



Name: Nicole Genyn

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

Concerning the proposal for cancellation of alternative program.

I was motivated to share our family story as it relates to the Alternative program. I don't need much time. I have an older son who has had a positive and successful journey through elementary school thus far, and will be entering highschool next year. My younger son is in Grade 2 and switched to the alternative program last spring. I disagree that the two streams are similar enough to warrant cancelling the Alternative program. I am concerned about the potential affects on my younger son being forced to assimilate and potentially switch schools again. I am worried about his mental health and the fact that he has improved significantly since changing schools, and would this take a turn for the worse if the proposal comes into affect - we have gone from frequent trips to the principal office at the previous school to discuss behavior (staff were very caring but his negative self talk was alarming at times and documented) to at our new school being surrounded by much more positive feedback and generally great days (reinforcement of how bright and polite he can be). We are not without occasional episodes but it is heartbreaking to imagine returning to the former. I feel the program is an invaluable compliment to what education in the Ottawa public board has to offer. I believe my son is a striking example of being met where he's at. I believe it is ill-advised to attempt a melting pot of meeting all possible needs at each location, so to speak, as opposed to a mosaic of options for a diverse-needs population. I already know that the regular program was like putting a square peg in a round hole for my son, and that his self esteem suffered due to that. I am appealing to weigh these considerations against the suggestion that the program is not needed. I think there are a significant lot of children who deserve access to what the Alternative program provides for their journey in education who would otherwise get discouraged and not reach their unique potential. This would truly be a disservice to Ottawa.