

Hello,

I would like to provide my feedback regarding the ARC process and the impact on my son's school, G.L.Armstrong Elementary on the central mountain. I, unfortunately, am unable to attend the working group meeting tomorrow evening to provide my feedback in person. I trust that my feedback provided herein will be passed along to the relevant parties for their consideration.

I understand that there are eight schools on the central mountain that are presently under review. I have read the reports relating to all eight schools and considered the grades that each school services. Being a finance professional, I understand the many constraints that the committee is facing. There are several sites that are all in need of capital repairs and updates, and some schools are not operating at or near capacity. There are no economies of scale to be realized in these situations, and hard choices have to be made because it just makes good financial sense to do so. There is only so much money to go around, and the ARC Committee has to decide where it is best spent.

In looking at the eight schools in question, without any further knowledge of what specifically the capital requirements at each site are, it was immediately apparent to me that most of the schools in question do not service all grades from JK to 8. Armstrong and Franklin Road are the only two schools that service all grades under one roof. The other six facilities only service between 3 and 7 grades. On the surface, it seems that it makes good sense to service as many people as possible under one roof. In short, it allows HWDSB to achieve economies of scale and save money. As such, it just makes sense that schools offer JK to 8 at one location. This allows the HWDSB to operate fewer facilities while servicing the same number of students. It also stands to reason that this strategy results in reduced capex requirements for HWDSB since there are fewer schools to operate, thereby allowing them to provide better facilities to students and staff. This results in better morale for everyone involved and reduced employment costs associated with poor staff health or morale.

To be frank, I struggle to understand the rationale behind operating separate primary and middle schools in the first place. The HWDSB must own and operate two facilities instead of one. It just doesn't make good financial sense to me in the face of one centrally located JK to 8 school that can accommodate everyone under one roof. One JK to 8 school produces numerous benefits to HWDSB including reduced operating costs, reduced capital requirements, lower maintenance and upkeep costs and it also provides stability for students and their families.

I would like to provide my feedback and recommendation that G.L. Armstrong not be considered for closure. The physical building has a very rich history and is possibly one of the most beautiful buildings that houses our students on the mountain. It would be an absolute shame for this facility to be sold as a surplus building and likely eventually torn down.

From the report, it is apparent that Armstrong is, compared to the other facilities being considered, a large school and can accommodate a significant increase in student population. Provided that the facility is structurally sound, it appears to make good business sense to take advantage of the building's size and central location and service a large number of

students out of one building. To me, it would make the most logical sense to discontinue operating the neighbouring primary and middle schools and consolidate the students at Armstrong. This option would save the HWDSB money. Given that the ARC Committee is charged with determining what makes the most financial sense, I hope that my feedback will be considered.

In addition to the logical business case for keeping Armstrong open as described above, I would also like to provide my feedback about what an exceptional school Armstrong is. My son Baeden is in Grade 1 at Armstrong. I have had nothing short of a wonderful experience at this school. The staff are exceptional and the environment is also excellent in my experience. In addition to the regular curriculum, our school also includes programming for special needs students which I feel is very important. I have grown family who are Armstrong graduates and my hope is that my son is able to continue to attend Armstrong and graduate from Grade 8 there as well.

I welcome any feedback or questions you may have. I appreciate you passing along my feedback to the decision makers in this process.

Best regards,

Jacqui Blackman, CGA, H.B. Com.

Good morning

Thank you for your letter and phone call regarding the upcoming meetings regarding Linden Parks closure. As I will not be able to attend the meeting as I have 2 young children that attend Linden Park (JK & Grade 3), I am not able or willing to keep my children up until 9pm to attend your meeting. But I do appreciate the money spent on sending the letters home and to robocall each parent in your directory.

I wanted to ensure that my voice was heard and minuted by this email as I have very little trust in the HWDSB decisions of late. Not only the fact that you are attacking small and recognized schools in the school board but by your obvious disastrous dealings with the government over the past few years; where very little teaching was done to many students and in fact harmed a great many of them with entrance into college or university and of course the inability to have any sort of consensus of finding land and building a new high school in the area. *"They are acquiring property for a new central mountain high school now and "should" have the plan public "soon" (lets hope it goes better than the stellar job they're doing downtown)."* But you don't even use property that even own and are negotiating with a private seller.

But of course, have no issues building a brand new school board up on the mountain (yes I have heard, this is "different funding" – this came from one of your PR people").

In case you haven't thought to look, Linden Park has been recognized as being a green school, don't you think that tearing it down and building a new one is not very green? Isn't this what the government and the school boards are always talking about. But from what I can see, I don't see very many other schools that are green in the area. Or even better yet, leaving it up and becoming an eye sore. I recently drove by the old Winona Public School which is in horrible condition now that it sits empty and is supposedly up for sale by you. I am sure a great sadness to the community of Winona and its neighbours to have to see boarded up windows, overgrown grass and graffiti on a school that was such a pride to the community. Perfect for a homeowner when trying to sell their house. Is this what we get to look forward too at Linden Park? Not only to have to see Linden Park fall apart but also Hillpark right beside it.

Currently (as disclosed on your web site), you have over 11 properties that are owned by the school board (over 100 acres) that are sitting empty and with the closing of the all of these new schools, this will only add up. If the school board is closing these elementary schools to save money on renovations and to combat empty spaces, do you not think that selling some of your properties is a good way to do it? But I also see that the property you decided to build a new secondary school (oh yes, that is not actually decided yet although it was told to the public it was), or your new building going up could have been built on one of those properties. I am no real estate agent but I am guessing that building on land that you already own would be a cheaper option than having to buy land from a private landowner and start from scratch. But I forgot, this is all to save money and the school board is from different funding, so it doesn't really count.

Other than the many short comings that the HWDSB has been of late, I want to ensure that you have spoken to the daycare that are attached to both Ridgemount and Pauline Johnson to confirm that when you close our school that there will be sufficient space and staff to accommodate our children. Because I will be the first parent calling both the school board, government and newspaper if I see 1 child over the Ontario mandated numbers at either school. When I called the YMCA daycare at the schools to say I was moving and my children would be enrolled at that school, I was told they were at capacity and were

unable to accept any more. So am I going to get this same information in July when I need to enroll my children in child care because like the majority of parents in the Linden Park area, we actually have jobs because we contribute to the economy of Hamilton and pay the school board taxes, that don't seem to help us in the end.

My last point is hopefully to hear that you have some sympathy for what you are doing to these young children in kindergarten to grade 5. My son is currently in JK, so by the time gets to grade 6 he may have been bumped to 3 different schools. How does this not affect a child's learning, bouncing from one school to another, from one teacher to another where nobody knows anyone. What happened to a school being a community? To being able to walk or bike to school, to having those puddle days and earth friendly days when you are asked not to drive, but to walk, bike or even skip. Are we able to tell the environmental agencies that we are NOT allowed to do that because our school board has decided to close down all of our neighbourhood schools and now my kids have to be bussed (of course as long as they are within the boundaries that YOU tell us). God forbid, if one of these mega schools open with no security and teachers that don't know the parents by name and who their children are that something horrific happens; like is going on every month in the States, that YOU hold yourself at blame for taking away the neighbourhood schools in our city. To not save any money but to show the province (that you are at war with) that you are trying to be fiscally responsible.

I have been to these meetings before, I can only imagine the lines that will be told tonight. "Yes, we have looked at that issue and are working very hard on a solution that will benefit both the school board and the parents involved", "We understand your frustration in this situation, and are doing our very best to make it an easy transition for your children". These are the typical lines and the same ones when I heard on numerous occasions when going to the meetings regarding the closures of the secondary schools. So, I need to assume that they will be the same ones fed by your PR people.

I have attached this article as I am hoping that you were at least on the board or have read it. And you can see what the communities around Hamilton are actually thinking about what you are doing.
http://raisethehammer.org/article/1962/school_closures_and_civic_engagement

Once again, something to be proud of when living in Hamilton. A school board that doesn't actually live in the area that you are trying to close and let's face it, a non-democratic council that doesn't care what it's doing to the communities around it as long as they have a job.

Thank you
Candice Stroud
Linden Park parent

2013

Public Meeting: Key Messages

According to the phone message from the Board: the public meeting is hosting "table discussions to help develop an accommodation option for your school" as they "strive to give all students great schools".

Key Messages:** What is the rush to close schools next June? This should be a well-planned process. Necessary renovations to existing schools should be completed before moving our students to suboptimal environments that will negatively impact learning. There is an election in the Fall of 2014. No closures should be finalized until the election.

1. Queensdale is already a GREAT school that should be maintained for our students because:

- a. it is **wheelchair accessible** with accessible washrooms – **no renovations required**.
- b. it is fully **equipped for full day kindergarten** with **no renovations required**.
- c. it has a **large lot with ample green space** and with room for expansion if required. The green space also promotes student engagement in physical activities during recess and outdoor gym activities (as recommended in the PIC
- d. it is in very good condition thanks to renovations in approximately 2006-2008 (including air conditioning, new windows and doors). The school board has rated Queensdale in FAIR condition – we dispute this rating and want an independent assessment. NOTE: none of the "symptoms" listed in the "Fair" rating category are evident at Queensdale (practically zero staff turnover, ZERO bullying incidents (disciplinary incidents), no evidence of increased attendance issues)
- e. there are two main streets that can accommodate bus drop-offs and pick-ups safely. NOTE: currently only special needs students are bussed to the school – therefore the WALKABLE Queensdale school promotes safe/easy activity for students, as recommended by the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) through the Board website.

"Being active on the way to school can help your child: perform better in school, get to know their community, [and] improve their health" (Metrolinx)NOTE: **October 5 – 11th is International Walk to School Week!**

This issue is recognized as significant internationally

- f. it is supported by the community, including the local church (Olivet United Church), local businesses (Big Bee) and it engages in community events, including the Fun Fair, annually.
- g. there has been minimal staff turnover(excluding maternity leaves) suggesting high staff satisfaction with the school environment
- h. Queensdale school is a respectful, inclusive learning environment with ZERO bullying. The school promotes high student engagement, in part due to the ability of teachers to get to know all students in a smaller school community. *(As a parent, I have gotten to know the majority of the teachers in the school as well as the support staff and principle just by chatting on the schoolyard and by attending community events at the school.)*

2. Accomodation options for Queensdale could include:

- a. **Implement full day kindergarten in 2014 and reassess in 3 years** so that the Board can make long term decisions using appropriate data that reflect the new programming. NOTE: the school board determined when each school would start FDK, and neglected to include Queensdale earlier in this process DESPITE the pre-existing capacity/physical building elements present at the school (FDK classroom space)

- b. **Boundary review.** Currently students that live closer to Queensdale are technically out of catchment. Adjusting boundaries minimally so that students can access the closest walkable school promotes physical activity and student success, community involvement and civic responsibility, as well as parent involvement in the school (as they live in the community). In the event another school is closed, a minor boundary change will effectively bring our school enrolment to approximately 100% in the next one to two years
- c. **Addition to the school** to include grades 7 and 8 (it may be possible to add one class for each grade without an addition)
- d. **Increase the special needs services** offered at Queensdale and bring in more special needs students to this ACCESSIBLE, inclusive and supportive school.

3. Important information about the impact of potentially closing Queensdale (as is currently suggested):

- a. The majority of students will NOT go to Armstrong school. A recent poll at the school with an over 60% response rate showed that only 15% of students will actually go to Armstrong (this equates to about 27 students from the total student population). A large percentage of students will move to the other community school which is part of the separate school board. Others intend to go to other public schools. Therefore, closing Queensdale will not solve the enrollment issue at Armstrong.
- b. *(if this applies to you):*The community supports their community school. Removing Queensdale make the Separate School (St. Peter and Paul) the new community school – and I will change my tax dollar allocation accordingly.
- c. Parents have serious concerns about the condition of Armstrong school. Significant repairs are required if the school board is committed to “give all students great schools” ... including air conditioning, accessibility for all students (currently not wheelchair accessible and no elevator .. washrooms may also have barriers), roof repair (currently leaks), asbestos assessment and removal, air quality testing, replacement of windows/doors, etc.) . To move students to Armstrong by September 2014 would be moving students from a brick house to a straw house (the Board specifically said they will not move students from straw house to straw house at the ARC Committee meeting on October 2st).
- d. Parents have serious concerns about the safety of the location of Armstrong school. Specifically, the busy location, group home across the street, lack of parking/bus drop off areas due to street parking for the neighborhood, lack of green space that students are ALLOWED to use for recess. The HWDSB Multi-year Accessibility Plan indicates: “HWDSB will provide safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environments for all staff and students.”
- e. The HWDSB also indicates in the Multi-year Accessibility Plan that : “HWDSB will achieve high levels of student engagement in our schools ... [and] ..achieve high levels of parent engagement in our school communities.”
Larger schools DO NOT promote the same level of student and parent engagement as smaller schools, particularly if those schools are further from the communities where the families live.
- f. According to the Special Education Advisory Committee the HWDSB is responsible for “assisting students to receive the best programs that meet their social, physical, emotional and educational needs”. Implementing **major change** within months of the decision making process being completed (in the spring) will NOT support students social, emotional or education needs.

NOTE: if physical, social and emotional needs are not met, students CANNOT engage in effective learning (Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs). Therefore if students are sent to a school in need of renovations (basic physical needs not met), and if there is not a comprehensive implementation plan, in a reasonable timeframe that supports students socially and emotionally, then learning will be significantly impaired.

NOTE:

The HWDSB Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Think about how Queensdale is already meeting these objectives (accessible, preparing students for success based on testing scores, engage students and parents ... this decreases if students are sent outside their community for school, Etc)

Tips for Effective Participation at Public Meetings

1. Professional demeanor:

- Deliver your message in a non-confrontational manner to maximize effectiveness.
- Avoid name calling and negative comments about other schools that aren't backed by evidence.
- Avoid emotional pleas to save our school – the Board is collecting evidence. State facts whenever possible (for example, “if my local public school closes then I will be supporting the other community school, the Catholic school, and will change my tax allocation accordingly”).

2. Come prepared:

- You will be asked to answer specific questions at your table. Consider potential questions that may be phrased to “encourage” you to agree with the Board’s position. Think about how you can respond and redirect to get a key point across.
- Review the Board’s policies and strategic plan on their website – consider items you disagree with and develop an argument.
- Differentiate between elementary and middle school student needs. The Board may ask if you think it is important to have subject specialists for all students – this obviously is not necessary for primary grades. Elementary students need a supportive community (smaller schools).

3. Introduce yourself with credentials/relevant experience:

- When first speaking at your table start by introducing yourself and listing any relevant credentials or experience (particularly if it relates to construction, education, finance, legal, health care, etc) that illustrates your expertise in this topic area.

4. You can reject the question:

- You can respond that a question is inappropriate and why (and use this as an opportunity to make key points that they aren't asking for)
- Question any assumptions that may be included in the Board’s questions (for example, if the Board asks “Do you think all students should have access to new facilities”, you may respond “it is not possible to provide new facilities to all students in the Central Mountain – I think students should have access to well-maintained facilities, like those at Queensdale School, where extensive renovations were performed just a few years ago”).

5. Stay focused on your topic

- Avoid misdirected conversations about the Ministry of Education, funding for education, the Hill Park closure (unless you're relating it to a need for delay in decision making as we don't know where a new high school will be built). Any discussion that is not promoting Queensdale as an asset for the Board is not helping our cause at this meeting.

6. Check the minutes

- Ask the scribe what they have noted in the minutes to ensure your message was accurately recorded, or ask to check the notes at the end of the discussions.
- If it is not recorded, it didn't happen.

My name is Ryan Coe. My wife and I are very concerned with the Board's staff option to close Linden Park this coming June 2014, as our son Cooper is attending his very first year at Linden Park in the Junior Kindergarten class.

My wife was in attendance at last night's public ARC meeting at Cardinal Heights. This morning, we have been reviewing the data provided at last night's meeting with regard to current and projected enrollment numbers. I wanted to share my thoughts on this matter.

Populations grow and shrink year after year. Enrollment happens to be down at this point in time, so the Board's terrible idea is to close the schools with low enrollment rates (in this case, Linden Park, as proposed, and Hill Park, which will close in 2015), deem the school lands surplus, sell the land, and demolish the schools. Then, with the proceeds from the sale of the surplus lands, the Board will buy MORE land elsewhere and build a mega school to cram all the low enrollments into. Given that their neighbourhood school has now closed and is no longer within walking distance, the students would require to be bused in - how cheap is that?

In 5-10 years, enrollment will increase, as it always does, and as the schools will be at over-capacity in their "on the ground" enrollment, the Board will simply dump portables onto the mega school's property. This is not ideal, nor very cost effective. On our street alone, walking distance from Linden Park, there are 2 new home owners with babies and a third house for sale. It will no doubt be bought by another young couple just starting out as we once did. Our street cannot be unique to the neighborhood and I should think this is happening elsewhere. So in 5 years we will be back into higher enrollment numbers.

I believe that the savings are minimal when broken down year by year. The land and buildings are already there – why not simply maintain them during the low enrollment years? Let's be an example to the other municipalities. Let us not do what they are doing and cram hundreds of kids into mega multi-level schools

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where no one knows anyone and there is no sense of community. Let's keep our smaller community schools small.

To borrow from Jordan Hylden's paper on school sizes, Harvard University: "Students in small schools perform better academically, graduate at higher levels, are more likely to attend college/university, and earn higher salaries later on in life. They participate more in extracurricular activities, have better rates of attendance, report greater positive attitudes towards learning, and are less likely to face school-related crime and violence."

I think the facts speak for themselves.

Regards,

Ryan Coe



Dr. John Malloy
Director of Education
TEL: 905.527.5092 EXT: 2291
FAX: 905-521-2539

June 26, 2013

Dear Sir or Madame:

As one of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's (HWDSB) potential facility partners, you know the value and impact partnership can have on improving student achievement. Cooperation and collaborative partnerships are part of the foundation of a strong, vibrant and sustainable publicly funded education system.

We want to make the best use of public assets by offering space, on a cost-recovery basis, in our schools to our community partners. By doing this, we can strengthen the role of schools in communities, provide a place for programs and facilitate the coordination of, and improve access to, services for our students and the wider community.

Across the province, school boards have entered into successful facility partnerships with community agencies to reduce facility costs and improve educational opportunities. The Ministry of Education is encouraging us to build on that success by adding community partnerships that support student achievement.

HWDSB currently has surplus space in many of its buildings. We want to hear from community partners looking to share facilities to the benefit of students and the community. Community agencies are invited to indicate their interest by going to www.hwdsb.on.ca/community/facility-partnerships. You can also find more information by reviewing the Ministry of Education guidelines at www.hwdsb.on.ca/community/facility-partnerships/documents/media.pdf. Please note that all partnerships are on a cost-recovery basis and applications should be received by September 13, 2013.

We value your service within the community and look forward to the possibility of working together to improve services, programs and supports for our students as well as maximize the use of public infrastructure through increased flexibility and use.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Malloy".

Dr. John Malloy
Director of Education