

**PRESENTATION TO NORTH ARC MEETING,**

**HAMILTON BOARD OF EDUCATION, May 24, 2011**

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University

To: Members of the North ARC

Re: Potential closing of Parkview School

- I am speaking on behalf of the Social Action Committee (SAC) of the Ont. Assoc. of Social Workers, Hamilton & District Branch. We are concerned about the potential closing of Parkview School and the effect this is likely to have on students who are flourishing at Parkview.
- Over the years, Ontario schools have experimented with: (1) streaming students into schools or classrooms that fit their capabilities; (2) putting students of differing capabilities into the same classroom. Members of the SAC would like to endorse the first approach; social workers in schools have seen the benefits for students of being educated along with others of similar capabilities.
- The following points are taken from an article written in the *Education Forum*, a journal for secondary school teachers in Ontario: The article, *Streamed General level classrooms: A place to learn, a place to grow*, is written by teacher, Nancy Maki, about her experience in a Grade 9 classroom that was geared to students with special educational needs.
- Ms. Maki describes a moment of achievement for Tim, a Grade 9 student who had great difficulty putting his ideas into written form, but had finally volunteered an answer in class that was grammatically perfect and textually comprehensive. He repeated this success three days in a row and after his third answer, suddenly the other 23 students in the class started clapping. It was a moment of happiness for Tim, which he could not have achieved in a mainstream classroom—a more competitive environment.
- Ms. Maki also describes her work with Roger, another Grade 9 student, who worried he would fail because of his poor spelling. He worked on a special computer spelling program and came to trust Ms. Maki, so that he was able to experience success as the two worked together and he made significant improvements in his written assignments.

- The author goes on to say, "Countless teachers have similar stories to tell of students who spend years in elementary classrooms trying to protect their fragile academic confidence from the fallout of students who excel academically. These needier students spend their elementary years eluding, rather than embracing, the opportunity to learn." In classrooms such as Parkview School offers, students like Tim and Roger thrive on the success that results when they are encouraged to reach out to learning opportunities in a setting that doesn't threaten them, but rather emboldens and heartens them.

Members of the SAC hope that the students at Parkview can continue to learn in an environment which they experience as supportive, rather than intimidating. Ideally, they can stay in a school where they have been flourishing, rather than experience the disruption of moving to an unknown place, where the environment may be more threatening to them.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.