

23 November 2010

Mr. Lyn Hall
School District 57
2100 Ferry Avenue
Prince George, British Columbia
V2L 4R5

Dear Mr. Hall,

My name is Sandra Lamb and I am a parent of four children who attend College Heights Elementary School. I want to encourage you to **support families** within our school district. I was extremely disappointed when I reviewed the revisions to Policy 5119. I had expected that the School District 57 would **prioritize keeping families together** by putting in place a sibling policy for all schools across the region. We know that this will be a district issue as schools close and others become filled to capacity. Last year, this was an issue for our school, but we are just the beginning.

In April, I had the opportunity to speak to the Board along with other concerned parents about the need for a **district wide sibling policy**. During that meeting, we were encouraged to become active in our local PACs in order to bring about change. I listened. I am presently on the PAC executive and on the School Planning Council. I do not feel you listened to us, however. Your synopsis of the issue at the October Board meeting was that this was a "Right vs. Right" scenario. You said it was right to give priority to siblings and it was right for new families to come to the school. I take it to mean that the board is only supporting families with a single child, as anyone with subsequent children will have to "roll the dice" to keep their family together at one school in the future.

The policy revisions give **siblings priority for transfers** but not for Kindergarten or High School registration. Why is there this discrepancy? Does the Board think siblings are important or not?

Last April, on the first Wednesday, I wrote a letter to the Superintendent and Trustees regarding Kindergarten Registration. I would like to read an excerpt of that letter to you tonight.

I sat a test today. I competed with my friends, my children's friends' parents, my professional colleagues and others from around the city. The test was who had the fastest typing skills and internet access. The prize was keeping my family of four together at the same school that we walk to each day. Unfortunately, I failed this test. I prepared for this test: I was familiar with the page, and I practised typing my daughter's name and address over and over; I am not sure what happened. I sat here at my computer from 8:30 AM onwards to ensure everything was working well. I had a back-up computer set up in the kitchen. I could not access the registration form until my computer read 9:03 and my cell phone read 9:05. And then I typed. I typed as fast as I could while my heart was racing and my hands were shaking.

I believe in a School District that supports families and healthy environments for our children. I attended the public meetings and I was impressed by the passion of the Trustees and the importance placed on families and communities. Despite this, I feel the system has let my family down. The last few months have been very stressful to our community, the last week has been worse.

Please reconsider your policies to keep families together.

I was lucky. It turned out I passed my test that day. My daughter is in Kindergarten and she has her three big brothers as part of her school community. I am lucky that the birth order of my children was not reversed. If I had been trying to register my triplet boys in kindergarten and keep them with an older sister, my family would have been split. I would have had to either separate my older child from peers and her school or separate my family. **The School District's lack of sibling policy does not support families and it puts families with multiples at a greater disadvantage.**

I will not have to relive another kindergarten registration day as there are no more Lamb juniors to send to school. Other families, however, will be affected without a policy change. We have an estimate of twenty siblings for forty-four positions who will be entering Kindergarten September 2011 at College Heights Elementary School. **Having siblings together at a school is beneficial for the student, the parents, and the school community as a whole.**

Eighty percent of public schools in British Columbia with online policies prioritize siblings. Five out of seven of our neighbouring school districts with online policies prioritize siblings. **We request a School District 57 policy change to support families by keeping siblings together in our district.**

Thank you for your consideration,

Sandra Lamb

cc: Mr. Brian Pepper, School District 57 Superintendant
School District 57 Trustees