

Name: Emma Vincent

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

This written feedback is in response to the proposed Elementary Program Review which, if passed, will negatively impact multiple families not only across my own community, but across the entire OCDSB.

Parents are frustrated - I don't think anyone here can disagree with that. The EPR's intention is to discover if the current program model serves the need of the community, as stated on the Boards EPR engage website. Parents can appreciate that there might be needs within the community of Ottawa that are not being met for certain families, and that change is a necessary part of growth. It is our hope that you let this feedback, and all of the feedback that we've been sharing over the past few weeks, be heard and appreciated so we can ensure that whatever new program model is decided on is one that will actually serve the needs of families, communities and most important - the kids. The current proposed model fails on so many levels for so many people, and it is our belief that if the next program model is to serve the next 10-20 years of education in our city then it should be done in a way that takes everyone's needs into account, rather than apply a one-size-fits-all 'solution' that is not a solution at all.

I am a parent of Castor Valley kids who would be greatly affected on multiple levels if they are not able to stay in their current school until the end of Grade 8, which was our intention as parents when we decided on location when buying our home, and also when enrolling our kids in that particular school. The current proposed method has both of my kids moving to Greely Elementary, which would take them away from half of the friends and all of the wonderful staff at Castor Valley that they have grown up with and have great trust in. My youngest is in Grade 2, and only this year has stopped crying when getting on the bus to go to school. She has made monumental growth with the help of her supportive teachers and staff, and with a regulated schooling experience. She was not born in Covid, but most of her time was spent at home with her parents and not at a daycare until she started school because of Covid. She is a small example of a child who needs stability after a world that was completely unstable during her most formative years, and in a world that continues to be unstable.



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Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) reported that approximately 70% of children and youth experienced a worsening of mental health since the pandemic's onset. Additionally, there was a 50% increase in youth presenting with eating disorders at CHEO (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario).

During your strategic planning process, did you evaluate long-term mental health risks for kids after this change? If so, which mental health professionals were consulted during this process? Do you understand that you will be doing a disservice to multiple kids over the course of the next few years? Some of these kids are on the brink with their mental health right now, many have already had to seek help from multiple mental health professionals simply from living through a global pandemic. I plead that you do what is necessary to protect our kids as what is being proposed will do a lot of harm, and that is just speaking to the boundary changes, and not speaking to the closing of Alternate schools which is appalling.

Ottawa parents are begging for the proposed model to go back to the drawing board, with more community consultation at every step.