

My name is Alissa Mitchell. My husband Mike and I have three sons in the Near North board: two at Chippewa and one at Alliance.

I have studied the demographics of our board and understand the funding policies by the Ministry. With a continued projected decrease in enrolment, I understand why the board's staff recommended the building of a new high school.

And I support their initial recommendation. I support the 3:1 option.

I support building a new **centrally** located high school for the Near North District School Board. There is a large group of silent parents out there who also support the 3:1 option, but these are parents who are weary of the ARC process. In my opinion, the 3:1 option met with resistance for three main reasons:

1) People are scared of the idea of a "super school".

The board could mitigate these fears by communicating examples of successful large schools such as Jasper Place High School and by describing how concerns such as high traffic volume could be alleviated by offering staggered start times to the school day.

2) The public doesn't have all the information they need to make an informed decision. For instance, people are shocked to learn that shortly after 2020, the board will not have enough students enrolled to keep two high schools open, which means that one will eventually have to close, after we have poured millions into it to fix its deficiencies.

3) North Bayites are very loyal to their high schools. I firmly believe that many simply don't want to see their high school close.

I think that the public would be more open to a new school if it was located on a central site, made excellent use of public funds, and was an incredible facility that was built in consultation with local leaders in various fields of education.

I'd like to propose that the ARC committee and the school board consider building a new consolidated high school behind Memorial Gardens.

This neutral site has the potential to be amazing.

- First of all, there is no allegiance to Chippewa, Widdifield, or West Ferris.
- It would allow a smooth transition for continued IB programming, unlike if it moved to West Ferris.
- Adjacent to the arena, classes can easily take advantage of vacant, daytime ice use as part of the physical education programming.
- Located next to the YMCA, students can access the pool, the gym, after school programming, and more.
- Across the street is the Early Years Centre, ideal for placements and volunteering.
- It is a short walk to the Northgate Shopping Centre, which is convenient for students who work there.
- It is close to Cassellholme, for placements and volunteering.
- It is easy to walk downtown
- It is still close to the largest elementary school in the board, Alliance.
- The school could be used for sport tourism on the weekend, with easy access from the highway.

- And on the topic of access, there are two major access points: Fisher allows quick access from West Ferris, and Cassells allows quick access from both O'Brien and Trout Lake Road. Through the hockey season, those access points allow for up to 4000 people to attend Battalion games, so getting half that to and from school is doable, especially when the majority of those students are brought in by school bus. With about 48 high school students on a bus, that makes for far fewer vehicles than during an OHL game.
- But what about Thompson Park? Thompson Park could move to the Chippewa site.

Next, let's talk about partnering with the city. If we could share facility expenses such as snow removal, custodial needs, and even food services, every tax payer in this city would win, whether you have a student at this school or not.

We could build the new North Bay Public Library attached to this facility. Accessible by both the general public and the students, we would again be sharing expenses, such as information technology (IT) costs. This has been done successfully elsewhere in the province.

Finally, if we're going to create a space that optimizes the educational experience for 2200 of North Bay's students, let's get inspired.

- This building could have a modern triple gym that attracts sports tourism on the weekends and in the summer.
- It could be a showcase for theatre and the arts.
- It could have the latest in technology and programming in the Industrial Arts; inspiring a new generation of highly trained trades people.
- Imagine a school where students sit on bikes located in the foyer and as they pedal, their pedal power generates the electricity that illuminates the lights above them. Incorporating LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) design aspects would provide real world examples of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education in practice. See the Dr. David Suzuki Public School in Windsor as an example of what is possible.

This school could be an outstanding success for both the city of North Bay and the Near North District School Board. These collaborations have been successful in other cities and towns in Ontario. The Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School is one example just a short drive down the highway.

A new high school at the Memorial Gardens/Thompson Park location makes sense. It's not only logical and practical; it's forward thinking and progressive. It's a neutral site that would provide our children with a facility that rivals anything in southern Ontario.

We need leadership to make this happen.

Please vote for the 3:1 option and then let's make it amazing.

Thank you.