred to another school in district

It should be noted that future projections in the Impact Assessment Report are based on the misinterpretation of declining enrolment. A continuing dramatic decline in student numbers is projected into the next 3 years. These projections are based on a mathematical formula that uses a set percent to calculate the possible decline for each succeeding year. The Study Committee recognizes a general decrease in school age populations. However, the projections as presented in the Impact Assessment Report are not based on students changing schools and remaining in the district. This method of counting numbers results in a more accurate accounting for student numbers, and a smaller net loss of student numbers.

Based on this premise, it can be said that Pentz Elementary School does have a stable student population .which can be expected to remain stable over the next few years.

Final Summary and Recommendations

Summary

Pentz Elementary is a quality school.

Pentz Elementary School is meeting and exceeding expectations in literacy and numeracy. By the time our students complete grade 6, ALL of them are at 100% for literacy and numeracy. This demonstrates that not only is Pentz exceeding Board and Provincial averages, we are an IMPROVING school, demonstrating growth from grade to grade.

The cost of operating Pentz Elementary is less than one thousandth of one percent of the School Board's budget, making it one of the lowest board-wide.

It would not take a large investment to maintain our school for the next 5-year period. The Facilities Management Study (2009) reported required upgrades to bring Pentz up to standard for the next five years would cost three hundredths of one percent of the board's budget. Even if the 2009 figure is adjusted to account for inflation, it is still a very small percentage of the overall budget.

If our school were to close, the negative impact of the upheaval and stress on students, staff, families and our community could not be measured in dollars and cents and is neither warranted nor justified by the capital expenditure costs of keeping the school open.

In both Option 5 and Option 2, the Staffing Allocation forecast shows that there will be a loss of 4.5 FTEs for the school.

This is a serious erosion of teacher resource for our students. Classes could double in size, but students will have less time on task with teachers. All teacher resources, not only those specialist services, will be spread much thinner among the students, especially among those needing the most help.

In terms of French, music and physical education, the gains are so small as to be non-existent, and some of the losses (regular classroom teachers) are fairly large.

Pentz Elementary School employs a team of highly effective, qualified teachers. The academic accomplishments of students attending Pentz Elementary School surpass other schools in our region in all areas. The assumption of the Impact Assessment Report, indicating our ability to attract suitably qualified teachers and specialist teachers to be a problem is unfounded. Due to Pentz Elementary School's collaborative teaching environment and manageable class sizes our staff are not over-taxed and are able to assist where strengths

are evident and appropriate to ensure the best interests of the students and their individual needs.

The time that students spend on school busses is an important consideration for families when contemplating school closure. The student transportation section of the Impact Assessment Report contains little or no transportation data to support a decision to close the Pentz Elementary School in favor of building a larger school in a different location, while the available data regarding the status quo does support keeping the school operational. The Study Committee feels that a decision to close the school, and move the students to another school, should not be made in the absence of such critical information. Times and/or costs could increase greatly -no one knows - but the information will come only after the decision has been made – too late to go back, despite any subsequent, possibly severe negative impacts to both the students and the board’s bottom line.

Pentz Elementary School has a long “tradition of providing successful and extensive extracurricular programs” (Deloitte, 2012) supported by “a high level of commitment from staff and families of the school in terms of both offering/supervising each activity and in raising the financial, material and human resources to support the activities” (Deloitte, 2012). The Deloitte report further states, “while a larger number of staff members and families, with a broader school community could potentially enhance or extend what is already offered, the impact on some families of PES, and perhaps the majority, would be one of disadvantage and inconvenience, compared to the status quo.”

Our school is far more than just a building. It is the heart of our community; a gathering place where our children feel respected, appreciated, cared for and safe. The “Tell It From Me” survey completed by our grades 4-6 students, asked “If Pentz Elementary were to close, what would you miss the most?” One student summed it up beautifully by responding “that we have so much love”. Our school and community are one, and our children’s lives are enriched by the support of their parents, grandparents, elders and other people who make an effort to be involved in school activities. The community survey (appendices A and B) indicated 90.3% support for keeping our school in our community.

Recommendations:

We recognize the funding dilemma - which funding pocket does the money come from –the School Board’s, or the Department’s. While it seems an easy solution to build a new school and let the provincial taxpayers pay for it, that decision needs to be more than simply a quick financial one.

The evidence and data presented in this Response demonstrate the value that students receive in a small school environment. Extensive educational research into the benefits of small school environments reinforces that value.

The Impact Assessment Report covered the impacts of the many variables included in the school review process. But nowhere did it make any mention of the impact on the students and their families if the school is closed.

The Board has a responsibility to govern with the best interests of the students as the primary consideration. The Board must ask itself – whose best interest is served with a larger, more distant elementary school?

Based on the criteria of outstanding educational value and the best interests of the students,

it makes no sense to close this highly functional, low-cost school.

The decision would seem to be clearly in favour of maintaining the status quo, of continuing to operate the Pentz Elementary School.

Appendix A: Community Survey - Results

A random sample of households in each of the seven communities that make up the Pentz catchment area were called and asked to respond to the survey questions below.

The seven communities are: Conquerall Bank Pleasantville
West Lahave Lake Centre
Pentz Lahave
Dublin Shore

Question 1: Are you aware that the Pentz Elementary School is under review for possible closure: Yes/No

Most of the residents surveyed (83.2%) were aware, to varying degrees, of the review process and the possibility that Pentz Elementary School may be closed permanently.

Question 2: Do you currently have children or grandchildren attending Pentz Elementary School? Yes/No

Most of the residents surveyed (72.6%) did not currently have children or grandchildren attending the Pentz Elementary School.

Of those 72.6% of households that do not have anyone currently attending Pentz, 94% stated that they did not want to close Pentz Elementary School. This figure indicates a very high degree of community support for maintaining Pentz Elementary School as a viable educational institution.

Question 3: Will you have children or grandchildren attending Pentz Elementary School within the next 5 years?

Most of the residents surveyed (78.8%) will not have children or grandchildren attending Pentz within the next 5 years.

Of those 78.8% of households that will not have children or grandchildren attending Pentz within the next 5 years, 91% of them indicated that they would prefer to keep Pentz Elementary School open. Again, this high percentage indicates strong community support for maintaining Pentz as an operational school.

Question 4: Do you feel that the Pentz Elementary School should remain open?

Overall, 90.3% of all households surveyed stated that they prefer to keep the Pentz Elementary School open.

		Total responses	Yes	No	d/k-n/a decline	%yes	%no	% d/k	Check totals	
1	Are you aware that the Pentz School is under review for possible closure?	113	94	18	1	83.2%	15.9%	0.9%	100.0%	113
2	Do you currently have children or grandchildren attending the Pentz school?	113	30	82	1	26.5%	72.6%	0.9%	100.0%	113
3	Do you have children or grandchildren who will be attending the Pentz school in the next 5 years?	113	21	89	3	18.6%	78.8%	2.7%	100.0%	113
4	Do you feel that the Pentz School should remain open?	113	102	2	9	90.3%	1.8%	8.0%	100.0%	113

Appendix B: Community Survey – Comments

These are the comments that were made regarding the possible closure of the Pentz Elementary School.

1. The school is not that old – there won't be anything left.
2. Long bus rides
3. Perfect little school – don't understand economics of a new school
4. Issues are dealt with immediately, in a big school, kids are on their own
5. Good little school
6. In a bigger school, with say, 4 grade 1 classes, there are too many people to go through for the kids with problems.
7. Good school, my kids did well. Lots of community support – everyone steps up and chips in – strong support.
8. Traveling is more difficult at a larger school.
9. Really good school. Like the way the kids are taught.
10. Excellent school. Not in the best interests of the kids to close it.
11. Kids had great time at Pentz. Same friends all the way through.
12. Although had no kids at that school, always went there for school concerts.
13. More personal touch. Teachers more connected. Always been a positive experience.
14. Don't want to build a new school – put the money into programs. Keep Pentz and Petite open and enlarge the Petite and Pentz catchment areas to include Hebbville Don't want to see technology suffer.
15. Very important to life of the community. Lost too much already.
16. Good school
17. Attend events there, like concerts and bazaars, whether or have kids there.
18. Hate to see it go – was a great thing for our kids
19. Great school, wouldn't want to see it close.
20. Pentz is a good school because it is smaller.
21. Nice location and heard lots of good things about Pentz Elementary School (no kids there ever)
22. Pentz is a wonderful school.
23. Nice school.

24. See both sides.
25. Would like to see the school remain open.
26. Small schools should remain open.
27. Pentz should remain open.
28. What will happen to school and the upkeep of the school? Great school and have heard great things. Are they looking at long term and other ideas first?
29. Small school but they were always taught – helped xxxx a lot with his problem.
30. I can't justify spending money on schools that are half full.
31. Love the small schools.
32. Pentz is a wonderful school!
33. Will be sad to see it close.
34. The school needs to stay open. Our community depends on it.
35. I am 79 years old and not terribly interested in this topic
36. Felt the school board could save money by bussing kids on one bus to different schools, i.e., drop off at elementary/jr. high. One route, one bus for multiple schools. Concerned about too many busses on one route. (*this is already the way it is done in many cases*).
37. Pentz is an old school with outdated technology and a high heating bill. Like option 2.
38. Concerned about travel time for children on the bus. Sad that they may close the school.
39. Too bad it may close. It keeps the community together.
40. It is very important that small community schools stay open. Gives the kids a sense of going to school vs. a rat race. Fortifies young children's identities. Mahone Bay and Riverport, and all the other recently closed schools should have remained open. Good idea to survey students of those new schools.
41. Part of the community heritage would be lost, watched children after children attend that school. What will happen to the building after the school closes? Concerned that there will still be taxes to pay on it, and wonder about future building use.
42. Please don't close Pentz. It's a very valuable asset to our community.
43. Not the same when kids go to a big school. Impacts on the children and the life-long effects are not always accounted for or realized in these decisions. Gradually losing community spirit. The community is being eroded away already, with both parents working and busy, hectic lives. Cant' get that back once it's gone. XXXX was in the last high school graduating class at Centre – her brother had to go to PVEC. It was difficult to make new social contacts in senior high. Know a child who attended Riverport. After the school closed, the child's bus time went from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. This is hard on families!
44. Community connection happens at our elementary schools. If closure is necessary, I would hope that a great deal of time would be taken to consider the impact it would have on everyone – community, families, etc.
45. Would like to keep Pentz open, but if necessary to close, then build new school for Pentz and Petite. There is overcrowding at Hebbville.
46. Bussing is a huge issue! Smaller children need to be kept near their homes. If change is slated to happen, the "it must be". But no more cuts to programs/no cuts in teacher positions, please. Keep our basic education program as is (status quo). The less upset, the better.
47. I volunteer at the school. Two of my own children attended there. I consider all 85 of the children as my own. Keep the school open.
48. A new school is not required as there are existing schools already.

49. I don't think that Pentz or any other small school should be close unless it is totally necessary. Children are getting lost, being ignored or forgotten in larger schools. Individuality is forgotten. Don't close Pentz!
50. I would like to see it stay open, it is an excellent school.
51. Understand the declining numbers, but strongly feel the school should remain open.
52. I am concerned about longer bus rides for the little children. The bigger kids should be getting up earlier vs. the little ones. It makes no sense at all. The little ones already get up early. Making them get up even earlier, that is a concern!
53. I still feel, logistically, that it is feasible to keep Pentz open. How long will the declining numbers last? Could turn around.
54. I went to Lahave School. Pentz was an excellent school for her son.
55. Pentz gave my children a great one-on-one education.
56. Great school, my kids did well there.
57. Very convenient location. Spring Fling brings in revenue.
58. I was a teacher at Pentz. I think that small schools are such a positive thing. They are so home-y, comfortable. They are able to provide such a positive environment. Pentz and Petite should stay open.
59. I was an employee at Pentz (assistant) and was secretary of the H&S. It was an issue then and I was a huge advocate of keeping the school open. I believe the class sizes and the location in the community are a huge advantage for our children.
60. Keep it in the community.
61. Pentz was a positive experience for all 4 of my kids. They really loved it. I am concerned about declining enrollment.
62. We are fortunate to have such a positive and top-of-the-line school environment for our children right in our community. It would be a shame to close it.
63. We had very positive experiences with Pentz! Our family enjoyed Pentz and what it had to offer. We don't want to see this small school close in lieu of a HUGE oversized school.
64. Hate to lose our small community schools. It was a solid foundation for our kids! We lose too much when we lose our smaller schools. Closing smaller schools is a HUGE step backward!
65. Pentz was the foundation of our children's education! Reading Recovery gave all of our children the help they needed to 'go forward'. We and our children were all Pentz students. Our sense of community started in school – our sense of giving back and volunteering came from Pentz! We still volunteer for our school events! Don't close Pentz! (grown kids)
66. Against all closure. Do not like community change or upset unless it is seriously needed.
67. Long bus rides are exhausting and set the pace for long school days. Kids are not at their best if leaving too early in the morning to catch busses. Keep our elementary schools close to home – close to our communities. Please!
68. Small schools are appropriate for small children! Small schools are the hub of smaller communities. Losing our schools will have a huge impact on our community. Bussing young children long distances is inappropriate and not effective for healthy learning. Fatigue and stress to families (if change occurs) creates negative impact.
69. "Please don't close Pentz Elementary School"! Our community will suffer without the school. Our grandchildren will attend Pentz. We don't want them going to school outside our community.

70. Please don't close Pentz Elementary School. If no alternative (but to close) is provided, please consider keeping Pentz and Petite together. We do not want long bus rides for our children if Pentz is closed and a new location is confirmed.
71. Please keep the school open. Bus ride to any other location will (no doubt) be too long. I support the child care now in place, but would have to change it. Too much upset for our family. A terrible loss to the community (families) if closure occurs.
72. No involvement, no thoughts about Pentz. We're seniors and are not interested in this survey.
73. Not interested and I really don't care one way or the other. My child did not attend Pentz very long so I have no feelings about the school.
74. My children went to Hebbville in jr. high Too far away. To consider doing it to elementary students is insane.
75. Should stay open. Both children went to Pentz and had a great education.
76. I don't feel that small children should be on the bus for longer than 10-15 minutes. Site of school is an important walking site and playground for the community.
77. Feel sad. Shame. Effects community. Opposed to it. Anyhow, people that have recently moved in will have to really consider where they want their children to go.
78. Was disappointed that one of the options was not to close Hebbville elementary and move those students to Pentz and Petite. This appears to be the option with the most cost savings. This would also allow Pentz and Petite to get the benefits associated with increased enrollment. Also concerned that this review will focus on money instead of what's in the best interest of the students and home communities.
79. Should remain open!
80. We would hate to lose the school. Big does not mean better!
81. Pentz is an excellent school – small building for elementary kids.
82. Is this school board in favour of small schools? Are they behind us? Why is Pentz catchment area smaller than Petite's?
83. Would like our school to remain open. Our taxes should be going to this school, not a school outside the community.
84. Moved in to new home because of school. Kind of community we want our kids to be living in and attending Pentz. I am involved with a playgroup of at least 15 parents whose children will attend Pentz.
85. Might be better in joining Pentz and Petite. Love to see a new school. Split classrooms are very tough. Both schools have health issues.
86. I like advantages of small schools. However, we need programming, i.e., librarians, cafeteria, etc. If the two schools could be combined with better facilities and programming then I am for it. I am not averse to having the children bussed to a different location, i.e., Hebbville as long as it is a p=6. Any different, there is too big an age gap. There is a culture of bullying and drugs in the jr. High.
87. I have mixed feelings because of the age of the building. If this building can't be kept open then I would rather see a school for Pentz and Petite.
88. I don't think it should close unless for health reasons. If so, combine all with Hebbville.
89. I would prefer the status quo and spend 500,000-1,000,000 on both. Or build a new school in a central area like Conquerall Mills and combine Hebbville, Pentz and Petite.
90. I don't have enough information regarding financial figures, etc. From what I hear, it is all about money and politics. I don't want to commit to anything further. My three children

enjoyed their experience at Pentz. A big question is the need of an elected school board when ONE person ran it efficiently.

91. Too much of an age gap to have primary to nine in one school and on one school bus.

92. I feel the school should stay open, but it unable to stay open would prefer option 4 (New school, p-5, all three schools).

Appendix C: A Review of the Research

Overview

RURAL EDUCATION RESEARCH SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

This section of our report may be considered a review of the academic literature regarding the merits of small schools. The term 'rural education' is similar in meaning and context to the term 'small school' and the two are used synonymously throughout this section of our report. Credit must be given to Acadia University professor Dr. Michael Corbett as he has been a leader in the academic community on this issue. Dr. Corbett has written, and spoken extensively and widely on this topic and has, in the recent past been the keynote speaker at a small school summit held in Bridgewater. What follows is, in large measure a synopsis of many of his findings.

The purpose of this review is to critically examine the scholarly literature that pertains to the viability and value of small rural schools. This literature review consists of research reports and the considered and thoughtful views of both scholars and practitioners. There is much support in the literature for the claim that the quality of education available in small schools equals, or in some instances exceeds, that experienced in larger schools.

It is hard not to conclude that those who still insist that bigger schools are better schools are simply not interested in the evidence to the contrary. For the most part scholarly opinion now favours smaller schools over large. A large and increasingly consistent body of research suggests that we should be moving, not toward larger schools, but expeditiously toward smaller ones. Even the popular literature of the past few years has been sprinkled with articles extolling the virtues and successes of small schools (Gregory, 2000: 2). As a result of this new research, it is imperative that educators and policy makers reevaluate their beliefs and assumptions about the value and viability of small schools. Rather than continuing a policy of closure and consolidation of small community schools, they need to sustain and support such schools. While considering Pentz for closure, we ask that School Board Members recognize that the research of the last thirty years clearly justifies educational policies that support the creation and maintenance of new small schools and, more importantly for rural areas, sustaining and supporting existing small community schools. There is little if any justification for closing small schools as a matter of policy. All fair-minded people have to wonder given this research base: Why do so many provinces continue to develop consolidation policies that are anything but research-based? Why is this irrational and failed approach to educational improvement forced upon rural communities, despite their widespread and often vehement opposition? (Rural School and Community Trust, 2006) To continue to pursue a policy of closure and consolidation in the face of the research evidence is to put the education of our children at risk.

A. Achievement Advantages

Students in smaller schools perform as well or better academically compared to students in larger schools.

For most of the twentieth century the 'conventional wisdom' in education dictated the closure and consolidation of small community schools and the transportation to students to larger schools in distant communities. It is pretty well taken for granted by educational authorities that 'bigger is better' and quality education can only be achieved in larger schools. Educational authorities (see Gunn Report), convinced that they were right, intimidated and informed parents that if they wished their children to have a quality education, they had to agree to close their small community school and have their children bussed to a larger school in a distant community. No additional evidence seems necessary (Howley and Eckman, 1997; Truscott and Truscott, 2005, Theobald, 2005; Meier, 2002).

The body of research that has been amassed over the last thirty years confirms that small size is no impediment to academic performance.

For some groups of students a smaller school provides them with their best chance of academic success.

Cotton (1996) points out: examination of the research reveals that there simply is no reliable relationship between school size and curriculum quality. Moreover, "the strength of the relationship between school size and curricular offerings diminishes as schools become larger."

B. Why does smaller seem to work better?..

People seem to learn, to change, and to grow in situations in which they feel that they have some control, some personal influence, some efficacy (Berlin & Cienkus, 1989, cited in Cotton, 1996)

Keeping schools relatively small might be more efficacious and may exhibit rare consensus as a goal of educators, the public, and those seeking equality of opportunity for students (Fowler and Walberg, 1991 cited in Cotton, 1996)

The research evidence is quite clear and unequivocal: small schools are academically viable. Smaller schools can provide a learning environment that is at least as good as larger schools.

For those students who may be considered at risk, small schools are especially supportive. Achievement equity is more often achieved in smaller schools.

Smaller schools (Pentz) offer their students much more than academic productivity.

They provide a learning environment that is supportive and nurturing of a wide variety of desirable educational goals for all students.

C. Why do small schools work so well? Why do they work academically? Why do they appear to do a better job of developing the whole person?

Another issue that relates to quality education and academic performance is what is referred to in the literature as 'achievement equity'. Achievement equity refers to the degree a particular school serves the academic needs of all its students in a fair and equitable fashion regardless of their socio-economic status.

The most conclusive evidence in the field: small schools foster achievement by all. (Tom Vander Ark, 2000)

Educators have to be concerned with the holistic development of their students. This development can be fostered in many ways including: opportunities for leadership, engendering in students a sense of belonging and being needed, and opportunities to take part in extra-curricular opportunities.

The research literature confirms that in terms of social and affective development, students excel in smaller schools.

Baker and Gump in, *Big School, Small School* reported on their investigations into student participation and involvement in schools of different sizes that there was a much higher percentage of students involved in extracurricular activities in smaller schools than in larger schools.

There were many more opportunities for students to exercise leadership roles. Students in smaller schools were more likely to fill important positions in those activities and gain greater satisfaction from participating.

A number of studies have made a connection between participation in the life of the school and dropout rates. The more students participate, the more likely they are to remain in school through to graduation.

Smaller schools have been shown to have significantly lower dropout rates. None of the research finds large schools superior to small schools in their achievement effects.

Student achievement in small schools is at least equal—and often superior—to student achievement in large schools. Achievement measures used in the research include school grades, test scores, honor roll membership, subject-area achievement, and assessment of higher-order thinking skills (Cotton, 1996).

The presence of programs is no guarantee that students will be willing or allowed to take them.

To bus students out of their home community to a larger distant school may put their academic lives at risk.

Travel distance and time become additional barriers for parents to be involved with the school and get to the school for special meetings. In some circumstances having access to transportation can be a problem for parents.

D. Bussing

The persistent efforts of educational authorities to close and consolidate small schools and create ever-larger schools has resulted in more and more students of all ages having to endure longer and longer bus rides.

Given that educational administrators have held considerable power, school consolidation has often been achieved by over-riding public opinion on the basis of claims about the educational and financial benefits of larger schools.

These alleged benefits are not supported by any significant evidence, and the more researchers have looked at the question of school size, the more clear it becomes that small schools are actually superior.

Rural communities value their local schools for what they can offer the children and for what they mean to the life and vitality of the community.

“Because policy makers focused on the benefits of school consolidation, however, they tended to overlook its drawbacks” (Ramage and Howley, 2005).

Increased student transportation has been the by-product of school consolidation, but the cost of transportation is the most understudied issue in the consolidation debate. Rural children are most affected.

Some research and much anecdotal evidence suggest that long bus rides have negative effects on family life, the ability of students to perform well in school, and students’ abilities to fully participate in the school experience (Spence, 2000)

In the majority of cases restructuring the educational system has resulted in more students spending increasing amounts of time riding the school bus.

Although the issue has been all but ignored by governments and educational researchers, rural parents and educators are well aware of the impact of long distance bussing on students (Mulcahy, 1996).

Most educational authorities appear to take it for granted that no harm is being done to students and whatever discomfort is experienced is a small price to pay for the purported benefits of attending larger schools. These illusory benefits are supported by a system of beliefs drawn from industrial production models and not from studies of educational achievement. So just as children ‘adjusted’ to factory labor in the 19th century, they

adapt to factory schooling today; and this, of course, is presented as progress. Pentz Elementary does not see school closure as a progressive idea.

Riding the bus should not just be a thirteen-year task that children endure, but one that makes sense as an integral part of their successful and fullest education (Zars, 1998).

Parents have a right to be concerned with the potential impact of bussing on the quality of education their children receive.

The amount of time and the distance traveled affect students and their families in a wide variety of ways. Fox (1996) study "Rural School Transportation as a Daily Constraint in Students' Lives:"

Bussing times and distances affect activities such as homework, recreational activities, employment (ability to have a part time job) and especially sleep

Students living farther away from school must drop non-essential activities from the lives to compensate for the time spent on the bus.

Bussing affects the life of other members of the student's family in a variety of ways. The greater the time/distance the greater impact on the family. Interaction among and between family members is affected.

"In general, there was a feeling that the time devoted to riding a bus was a great waste of physical and intellectual time. Regardless of distance, most students suggested that they tend to do less homework than they would if they could walk to school" (Fox, p. 25).

"They also suggest that the time devoted to travel causes fatigue so that they are not as attentive in school, nor are they as willing to put the required time and effort into their home work assignments. These factors will ultimately have a negative effect on grades" (Fox p. 26).

When students are bussed there is a disconnect between family and community and the new school. Families tend not to identify with the new school in the same way they did with their community school.

Participation in extra-curricular activities declines steadily with increased distance from a school.

School jurisdictions are beginning to understand that school busses are spaces in which a wide range of violent, abusive, dangerous and inappropriate behaviors can and do occur.

In research in rural southwestern Nova Scotia, several informants described the daily school bus ride to the regional secondary school as an experience that was significantly

marked by intimidation, racism, sexism and ongoing bullying that led many students to drop out of school (Corbett, 2001).

Students who have longer bus rides have severe constraints placed on their opportunities to participate in the social life of the school.

Unless students have an alternative way home, they must leave when the bus leaves. There are several serious consequences for students here. They cannot stay after school to seek extra help from teachers or attend after school tutorial sessions. They cannot avail themselves of the library and other learning resources that may be available at the school after the end of the school day. Both of these matters may have serious academic consequences for students. Most extra-curricular activities and sport team practices take place either after school or before school starts in the morning. Unless students have their own transportation to and from school it is impossible for bussed students to take part in these activities.

E. Why Small Schools Work

School characteristics that tend to promote increased student learning—such as collegiality among teachers, personalized teacher-student relationships, and less differentiation of instruction by ability—are simply easier to implement in small schools (Toche, 2003 cited in Hylden, 2004: 18).

Smaller schools, such as Pentz Elementary, offer:

- A very personalized learning environment.
- Small schools have fewer students and teachers and because of this students (and teachers) experience a more personalized learning environment that is simply not possible in larger institutions.
- Students are better known to each other and their teachers, and there is less opportunity to fall through or hide in the cracks in a smaller school.
- There are fewer strangers in small community schools.
- In smaller schools teachers talk more often about how students are doing, and compare information across classes and over the years.
- All of the students know each other.
- If a student is having trouble, all the student's teachers can more easily meet with the student and/or parents to talk about the problem and create a plan to help. (Wasley, et al, 2000).

Students in small schools are involved in a greater variety of activities and that they derive more satisfaction from their participation than students in large schools.

Students in the large schools were more polarized, with a group of active participants at one end of the continuum and a large group of students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities at the other. In the small schools there were few students who did not participate in anything (Hamilton, 1993)

The average large school student does not utilize these opportunities. Although the small school does not provide such a wealth of activities, the average student has a better experience as measured by the amount of involvement in the available activities (Schoggen and Schoggen, 1998)

Findings about participation rates in smaller schools hold true regardless of setting and are most applicable to minority and low-SES students. Because research has identified important relationships between extracurricular participation and other desirable outcomes, such as positive attitudes and social behaviour, this finding is especially significant (Cotton, 1996)

Smaller schools promote substantially improved equity in achievement among all students, and smaller schools may be especially important for disadvantaged students (Howley, 2002).

This personalized environment serves to nurture some very important individual and social educational goals. Berlin and Cienkus (1989) claim that students “seem to learn, to change, and to grow in situations in which they feel that they have some control, some personal influence, some efficacy.” That efficacy or feeling of empowerment is connected to feelings of belonging and feeling needed in small schools and the social opportunities that exist.

Arguably, participation in a smaller enterprise enables a more sure-footed construction of self in the company of trusted others as well as a greater investment by all participants in the construction of common purpose.

Writing in *Educational Leadership*, Deborah Meier argues that small schools enjoy advantages over larger schools along seven dimensions: governance, respect, simplicity, safety, parental involvement, and belonging: In small schools, the other 70 percent belong. Every kid is known every kid belongs to a community that includes adults. Relationships are cross-disciplinary, cross-generational, and cross-everything else. The good news; and Pentz is a prime example, is that kids like to be members of such cross-generational clubs. And, if parents are part of the process, they like to join, too—even part-time.

In small schools, we are more likely to pass on to students the habits of heart and mind that define an educated person—not only formally, in lesson plans and pedagogical gimmicks, but in hallway exchanges, discussions about important matters, and resolutions of ordinary differences. We are more likely to show kids in our daily discourse that grown-ups-models outside their homes-use reasoning and evidence to resolve issues. We can teach them what it’s like to be a grown-up—bring them into our culture, but only if we are part of a world that they find compelling, credible, and accessible.

It is not surprising that investigators have found a much greater sense of belonging (sometimes expressed as a lower level of alienation) among students in small schools than in large ones. Patricia Wasley argues, in an article entitled “Small Classes, Small Schools: The Time is Now” that the time is ripe for educators and policy makers to make the case for what the research

suggests and what our experience has been telling us for years: Students do best in places where they can't slip through the cracks, where they are known by their teachers, and where their improved learning becomes the collective mission of a number of trusted adults. We have the resources to ensure that every student gets a good education, and we know what conditions best support their success. It is time to do what is right; keep Pentz Elementary school open.

Why do small schools work? A large part of the answer is situated in the feeling students have in small schools of being known, cared about, and where they possess a sense of belonging. The personal attention that is possible in a small school is the single most important feature that contributes to successful student learning. There is no mystery here. Perhaps Meier says it best: Small schools mean we can get to know a student's work, the way he or she thinks... This close knowledge helps us demand more of them; we can be tougher without being insensitive and humiliating. It also means we know their moods and styles—whom to touch in a comforting way and whom to offer distance and space in times of stress. It means that every school feels responsible for every kid and has insights that when shared can open up a seemingly intractable situation to new possibilities (1996: 12).

In other words, small schools offer more structural potential that increase the likelihood that high-quality educational exchanges will occur and that a genuine, powerful and supported/supportive learning community will emerge. Small schools are also more accountable to their communities because the teachers are known to parents and to other community members (Shelton, 2005).

F. Extra-Curricular Participation

Small schools allow greater student participation in extracurricular activities (Kearney, 1994). In small schools students are less likely to feel "redundant" and more likely to feel needed. Many investigators since then have studied this issue and these findings confirm that extra-curricular participation is much higher in smaller schools than larger ones (see e.g. Burke 1987; Cawelti 1993; Foster and Martinez 1985; Fowler 1995; Fowler and Walberg 1991; Grabe 1981; Hamilton 1983; Holland and Andre 1991; Howley 1996; Kershaw and Blank 1993; Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Rogers 1987; Schoggen and Schoggen 1988; Smith and DeYoung 1988; Stockard and Mayberry 1992; Walberg 1992).

Opportunities to participate and take on leadership roles in the social life of the school are crucial developmental and growth experiences for all students. Researchers have found small schools provide more of these opportunities for more students. There appears to be this recurring theme in the literature. While the larger school appears to have quantitatively more of everything to offer, only a small percentage of particular students benefit. Pentz Elementary school has a long-established 'no cut' policy for its teams. Simply put- if you show up, you play on the team. Pentz kids are not sorted into capable and incapable. All are welcomed and valued.

The research is very consistent in finding that as far as attitude towards schooling is concerned students in small schools have a much more positive attitude towards school than do students in larger schools. Unlike large schools, in small schools, the more disadvantaged the students, the more positive are their attitudes. There is nothing surprising in these findings. If you feel wanted

and needed, have good and productive social relationships with your peers and teachers, more than likely you are going to enjoy school and do well. Related studies that investigate attendance and retention all favour the smaller school.

Virtually all educational research from every theoretical perspective, methodological orientation and disciplinary foundation over the last hundred years has confirmed that in order to be successful in school students must possess positive motivation. And, smaller schools like Pentz offer more motivation for students than larger schools.

G. Social Behavior

Behavior problems are so much greater in larger schools that any possible virtue of larger size is cancelled out by the difficulties of maintaining an orderly learning environment (Stockard and Mayberry, 1992). Many teachers working in large schools report that they spend as much as 40% of their time dealing with behavior problems in their schools and classrooms. In smaller schools that percentage of disruptive time is minimal. Teachers in smaller schools are able to focus practically all of their energies on teaching and learning activities.

Larger schools can create anonymity, the breeding ground of antisocial and violent behaviour: Anonymity breeds not only contempt and anger, but also physical danger. The data are clear that the smaller the school, the fewer the incidents of violence, as well as vandalism and just plain rudeness. Strangers are easily spotted, and teachers can respond quickly to a student who seems on the verge of exploding. Small schools offer what metal detectors and guards cannot: the safety and security of being where you are known well by people who care for you.

H. Parental Involvement

Several generations of effective schools research have consistently found that one of the keys to high levels of student achievement is parental involvement in the school. The very best way to facilitate parental involvement in a school is to maintain community and neighborhood schools. Small size works for parents as well as for students. They feel the same sense of belonging and connectedness with the school and the teachers. It is a personalized environment for them as well. When the school is located in the community, it is much easier and convenient for parents to visit the school and take an active role in a large variety of activities. In addition, there are opportunities for parents to encounter teachers outside the school where an informal and casual conversation can take place regarding their children. There are two characteristics of schools that work against parents being involved with the schooling of their children. One is the size of the school and the other is the distance the school is from the home community of the family.

Meier (1996) addresses the issue of school size as an impediment to parental involvement. "Schools are intimidating places," she writes, "for many parents – they feel like intruders, strangers, and outsiders." And nothing seems more foolish than going to parent night and seeing a slew of adults who don't really know your kid, have very little investment in him or her, and whose opinions and advice make one feel less, not more, powerful. When the school is small enough, probably someone there knows your kid well enough, and maybe also likes him or her enough, to create a powerful alliance with you. Smallness doesn't guarantee such an alliance, but it makes it reasonable to put time into creating one (1996: 13). When that larger school is in a distant community, that feeling of alienation for parents is intensified.

Conclusion

It appears that keeping schools relatively small might be more efficacious and may exhibit rare consensus as a goal of educators, the public, and those seeking equality of opportunity for students. (Fowler, W. & Walberg 1991 cited in Cotton, 1996) Smaller school size has been associated with higher achievement under certain conditions.

A persistent concern in the literature, especially for rural educators, has been the issue of whether a school can be too small to be considered academically viable. Academically effective small schools may come in all sizes. Howley and Howley also note that, “contrary to our own previous work, this study suggests that larger size does not significantly improve performance among affluent students” (2004: 26).

The key is that schools must be small enough to foster the sort of learning community that can support the learning of disadvantaged children and youth. Actually, many large schools are now attempting to create this sense of community within a large school structure by creating “schools within schools.” The school within the school movement essentially breaks large schools down into smaller internal schools or “houses” to create the conditions that are present in small schools. In other words, these large, typically urban schools are attempting to create the social conditions that exist naturally in rural schools, conditions that are ironically destroyed by consolidation.

Many rural areas in North American (including Atlantic Canada) face a number of challenges that impact on educational decision-making. These include out-migration, declining birth rate, declining school enrolment, and economic challenges of various kinds. Closing and consolidation of small schools should not be seen as a solution to these challenges. The research would appear to indicate that small schools offer the children of these rural communities their best chance of success. Rather than closing such schools, educational leaders should be searching for ways to sustain and improve these important rural assets. Smaller schools have now been shown to exert an evidently robust effect on equity.

Howley and Howley conclude their most recent work with a number of practical recommendations for educators and policy makers concerned with making the most educationally sound decisions regarding small rural schools. They base these “considered judgments” on the current body of research on this topic as well as their own and others experiences working with rural communities:

- Sustain the smallest schools in the poorest communities.
- In communities that serve all social classes, do not build large schools.
- Keep elementary and middle schools proportionately smaller than high schools.
- When building new, keep schools everywhere smaller than recommended in the 20th century.
- Provide appropriate and adequate support to smaller schools: small size improves the odds of success.
- Regard smaller school size and reform as distinct issues, but do not hesitate to innovate in smaller schools.
- Doubt that an educationally relevant lower limit of school size exists. Much depends on context, and even in the contemporary world, dedicated parents educate very small groups of children with remarkable success at home (2004: 28-29).

In small-school environments, the studies show, all students—whatever their ethnicity or place on the socioeconomic ladder—tend to achieve at higher levels, have a greater sense of belonging, feel safer, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and go on to college. Furthermore, parent involvement is higher in smaller schools.

The actual evidence we have examined points clearly toward the advantages of small schools rather than their disadvantages for student achievement, social cohesion and generally accepted quality educational outcomes. It is our view then that educational decision-makers ought to be thinking about how to keep small rural schools open so that larger schools can learn from them.

Academic research makes clear it is imperative that educators and policy makers reevaluate their beliefs and assumptions about the value and viability of small schools. Rather than continuing a policy of closure and consolidation of small community schools, they need to sustain and support such schools. To continue to pursue a policy of closure and consolidation in the face of the research evidence is to put the education of rural children and youth at risk.

Appendix D – Tell Them From Me Responses

Our school question 1: If Pentz Elementary were to close, what would you miss the most?

1. Teachers and some of my classmates and Mrs. MacIntosh.
2. that it was really close.
3. The teachers and the area of the school and I would miss our librarian.
4. I would miss being able to not have to try out for sports.
5. our teachers and my friend because some of us would be in different class's
6. we are sort of a big bonded family
7. all the attention we get from the teachers. since we have such a small school the teachers know all of our names and have time to talk to us and get to know us. all the students know everyone's names and most of us are really close.
8. the good teacher
9. i would miss everything about our school. i hope it will never close.
10. What I would miss most is the teachers having to work some where else.
11. re skating rink
12. I would miss all the people at the school.
13. nothing
14. if pentz were to close i would miss the teachers the playground. And if we did close i would go to Hebbville academy but i wouldn't really want to live pentz because it is such a good little school.
15. my teacher and my friends
16. I would miss it because it is so small and since it is so small if we have a problem it will be dealt with right away and since the classes aren't that big if we are struggling in a subject we will usually get help right away. otherwise I would miss this school extremely because I spent seven years of my life here and I wouldn't see all my old teachers that taught me. That's why I would be so grateful if they kept pentz open.
17. nothen
18. the hill the winter carnival pink day the pride awards EVERYTHING!!
19. that we have so much love
20. my friends
21. the teachers
22. The big gym and the little cafeteria and the teachers.
23. the friends, the teachers oh the most wonderful principle, the teachers are the ones to help us have great opportunities and make it fun and mostly interesting!!!
24. All the teachers they all know me so well and they work so hard to do bazars winter carnivals and christmas concert. and i would definitely miss all the little kids i love helping them out and playing with them.
25. i would miss our play ground each recess
26. the teachers in the school, I love this school. The skating rink and all the playground equipment
27. mr.snyder
28. the whole school
29. my friends.
30. I would miss all the things I learned in it. I would miss all the good times I had in it. But what I would miss the most would be all the love and care and all the help in it.
31. the smallness of our classes and all the time we get to have 1 on 1 time with our teacher that is so important i feel. but with the learning we have gotten out of pentz i know by the time i get to hebbville i will be ready.
32. The teachers
33. friends

Appendix E: Community Support

Eric Hustvedt
18 The Lane
Broad Cove, Nova Scotia
B0J 2H0

January 28, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Keeping Pentz Elementary School Open

As the municipal councillor for the municipal district that includes Pentz Elementary School and much of its student population, I have been in a good position to see the positive impact the school has had on its students and the surrounding community.

Like other active, well-run rural schools, Pentz Elementary is a significant positive factor in economic and social development. This aspect was recognized by our during an earlier, suspended review process, in a Resolution that included Pentz Elementary (see attached, below).

Like a municipal council, a School Board has the challenge of providing the best service at the most reasonable cost. I would argue that there is a value in maintaining community schools that needs to factor into the discussion of maintenance and capital costs.

I believe a School Board is responsible for education in the broad sense, which includes education in citizenship — a preparation for taking part in society. This preparation can best be done, during the first years of school, in a familiar setting — a community in which the child is already a citizen: surrounded by her or his family, neighbours and familiar landmarks. New responsibilities and can be taken on in a context that the young student already feels a part of. A garden or a playground on school grounds feels to be an extension of the home yard...

Through the skills and commitment of its principal, staff, school advisory committee, supportive parents (and other community members) Pentz Elementary School has not only made the most of its land and location through such initiatives as a community garden, bicycle and skateboard workshops, but has also taken an active role in developing the surrounding community through partnership with the local fire department, a neighbouring church and other community organizations. I have not gone into the school without witnessing a sense of active enthusiasm among children and staff.

I have heard arguments that students can benefit from the wider range of course offerings at a larger, more centralized school. However, everything I've read suggests that graduates of small schools have academic futures at least as bright as those who come from larger schools. Little is gained, but much is lost.

..... /2
Hustvedt: Keeping Pentz Elementary School Open, January 28, 2013 PAGE TWO

In summary, I believe maintaining Pentz Elementary is the best option for students and the community in terms of value for money spent.

I urge the School Board to keep the school open.

Respectfully submitted,



Eric Hustvedt, Councillor
District 12, District of Lunenburg

Municipal Council Minutes 13 March 8, 2011

13.1 COMMUNITY CONCERNS re POSSIBLE SCHOOL CLOSURES (E. Hustvedt)
Councillor Hustvedt presented a resolution to address concerns regarding the review that the School Board is considering in relation to possible school closures.

Moved by Councillor Hustvedt, seconded by Councillor Bell that,

WHEREAS four schools in the District of Lunenburg have been targeted for consideration for review; and

WHEREAS Council recognizes the importance of schools to the economic and social fabric of rural communities in our Municipality; and

WHEREAS community efforts to support the survival of their local community schools have already been initiated in two of these school districts to date, including a community meeting held at Petite Riviere Elementary School last Wednesday organized by the Home & School Association, and a meeting organized by Pentz Elementary's School Advisory Committee at that school tonight;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Council, as appropriate, show support to community efforts to keep open the following schools:

*Petite Riviere Elementary
Pentz Elementary
Newcombville Elementary
New Germany Rural Jr.-Sr.*

The motion was carried unanimously.

January 30, 2013

To whom it may concern,

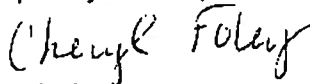
My family and I wish to comment and have our opinion noted concerning the school review process. We moved to this area from a small community in New Brunswick where we saw the need and the value for a school in the community. There were many opportunities for us to be involved in that school as volunteers. The school was not lacking in support from parents, community businesses, and even older folks. There was a pride in the school from families, business and from those who did not even have children in the school. It was a place to come together to benefit the next generation who would become tomorrow's leaders. One of our children attended that school for grades P-5. It was a safe environment and she got to know so many adults that cared.

I believe the same holds true here at Pentz Elementary. There is a pride and a love for our school. Our daughter had 1 year and a couple months at Pentz and our son began Primary at Pentz. One of the big things we looked at before we moved to this area and what type of school our children would be going to. We saw how much a small school and community benefitted our children and the community. It was important to us to continue on and find that type of school and area to move to. The small school and community is one of the big reasons we chose this area. We also loved the fact that this school was a P-6 school and not P-5. I believe the extra year is beneficial for these kids.

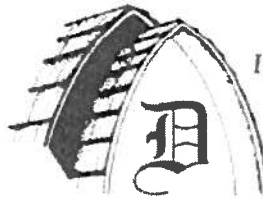
We absolutely love Pentz Elementary School! We moved here in May of 2011. In just the almost 2 years we have been here, we have gotten to know so many wonderful families and have been able to participate in their lives. We volunteer regularly at our school. Our children are benefitting from that daily contact with people who care.

I am concerned that it all boils down to money to make a decision to close a school, and not what is best for our children. These children don't need to be a number in a big school. They need to be loved and valued. Our children need people from their community in their lives. I believe that Pentz School should have a future in our community.

Respectfully submitted,


Cheryl Foley

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Nov 20/12

To whom it may concern:

Since 1972 when we first arrived in this area, we have watched little children from our small settlement, including our own children, and later our grandchildren, board the school bus for Pentz Elementary School. Not one year has gone by, without children boarding that bus, outside of our office.

During those intervening years, my wife and I, including neighbours, have spent many volunteering hours at the Pentz School. At this time, it's our children, who have our grandchildren on school at Pentz, who are doing the volunteering.

When we first moved to Pleasantville, in 1972 we felt very proud of this area. Besides the beautiful



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scenery, and the low municipal taxes, and the wonderful area citizens, the Pentz Elementary School contributed greatly to these feelings. I feel our contribution, in residential and corporate municipal taxes, some that time, has been helpful to this area. The Pentz School is definitely a very important aspect of life along the Latture River.

We would be devastated to see our Pentz Elementary School closed. There is more to creating a community than a radical change, such as closing a school due to an economic downturn. When the going gets tough, the citizens get going, working together to improve the situation. The closing of this school would harm the optimistic spirit of our area. That's not the correct move to make!

Sincerely,
Jodi Davidson, CEO.



FaceBook Comments:

“the extra special “one on one” the teachers are able to give the children.....like how the teachers/principle know all the children in the school by name!!”

“So many things.... like a basketball team where anyone can play, as opposed to tryouts in a big school where only the best get chosen. Then afterwards they only have a short trip and they are home again, no hour-long round trip to get picked up.”

“I just love the school and all the workers and what they do for the children. In Pentz I know my child is being taken care of and taught way better then she had in a big school. They do alot for the kids. The teachers and principle are real and understand life can be crazy sometimes. I cant say enough about this school and how I am super glad we have it!!”

“Sara loved going cross-country skiing today. I am so impressed with the school for creating opportunities like this for our kids to have such wonderful learning experiences. The garden is another such example, and many more besides.”

Thanks to all who helped in the preparation of this report!

The Study Committee for Pentz Elementary School graciously acknowledges the support and contributions of the communities of Conquerall Bank, Pleasantville, Dublin Shore, West Lahave, Pentz, Lahave and Lake Centre in the preparation of this response.

The SAC and the Study Committee were made up of the following people;

Carol-Ann Brown

Carol Hughes

Sherry Doucet

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Tammie MacPhee-Davidson

Nancy Skinner

Claudia Robar

Assistance and support for the various areas of research and writing was generously provided by many members of the above communities, and their names are too numerous to list here. You know who you are, and we are more grateful than we can say for your help and moral support.

