

Anne: Here are some points that we feel summarize our thought on integration. We feel that a speialized program has benefitted our daughter immensely. There is no doubt in our minds that the programs and staff at Mountain Secondary deliver a quality learning environment due to committed staff that aspire to help learners that, for whatever reason, need a modified program with custom delivery.

- Commaradery amongst students with varied malady's. There is a spirit ,that is unique, because of the fact that there is common ground amongst these challegned students.
- Staff is specialized working with modified programs and students. Their abilities to deliver modified programs while taking in to account the individual students needs make learning possible and probable. IEP needs are fulfilled because of specialized staff.
- Location is very handy to HSR and local businesses allowing some easy access for such things as co-op placements.
- Parents with similar challenges (special needs) are comfortable with staff and the curriculum.
- While our child was in a regular program in elementary school she was in a sea of learners with very little learning for her.

Sincerely,

17/05/2011

Parent Testimonial: Why Specialized Schools are Important for MID kids.

I am the parent of a grade 11 boy at Mountain Secondary. I am very sorry that the board plans to close both the high schools for kids with special needs in the city. I think our kids deserve and need a choice.

When my son was in grade 2 in the public system, the school decided they wouldn't give him an EA anymore, although it was clear he could not keep up with the work and the testing he'd done indicated he had MID. The board told me that since he wasn't dangerous and he didn't need his diaper changed, he couldn't have an EA. With the school's permission, I brought my own volunteer into the classroom to help. The teacher, or maybe the learning resource teacher, didn't appreciate my providing a volunteer for my son although it was clear they couldn't support his needs. Although this volunteer was a former specialist in special ed, they didn't allow her to work with him as he needed. He muddled through grade 2 on his IEP, but one night during the summer before grade 3, he woke up in the middle of the night crying. "Mom," he said, "I just can't do the grade 3 work." He was then and always has been aware of not being able to keep up to others.

We had no choice to put him in the private system. Our son was treated well there. The classes were small. The teachers were compassionate, well-trained, and interested in working with struggling learners. All the kids had some sort of need and no one teased him or picked on him. But my son's needs were the most extreme; the other kids had learning disabilities but my son had global issues. Still, although he was the lowest in the class, he was happy in a small and contained program from grades 3-8. However, because we were out of the public system, we didn't even know that special classes were available to kids once they reached grade 6. Had we known, we would have had our son back in the public system sooner. Once I found out about the special ed classes, I visited the classes at Ryerson and was so impressed by the dedicated teaching that I saw. However, at that point, it was too late to move our son and we didn't want to cause him a disruption again.

When it came to high school there were no options in the private system. Our choices were the public or the Catholic schools. We took my son to both of the schools, to St. Mary's and to Mountain. St. Mary's is a beautiful school, a beautiful building, close to our home, with lots of programming options, and a huge special education department. Our son even knew some people there. He was told that at St. Mary's he'd be in a class with all kinds of kids, but only a few would have needs like his. At Mountain, he'd be in a school with kids like him, with his kind of learning needs. Despite the beauty, the wealth, the proximity, and the program choices at St. Mary's, our son chose to go to Mountain. The kids at Mountain were a bit rougher than the ones he was used to, *but he told us that what was most important to him was to be in a community of learners just like him.*

Our son has had a successful three years at Mountain. His teachers have delighted in him and we have been very grateful to them for their dedication and their sensitivity. The administration has proven to us time and time again that they understand the needs of kids like my son and the needs of kids who have many more issues than he does. Our son has a loving, supportive home. Lots of the kids at Mountain don't. Lots of these kids are socially awkward and emotionally volatile. The staff and the administration at Mountain do their best to provide both education and security for these kids. My loyalty to Mountain comes from their treatment of my son but also from their treatment of all the special-needs kids at Mountain.

Now my son is headed for grade 12, he wants to attend his home school like his older brother. He wants to graduate from our local school and to graduate at the end of next year. From the psychometric tests that we've had done and from the academic work we have seen, our son is not capable of doing the work that would be required of him without assistance. However, his awareness of not being able to keep up to others is so painful to him that now he denies he has any needs at all. His home school welcomes him, but will not offer him an EA for the same reasons that we were given 9 years ago - our son is not violent and he doesn't need his diapers changed. He has been discouraged from taking music although this is the one area in which he excels because he doesn't read music. The classes, I was told, are for kids who will be studying music in university. My son performs in an orchestra and has done so for the last three years. Still, he'll be invited but not really

17/05/2011

included.

This saddens me deeply but my job now is to honour my son's requests and allow him to try his home school, to try the variety of courses that interest him, to stand by him during this experience. I hope he is treated well by his peers and that he's not treated derisively for the first time in his life. I hope the teachers welcome him and engage him and search out his strengths, find out what a wonderful boy he is. I am very disappointed in the school for not providing him with more support but mostly I am shocked that a schoolboard would think they have the capacity to support 480 MID students in the system in 2 years time when they can't support one boy now. At least Mountain will still exist next year and I know that if he needs a place to return to, they'll be there for him.

My son's time at Mountain has been a opportunity for me to learn how complicated these kids are and how very specialized and compassionate the teachers who work with these kids need to be. It will take years for the already overloaded teachers in the regular system to learn, grow, and adjust. For all of us education is precious, but the board needs to keep in mind that the kids at Mountain are too fragile to be experimented on.

to whom it may concern,

As a concerned parent of a student @ Mountain S.S. I would like to extend the importance of keeping the school open.

Moving these students to a full school would be devastating to my child as he doesn't do well in large populated areas.

The smaller population and easier assistance from the teaching staff at Mountain has been very positive in the success of

my son & other students at this school.

Throwing these kids into situations that were unsuccessful for them before could only be steps backwards instead of forwards

in the successful education plan that is supposed to be provided to them.

Perhaps including a school that is full of students that have proven very success full in any situation due to there own

abilities should be moved into a new school and be given the opportunity to have a self taught program there. As I am sure they

would perform the same in almost any learning environment you provide. Where the students @ Mountain were tested and deemed

to have specific needs greater than the average student and this is why we have them @ this terrific school. So we need to consider

what is the best solution for the students and not just what looks good on paper.

Thank you,

A Parent of Mountain S.S.

I hope this helps.

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