

**Mount Benson Parent Presentation to
Trustees of School District 68 :
Consultation General Presentation Night 2:
Programs**

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Schools and Programs

- A school cannot be all things to all people.
- Larger schools do not provide more programs or more choice, than a larger number of smaller schools. Students and communities determine which programs work, not the buildings.
- Neighbourhood schools allow the community and teachers to have greater influence over the programs offered.

Mount Benson School

Mount Benson School is a community. Families who have enrolled their children at the school have done so because they value their community, and the Families at M'Akola are a very large part of that community. While many Mount Benson Parents have been advocating for everyone in the community, extra attention needs to be paid to those families who will be shuffled to Pleasant Valley.

Enrolment

- Long commutes discourage some families from attending public school.
- Consider walking 3-4km to school with two primary kids. Walking becomes your life and Job. Homeschooling becomes the preferred option.
- Students from Transportation challenged families will simply not **attend**.
- “Home Schooling” which is already common around Mount Benson School, will become even more attractive.
- Parents who have to drive long distances will spend more time considering private school.

- Poor access to public school will drive enrolment down.

Attendance

- More than half of Mount Benson Students currently live within 750 meters of school.
- SD68 proposes Mount Benson children walk farther than any other district in Canada.
- The distance and safety of a commute to school is one of the most common reasons for students not attending school.
- Parents whose children are too young to walk to school alone are faced with 2-3 round trips to school. This translates in 6 hours of walking for a parent with a child in Kindergarten and another grade. These walking distances affect attendance when families do not have ready access to a car. Older children who have to walk long distances to school are also more likely not to attend.
- Poverty increases the problems associated with long or unsafe school commutes.
- The farther a school is away from home, the more transportation challenged the family is, the greater the negative impact.
- Bussing solves some attendance problems, but does not fix the many other problems associated with removing a neighbourhood school.
- Busing is not an alternative to a healthy neighbourhood school.

(insert slide showing distances – Pleasant Valley)

(insert slide showing distances – Dover)

Programs and School Choice

- Fewer schools provide parents with fewer choices
- Full schools limit choice even more.
- Families end up with access to fewer programs.

School Programs

- Bigger schools cannot always offer the programming families and students want.
- Neighbourhood schools can be more flexible, with programming tailored to the school community.
- Even though Mount Benson is smaller than its 3 neighbours, it is the only school which offers band every year.
- Mount Benson children have band because they want it. Band is part of their school and its neighbourhood culture.
- School districts cannot run programs if the students are not interested, and infusing Mount Benson students into Pleasant Valley, Coal Tyee or Rock City will not result in any significant change to their school culture, but it will result in Mount Benson students not getting Band.
- Mount Benson Teachers offer extra-curricular programs such as Rhythmic Gymnastics and Choir, these are not offered at the surrounding schools.

Daycare

- Daycare is difficult to find.
- Mount Benson has a before and after school care program.
- Coal Tyee does not have qualifying space for daycare.
- Most of the daycares and programs which pickup from Mount Benson school, have indicated Coal Tyee and Pleasant Valley are too far away, and will not pickup these children.
- Bigger and fewer schools means fewer services and less family support.

Sports

Larger Schools Limit Sports Opportunities

- Team sizes do not grow with school size.
- As schools grow, more students are left off the team.
- Students who are not active do not join as they know that they are not needed, and may feel unappreciated.

Ideally sized schools Encourage Sports Opportunities

- At smaller schools kids who would otherwise be overlooked, are recruited by peers and staff.
- Everyone can be part of a team.
- Students are valued simply for being part of the team.
- Elementary School sports are about learning to participate.

Busing Elementary Students reduces Sports Participation

- Sports teams practice after school, bused students cannot practice
- Sports teams play after school, bused students cannot play, even at home games
- Transportation challenged parents cannot even watch home games

Location Provides Sports Benefits

- The morning run will become less interesting as they will no longer be next to the E&N Trail, Loudon Trail, Diver Lake and Parkway trail.
- Only Mount Benson can walk to Kayak lessons in the spring.
- Only Mount Benson students do their 30minute morning run along a selection of lakes and trails.
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Busing Restricts school's ability to help students

- Teachers at Mount Benson offer before and after school help for students.
- For many students who do not or cannot get help at home, this is critical.
- Busing students prevents children getting extra help.
- Transportation challenged families are often the same students who benefit the most from extra help.

Community Participation

- Getting parents to be active in schools is always challenging. When the parents live 3-5km away, and do not have access to transportation, participation is virtually impossible.
- Parents cannot get to daytime performances or school concerts.
- Parents cannot volunteer to help with hot lunches, fun days or classroom activities.
- Students and families skip
 - PAC Meetings
 - Weekly Sports Nights
 - Evening Concerts
 - Movie Nights
 - Literacy Nights
- Families are no longer part of the school community.

Separated From Friends

The smaller group of students being sent to Pleasant Valley are being separated from their Mount Benson School friends, sent to a school which is farther away and in the opposite direction, and then to a high school (Dover Bay) which is more than twice as far away as the local High School (Wellington). While it may be unintentional, the catchment changes are dividing the Mount Benson School Population along social and economic boundaries. Families who could benefit the most from a stable school community, will experience the most upheaval and inconvenience.

Catchment changes

- Transportation challenged families and other families benefit the most from neighbourhood schools.
- The catchment changes target the Mount Benson Families who live in:
 - Non-profit housing
 - Aboriginal Housing
 - Apartment Housing
- These children are being sent out of their community to school, despite the family housing being built in close proximity to the school.
- Students from a child oriented neighbourhood are being redirected to a school located in the most retirement oriented area of the city.

(Slide of demographics of our area and PV)

Students as Numbers

Coal Tyee and Rock City are closer than Pleasant Valley to the students who live along Wellington Road. Instead of moving students to a nearer school which would be better for the students and families, SD68 proposes to move the students out to Pleasant Valley. The students are being moved in a numbers game to justify expansions.

- **Please keep Wellington children where they belong. Keep them in school, in the Wellington Neighbourhood, in Mount Benson.**