

Trustee Accommodation Review Meeting Deputation

By Emily Taylor

My family, and many other families with children attending Near North schools, are very opposed to the idea of a super school. One reason why people live in this beautiful area is because they prefer the small town feel of North Bay, instead of the overcrowded neighbourhoods and highways in southern Ontario. For example, my husband and I started our careers in southern Ontario and we came up north occasionally on weekends to get away from the overpopulated south. After getting to know this area and realizing that it would be a healthier and more quaint place to raise children, we moved here despite the limited variety of job opportunities in our areas of work.

Now, you are considering grouping all of your North Bay area students from grades 7-12 into two or possibly even 1 super school? Not a good idea. No parents with young children would specifically choose North Bay as their home, knowing their children will end up in a school with over 2000 students. No one would choose to move to a nice small town of 50 000 people, only to send their children to the biggest school in Ontario. It just won't happen.

More importantly, you will drive away your current and future clientele. Jobs in North Bay are currently disappearing (i.e., the hospital). With many more jobs in southern Ontario and potentially smaller schools, there really will be nothing keeping young families here. Many families have already chosen other local school boards instead of the Near North District School Board, and it's not because they are devout Catholics or Francophones. Please do not give families yet another reason to leave your board. I already know of several families that plan to leave your school board if you choose to build a super school, our family included. When my daughter was going to start kindergarten, the Near North School Board was considering placing all JK-grade 12 French Immersion students together at one school. You made a great decision to dismiss that idea, so we registered our daughter and eventually our son with your board. Please make the right decision this month, and dismiss this idea of a super school.

Instead of making your school board less appealing, I would suggest marketing your current schools to promote the wonderful programs you offer. For example, educate people about the benefits of your French Immersion, IB and STEM programs. Really inform families from feeder schools about the opportunities at each of your schools. Your schools have a lot to offer, but most people are not aware of it. You are trying to be fiscally responsible, I know. What I am suggesting is find ways to INCREASE your numbers by promoting your schools so they GROW, rather than projecting FAILURE and setting yourselves up for more FAILURE. Businesses thrive by marketing themselves and reinventing themselves, not by downsizing and predicting the worst.

To sum up, I would like to share with you a speech my daughter wrote in April. Her teacher asked each student to write a persuasive speech about anything they felt strongly about. It wasn't until after her speech was marked and came back home that I found out she wrote about the super school. Her speech is entitled:

Super School = Bad Idea

Hello everyone! I am Samantha, a seventh-grade student and possibly part of the first graduating class of the “super school”. Every school wants to promote learning and fitness...Right? Well, building this “super school” will do the exact opposite, and I’m here to tell you why the super school is a bad idea.

First of all, this school will lead many students to less learning. Not only will the construction of the school disrupt Chippewa students, but having over 2200 students in one school will just not work. Having over 1000 students taking the bus each day to the same destination will make many students late, as many buses are already usually late. Also, with more people and friends in the halls, there will be more skipping classes. Then, with less staff and bigger classes, there will be more fights and less one-on-one time with teachers and students.

Then, you have to start thinking about physical activity and how it helps kids focus and learn. Even if the number of students increases, the number of students they can take on each sports team will not. If they are only allowed to take, say 12 people on a team, then those 12 people will be the best of the best, the rep and regular players, not the ones who actually need cheap, fun physical activity. Not only that, but with knowing that will happen, it will discourage many people to even tryout or play. Even if the school decides to have an a), b) and c) team, and possibly even clubs, how will they be able to find enough teachers who want to coach or run those clubs? Sometimes it’s even hard to find one coach!

Now, for my last point, I will be discussing money. The whole idea of the “super school” is to save money and cut down on costs, right? Well, once again, that’s not going to happen. Everyone knows that schools are shifting away from text books and towards laptops, so in the past few years, all the schools have been stocking up. In addition to schools having hundreds of iPads, laptops and computers, the majority of students have personal devices with them at school, connected to the WIFI. Already, at Chippewa, you can clearly see that they have wasted thousands of dollars on devices, when having so many devices connected, the internet never works. Imagine a “super school” with hundreds of students with devices connected and thousands of school devices connected. There might even be more devices than students, but none of that matters because there will be no internet ever! What a waste of money! Not to mention how terrible that would be for the students, considering how important the internet is for notes, classes and studying these days.

In the end, it is plain to see that a “super school” would not be a good idea. It would only bring less learning and fitness to the students, and instead of saving money, we would only be wasting it. Thank you for listening to why a “super school” would be a bad idea.