

Speaking Notes

Topic: Choice

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My name is Dylan Vaillancourt. I currently have a son attending ECHE in Grade two and a daughter entering Kindergarten next fall. I am deeply concerned that without a sibling priority in place, it is possible my children will have to attend different schools come September.

Tonight I would like to talk to you about choice.

In the Prince George School District we are lucky that we have choice. I am pleased to have the choice to send my son or daughter to a number of excellent educational programs. I can choose, and many do choose, to send their children to the English program that has developed from the historic education system in the Province. We also have other choices such as French Immersion, The Montessori, The Traditional, and now the Aboriginal educational program. All of these diverse educational systems exist under the umbrella of the public school system. They are all different in their teaching styles, but all have the same goal of educating the youth of our district. As parents we are lucky to have this choice.

The school board is also facing a choice in their revision to policy 5119. They can support the decision of previous boards and uphold the commitment to the education of family units or they can abandon this policy in support of a first-come-first-serve mentality. The commitment of previous boards to the education of family units can be seen in the previous version of policy 5119. In two places, in the Catchment section and in the transfer process there is a priority given to siblings in school enrolment. In both cases this refers to out of catchment children. There is no wording about what happens within catchment, but as within catchment children in the past have always been accommodated, I gather that it was not deemed necessary to write this into policy. In any case, there seems to be a clear message from the previous boards that education of a family unit within a single school has been a priority of the board.

This brings me back to the issue of choice of programs. In the suggested modification to policy 5119, the Choice programs (which does not include the English option) are being excluded from the concept of education of family units. I don't see a justification for this exclusion. Are these other programs superior to the English option? Do they represent a better and improved educational experience... No, they are simply educational choices. They all should be subject to the same guiding policies as the majority English option. Otherwise, parents who choose one of the less popular options are actually being discriminated against.

In the revision of policy 5119 the board has a philosophical choice to make. Do they want to continue in their support of the education of the family unit or not. You have to make a choice. If you do support this concept, and I hope you do, then you don't really have a choice but to extend this principle to all of the educational choices offered by the district; the English option, The French immersion option, the Montessori option, the Traditional option, and the Aboriginal option.

My family needs you, the Trustees, to include sibling priority in your policy to protect ALL families and children in this district, regardless of the chosen program.

Thank you.