

Name: Jessica Strauss

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

I wish to delegate to speak as a parent of a disabled child concerning the elementary program review and its impact to our local school and to children with disabilities.

Rockcliffe Park Public School held a Town Hall on February 3, 2025 which was well attended including by Trustee Evans and by the Principal of the school, Mr. Brian Chiasson. During the meeting there were two agenda items reviewed, namely: (1) a reconsideration of all boundary zones for OCDSB schools; and, (2) the option to extend RPPS to include grades 7 and 8. I will limit my remarks to the second items, to extend RPPS for Grades 7 and 8 students. I do not believe that these two items are mutually dependent. Rather, I recommend that they be reviewed separately on the merits.

The status quo for RPPS students is that after Grade 6, 97% of students leave the OCDSB board to attend any of De La Salle (which is in the French Public CEPEO board), or any of the private schools nearby, of which there are many ranging from \$13,000 to \$34,000 per year for entry to Grade 7 starting in September 2025. In September 2024, 3% of students from RPPS entered Queen Elizabeth High School at Grade 7.

The effects of the status quo cannot be understated:

1. Regarding friendships, the transition from RPPS as a community school is broken for children who as young as 11 years old. Aware of this transition, anxiety had been building for years for both for students and their families as they understand that friendship networks will be severed.
2. Regarding family resources, the economic impact for RPPS families is significant. Many who take the decision to enroll in private schools have been saving for a decade or more and compromising other aspects of their family's

enjoyment.

3. Regarding safety of students, as most families who attend RPPS live nearby to Springfield Road, the only option for students to attend a public OCDSB high school 4 KM away and across a major arterial divide (St Laurent Blvd) is not only unsafe but it is also impractical. We cannot require children who are approximately 11 years old to make this commute. As such, parents much accompany them which defeats the purpose of a community school.

We understand that the status quo significantly contravenes the goals of the OCDSB Trustees, namely, to ensure adequacy and availability of community schools, limit transitions for children, and provide quality education for Ottawa's children within the OCDSB school board. For these reasons, the status quo must change. In fact, RPPS has recently completed a reconstruction project for the old Police Station thereby expanding its footprint. Further, RPPS has retained the existing portables on its property which would serve as the bricks and mortar required for an expansion for Grades 7 and 8 students. An expansion for Grade 7 and 8 students is thus made possible by:

1. Existing bricks and mortar! The capital investment required to expand to Grades 7 and 8 has already been made. OCDSB does not require further capital investment at this time.
2. Renovation for middle school students: In fact, a modest financial request to renovate the existing space so that it is middle-school appropriate may be requested, proposed to be matched by School Council fundraising initiatives. This would ensure that the community "buys in" and commits to keep children at RPPS rather than switch to another school.
3. Class sizes: To maintain adequate class sizes for Grades 7 and 8, RPPS will seek to scale up over a first five-year phase and to demonstrate that there is a significant community need. While many families have already taken the painful but necessary steps to find alternative channels of education, the families that



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remain will commit to work within the community to build the class sizes so that in the subsequent second five-year phase, enrollment numbers are closer to what other comparable Grade 7 and 8 class sizes are.

4. Anticipated retention for the OCDSB: It is thus expected that rather than a 97% attrition away from the OCDSB to CEPEO or private schools following Grade 6, there is a strong business case to be made that RPPS can grow its student population to reach an expected retention of 75% in the first phase of this new expansion.

For these reasons, an expansion at RPPS to include Grades 7 and 8 is completely in the realm of the possible; perhaps even for the upcoming school year 2025-26 given the will of the parents and the desire of the OCDSB to retain students in its catchment.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to engage in a thoughtful and meaningful conversation with OCDSB leadership. I am truly grateful.

Sincerely,

Jessica Strauss

Parent, RPPS Grades 2 and 4