

The Trillium Lakelands District School Board Administrative Report indicates under Summary of Issues:

The school or group of schools is unable to provide a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities of students;

Reorganization involving the school or group of schools could enhance program and learning opportunities for students;

Teaching/learning spaces are not suitable to provide the program needed to serve the community and retrofitting may be cost prohibitive.

There has been no evidence provided by the school board to support these reasons. Not only has there been no evidence provided by TLDSB, empirical research directly contradicts this approach and supports the existence and continued investment in Honey Harbour Public School as the most progressive and ideal approach to educating our future citizens.

As the board has failed to actual rationale for these positions and our community has been left frustrated due to HHPS teachers being prevented from providing us with meaningful input around these accusations, we are left to speculate on what they expect students at the junior levels to accomplish while under their supervision.

I personally believe, and know that many others in this community support my position, that HHPS provides our children with a superior range of learning opportunities, the programing is second to none, and the learning spaces far superior to many of the modern structures being built to house large student populations. Our non-traditional education facility extends beyond the walls provided to us by the school board and out into our surrounding community situated within a Globally recognized United Nations Biosphere Reserve.

Honey Harbour PS has been successfully teaching our children to be better equipped to deal with the collaborative and pan-dimensional nature of high school, advanced education and the workforce that our modern society requires. This is reflective of small micro-schools as the preferred choice for most people throughout the history of education. HHPS have been doing this at our current location for 50 years without there ever being a mention that this was somehow inadequate or sub-standard. It is only in recent years that the rest of society has caught up to what we have long known to be a truly positive and effective learning approach.

At the start of the last century the movement in education was reflective of the industrial mindset of the governments of that time; consideration of the efficiencies created by economics of scale took precedence over what was in the best interest of the citizens they were responsible for educating. In other words, "This assembly-line concept of education entered the classroom...and did not evolve from any research base...but it evolved and became a deeply engrained tradition more by accident (www.trinityaberdeen.org).

What is now the accepted systemic approach to cost savings and education no longer works for our modern needs; it makes schools and boards less able to respond nimbly to individual learner's needs and children are being lost in the shuffle of an inadequate and inefficient bureaucratic machine. More recently our government has moved to reduce the classroom size in recognition of its value; globally the one-room school house or micro-school learning structure is the choice of independent educators in recognition of it being the most conducive to how humans actually learn and thrive.

HHPS is providing, in an extremely cost effective manner, something custom-made for the students that can respect differences and focus on what really makes them tick. The cost to educate students in our two-room school house setting is roughly the same per student as the factory schools with all schools having to meet the same national standards. I am not going to suggest that HHPS fairs any better on EQAO results however there is a great deal more to molding a strong citizen than standardized test results. This is where HHPS shines.

Our current education system is set up to support our old economy where the best skills a student could learn would be to show up and do exactly what they are told. Our new economy requires a very different type of approach. We need people who are creative thinkers, who can identify needs, think of solutions independently or collaboratively, and know how to get things done.

The US Government reports that "research evidence indicates that multi-grade instruction has significant positive impact on student attitudes, and tends to enhance achievement outcomes under positive implementation conditions."

Schools strive to teach students particular lessons outside of the standard curriculum. These lessons are not easy to teach or learn. HHPS, because of our multi-grade structure, teaches our student, at a very young age, additional critical life skills that I know some adults who went to large schools growing up still struggle with. Included but not limited to:

get along with challenging personalities and those with different views

Our children soon discover that when the number friends are limited it is advisable to find creative ways to get resolve conflicts and be tolerant of differences. Incidents of bullying occurs relatively less frequently. This is less easily taught in a larger setting and often takes a much longer time to learn when there are avoidance options available in the form of other persons. For our HHPS students, this lesson is ingrained at a young age and becomes a way of life.

Collaboration across age and gender divides

In life, most major projects cannot be done alone; collaboration is a critical life-skill. Working together can be contrived, difficult and dysfunctional when superficial barriers such as age and gender are imposed by single/double grade situations. In HHPS multi-

grade classroom teachers often devise creative ways of presenting project work that involves all age/grade/gender groups and that focus on a common topic. At HHPS students adjust the social dynamics, break down barriers, they are more open and respectful of others as individuals with individual approaches to learning; without any consideration to systemically imposed limitations. Again, a critical life skill that the HHPS model excels at.

Independent working and critical thinking skills

A skill that is often not honed until much later in life is the ability to work and solve problems independently. HHPS students have an advantage, during certain subjects and for a period of time, the teacher is engaged providing lessons to other grade levels, students are expected to critically think through problems or engage the assistance of their peers. Honing independence early sets our students up for greater success at the high school and higher education levels as well as in the workforce. Although these skills are taught in all school settings, the students at HHPS have no choice but to fine-tune them at an earlier age than students in larger classroom single/double grade settings.

Stability, continuity, support and thinking of community as family

With HHPS comes stability and continuity for students and their families. Students do better when they know their teachers over multiple years and in turn teachers know their students and by extension the families. This allows for a real long-term interest in these kids and a solid ongoing loving relationship to develop. The social environment that exist at HHPS is akin to a big family where everyone looks out for each other. Where else would a junior kindergarten girl be taught, at recess, by an eighth-grade boy how to tie her shoelaces and he is not made fun of by his peers? Is that not how we teach boys to be great fathers? Where else would a first grader feel perfectly comfortable to invite a fifth or sixth grader to their birthday party, and have them show up? Is that not how we teach acceptance and respect? Just as family gains strength from the range of talents and interest of its members, the multiage/grade class is also enriched.

The lack of input from our teachers prevents me from being able to know how much HHPS is allowed to develop and experiment with the delivery method for the curriculum. Smaller multi-grade micro-schools have the distinct advantage of being able to try new approaches to educating our children. If this is not already being done by HHPS it is a large missed opportunity to the board. Some of these include:

Ability to drive the schedule

When children grow into adults they will not have someone dictating to them how they are to structure their day. In smaller schools, it is easier to be flexible with the daily schedule and allow the children to drive for much of the time. College/Universities

spend a great deal of time trying to teach new student how to manage their time. HHPS has the opportunity to begin these lessons from an early age.

Opportunities exist to provide flexibility and a variety of learning approaches within the school setting.

One teacher to many, one teacher to a few, parent to student (part-time home schooled), software to student, tutors (EA or teacher to student), student to student (create a one on one buddy system), student to students (create a one to many configuration). This mixed approach allows the school to be much more adaptable and creative in delivery of information. It could also see some cost savings measures where volunteer parents and students could assist with the delivery. There are cost savings opportunities to be had using this approach. Closing schools to save money is short-sighted and does not work for the long-term!!!

Utilizing software to track a student's progress.

modern schools have a large variety of software programs to choose from that can be utilized in conjunction with the above multi- delivery approach method of education, to track individual students progress in a consistent and cost efficient manner. Closing schools to save money is short-sighted and does not work for the long-term!!!

Investing in small test-batch education experimentation

As with anything it is important to have a vision for the future; If you are only focusing on what already works and not exploring new ideas you will fall behind. Micro-schools are the perfect place to discover new approaches to learning and scale them up to the rest of the board. Courage with more creative ways to find efficiencies within the school system will grow better schools. Closing schools to save money is short-sighted and does not work for the long-term!!!

Many people believe that culture is unchangeable; in fact, within a smaller community such as HHPS we can create and change with intention. Micro-schools with multiple-grade classrooms are not an inferior way to educate children and in fact are a superior way to achieve citizens better able to deal with our new economy. To close micro-schools in an attempt to save money is short-sighted and a missed opportunity on the part of school boards. It will not work for the long-term.

I strongly advocate for micro-schools as the best approach to educating our children. Rather than closing micro-schools, the board should be closing factory schools and opening micro-schools using innovative and cost effective approaches to the delivery of education.

My questions to Trillium Lakeland School Board are:

- considering my comments above,
 - what have you done to improve the delivery of education of late both at the board as a whole and specifically at HHPS? Have you attempted any scaled experimentation to determine if there are better ways of delivering education without closing schools?
 - What consideration have you given to the education of our children beyond the standardized EQAO test results as a measure of a school's success?
 - How can you possibly consider closing HHPS considering:
 - the success of HHPS's delivery of education that meet standards
 - the additional life skills and moral compass our students gain which are not readily taught or gained at larger schools
 - the contested cost for the delivery of this education which is still not clearly laid out by you in a manner that is transparent and which many feel is inaccurate
 - the fact that our community does not believe that the school building and grounds are inadequate
 - our population resting at well above the threshold for ARC considered
 - the lack of trial of alternate delivery methods for the education that are more cost effective
 - The missed opportunities that will occur in terms of discovering more cost effective measures through scaled trials
 - a school that is functioning within the limits for which it was created

I submit that HHPS is a thriving example of creative and multifaceted approaches being used that should be held as an example to other schools on how to successfully educate children in our diverse culture. It should be used as a blueprint for how to get things done. Bravo to our teachers for their continued success.

The school or group of schools is unable to provide a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities of students; Honey Harbour provides, in the view of this community a very suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities, and in some instances, outside of the set curriculum, a superior education to that offered in larger school settings.

Reorganization involving the school or group of schools could enhance program and learning opportunities for students; This reorganization must happen within the existing structure of the HHPS by further developing creative and cost effective approaches to providing TLDSB students with a leading-edge education that supports our new economy and provides them with the opportunity to surpass the needs of this economy and society as a whole.

Teaching/learning spaces are not suitable to provide the program needed to serve the community and retrofitting]may be cost prohibitive. HHPS had adequate space to provide in-class instruction which you chose to remove last year. Our position within the

UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, provides us with the outdoor classrooms we live here to utilize. Four walls limit us, exploring history where it happened and ecology, geology and geography in one of the greatest reserves in the world makes our school more superior than modern large facilities. In fact, approaching HHPS as an opportunity for small-scale experiments that the board can scale up means you have a readymade laboratory for creative means to educate students in Ontario that will provide alternate ways of achieving cost savings that do not include closing micro-schools.

Closing HHPS would be a loss to both our community and the school board. It is time to move boldly forward away from these antiquated systemic cost-savings measures and approach education with the agility and nimbleness that our future requires. I ask that the Trustees responsible for making this decision be brave and demand better of the board than this. Do not close Honey Harbour Public School. The reasons for doing so do not truly exist.