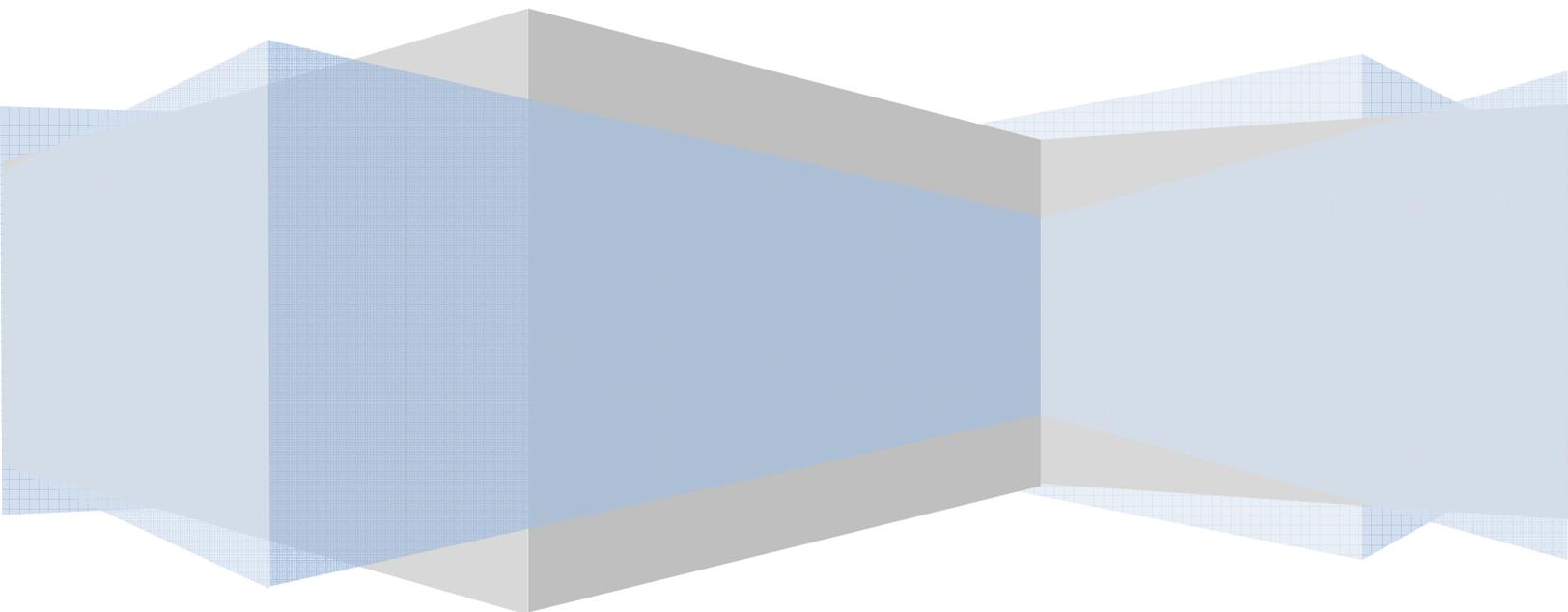


**Citizens for Austin Road Elementary School**

# **A Response to the District Sustainability Committee Report**

**Concerns, Alternatives, and Research**

**March 2010**



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## Introduction

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The District Sustainability Committee Report (DSCR) states that “School District No. 57 must decide which of two worlds it wants to inhabit.” One world is described as ignoring enrolment decline and resulting financial challenges, while the second world offers the promise of sustainability where challenges are explained, confronted, and addressed. We agree with this statement and that the second world is certainly the more preferable of the two options.

However, we also believe that one world focuses on short-term challenges and denies itself a future by holding on to solutions of the past. The other world embraces children and foresees a learning system that is sustainable beyond the current board, district administration and provincial leaders. It is our hope that School District 57 will work with us towards the second of these worlds.

Citizens for Austin Road Elementary School (CARES) is a group of concerned residents, parents, students, grandparents and community members. We are responding to the recommendations made in the DSCR, and are concerned with the impact these recommendations will have on students in the Hart.

This report outlines our concerns, alternate scenarios, and options. Our goal is to work with the School Board to find solutions which will address those concerns, while still managing the current budgetary challenges.

Please email [cares@AustinRoadPAC.info](mailto:cares@AustinRoadPAC.info) with any questions, concerns, requests, or comments, and we would be pleased to respond.

# Executive Summary

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The district has recommended closing Austin Road Elementary and moving English track students to a new Heather Park Elementary school, and French students to a new John McInnis Elementary school.

This report provides details on CARES concerns in the following areas:

- Size of elementary school – proposed schools must allow for academic and social success, while still being cost effective.
- Accessibility of the French Immersion Program – barriers, including health and transportation should not preclude Hart students from accessing the program.
- Health and Safety – physical and emotion health and safety must be addressed.
- Suitability of Proposed Site – John McInnis and Heather Park must be made ready for young students.
- Single track Education - French only education has limitations.
- Sustainability – decisions made today must be able to endure the test of time.

We have analyzed 6 different scenarios:

## **As Recommended, and Most Probable Result**

The DSCR recommends the closure of Heather Park Middle School, Austin Road, Nukko Lake and Springwood, and the amalgamation of all students into a K-7 Elementary at Heather Park. However, if this recommendation is adopted, the majority of Austin Road French Immersion parents have indicated that they would not send their children to John McInnis. Instead, these students would likely attend the Heather Park Elementary English track program, creating a 660 student English only elementary school at Heather Park.

## **Alternate Scenario 1: Move Austin Road to Heather Park**

This recommendation proposes the creation of a K-7 Dual Track school at Heather Park, housing the Austin Road students with their Grade 6's and 7's. Heather Park Middle School and Austin Road would be closed, but Nukko Lake and Springwood would remain open. This would create a reasonable size Dual Track school in the Hart, while still resulting in financial savings to the school district.

## **Alternate Scenario 2: Two Dual Track Schools**

This recommendation proposes the creation of two dual track schools in the Hart: K-3 at Austin Road and 4-7 at Heather Park. This would create reasonably sized Dual Track schools in the Hart, allow primary school students to be educated in a facility suitable for their age group, and still result in financial savings to the school district.

### **Alternate Scenario 3: Dual Track Heather Park Elementary**

Under this alternative the school district would establish a dual-track K-7 configuration at Heather Park. Nukko Lake, Springwood and Austin Road would be closed and their students, along with the Grade 6's and 7's would attend Heather Park. This would allow for Dual track education in the Hart, and provide financial savings to the school district. However, the resulting size of Heather Park elementary would be extremely large.

### **Alternate Scenario 4: Single Track French Immersion in Hart**

This scenario looks at creating a Single Track French Immersion school at Austin Road or another school. English track students from Austin Road, Nukko Lake and Springwood would attend Heather Park as per the DSCR recommendations.

### **Alternate Scenario 5: Keep Austin Road Open**

This scenario looks at maintaining Austin Road as a K-5 Dual Track Elementary school in the Hart. Heather Park Middle School would also remain open in its current state.

In these scenarios, we have only looked at options involving the schools with which Austin Road would be combined. Examining the merits or the impact of keeping Central Fort George, Shady Valley or Salmon Valley, for example, does not fall within the mandate of this report.

We have also proposed some alternate solutions for the School Board's consideration. These include increased input into decision making, the creation of additional dual track schools in the school district, using existing surplus funds to invest in Green solutions, evaluating the costs and benefits associated with renovating existing schools, lobbying the federal government for funding to support dual track schools, and providing support for excellence in teaching.

## Concerns

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We acknowledge and understand the financial constraints the school district is facing. While solutions must be found to the budgetary challenges, the welfare of our children should not be unduly compromised. In this regard, we have the following concerns:

### Size of Elementary Schools

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The DSCR recommends that Austin Road students be directed to one of two proposed mega schools; Heather Park or John McInnis. The proposed size of Heather Park Elementary is over 550 students, and John McInnis Elementary is over 600 students.

#### Size Matters

A review of the literature indicates that the optimal maximum size for an elementary school is **300 to 400 students** when considering students' academic achievement, behavior, sense of connection and safety. As concerned citizens living in the Hart area and parents of children attending Austin Road, we believe it is imperative to cast a critical gaze at Recommendation 15, reconfiguring Heather Park to a K-7 elementary school. In the DSCR it is stated that the School Board "expects that the learning needs of our students need to not only be met but wherever possible enhanced"<sup>1</sup>. An overview of the research illustrates that learning needs and possible enhancement may be compromised with a movement towards mega schools. Size matters when considering students' achievement, behavior, safety and sense of connection to the community as well as parental involvement.

#### Student Achievement

In their 2007 analysis, researchers from SFU found that smaller schools "improve educational outcomes"<sup>2</sup>. Students from smaller schools "tend to complete more years of higher education and score higher on standardized tests"<sup>3</sup>. As well, achievement gaps between socio-economically disadvantaged students and affluent students decreased significantly in smaller schools<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, McMillen highlights that "achievement gaps typically existing between certain subgroups (i.e. more vs. less advantaged, lower vs. higher achieving) were larger in larger schools."<sup>5</sup> Research shows that oversized schools are a detriment to student achievement, especially for poor children. Even assuming larger schools did equate to more fiscal efficiency, diverse curriculum, and extracurricular activities, those factors have not translated into better student achievement. Research further shows that smaller schools are able to offer a strong core curriculum, and except in extremely small schools, a comparable level of academically advanced courses<sup>6</sup>.

#### Sense of Connection

A parent on our committee said it the best in response to the proposed "mega school" site at Heather Park, when she commented that *"I know my kids will be fine. I don't want them to just be fine. I want them to be fantastic!"* It is our hope that as our children navigate their way through elementary school, they feel a sense of belonging, connection and interest in the school they attend. These descriptors are not the simple hopes of all parents but coincide with the developmental needs of elementary school children. The

literature is clear — smaller schools foster a sense of connectedness and a sense of community. Increased contact time between students and teachers in smaller schools leads to a sense of attachment to and satisfaction with school<sup>7</sup>. It is apparent that ‘being and feeling known’ in one’s school influences student achievement. Furthermore, with a sense of connection and community there is greater opportunity for conflict resolution and lower rates of negative behaviours such as bullying<sup>8</sup>. The average school size for public elementary schools in BC is 266 students. There are 185 schools with a population of more than 400, and 492 schools with less than 250. If Recommendation 15 were put in place, Heather Park Elementary would be the 30<sup>th</sup> largest school in the province out of a total of 1021 elementary schools. If we look at the results of the survey completed by the CARES committee, 67% of respondents intend to remove their children from French Immersion rather than send their children to John McInnis. We assume these children would then be sent to the Heather Park English only school. This movement would potentially make Heather Park Elementary the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest elementary school in the province. The research is unmistakable: large schools struggle to develop a sense of connection and community for students, and smaller schools foster strong relationships between students with teachers, families and communities<sup>9</sup>.

### **Parental Involvement**

The importance of parental involvement in a child’s education cannot be understated. The benefits are vast and well documented in the literature. Children learn and develop through three overlapping “spheres of influence”: family, school & community<sup>10</sup>. Parental involvement leads to increased academic performance and improved attitudes towards school. It is clear that getting parents involved in their child’s education is an integral part to students’ success. Researchers found dramatic and statistically significant improvement in reading amongst elementary school student with increased parental involvement<sup>11</sup>. This is of particular importance, considering the problem of literacy and the provincial government’s concern and apparent focus on literacy programs. Smaller settings (schools having less than 400 students) are easier to connect parents to their child’s educational experience. In these settings, personal and informal interactions with parents are more available.

In general, the impact of parental involvement is meaningful, statistically significant and large<sup>12</sup>. These conclusions point to the difficulties inherent in engaging parents of children in larger school settings. It matters that parents perceive themselves and are actively invited to be part of their child’s school community. It is important that a child feels known in the school she/he attends. Alongside this, it is important that the caregiver of that child feel known.

### **Cost Effectiveness...Not Easily Answered**

We live in a society that is immersed in the ‘big is better’ philosophy. It was in the 1960’s when the trend of larger schools first developed. It was assumed that this movement would provide significant cost savings to school districts, however, economies of scale often only occur to a certain level or size and then diseconomies of scale set in. In various studies of comparative operating costs, researchers have found that small schools - those less than a population of 400 - are actually more cost effective on a per capita student basis than larger schools<sup>13</sup>. Similarly, some research highlights the importance of reduced costs associated with less frequent student discipline issues<sup>14</sup>. Other research has looked at the longer term costs of graduating vs. non graduating students.

Though some of the noted studies look at high schools, it seems reasonable to extrapolate when considering long term costs. It can also be added that there is probably more hidden costs to larger schools when considering increased administration, security and maintenance. In her review of the literature on this topic Cotton points out that “the required disciplinary and other administrative personnel of large schools are so costly that past a certain point per pupil cost goes up”<sup>15</sup>. What becomes more difficult to answer is the cost to a community when a school closes. What will be the impact to the whole of the Hart Community if the recommendations are followed through? If schools are a place that bring people in communities together for various activities what happens when those spaces are gone, and even worse, left standing empty? These are costs not easily answered.

## **Accessibility of the French Immersion Program**

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Currently some 165 students in the Hart are registered in the French Immersion program. The DSCR recommends that these students be relocated to John McInnis. John McInnis would be a single track French Immersion school, located approximately 15 km from Austin Road.

### **Benefits Unclear**

Recent local news reports featuring interviews with Superintendent Pepper have stated that the primary rationale for centralizing French Immersion programs in Prince George is to accommodate a strong and growing demand for this popular choice program. The DSCR stated that College Heights Elementary and Spruceland Elementary are unable to accommodate the demand for French Immersion, and therefore John McInnis was proposed as a site where French Immersion can be allowed to grow and flourish.

Conversely, in the Hart schools have, to date, been accommodating the full demand for French Immersion. The local news reports have further stated that while some savings may be achieved by the proposed consolidation of French Immersion in Prince George, cost savings is not driving this proposal, but rather the desire to accommodate the demand for French Immersion. We find it unclear why the school district is proposing the removal of French Immersion from the Hart, which will essentially deny access to French Immersion for the vast majority of Hart students.

A survey of parents of Austin Road students has indicated that the vast majority of children currently enrolled in French Immersion at Austin Road would not continue with the French Immersion program if the program is removed from the Hart. Many of these children will have no choice but to switch over to the English curriculum. As such, the school configuration numbers in the English program would differ from those in the report, as there would be a sharp increase in English track enrolment. These students would also require additional resources to familiarize them with the English curriculum.

### **Transportation**

Travel distances created by a single French Immersion program at the John McInnis site will create overwhelming barriers to French Immersion for children living in the Hart. Access to the French Immersion program will be largely restricted to those within a reasonable distance of John McInnis, and to those whose parents can supply both the additional time and expense of transport.

It should be noted that the one-way commuting time from Austin Road to John McInnis is about 20 minutes by car; many students would have a greater commute than this. The district does not propose to provide any bussing alternatives, as French Immersion is a choice program. John McInnis' location and hours of operation are generally not compatible with families' daily commute downtown, leaving many parents unable to transport their children to this school. Rural students would need to travel for considerable distances every day; this would have a significant impact on their ability to succeed in their education. The Carbon Footprint associated with transporting children to and from John McInnis on a daily basis for 8 years of elementary school education is sizeable. It is ironic that one of the reasons for the school district's budgetary challenges is the requirement to purchase carbon credits to offset the district's carbon footprint.

### **Sense of Community**

The recommendations in the DSCR would require Hart students to be educated outside of their community, despite viable elementary schools being within walking distance of their homes. We believe that community involvement is enhanced when students attend a school which is close to their home, and that families have less involvement if their children are attending a school that is not in their community.

## **Health and Safety Issues**

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### **Air Quality**

The quality of the air in the city of Prince George has been the topic of much consideration in recent years, and a serious health concern for the citizens of this city. Air pollutants tend to accumulate in the downtown region due to the "bowl" topography of this area. Younger children have been identified in various literature as "sensitive receptors", and are therefore at an increased risk of developing the health problems associated with these pollutants. Detailed information on this issue is included in Appendix 3.

In light of these health concerns, many families in the Hart have made the decision to live outside of the bowl area in order to avoid exposing their children to these health risk. The air quality is particularly dangerous for children with respiratory issues, and some families have been instructed by their family doctors to avoid bringing their children into the bowl area as much as possible.

The closure of Austin Road and the reconfiguration of John McInnis into a single track French Immersion school would force many parents of French Immersion students to choose between the health of their child, or continuing with this program.

We note that if children continue in the French immersion program, they would go to Duchess Park school, also located in the bowl area. This does not mean that parents of French immersion students are prepared to educate their children in the bowl area — many students are removed from the French program before secondary school, and the air quality concerns are more critical for younger children.

### **Emotional Health**

The impact of the DSCR Recommendations on the emotional health of the children within the school district will be significant. Children within the French Immersion program will face the stress and trauma of being segregated from their schoolmates, uprooted from their schools, separated from their regular

child care, and their neighbourhood playmates. The closure of Austin Road and the single track French Immersion recommendation will impact these children’s academic performance and social development. Further, children of families who cannot continue with French immersion will suffer undue stress related to catching up to single track English classes, and may suffer academically and emotionally as a result.

### **Students with Disabilities**

An often overlooked impact is that of students with disabilities. The transition of students with disabilities is a much more complex transition than that of a typical student. From the educational standpoint change directly affects the outcomes of students with disabilities. Recent studies have shown a direct correlation between the number of school transitions and the success of the students. There was a 38% increase in dropout before grade 12 for students with disabilities who have transferred schools more than twice. Educational performance also dropped, and was attributed partially to an inability to focus and adapt to new environmental and social structures.

“Buildings that were predictable, consistent and orderly had a calming effect on students with sensory and behavioral issues and helped them to focus on their work. The ability to reduce environmental stimuli also had a positive impact on students’ ability to focus.” NJIT’s Center for Architecture & Building Research. The philosophy of inclusion advocates that all students, regardless of abilities, should be educated alongside their peers. The classroom represents the very nerve center of the educational environment. While this is true for all students, it is particularly so for students with disabilities. It is primarily in the classrooms that the contract for inclusion is made or broken.

### **Physical Safety**

With regard to Heather Park Elementary, there is a concern with placing elementary students so close to a high school, populated with approximately 300 new drivers, who may be driving through the Heather Park Elementary school area before and after school hours. The volume of traffic associated with this large student population coming in and out of the school on a daily basis is also a safety concern.

With regards to John McInnis Elementary, the intersection of Ferry Avenue and Westwood is extremely busy, with no provision to accommodate the significant commuter traffic. The area around the school is extremely open and maintaining security for children will be challenging, especially with commercial properties and highways close by.

### **Peanut Allergies**

Austin Road has successfully been operating as a peanut free school. Parents of children with severe peanut allergies have raised concerns that the mega school concept for Heather Park is not conducive to a safe peanut free environment for children, due to a larger population to monitor.

### **Suitability of Proposed Sites**

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Heather Park and John McInnis are not currently used nor designed to be used as elementary schools. Relocating elementary school children, as young as age 4, into a mega school that was never designed for elementary school children will present learning barriers and significant challenges for children.

In the case of Heather Park, there are concerns about the stairs, handrails, balconies, proximity to the secondary school, lack of playground, fencing, and nearby forested area.

With regards to John McInnis, although a playground currently exists at Peden Hill elementary, it is not adjacent to John McInnis, and is insufficient for the proposed number of students. The building is not laid out for younger children, and most classrooms do not even offer windows for natural day light or emergency exits. The school does not have the capacity for all district French Immersion students.

Ready, Set, Learn and Strong Start programs are also integral parts of the education spectrum. Remaining schools must have enough room available to house these programs as well as any other pre-kindergarten programs planned by the Ministry of Education.

## Single Track Education

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Austin Road parents consider dual track education to be an important aspect of the French Immersion program. Dual track schools reflect the bilingual nature of our society. They help all students appreciate the country's two official languages and cultures. Integration of the two cultures fosters understanding, and both immersion and non immersion students are exposed to the languages used in the school. A single track program may aggravate the perception that French Immersion is an elitist program.

An additional benefit to dual track schools over single track schools is the ability for children in the same family to pursue differing education programs depending on their learning style. There are numerous examples at Austin Road of families with children in both the English and the French Immersion program. The DSCR recommendations would likely force families to choose the same program for all their children regardless of learning style, simply due to logistics.

Dual track schools also reduce the risk of students entering French Immersion. Not all students thrive in this program, and a small percentage of students typically switch over to English track if it is determined that the French Immersion program is not conducive to their learning style. In a dual track school, these students are able to easily switch programs. However, in a single track school, such a switch would result in a change in schools – likely to an entirely different area of the city.

We have found from our survey of our families at Austin Road that most English track parents are in favour of a dual track school setting: 78% of responses with children in English track stated they are in favour of the current dual track setting, 2% were not in favour, and 20% didn't know. Overall, 87% of parents were in favour of the current setting, 2% were not in favour, and 12% didn't know.

## Sustainability

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Whichever decision is made by the School Board, it is in everyone's best interest that the restructured format of our school district be sustainable. Specifically, the changes must be financially sustainable in the big picture over the long term. They must provide for strong, stable education for our students and must not incur new related costs in the future.

## Scenarios

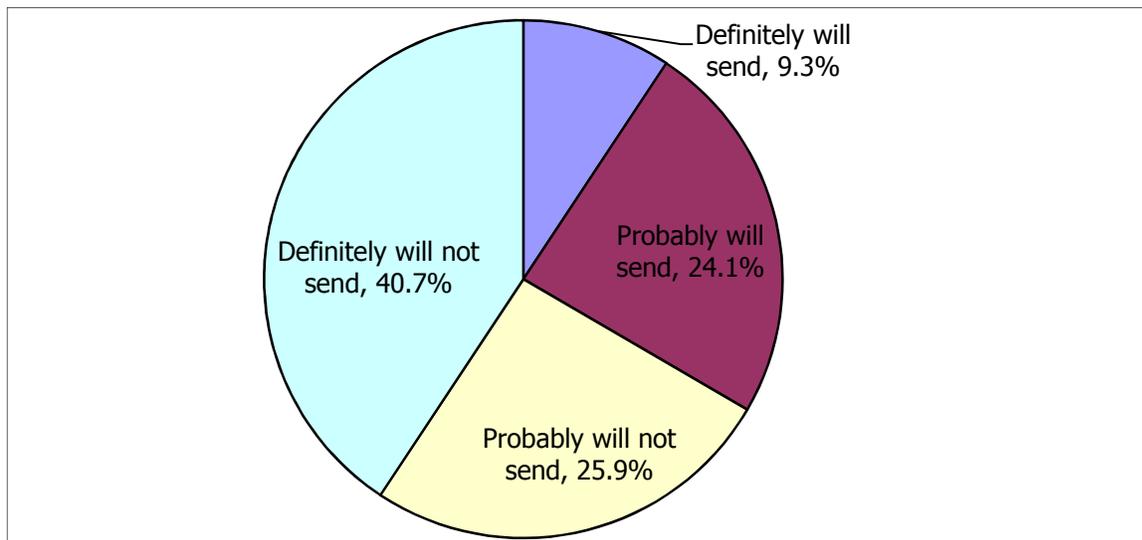
Appendix 1 provides more detailed data about the assumptions made for class sizes and net savings. The appendix also examines the issue of the location of the students currently in grade 6 at Heather Park.

### As Recommended, and Most Probable Result

The DSCR recommendations call for the closure of Austin Road, Heather Park, Salmon Valley, Shady Valley, Springwood, and Nukko Lake schools. Austin Road English students, Nukko Lake students, and Springwood students would go to Heather Park Elementary for K-7, and Austin Road French Immersion students would need to travel to John McInnis, which would become the sole French Immersion school.

New School	Existing Students	Total Projected Students 2010/11	% of Operating Capacity	% of Working Capacity	% of public elementary schools in BC larger
Heather Park	Austin Road - English, Nukko, Springwood	561	73%	63%	2.8%
Glenview	Glenview, Salmon Valley, Shady Valley	238	122%	117%	55%
Hart Highlands	Hart Highlands	373	101%	97%	22%
John McInnis	French - College Heights, Spruceland, Austin Road	608	143%	124%	0.7%

However, the majority of Austin Road French Immersion parents do not plan to send their children to John McInnis, when asked: “What are your current thoughts about sending your child to the French only John McInnis school, for grades K to 7?”



Accordingly, we have assumed that 67% (definitely and probably will not send) of French Immersion students would stay in the Hart, switch to the English track and attend Heather Park. Many have expressed interest in trying to obtain a place in a smaller public school, home school, or move to a private school. Unfortunately, the local smaller public schools appear to be at capacity.

Given these assumptions, it is likely that the DSCR recommendations would result in a 660 student English track elementary school at Heather Park. We are not supportive of this scenario, as the net effect would be to create an oversize single track English school, and severely restrict access to French Immersion for Hart students.

New School	Existing Students	Total Projected Students 2010/11	% of Operating Capacity	% of Working Capacity	% of public elementary schools larger
Heather Park	Austin Road - English, Nukko, Springwood, Austin Road - French - 67%	660	86%	75%	0.2%
Glenview	Glenview, Salmon Valley, Shady Valley	238	122%	117%	55%
Hart Highlands	Hart Highlands	373	101%	97%	22%
John McInnis	French - College Heights, Spruceland, Austin Rd- 23%	494	116%	101%	0.7%

### How does scenario address concerns of Austin Road parents?

- Heather Park Elementary would be nearly at capacity, with more students in an elementary school than anywhere else in the district, and 2nd largest in the province.
- This option would unduly restrict access of Hart children to the French Immersion program. The majority of students would not be able to continue in French Immersion.
- This option would not address the Health and Safety concerns associated with the mega schools. In addition, this would trigger air quality issues for French Immersion students travelling to the bowl.
- Both Heather Park and John McInnis school would require renovations in order to hold younger children.
- Single track education would be the only choice.
- Glenview appears to be over capacity, with the return of grades 6 and 7s and the addition of Shady Valley and Salmon Valley.
- The three remaining elementary schools in Northern Prince George would all be near, or above, capacity. There would not be any scope for any increase in school populations.
- **Net savings to the school district is estimated at \$883,287.**

## Alternate Scenario 1: Move Austin Road to Heather Park

This scenario looks at an option to move the existing Austin Road students, along with Austin Road grade 6s and 7s, into the Heather Park site. Nukko Lake and Springwood would stay open. Heather Park would have 421 students, making it the 162<sup>nd</sup> largest elementary school in the province. This size is manageable from a student perspective, and is economically viable. French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George, and no single track French Immersion would be required. There would still be a cost savings from the closure of Heather Park Middle, Salmon Valley, and Shady Valley schools.

New School	Existing Students	Total Projected Students 2010/11	% of Operating Capacity	% of Working Capacity	% of public elementary schools larger
Heather Park	Austin Road - English, Austin Road - French - 100%	421	55%	48%	16%
Glenview	Glenview, Shady Valley	202	104%	99%	64%
Hart Highlands	Hart Highlands	373	101%	97%	22%
Springwood	Springwood and Salmon Valley	233	120%	114%	56%
Nukko	Nukko	91	37%	35%	89%

### How does scenario address concerns of Austin Road parents?

- Heather Park Elementary would have 421 students, making it the 162<sup>nd</sup> largest elementary school in the province. This size is manageable from a student perspective and is economically viable.
- French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George.
- Health and safety concerns would be manageable.
- Heather Park would primarily require fencing and assistance with play areas. Conversion of work areas into class rooms would not be required, therefore saving money.
- No single track French Immersion would be required.
- There would not be any cost savings from the closure of Austin Road, Nukko Lake, or Springwood schools. However, there would still be a cost savings from the closure of Heather Park Middle school, Shady Valley, and Salmon Valley.
- Heather Park would not be at capacity. However, school districts are being encouraged by the Ministry of Education to include elements of Neighborhood Learning Centres, where people can access educational and community services under one roof. The pod setup of Heather Park seems to lend itself to allowing community use of a portion of the school.
- Glenview is no longer over capacity, but Springwood would now be over capacity with the addition of Salmon Valley students.
- **Net savings to the school district is estimated at \$517,885.**

## Alternate Scenario 2: Two Dual Track Schools

In order to further reduce expenses by closing more schools – while keeping dual track education in the Hart, and still maintaining reasonable elementary school sizes – we suggest creating two separate facilities for the students who had previously attended Austin Road and Springwood. We suggest that grades K-3 would go to Austin Road, and grades 4-7 would go to Heather Park.

We are supportive of this scenario, as no schools would be over 400 students. Austin Road would be nearly at capacity, and Heather Park would be half filled, providing room for additional community use of the school. French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George. It could also provide for an expansion of choice programs to those children coming from closed schools. K-3 children would be educated in a school that was designed for younger children, thus reducing safety concerns.

New School	Existing Students	Total Projected Students 2010/11	% of Operating Capacity	% of Working Capacity	% of public elementary schools larger
Austin Road: K to 3	Austin Road - English, Springwood, Austin Road - French - 100%	304	97%	92%	38%
Heather Park: 4 to 7	Austin Road - English, Nukko, Springwood, Austin Road - French - 100%	314	41%	35%	35%
Nukko	Nukko	91	37%	35%	89%
Glenview	Glenview, Salmon Valley, Shady Valley	238	122%	117%	55%
Hart Highlands	Hart Highlands	373	101%	97%	22%

### How does scenario address concerns of Austin Road parents?

- No schools would be over 400 students. Austin Road would be nearly at capacity, and Heather Park would be half filled. Nukko Lake would be below capacity, and Glenview appears to be over capacity, with the return of grades 6 and 7s and the addition of Shady Valley and Salmon Valley
- French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George. It could also provide for an expansion of choice programs to those children coming closed schools
- Health and Safety concerns would be manageable. K-3 children would be educated in a school that was designed for younger children, thus reducing safety concerns.
- Heather Park may require minor renovations, but not as many renovations as would required for younger children.
- No single track French Immersion would be required.

- Glenview appears to be over capacity, with the return of grades 6 and 7s and the addition of Shady Valley and Salmon Valley. Heather Park would have room for other activities such as Neighborhood Learning Centres or the Strong Start program.
- **Net savings to the school district is estimated at \$333,703, assuming Nukko Lake is kept open, and \$410,317 if Nukko Lake was closed.**

**Notes:**

- There may be an increase of \$80,000 in costs for a dual track school over the DSCR report, but we have received different opinions on that from the school district.
- Other options to consider would be to switch Heather Park and Austin Road. There would be increased costs for renovations, however. Another option would be to consider making Austin Road K-2 (and possibly pre-kindergarten), and Heather Park 3 to 7.
- In BC, there are twenty-eight K-3 public elementary schools and ten 4-7 schools.
- One issue with this alternative is the issue of school transitions for students. The district has expressed a desire to reduce the number of school transitions for students, as this can be a contributor to academic success. This option, while requiring one more transition than proposed, does provide the same number of transitions as currently experienced by Hart students.

## Alternate Scenario 3: Dual Track Heather Park Elementary

Under this alternative the School District would establish a dual-track K-7 configuration at Heather Park. In reviewing this alternative, it is again imperative that consideration be given to the many issues raised in this report associated with adapting Heather Park to accommodate elementary school children.

Heather Park would be nearly at capacity, with more students in an elementary school than anywhere else in the district, and the fifth largest in the province. French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George. It could also provide for an expansion of choice programs to those children coming from closed schools. This option would not address the health and safety concerns associated with the mega schools.

As parents, we support saving Nukko Lake as an existing school. This choice also has the advantage of reducing the size of the mega school, which would be of benefit to the remaining students.

New School	Existing Students	Total Projected Students 2010/11	% of Operating Capacity	% of Working Capacity	% of public elementary schools larger
Heather Park	Austin Road - English, Springwood, Austin Road - French - 100%	618	80%	70%	0.5%
Glenview	Glenview, Salmon Valley, Shady Valley	238	122%	117%	55%
Hart Highlands	Hart Highlands	373	101%	97%	22%
Nukko	Nukko	91	37%	35%	89%

### How does scenario address concerns of Austin Road parents?

- Heather Park would be nearly at capacity, with more students in an elementary school than anywhere else in the district, and 5th largest in the province.
- French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George. It could also provide for an expansion of choice programs to those children coming from closed schools. This option would not address the Health and Safety concerns associated with the mega schools, However, air quality issues for French Immersion students would be eliminated.
- Heather Park would primarily require fencing and assistance with play areas, as well as some safety modifications to the interior.
- No single track French Immersion would be required
- Glenview appears to be over capacity, with the return of grades 6 and 7s and the addition of Shady Valley and Salmon Valley.
- **Net savings to the school district is estimated at \$726,673, assuming Nukko Lake is kept open, and \$803,287 if Nukko Lake was closed.**

## Notes

In this option, parents have identified that the following additional resources would be needed:

- dedicated school counselors for the mega school
- pod, bell schedules or other methods to allow for separate school areas
- funding for playgrounds
- fencing
- parental input for planning for the school

## Alternate Scenario 4: Single Track French Immersion in Hart

This scenario looks at an option to keep French Immersion in the Hart, and reduce the size of Heather Park, by separating the French Immersion students into a single track French Immersion school. There are two benefits to this option: the number of students attending Heather Park would be reduced to a more manageable number, and French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George. It could also provide for an expansion of choice programs to those children coming from closed schools. Single track education would be the only choice. The total capacity of Austin Road may be less than is required for a sustainable elementary school, given the current funding formula. It is possible that switching Glenview or Springwood school with Austin Road school would work better in terms of school capacities.

New School	Existing Students	Total Projected Students 2010/11	% of Operating Capacity	% of Working Capacity	% of public elementary schools larger
Heather Park	Austin Road - English, Springwood, Nukko	561	73%	63%	2.8%
Glenview	Glenview, Salmon Valley, Shady Valley	238	122%	117%	55%
Hart Highlands	Hart Highlands	373	101%	97%	22%
Austin Road	Austin Road - 100% French	148	47%	45%	78%

### How does scenario address concerns of Austin Road parents?

- Heather Park Elementary would have more students than recommended, although less students than either of the dual track options. Austin Road would be below capacity, and Glenview also appears to be over capacity, with the return of grades 6 and 7s and the addition of Shady Valley and Salmon Valley.
- French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George. It could also provide for an expansion of choice programs to those children coming from Nukko Lake, Springwood, Salmon Valley and Shady Valley Elementary Schools.
- Health and Safety concerns would be manageable
- Heather Park would primarily require fencing and assistance with play areas.
- Single track education would be the only choice.
- The total capacity of Austin Road would be less than is required for a sustainable elementary school, given estimates from the current funding formula.
- **Net savings to the school district is estimated at \$650,317.**

## Alternate Scenario 5: Keep Austin Road Open

This scenario looks maintaining Austin Road as a K-5 Dual Track Elementary school in the Hart. Heather Park Middle School would also remain open in its current state. Austin Road is an excellent school. It has high performance scores and satisfaction scores. It houses a successful French Immersion Program and is currently the 5<sup>th</sup> largest elementary school in the district. Costs per student are below the District average. Austin Road draws many students from outside its catchment area due to the quality of the school, teachers, and administration.

New School	Existing Students	Total Projected Students 2010/11	% of Operating Capacity	% of Working Capacity	% of public elementary schools larger
Austin Road	Austin Road	312	84%	81%	36%
Heather Park	Heather Park	585	76%	66%	1%
Nukko	Nukko	80	33%	31%	91%
Springwood	Springwood and Salmon Valley	159	82%	78%	75%
Glenview	Glenview and Shady Valley	146	75%	72%	78%
Hart Highlands	Hart Highlands	263	71%	68%	48%

### How does scenario address concerns of Austin Road parents?

- Austin Road would remain open. This size is manageable from a student perspective and is economically viable.
- If Austin Road remains open, then Heather Park would also need to stay open, as would Springwood.
- French Immersion would be accessible to students in the North of Prince George.
- Health and safety concerns would be manageable.
- No school renovations would be required.
- Some classroom modification may be required in order to fit full day kindergarten into the school.
- No single track French Immersion would be required.
- Glenview and Hart Highlands are no longer at capacity. Salmon Valley students have been moved to Springwood, and Shady Valley students have been moved to Glenview. There is room for the current pre-school at Glenview school.
- There would not be any cost savings from the closure of Austin Road, Nukko, Heather Park or Springwood schools. However, there would still be a cost savings from the closure of Shady Valley, and Salmon Valley.
- **Net savings to the school district is estimated at \$94,828**

## Summary

Scenario	Size of school	Accessibility of the French Immersion Program	Health and Safety Issues	Single track education	Net Savings to School District
As recommended (adjusted for survey response)					\$883,287
Alternate Scenario 1: Only Austin Road to Heather Park					\$517,885
Alternate Scenario 2: Two Dual Track Schools					\$333,703
Alternate Scenario 3: Dual Track Heather Park Elementary			mixed		\$726,673
Alternate Scenario 4: Single Track French in Hart					\$650,317
Alternate Scenario 5: Keep Austin Road Open					\$94,828

## Alternative Solutions for Further Consideration

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The following proposed options confront the overall sustainability of public education by challenging the status quo in administrative choices.

1. Changes to the education system on any level, both presently and in the future, should involve direct and broad-based input from principals, teachers, parents, community representatives, civic leaders, and key employers who are dependent on attracting and retaining educated employees (example - UNBC and Northern Health). We know from enrolment that dual track French Immersion is appealing to educated professionals. Turning away two doctors, for example, who are considering relocating to Prince George would cost up to 3,000 people access to a family doctor.
2. Dual-track French Immersion schools are currently the most successful elementary schools in School District 57. They are full to capacity in College Heights and Spruceland and continue to grow. To alleviate the enrolment pressure on College Heights and Spruceland, the School Board should analyze the catchments that are losing students to these two French Immersion schools. For an incremental cost of \$80,000, the School Board should add a French Immersion program to the most logical school. This would reduce pressure on the other two schools, reduce the carbon footprint resulting from commuting across catchments, and also eliminate the need to renovate John McInnis at unknown costs to the district. John McInnis could then be closed, resulting in financial savings.
3. As of June 30, 2009, the district had \$12.1 million dollars of internally restricted funds. Of this amount \$7.7 million was appropriated to 2009 to 2012 budgets and unexpended school operating and capital budgets. A portion of these funds could be redirected by the School Board to invest in technology to reduce annual operating costs and deal with the carbon footprint on a long and short-term basis. This could include having the schools in the bowl tie into the City of Prince George District Energy System initiative, installing geothermal and solar energy systems, and using video and teleconferencing to reduce the need for travel. These are proven technologies that would have an immediate impact on greenhouse gas target reductions. The School Board would need to subscribe to the mindset of spending a dollar now to save many dollars in the future. Calculations have not been provided, as data was not made available from the district at the time of writing this report. Closing schools to reduce greenhouse gas target reductions is not a logical long-term solution. This approach would result in the eventual closing of all schools.
4. The District Sustainability Committee has recommended numerous relocations that involve major renovations to accommodate elementary school children. The costs of renovating these schools have not been properly evaluated. No decision should be made regarding these schools until at least three quotations from non-district staff are tabled and evaluated. This is common practice in the construction industry. It is especially important to follow standard industry practices when the district is closing school because of a lack of funding.

5. The School Board and the district administration should be lobbying the federal government for funding to support dual track schools. This funding would go beyond the current funding to cover the incremental cost of dual track.
6. Educational research is now focusing on the importance of teachers in education, more so than schools, class sizes, or curriculums. We should try to identify great teachers, determine common factors, and then allocate funding towards supporting excellence in teaching. In the long run, the most important factor in our children's academic success is the adult in our children's classroom.

## Appendix 1: Assumptions

The scenarios were analyzed based on the following assumptions.

### Financial

	Austin Road	Nukko Lake	Salmon Valley	Shady Valley	Springwood	Heather Park Middle
<b>Savings on closure</b>						
School Allocation	\$110,000	\$135,000	\$147,500	\$135,000	\$140,000	\$300,000
Dual Track Allocation	\$80,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000
Custodial	\$101,503	\$44,461	\$25,561	\$24,358	\$50,921	\$198,000
Utilities	\$21,467	\$31,153	\$10,048	\$10,448	\$17,867	\$39,600
<b>Subtotal Savings</b>	<b>\$312,970</b>	<b>\$210,614</b>	<b>\$183,109</b>	<b>\$169,806</b>	<b>\$208,788</b>	<b>\$547,600</b>
<b>Increased Cost to District</b>						
School Allocation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Dual Track Allocation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Small Community Grant	\$0	\$134,000	\$134,000	\$134,000	\$0	\$0
Maintenance	?	?	?	?	?	\$0
Busing Costs	\$0	?	?	?	?	\$0
<b>Subtotal Increase</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$134,000</b>	<b>\$134,000</b>	<b>\$134,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Net Savings</b>	<b>\$312,970</b>	<b>\$76,614</b>	<b>\$49,109</b>	<b>\$35,806</b>	<b>\$208,788</b>	<b>\$547,600</b>
<b>FTE Staffing</b>	<b>24.0607</b>	<b>7.6062</b>	<b>3.6529</b>	<b>4.2921</b>	<b>11.6293</b>	<b>47.4697</b>

The savings from each school closure are primarily derived from the allocation to each school. However, this amount would presumably be declining in 2010/11, due to the planned \$2 million in cuts coming from classrooms. The current allocation has been shown.

Custodial and utilities figures have been taken from school district handouts at consultation meetings. An estimated amount for Heather Park custodial and utilities has been calculated, based on an average cost per classroom. Based on financial information received as of March 8<sup>th</sup>, the utilities figures in the consultation handouts appear to be approximately 70% of the actual amounts budgeted for utilities, presumably indicating the net amount saved, given the requirement to maintain unused buildings.

Additional transportation costs have not been shown, as we have no estimate for those amounts.

The small communities grant needs to be considered in the analysis. If a school in receipt of the small communities grant closes, then that grant will no longer be paid to the school district. While this grant does not appear on individual school financial statements, it certainly has an impact on the overall district budget. It is possible that the school district is anticipating funding protection from the ministry, to allow this amount to be continued to be received. That type of funding was never intended to be continued in the event of a school closure, and can be removed even more readily than the annual facilities grant.

In scenarios where Heather Park would be re-opened as an elementary school, an elementary school allocation needs to be added into the analysis again, along with the corresponding custodial and utilities.

Additional cost reductions related to consolidation and large school efficiencies or savings that would result from reduced service costs in the areas of maintenance, human resources, finance, curriculum and special education have not been factored into this analysis.

### Net Savings to School District – Scenario Comparison

Scenario	Austin Road	Nukko Lake	Salmon and Shady Valley	Springwood	Heather Park - Middle to Elementary	Dual Track Supplement	Total
As recommended	\$323,125	\$90,447	\$94,828	\$216,787	\$200,000	\$0	\$925,187
Move Austin Road to Heather Park	\$323,125	\$0	\$94,828	\$0	\$200,000	(\$80,000)	\$537,953
Two Dual Track schools (save Nukko)	\$0	\$0	\$94,828	\$216,787	\$200,000	(\$160,000)	\$351,615
Two Dual Track schools (close Nukko)	\$0	\$90,447	\$94,828	\$216,787	\$200,000	(\$160,000)	\$442,062
Dual Track Heather Park Elementary (save Nukko)	\$323,125	\$0	\$94,828	\$216,787	\$200,000	(\$80,000)	\$754,740
Dual Track Heather Park Elementary (close Nukko)	\$323,125	\$90,447	\$94,828	\$216,787	\$200,000	(\$80,000)	\$845,187
Single Track French in Hart	\$80,000	\$90,447	\$94,828	\$216,787	\$200,000	\$0	\$682,062
Save Austin Road	\$0	\$0	\$94,828	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$94,828

### Students

We have estimated the students for each class for each school in the Hart for 2010/11. For kindergarten, we have assumed that the kindergarten registration is the average of the past 3 years registration for that school. Grades 1 to 6 are the previous year's grade K to 5, and the grade 7 number is taken from the school's 2008/09 grade 5 class.

School Name	Austin Road - English	Austin Road - French	Glenview	Hart Highland	Nukko Lake	Springwood	Salmon Valley	Shady Valley
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>
Kindergarten	31	25	21	42	10	20	5	5
Grade 1	30	27	16	41	8	20	3	0
Grade 2	32	25	24	38	15	30	7	5
Grade 3	29	19	24	44	12	16	4	4
Grade 4	27	12	21	54	15	29	4	2
Grade 5	44	11	19	44	5	16	5	6
Grade 6	46	13	24	40	15	28	6	5
Grade 7	34	16	21	70	11	38	2	6

One big question in the calculations is the disposition of the grade 6 students currently attending Heather Park, specifically the 70 students from Hart Highlands and the 21 students from Glenview. The DSC report stated that they would be able to either attend Heather Park Elementary in 2010/11, or return to their home school. This would have an effect on class sizes and capacities for the 2010/11 year only.

We have analyzed scenarios in which all these students are retained at Heather Park, and the impact on the number of classrooms required. In the worst case scenario for school size – scenario 3, with Nukko Lake closed, and all the grade 7s remaining at Heather Park, we have calculated that 25 English classrooms would be required, and 6 French classrooms:

- English track: 3 Kindergarten classes, 2 grade 1, one 1/2 split, 3 grade 2s, 2 grade 3s, one 3/4 split, one grade 4 class, one 4/5 split, 2 grade 5s, 2 grade 6s, one 6/7 split, and 6 grade 7 classes.
- French track: 1 Kindergarten, 1 grade 1, one 1/2 split, one 2/3 split, one 4/5 split, and one 6/7 split class.

We would strongly suggest that full day kindergarten not be implemented in the first year of this scenario, given that this would be the year with the most students in the building.

### Catchment

Another question that would affect the school configurations is the question of catchment. Currently, only 54% of Austin Road students are from the Austin Road catchment. If Austin Road is closed, some of these students will presumably attempt to return to their catchment area school. In the case of students from Hart Highlands and Glenview, this may lead to problems, as these schools will be near capacity with the recommended changes.

We note that these numbers indicate that while the French track draws students from other catchments to Austin Road school, English track students are also drawn for the quality of the school.

Catchment Area	# of English		# of French		Total	Total %
	Students	English %	Students	French %		
Austin Road	120	59%	47	44%	167	54%
Hart Highlands	35	17%	26	24%	61	20%
Glenview	29	14%	14	13%	43	14%
Springwood	9	4%	9	8%	18	6%
Nukko Lake	2	1%	6	6%	8	3%
Other	9	4%	5	5%	14	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>100%</b>

## School Capacities

School	Nominal Capacity		Working Capacity		Total Working Capacity	Year Built	2003 Audit Score
	K	Gr. 1 - 12	K	Gr. 1 - 12			
Kelly Road Sec.		1,225		1,260	1,260	1961	73%
Austin Road	40	275	44	285	329	1967	66%
Glenview	20	175	22	182	204	1972	64%
Hart Highlands	20	350	22	363	385	1977	85%
Nukko Lake	20	225	22	238	260	1996	92%
Salmon Valley	20	75	22	79	101	1983	64%
Shady Valley	20	75	22	79	101	1978	68%
Springwood	20	175	22	182	204	1983	68%
Heather Park Middle	20	750	22	863	885	2000	100%

**Note:** the DSC report stated that Springwood Elementary was built in 1974. However, the present permanent building was constructed in 1983.

School	Number of Current Classrooms	Specialty Rooms	Notes
Austin Road	14	3	Music room in portable, teacher resource room, computer room
Glenview	6	3	multipurpose room, pre-school is renting 1 classroom, 1 classroom used as storage
Hart Highlands	13	3	2 multi-purpose rooms, music room
Nukko Lake	10		not all classrooms are currently being used
Springwood	7	2	computer lab and Strong Start program
Heather Park	25	8	computer labs, science rooms, home economics, tech ed, drama, art

## Public Elementary Schools in BC, 2009/10 – Top 50 Highest Enrollment Schools

School Name	City	Grade Range	Enrolment Total
Marlborough Elementary	Burnaby	K-7	1076
Chimney Hill Elementary	Surrey	K-7	695
Kerrisdale Elementary	Vancouver	K-7	656
Laura Secord Elementary	Vancouver	K-7	644
Hastings Community Elementary	Vancouver	K-7	637
Cambridge Elementary	Surrey	K-7	616
Laity View Elementary	Maple Ridge	K-7	608
James Kennedy Elementary	Langley	K-7	606
Lord Selkirk Elementary	Vancouver	K-7	604

Casorso Elementary	Kelowna	K-6	603
Albion Elementary	Maple Ridge	K-7	587
William F. Davidson Elementary	Surrey	K-7	582
Sir James Douglas Elementary	Vancouver	K-7	581
Hazelgrove Elementary	Surrey	K-7	580
Kanaka Creek Elementary	Maple Ridge	K-7	580
Martha Currie Elementary	Surrey	K-7	579
Lord Tweedsmuir Elementary	New Westminster	K-7	579
Cindrich Elementary	Surrey	K-7	577
Walnut Road Elementary	Surrey	K-7	575
Alexander Robinson Elementary	Maple Ridge	K-7	574
John Norquay Elementary	Vancouver	K-7, EU	573
Coyote Creek Elementary	Surrey	K-7	572
Hillcrest Elementary	Surrey	K-7	572
Pitt Meadows Elementary	Pitt Meadows	K-7	567
W D Ferris Elementary	Richmond	K-7	566
Promontory Heights Community Elementary	Chilliwack	K-6	564
Green Timbers Elementary	Surrey	K-7	563
Sunshine Hills Elementary	Delta	K-7	563
Glenmore Elementary	Kelowna	K-6	562
Ecole Willows Elementary	Victoria	K-5	555
Lena Shaw Elementary	Surrey	K-7	554
Yennadon Elementary	Maple Ridge	K-7	554
Walter Moberly Elementary	Vancouver	K-7	553
Dorothy Lynas Elementary	North Vancouver	K-7	553
Beairsto Elementary	Vernon	1-7	551
Tomekichi Homma Elementary	Richmond	K-7	549
Alex Hope Elementary	Langley	K-7	546
Newton Elementary	Surrey	K-7	540
Langley Meadows Elementary	Langley	K-7	534
Ross Road Elementary	North Vancouver	K-7	533
Dr F D Sinclair Elementary	Surrey	K-7	532
Peace Arch Elementary	White Rock	K-7	530
Martha Jane Norris Elementary	Surrey	K-7	530
Seaforth Elementary	Burnaby	K-7	530
Strawberry Hill Elementary	Surrey	K-7	529
Bonaccord Elementary	Surrey	K-7	528
Senator Reid Elementary	Surrey	K-7	526
Rose Valley Elementary	West Kelowna	K-6	525
Watson Road Elementary	Kelowna	K-6	525
Langley Fundamental Elementary	Langley	K-5	524

## Appendix 2: Report on Respiratory Health and Air Quality in School Age Children

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**Mike Lizotte BSc Pharm**

**Feb. 2010**

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the following items:

*The air quality in the Hart Highway community of Prince George is less polluted than in the rest of Prince George*

There is limited data on air quality in the Hart Highlands region. According to the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, “The monitor at the Glenview site was installed to determine the frequency of TRS exceedances that may be occurring at that site. Levels were low enough that it was felt there was not a need to continue monitoring at that site”.<sup>1</sup> The data that is available shows that at Glenview the annual averages for PM10 were 9.2 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and 9.9 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for 1999 and 2000 respectively. At Van Bien the annual averages for 1999 and 2000 were 22.7 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and 17.4 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for 1999 and 2000. Furthermore, 5.2% and 3.5% of samples at the Van Bien site had PM10 levels greater than 50 ug/m<sup>3</sup> (i.e. poor air quality days) compared to zero at the Glenview site for 1999 and 2000 respectively.<sup>1</sup> The Van Bien site was used as a comparator because it is the closest to John McInnis School, the proposed new location of the program.

- *Poor air quality is an indicator of health risk in individuals with certain chronic conditions.*

The following is an excerpt from the 2007 annual air quality report for the Prince George airshed:

Particulate matter refers to small particles ranging in size from 0.001 µm to 100 µm (1 million µm = 1 m). Particles range in chemical composition, size, shape and physical properties. Particles less than 10 µm (PM10) tend to stay suspended longer in the atmosphere than larger particles. The inability of the atmosphere to disperse small particulates is often evident during hazy days in the autumn when mixing is weak.

Larger particles may cause a nuisance or irritation, but PM10, either alone or in combination with other pollutants in the air, causes the greatest health effects because some can be inhaled deep into the lung cavities (Vedal, 1995). These health effects include premature death, increased hospital admissions, increased respiratory symptoms and disease, and decreased lung function. The main effects on vegetation are reduced growth and productivity due to interference with photosynthesis and phototoxic impacts as a result of particulate composition (Copes & Elliot, 2007).<sup>2</sup>

The Environment Canada’s Air Quality Health Index speaks for itself in relating poor air quality to health risk.<sup>3</sup>

- *Poor air quality directly relates to declining respiratory health in school age children, particularly in those with existing chronic respiratory conditions.*

A Medline search of international journals reveals a significant number of research articles finding correlations between poor air quality and declining health. When limited to children up to twelve years old, and to only respiratory health the number of articles is still high. <sup>3-41</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Environment Canada believed it unnecessary to continue to monitor air quality in the Hart Highlands region due to low levels, though it did not cease monitoring in the downtown locations. Many studies, including studies recognized by Environment Canada show a direct correlation between poor air quality and health risks. Furthermore, many studies conducted internationally all agree that poor air quality directly contributes to declining respiratory health in school age children. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that moving children from areas of good air quality to areas of poor air quality will have a negative impact on their health, especially those children with pre-existing respiratory conditions.

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## Appendix 3: Survey Responses to Austin Road School Public Survey

Surveys were completed late January/early February. 39 surveys were entered online, and 135 surveys were collected on paper and manually input, for a total of 174 responses. There are approximately 240 families at Austin Road School.

<b>Please tell us about yourself:</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
I have child(ren) in the English track program	52.0%	90
I have child(ren) in the French track program	45.1%	78
I was planning to send my child to Austin Road	12.7%	22
My children have left Austin Road	4.0%	7
Other	3.5%	6
<i>answered question</i>		<b>173</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

<b>What are your thoughts about sending your child to Heather Park for grades K to 7 in English only?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Definitely will send	29.4%	47
Probably will send	37.5%	60
Probably will not send	16.9%	27
Definitely will not send	17.5%	28
<i>answered question</i>		<b>160</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>14</b>

<b>What are your major concerns about sending children to a elementary school at Heather Park?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
School too large	53.4%	79
Lack of support services	20.3%	30
Not within walking distance	27.7%	41
Child care problems	13.5%	20
Not a dual track school	52.7%	78
Layout of school inside	33.1%	49
Layout of school outside	46.6%	69
Other (please specify)		44
<i>answered question</i>		<b>148</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>26</b>

- number of children in the school. School going from k-5 to a k-7. I feel this is too broad of an age range.
- Too many children and if money is so short where will the necessary people be for lunch monitors and hall monitors and crossing guards

- I wanted to put my daughter into french when she starts school in 2 years but with this new school shut down there will be no school on the hart that will be french so If i still wanted to do that i would have to commute downtown which is very unrealistic
- No child size play places. If Heather Park does not offer French then my child will be in English. Daycare, close to home and friendships will outweigh the benefits of French.
- The thought of sending my 5 year old to such a large school is insane!! It is way too large! I cannot see the same way Austin road treats its students - where all teachers and principal seem to be watching out for everyone and taking the time to get to know each child will even be a possibility with so many students!
- it is way too big for my age of children. A mega school is not ideal for elementary school children. The community feel that Austin road has will be lost. I am against sending my children to Heather Park Middle School.
- Parking/ Pick up issues.
- none, really not such a big deal, other kids in district already deal with k-7
- no Playground for younger children
- I really like the middle school programming as it currently is for my older child and I don't want us to lose that in our community.
- killing french immersion in the Hart
- not sure as I have never been inside Heather Park
- Inconvenience due to location
- I do not like that the class sizes will increase.
- Too many problems with drugs and sex!
- No major concerns
- no fenced playground. insufficient supervision
- no major concerns
- Not built for elementary - sinks, toilets etc.
- Class sizes being too large
- Concerned with it being overwhelming for smaller kids
- Travel
- Losing the middle school
- N/A
- proximity to the High school
- Loss of Middle school. I think we are regressing by going back to K-7.
- no problems
- Supervision?
- Teacher Job Loss
- Not an issue if there is French immersion
- Concerned about TA's
- the size and amount of students concerns me for the smaller grades as well as support systems
- Should be dual track
- All the research highlights the negatives of elementary schools with populations over 400. My daughter is entering grade 1 and I am extremely concerned with safety issues (ie. increased bullying issues, lack of effective supervision and intervention) & a lack of connected to one's school's which is highlighted to be a key component in a child's educational success.
- transition to high school no longer an option/bullying peer influence etc, at grade 8 level could be issue
- safety issues cars do not often stop at x/walk
- not french
- enough teachers one on one with kids still
- No concerns
- Water pools/puddles behind the school
- So close to the high school and no playground
- Class sizes (too many children in one class)
- Over crowded

**What are your major concerns about closing Austin Road Elementary?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
property values	32.7%	53
lack of community focus	50.6%	82
loss of playground in that area	39.5%	64
uncertainty over what would replace it in that location	27.2%	44
impact on children	85.2%	138
Other (please specify)		22
<b>answered question</b>		<b>162</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>12</b>

- School is positive learning environment. A larger school cannot offer the same level of supervision, one on one, etc.
- Loss of French immersion in the Hart
- no french school on the hart
- that we would lose our dual track school, our awesome teachers and our awesome principal!
- School is hard enough for children now they expect them to lose half their friends that they have gone to school with since kindergarten either because they are not in the new catchment areas, or because they were part of the french track. Having to learn a whole new school to learn and having to now deal with twice as many students. And seriously I don't know who in their right mind would be ok with dropping a 5 year for their first involvement in school with that many students in such a huge place which will most likely be understaffed! and say have a good day of kindergarten play nice with the other million students here!
- none
- no comment
- Everything
- Over crowded schools with only having a couple of schools up in the Hart.
- Waste of public money
- Losing French Immersion in the Hart!
- Loss of dual track
- Losing the dual track program in our area.
- loss of a dual track school
- N/A
- It's a great school-not too big, not too small
- where do the teachers go, loss of diversity and choice
- i think closing austinrd and centralizing students at heather park is a good fiscal decision although I want french immersion offered there as well
- amount of money parents and pac have spent on playground equipment
- It is ridiculous. It is a key part of this community and its development.
- segregation of french students
- French Immersion MUST remain on the Hart

**If Austin Road closes, would you:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Attempt to move your child to another school in the public school system	12.9%	20
Move your child to a private school	7.1%	11
Enroll your child at Heather Park	47.1%	73
Undecided	32.9%	51
Other (please specify)		31

<b>answered question</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>skipped question</b>	<b>19</b>

- Only because i have no choice being a single mom that has to work early unless they offered busing to hart highlands from my area then I would send my child there
- would try to make a decision based on the french immersion education that we hope they will receive
- I don't find that I really have a choice.
- Home school. why should we send our kids to another school so they can tell us in a year or so that it is closing.
- My child is in Grade 5 and would be going to Heather Park anyways
- My youngest son has attention problems, so I don't know where he will go.
- Have considered moving to private school
- Child is in French (children 3)
- French track school
- N/A
- Move my children to French track program wherever that may be.
- My child is homeschooled
- Possibly move out of Prince George
- It's the only option for us!
- depends on alternatives
- would like to keep in French
- Attempt to move your child to another school in the public school system / Move your child to a private school - one of these options, not sure which.
- Move child to wherever the French Immersion program is
- Go wherever the French is
- Franco Nord if possible
- And only because they rely on their friends for companionship and support
- French at JMJS
- Wherever our child can access french instruction
- Depends. definitely send to Heather Park if dual track. If no dual track, then undecided.
- Have to consider French options
- Depends on French
- go wherever they decide to have the french immersion
- we are in a different catchment area
- depends on french immersion
- John McInnis
- I worry that the district and gov't are happy to have people pull their children from the public education system. I used to think people who thought this were paranoid but I tend to think it's true.

<b>Are you in favor of our present dual track French/English program?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	86.6%	142
No	1.8%	3
Don't know	11.6%	19
Other (please specify)		6
<b>answered question</b>		<b>164</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>10</b>

- I strongly believe the dual track program is a benefit to both english and french students. It promotes Canada as a bilingual country and exposes english track students to the language more than would occur in an English only school.  
Losing the French program would impact the entire community. Families in this community have located here specifically for this program.

- neutral
- Doesn't affect our situation
- neutral
- My children will be in the English program. I am unbiased as to what other language they choose to offer.
- I'm interested in the immersion program. I will enroll my child next year in an immersion program regardless of where it is. I would hope however, that the immersion program will be in a central location so all geographic areas can access.

<b>Would you support Heather Park becoming a dual track school, offering English and French?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	87.6%	149
No	1.8%	3
Don't know	10.6%	18
Other (please specify)		11
<b>answered question</b>		<b>170</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>4</b>

- My needs suggest that this is the best alternative. School closures are a reality today, but curriculum need not change.
- I think it is a great idea to have french and english in the same school. It benefits both tracks
- neutral
- neutral
- Whatever benefits my child and other children the most. It makes the most sense to offer the same program that is currently offered at Austin Road.
- only if Austin Road closes
- Yes definitely - its the only way for us to continue in the French Immersion Program!
- Yes Yes Yes Yes
- Please
- My child will not be continuing in French
- Depends on number of students that would be attending. If rural schools in the Hart remained open (Springwood, Nuko) then I could support dual track at HP.

<b>Are you in favor of a centralized French program?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	9.2%	15
No	66.3%	108
Don't know	24.5%	40
Other (please specify)		25
<b>answered question</b>		<b>163</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>11</b>

- I would prefer a French immersion option in the Hart area; I need to know more information about the Lakewood option, but would favour French immersion in the Hart
- French is really not my concern my child is in the english program
- To not allow children a full integration with English track would be detrimental to children's play. Children accept one another quite simply when in different classes and learning different things, but one one becomes exclusive to one style of learning the teasing begins. If I wanted French only I would put my child in Francophone School. Yes I want the best of both worlds for my child because SD57 offered it and we started it.

- I don't think they should feel they are different and have to go to their own school and lose all their friends. I also think it is good for them to be able to have the french and english interaction at school.
- I school in prince george for all french emmersion, everyone needs to give up something, so french classes need to fit the budget as well. We all have to make arrangements for school transport changes, it is not like french emmersion won't be available in Prince George it has been a privilege to have it in the hart but not mandatory Plus if more children speaking french in one area would this not help with their language skills?
- neutral
- Does not affect my child
- Doesn't affect our situation
- neutral
- Don't care. My children will be in the English Program
- I believe this is segregation
- My child is in English only
- No - it's a bad idea - this is a bilingual country and English and French should be side by side.
- Will result in weakening/destroying French Immersion in PG
- if child doesn't succeed they leave all peers
- We like our daughter attending a school in our area of town (hart area).
- especially d/t
- Not downtown. If it were in the Hart I would send my child to the school. However if it was the Hart and that option was given I would support that.
- It has its benefits but I strongly oppose the proposed location
- In some ways I see a single school as a positive. I would have more flexibility in having my child in a classroom with a teacher that 'fits' his personality.
- i believe french program should be privatized sector and parents should pay for the school as private and religious school
- makes no real difference to me, seems unfair to make the kids bus all that way especially the young ones.
- Not sure-at what expense and to whom
- The hart needs it own french program, it's why we moved up here.

**Where do you think the Austin Road community should put their efforts?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
fighting to keep Austin Road open	44.2%	73
fighting to make Heather Park dual track	53.9%	89
working to make Heather Park better for all students	41.2%	68
Other (please specify)		22
<b>answered question</b>		<b>165</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>9</b>

- I believe we should have more than one option to present. I think we should fight to keep both Austin Road and Heather Park as is. These schools serve a number of students in this community. I see the second option as Heather Park being a dual track Elementary school, which may be the compromise.
- I'm torn on this question, because ultimately I want Austin Road to stay open. I guess because there have been hints out there that that idea is unrealistic, I will go with the Heather Park dual track answer.
- Putting pressure on the provincial government to restore adequate funding for public education.
- other schools have been threatened before and won. Let's save our school/community/immersion program
- Why hasn't the catchment area boundaries been disclosed. I would suggest SD57 will be sending many Austin students in English (and all if Heather Park is not dual track) that are close to Hart Highlands or Dawson etc to those schools and not Heather Park. We should know these boundaries, we might then have more adults in the fight. I do not believe it is just as simple as everyone at Austin goes to Heather Park.

- I would prefer to have Austin Road stay open, but my kids are in grade 5 and 3 so one of them was already going to go to Heather Park next year. So the focus of making Heather Park better for all students is fine by me.
- Help parents understand that it is just a building and what is inside counts the most...maybe set up tours for the parents to see and find out what changes will be made for the safety of the younger children. This will not be the only k-7 school in the district, other kids seem to be surviving just fine
- this is more than likely a done deal so need to focus on Heather Park to make it a better school for out elementary ages children
- Keeping Heather Park as a middle school
- Biggest priority is to make Heather Park a suitable elementary school. My opinion that this is a done deal and will go ahead so better to put energy and effort to make Heather Park a good school for our kids.
- constantly scrutinizing government decisions and demanding answers based not only on the present but also the future.
- Not sure what else can be done.
- Same class size as now!!
- 96% enrollment
- I would like to see the rural schools stay open; their schools closing is going to impact their communities and children way more.
- With sending students back to catchment areas, keeping Nukko Lake open
- As well as keeping the middle school - the opportunities available for grade 6-8 has been fantastic from extra curricular to tutorials. i would HATE for this opportunity to be lost in the Hart.
- Lobby Provincial government for adequate funding of public schools.
- 96% enrollment
- undecided
- Keep our elementary school open
- Make the best of the outcome

<b>Are you in the Austin Road catchment area?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	56.9%	91
No	34.4%	55
Don't Know	8.8%	14
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>160</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>14</b>

<b>Any other comments?</b>	
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
	81
<b><i>answered question</i></b>	<b>81</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>	<b>93</b>

- we can change the catchment to accommodate all of the projected enrollment for next year, and keep Austin Rd open, and then sell the middle school building or use it for the center for learning.
- for question 9, we would have to decide whether it makes more sense to argue that Austin Road remain open or whether strategically we should accept closure of this school and argue for the Heather Park option since there may be rural school closures and Heather Park would probably have to accommodate these students too.

- When talking air quality and fighting to keep our children out of the bowl, I'm interested in what the French Immersion parents plans are once their children are in 8th grade. Isn't their plan to send them to Duchess Park and the bowl? I think that needs to be addressed on some level.
- We are a family of 3 children, 2 of which attend Austin Road. We moved into this community 2 1/2 years ago because we were told this was the best place to raise a family, clean air, good people. We chose to buy a house within walking distance to the elementary school because we felt it was important for our children to be able to walk to school. It also creates a sense of community and pride to live near their school. We often visit the school to play even when school is not in session over the holidays. I feel that moving these children will not be beneficial, and that having a school not in walking distance will be greatly detrimental to all members of this family. My oldest is responsible to get the smaller two to school, this would not be possible, and therefore would mean that myself or my husband would be having to change or reduce work hours, which would in turn directly affect our children's well-being as well.
- Look at alternatives that keep dual track in the Hart and Nukko Lake open
- I am in Nukko Lake and irregardless Heather Park would be attended in the future. I feel if my child goes now and it is dual track it will be one less change of schools in her future. In other words after being at Heather Park only the transition to High School would remain.
- I would love to keep Austin Road school open for a number of reasons - my daughter is very comfortable there and she has been very upset about the thought of changing schools and losing friends. We also own a home within sight of Austin Road and are concerned about what will happen with the building if it becomes vacant. However I believe it would be a waste of time to try and fight the closure of Austin Road. I think the next best option would be to have a dual track school at Heather Park. If the french program moves to John McInnis we will definitely NOT be sending our daughter there. I have concerns about the location of the school and the time spent travelling to and from school. It has been a very difficult decision. If we want to encourage bilingualism in our children we need dual track schools to make french more accessible to everyone. If it becomes a choice of driving great distances and perhaps having two kids in different programs at different schools I truly believe convenience will be the first choice. Single track schools will be the beginning of the end for french immersion. If Heather Park was dual track we would definitely keep our daughter in the french program.
- My daycare is in the catchment area and I hope that will continue to be an allowment for children to continue going to school in the catchment area of Heather Park.  
I am curious looking at the ppt slideshow why is Hart Highlands not being considered to be closed as well and moved to Heather park if their enrollment is lower??
- Our house backs onto Austin rd. school. The reason we bought where we did was because of the school. So we do not want to see this school close but given the circumstances and options that are forced on us we do not see how to change this problem without money to solve it. We think its better to focus on making Heather park the best school it can be for our children, and future generations because this probably will not be the last of education cuts and school closures. Thank you for all the time and effort.
- HPMS is too big for the younger students. HPMS has a unique design which is best served by the existing middle school programming. It is also wasteful to spend capital dollars renovating that school unnecessarily.
- this community is in real danger. many younger residents (such as ourselves) chose this location specifically because of the French Immersion option. If it goes, so do we, and then with little influx, the neighbourhood ages, withers, and... .
- It is a shame to have to drive 30km to attend the french program. John McInnis is also in a very busy area with lots of traffic. Concerns of a lot of teenagers hanging around in that area
- My daycare is in the Heather Park catchment area. Question impact for the kids outside the catchment area - will they still be able to continue onto Heather Park. My child's daycare is in the area and needs to continue going to the school in the area. I also saw the meeting minutes. I would be one parent who would NOT support a triple split class that is being recommended just to save a school. I don't see the benefit in that to any child. If school closures are meant to be then it is meant to be. I am in favour of the elementary school going back to a kindergarten to grade 7. There should never have been a middle school developed. A junior High I could see (ie Grade 8-10, or even 7-9)
- I find that we are getting ripped. We have a school that is centrally located and they want to take it away.
- What are they trying to do over crowd our schools to have more bullying, more crime.  
What happens when there's not enough schools for our children are they gonna pay our gas to take our kids

to town because all the schools in the Hart are filled up.

You're taking my child away from his friends and the security they have with that school you keep changing their schools and the bullying is going to get worse.

What about overcrowded busses?

This is the most stupid decision ever!

- I am in favour of Heather Park Elementary School because I would rather have my child in K-7. I don't think the middle school idea is very good.
- Even though both of my older children would have been at Heather Park next year, I would still love to see Austin Road remain open. The teachers here are wonderful. The school has a real community spirit to it as well. I have one more child at home that would have been attending Austin Road in the future and I am now saddened that I probably won't be able to send my child there. I think Heather Park is far too large to send a small child there. I definitely would not feel comfortable dropping my small child off there as I feel some major changes would have to take place first (ie separate areas of the school for the older children, smaller washroom sinks and toilets etc.)
- We need to fight for something feasible and attainable. We need to ensure everyone is heard but recognize that we can't make everyone happy.
- It is enough change for children to start school and now there is anxiety of having to go to another school. Heather Park is not an acceptable choice for a variety of reasons. 1. It is too close to the high school. 2. Smoking pit is too close. 3. Not set up for little children - what would be the cost to renovate a new school? I removed my older children 4 years ago from the middle school due to bullying. I would not relish the idea of sending my six year old there. Austin Road is a clean, well functioning school that is like a community. They sing O Canada in the morning which I think is spectacular! The children are not a face in a crowd, they are a smile and a name. Leave our schools and our kids alone. How about city officials offering a pay cut to help instead of giving themselves raises? How about our kids education and well being forever - Olympics is only short term and what does it do for PG? Nothing.
- I would rather have my daughter stay at Austin Road. I don't like the idea of putting her in a K-7 school due to the class size and the size of HP. I plan on putting her in english for grade 1 due to having a hard time learning and my concern about sticking her in a school where classes are bigger. I worry she won't get the support she needs. I will not have anyone tell me they want her PEP thru school like I did because teachers are so over worked they don't want to take the time to teach slower kids. My other concern about younger kids with older kids is the influence at such a young age. I will try to put her in a different school if it ends up that K-7 at Heather Park. I also don't like the fact of having my daughter around a school where they are apparently starting to sell drugs up and around the school yards. Not only that but I know older kids have sex around there. I feel the safety for my child is most important.
- We are in the Nukko Lake catchment area and came to Austin Road because it has a French Immersion program.
- I think everyone should be putting huge pressure on the Provincial government to adequately fund all schools, including our rural schools. This round of closures is beyond fiscal responsibility and will have far ranging impacts on both the rural communities affected and Prince George as a city. How can we attract families to relocate to Prince George if most of our schools are closed?  
I am more concerned about the loss of Heather Park Middle school than the potential closure of Austin Road. I have had 2 older kids go through Heather Park Middle School very successfully and strongly believe it is very regressive to go back to the K-7 model, especially a mega school model. If anything, I would like to see more, smaller schools, rather than fewer, larger schools.
- In Heather Park...  
I want my children to bring individual qualities to their school. I don't want them "defined" by a student number. I want my children to be safe, to FEEL safe, to feel valued and respected. I want a quality playground and outdoor area fenced & accessible. I want familiar adult/teacher faces to help ease their transition-our school should move as a whole staff & students. I, as a parent, want to be welcome in the school to check in on my children, to provide and have my feedback respected and acknowledged. I want my children to be children, to have a fantastic elementary school experience & education. I know our children will be fine I want them to be FANTASTIC-they deserve this!!
- I have a child with anxiety disorder/cerebral palsy. She needs prior planning about going to a new school. She needs some familiarity. She is going to find the transition very hard.

- I would like to see Heather Park Middle School to stay as is. It has a great program with it Exploration classes in Art, wood-working, digital media/presentation, outdoor exploration (mountain biking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, survival skills (build shelter, fires tec.). A school from K-7 does not give our students in gr. 6 & 7 these same opportunities as the Middle school can. It is also a rather large school with a population of over 600 students now-with the capacity of about 800 students. It seems to me a overwhelming amount of pupils for our younger children in grades K-3 or 4!  
I am a big supporter of the dual track, having one child in french, gr. 4 and a child in gr. 8 at Heather Park. I have been driving my children to Austin Rd. for 9 years and we love this school with its great staff and students.
- I would like to stress the point that our daughter learning french is not only important academically, but also to our extended family. Our child is finally able to communicate and engage in a relationship with her grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. They do not speak english, but share french as a second, in some instances a first language.
- French immersion needs to continue in the hart-if not in Austin Rd., then most likely Heather Park site.
- Not sure if the school can be saved but would be in favour of fighting for dual track at Heather Park if Austin road closes. Our child is thriving in French Immersion. Would be very disappointed/heartbreaking to pull him out of French.
- Concerned about the overwhelmingness of such a LARGE school setting on young special needs students
- We need to ask trustees and provincial government why are we bringing in new programs when we can't afford what we have 1. Full time kindergarten 2. early literacy programs  
Why are the trustees having so much trouble talking to Victoria. I think producing \$ alternative and \$ saving ideas is key.
- We chose to put our children in French for many reasons  
- good for child's brain development  
- in the same school anyway  
- widen their horizons (life, job....)
- it would be such a disappointment to lose the french option in the Hart Highlands
- I have deep concerns about the children's safety if John McInnis becomes the centralized French Immersion school. I feel the amount of children that will need to be driven to that location will impact on an already congested thru way. This is especially concerning to me for the K-2 who do not have the motor or cognitive skills to navigate their way through such a busy thru way. I don't know if the school board has investigated the legalities involved in this decision.
- Due to the amount of money that needs to be cut, the best chance for maintaining a dual track school appears to be by housing it within Heather Park. Otherwise it is unlikely that there will be the option of french immersion in the Hart area. This would be truly unfortunate
- The main focus for me is to keep French Immersion in the HART. If that is one of our goals then we need to remember what the chairperson from the school Board said. "The domino effect" If we work out how to make heather Park school a dual track/ K-7, we also need to work out the numbers etc for the school (JM) that would not have our FI students. Thanks.
- Suggestion: What is the Real estate value of John Mc ? This school is sitting on Prime Real Estate Land. Would it be more cost effective to sell it rather than spend the \$ on Renos for a French school that will decline in enrollment as many people from College Heights and the Hart will not choose to send their children into the bowl for school. Many children will be pulled from French. For new students, a program located in town will not be accessible enough for people to want to send their children. Extra travel to and from town in the winter is another danger and disadvantage. The cost to Reno John Mc. will be wasted as this school will be in danger of closing in the future due to declining enrollment.
- This community as a whole revolves around the schools within it. People have bought homes because of the schools, property values will be hindered as a whole with more closures in the school system. The Hart is one of the last developed areas in PG. Is the school closures going to help? The Hart could stand to close some schools, perhaps the smaller schools and use Austin Rd. as part of the fill in, we are at 96% capacity. It does not make sense. Our education system used to be top notch, now it is a sad day to say that our education system is below standards and the problem is not getting any better. What kind of future does this present our children with.
- I personally think centralizing the french program will allow for improvements. All resources will be focused to the one school and all students will benefit. The worst part will be the stress on the kids (losing

friends, moving schools) and the so many teachers who will lose their job. I plan to "go with the flow" and make the best of the situation.

- My kids either way are going to be finished with Austin Rd. so it's not going to really affect me but I certainly see both sides.
- We spent a great deal of time choosing where to move after we sold our house, with the sole reason we moved to the Hart being that a french immersion program was being offered as a schooling option for all of our children. We do not have a problem if we must slightly relocate our children to another school on the Hart in case of the closure of Austin Rd, we have a VERY large problem with our children losing the opportunities and cultural exposure on the Hart. It is completely and totally unreasonable to expect us, as parent to not only drop off & pick up our children all the way downtown each day. As well, as expecting us to condone putting their health at such risks as continued air exposure downtown has been proven to cause. The government needs to offer a higher dollar value per student so that the french immersion community can stay active on the Hart. We absolutely will not send our children to school downtown. We moved out of there for many good reasons.
- I think we should be lobbying our provincial MLA's to reconsider the funding policy for School District 57 because PG has been the hardest hit in terms of population decline due to economic downturn. I think the land for all of the closed schools should be held in trust by the province/school district/city to allow for redevelopment of schools when the populations increases.
- I enrolled my child in french immersion program for the experience of being able to learn french while attending a school that also enrolls english children. I did not want my child in a french school. Having her attend John McInnis as French K-7 is not part of my education plan for my child. I have always made a conscious effort to live on the Hart. I don't support or appreciate being forced to make my youngest child spend her last two years of elementary education in a school located in the bowl. She has asthma which is concerning due to the constant air quality problems, and the extra travel distance is also something I'm angry about.

## Appendix 4: Survey Responses to French Track Intention Survey, Online Only

Surveys were made available online only from January to March. 54 surveys were entered, representing 68 out of 107 current French track students.

<b>What are your current thoughts about sending your child to the French only John McInnis school, for grades K to 7?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Definitely will send	9.3%	5
Probably will send	24.1%	13
Probably will not send	25.9%	14
Definitely will not send	40.7%	22
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>54</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>0</b>

<b>Would you be more likely to send your children if there was a school bus available?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	33.3%	18
No	50.0%	27
Don't know	16.7%	9

<i>answered question</i>	<b>54</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>0</b>

**How many children do you currently have in the French track at Austin Road school?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
None, but was planning to send children	5.6%	3
1	66.7%	36
2	24.1%	13
3	3.7%	2
4	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>54</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

**What are your major concerns at this point?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Air quality	75.5%	40
Transportation	69.8%	37
Not a local school	81.1%	43
Danger of driving	30.2%	16
Length of trip	69.8%	37
Reputation of area	60.4%	32
Don't believe in single track school	34.0%	18
School would be too large	26.4%	14
Earlier wake-up time	45.3%	24
Friends would not be attending	35.8%	19
Child care problems	52.8%	28
Comment		14
<i>answered question</i>		<b>53</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

- Estimate of fuel consumption is \$800 a year based on school days x 15km each way. Air quality poor downtown and our child has not exhibited any signs of Asthma since moving to the Hart.
- Other concerns: transition back to english would set back child educationally - need to catch up with english, if this does not go well then likely confidence and self esteem problems
- Younger Siblings who have not started school yet would not be attending as I would just put them into the regular system to attend the local school.
- His sister will be in the english track and I want to keep them at the same school.
- our community is the Hart area, we live here for health and safety reasons. I want my child to grow up in this community. I want the best for my child, which means all the opportunities that go with learning french; a safer community, not the bowl area of prince george, and of course the air quality of the bowl which is unacceptable.
- I do not believe that a single track school is in the best interest of the children. My children have friends in both the English and French tracks. Separating the children would make it more difficult for them to socialize with kids in their own community.
- I will not have my daughter lose friends, change schools, change daycare and be bussed as well to an area with pollution problems several times a year. So SD57 will be dumping kids after many studies have found French to be an asset. What will SD57 do for the students of French Immersion that must now begin English because of SD57 closures and circumstances of their own. Are these students expected to start

English cold turkey and be ridiculed by students for being so far behind the current English students. Could they start English in April for a slower transition while still at Austin?

- Kids having to switch from French (grade 2&3) to English when they have not studied any English yet. They will be behind in their studies and have to add an extra year or two to their education just to catch up. Will this not be an added expense to the school?
- my number one concern is reputation of area for proposed school, not very happy about air quality: not happy that we are limiting community choice,
- Schools can close and teachers can be laid off but we are in good shape we have the olympic fiasco
- carbon footprint
- govt run by idiots
- I like the idea of a large FI school. More choice and better matching for students and teachers (ex: this kind of teacher works better with this kind of child).
- Not that I don't believe in a single track school, I just think that a dual track school benefits all involved.

<b>Are you in the Austin Road catchment area?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	69.8%	37
No	24.5%	13
Don't know	5.7%	3
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>53</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>1</b>

<b>Any other comments?</b>	
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
	17
<b><i>answered question</i></b>	<b>17</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>	<b>37</b>

- Why can't French immersion be maintained in the proposed new elementary school - the school board should be lobbied to maintain this as an option.
- We chose this neighborhood because of the French Immersion program, it doesn't seem fair that it is a choice we make as parents to put our children in French therefore we can drive our children across town to go to school. We made the choice to buy a home near a French Immersion school.
- Concerned about the future use of the school building in the event of closure (e.g vandalism, upkeep to building and grounds, potential undesirable private use of school).
- When signing my child up for French, I was told the first 3 years are most important for french and because of that they would most likely be behind in English (compared to english class students), but would be caught up by grade 3-4. My child is in grade 1 so I suspect when moved to English only class, it could be a struggle to adjust. My younger children not yet in school would not be signed up for French if it is not available at Austin Road.
- The single track recommendation is canning the french immersion program. Parents will be too intimidated to send their child to an all french school. In dual track at least if it does not work out it is not a total upheaval to move the child to english.
- We need to have the pac from all the other schools involved with us, and the parents of both french and english track. the greater the number the more powerful we will be.
- Austin Road is within 2 km of our home. It makes it very easy for the children to participate in school sports/activities.
- Should we not all say no to sending the kids to JM until they decide to close the school! Decide later about busing, etc.

- Surely there are enough students at Austin to justify split classes at Heather Park for French Immersion? If busses are supplied from Austin and other parents driving as well, has the school district created yet another pollution problem in a city well known for its pollution?
- The poor air quality in town is not an option for many children due to health problems.
- I don't want my two sons going to different schools, in different neighborhoods, i don't believe in alienating the french students.
- needs to be at lakewood!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- We should be concentrating on keeping our school open and after the 26th if recommendation #4 is accepted then look at alternatives for our children, but at this point in time, we should be focused on keeping Austin Road Elementary as a dual track school open by proving and providing the information to the school trustees that it should not be included in the considerations for closure.
- Not everyone has the option of transporting their children taking away the communities right to make choices in the education of their children,
- parents need to demand more from MLA's, the board has no choice given tax increase and full-day K, to close schools
- I told my son tonight about the possible school closure and he bawled in my lap. I feel we chose to send him to a French Immersion school now it is being ripped away from us. He is doing so well at Austin Road, learning French and teaching me and his little sister French and I feel cheated for him and me. My heart goes out to the staff as well. Also we mainly took this house in the Hart so that our child could attend Austin Road. Very sad. I understand about budgets but still feel very cheated and helpless.
- We were seriously considering Austin Road for our child. Our first concern is the program, then the location.

## Appendix 5: End Notes and References

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<sup>1</sup> District Sustainability Report, p7

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<sup>4</sup> (Howley, C., Strange, M., & Bickel. R. (2002). The influence of scale: small schools Make a big difference for children from poor families. *American School Board Journal*, 189 (3) 28-30.

<sup>5</sup> McMillen, Bradley J., (2004). *School Size, Achievement and Achievement Gaps*

<sup>6</sup> (Rotherman, Andrew ( 1999). *When it comes To School Size, Smaller is better.* Progressive Policy Institute.

<sup>7</sup> (Bryk & Driscoll, 1998; Lee & Smith 1997; Wasley et al., 2000; Copland & Boatright, 2004; Klonsky, 2003)

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<sup>11</sup> Nye, C. Turner. H.M., Schwartz, J.B. (2006). *Approaches to Parental Involvement for improving the academic performance of elementary children in grades K-6.*

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<sup>13</sup> Stiefel, OL., Iatarola, P., Fruchter N., & Berne, R. (1998). *The effects of size of student Body on school costs and performance in New York City high schools.* New

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<sup>15</sup> Cotton, Kathleen. (1996). *School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance,* School  
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