

## Eastview's Children and Haultain School

A presentation to the Board of Education on January 10th, 2012 by Lara Quintin, Chair of the Haultain SCC.

If you remember, I've never asked you to keep Haultain open, because short of a 140 enrollment, I never thought that you would. So, instead, I've asked you to be diligent. Beyond that, unless there was something you hadn't heard, something that was important enough to merit an exception to the 140 enrollment rule, there wasn't much more I could say. However, I find perhaps there is something more to be said. So on behalf of the children of Eastview, I'm going to try to say it.

In the pages that I've attached, (which I am not going to read but hope you have had time to look through) I tried to examine to the best of my ability the various factors I'm aware of that help determine the success of an educational program, from a less successful one. I pondered and searched, had moments of revelation and a tangent or two, but I think you can see that I tried to look at as many angles as I could. Believe me when I say that I'm trying to be sensitive for the need to stay on budget. I'm pretty good at budgets and I'm trying to be realistic but I'm also hearing that the actual quality of the education comes before cost considerations, or at least, in equal proportion to it.

We've learned that the children attending Haultain school are by definition 'at-risk' children. We have the demographic studies, the materials from the Regina Children's Initiative, and of course, school reports, so let's start there. We've looked at the Learning Improvement Plans, and the Value Added Assessments, and if with even a scanty bit of information about how many of our children have Personal Program Plans and Diverse Needs Plans, we know that by comparison to similar communities, Haultain is an extremely successful school with a low but stable enrollment and an overly large number of at-risk students. It's nice when you have already have successes to compare with.

Beyond trying to hurdle the obvious barriers to success for at-risk students, such as poverty, hunger and neglect, we have to include apathy. Apathy is highly contagious, so don't interpret the lack of outcry over this proposal as compliance or even resignation. Take that as a very real red flag that says the children of Haultain are more at-risk than studies might have revealed and remember that should they need help, there isn't likely to be an advocate for them.

Two factors known to be great barriers to education in low-income areas have always been issues for Haultain, nutrition and attendance. I wanted to see how these factors would be affected by a merger to another area, and the answer was, it's really too hard to say. Programming doesn't necessarily follow the students because nothing is a ever guarantee. I don't know if there would be funding for the nutrition programs as some of that is determined by outside sources and these sources are currently over-stretched even for Haultain's small population. I don't know if another school would try to keep the programs inclusive, or try to change them. I don't know how another school will be staffed or how the staff will respond to new programming. I can hope, but I can't know. I also can't know how attendance is going to be affected because the factors that currently affect our attendance come back largely to the weather and apathy.

I'm going to assume you've closed schools with high risk populations before, but I'm under the impression that families without transportation had at least one other option within a safe walking distance. Distance is an issue, but safety is a greater one. Geographic accessibility is something we already prioritize for children with special needs. We haven't looked at prioritizing geographic accessibility for at-risk children, possibly because we haven't had to, but now that we do, I don't know why we wouldn't. The only direction with a sidewalk leading out of Eastview is East on Dewdney, or South down Winnipeg Street, meaning there are no safe pathways for a child to walk or cycle to school outside of Eastview other than Thompson, (which generates little interest as an option). We can't assume that children have an alternate means of transportation, in fact, it's best if we assume they won't. Assume they won't and at the very least we cut out their participation in after school extra-curricular activities. At the most, we create a degree of non-attendance we have yet to chart.

That said, I'm presenting you with a reason to have Haultain operate for less than 140 students. I'm suggesting that there is an exception to be made. It's not just my position as SCC Chair, or the fact that as a parent and resident, I'd rather my son go to Haultain, it's because I've looked at it and I honestly believe there is reason for concern and reason for exception. It's your decision to make, but it's not irresponsible or inequitable to invest more in a community that has substantially less, a community with barriers to overcome and dangers to consider. In some circumstances more is required in order to have or achieve what others have and achieve. It's inequitable not to do that. Sometimes it takes more to level a playing field and that's never unfair. Advantaged groups never see themselves as advantaged unfairly however they can and do take that view of the dis-advantaged whenever they have been given more. Some exceptions have merit and finding them, debating them, and deciding when they apply is every bit as much of the job as being fiscally responsible, or adhering to a plan, even a good one.

I'd love to give you more detail, but there isn't time, so I've written up points that I've pondered of the advantages or disadvantages as I see them in the scenarios that we were asked to consider as the possible outcomes of Board's decision tonight, with scenario one being the merger of Haultain with Glen Elm School, two being the continuance of Haultain for at least one more year while we figure things out, and three being a merger with Haultain to Imperial or McDermid schools.

I hope you have had a chance to read the pages I've attached and please ask questions if you like, because when I step away from the microphone, you are the ones who have vote on what to do next. It's not up to me, If I were in your place, I'd really want to be more certain than I am. I'd need to know for a certainty that I wasn't putting these children at greater risk. I'd have to know I wasn't following a formula that miscalculated importance of what seems marginal, or marginalized something vital while trying to keep a budget from going into the red. Again, I'm good at keeping budgets so that is saying something. Thank you all for your time and attention. It's deeply appreciated.

## Scenario One

Vote to Close Haultain in at the end of this school year:

Merge the Haultain population with Glen Elm by providing bus transportation and expanding the staff and facilities of Glen Elm School.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is one of the great influential factors in education that tends to sneak out of the spotlight when food, shelter and family stability are concerns. We have a theory that says that if a child has at least one friend at school, they will want to go to class, but at Haultain, the attendance records show us weather might be the most relevant factor. Taking the bus may increase attendance as children may be more inclined to attend school on cold days when they no longer have to walk the roughly seven minutes it takes to get to and from school. Conversely, children who won't walk to school on a cold day, may decide it's too cold to wait for the bus. How can we determine if busing will increase attendance and have a positive affect on education? The obvious way is to compare records of a school like Haultain, where attendance is completely dependent on individual transportation, one where attendance tends to drop in colder weather, and then compare how that attendance is affected by providing only bus transportation to a farther area. In other words, I don't think we can tell how busing will affect attendance until we do it, because it's not the bus, or the school, it's the population that decides whether or not to attend. Currently, some Haultain students tend to stay home in colder weather, and that is all we really know for the moment.

However, if a child misses their bus, a parent or guardian will have to have some means of available and affordable transportation, such as a car, taxi or city bus. This also assumes the parent would willingly spend the time and/or pay the expense to transport the child, rather than saying the child is ill when the school calls. It also assumes that a child stranded at the school can actually reach someone who could come to collect them. It remains to be seen how responsive parents will be in this situation. We can already assume from the demographic studies made available that there is a lesser amount of two car, or even one car families. From the attendance records, we know that general apathy is a factor that alone suggests we can expect to continue encounter to non-attendance from at-risk students..

### **Sidewalks and crosswalks and geographically accessible schools**

Alternatively a child could ride a bike or walk the distance to a receiving school, which is about 3 kms to 2 kms depending on the school. However there are currently no walking paths, no sidewalks, and no crosswalks which would safely convey a child to a school outside of Eastview with the exception of Thompson to the south. Google maps can provide a *street view* of any path that we can think of taking so we can see where the sidewalks end and how much traffic there is on the major thoroughfares we will have to navigate across. It will also actually warn us to use caution on any route we chose to walk or cycle to or from the suggested receiving schools. Child safety now becomes a factor in attendance. We could try to create a safe walking or cycling path and install some cross-walks were children are most likely to cross high traffic streets, but that would take co-ordination with city officials, and that may not be possible in the time we have before the 2012/2013 school year.

### **Increased Participation in Extra Circular Activities**

Some children will be able to participate in some after school activities that they could not be involved in at Haultain school due to the small number of children willing to participate, if their parents are able to drive them home afterwards. Children who cannot access transportation will not be able to participate unless they walk or cycle home, and that is currently not a safe option.

**Continuity of staff:** The benefit of having an educational staff that has built an intimate knowledge of their students is undeniably helpful to the success of the students. While teaching staff have long held their positions at Haultain, the rules of employment outlined in the contract, such as seniority, can not be overthrown. In reality, teachers and other staff will scatter to new positions and it is unknown if any will find themselves at Glen Elm school (or any other receiving school). As students are all changing grades in the coming year, and they are generally placed according to academic strength, Haultain students have only a very little chance of being taught by a former Haultain teacher and are unlikely to benefit from the relationship they now share with the Haultain staff. Encouraging the staff to follow the students is rather a polite formality but should not be an expectation given to parents who are concerned about continuity for their children.

**Increase the number of classrooms (split grades):** When we discuss split grades, we mostly look at low enrollment schools that have 'forced' split grades, however, high enrollment schools utilize split grades as well. It is rare to find a school administrator who would rather have two single grade classes than two split grades and one single grade. Split grades have academic advantages but can also create a social stigma between peers from inference of *near failure* or *superiority*. This stigma does not currently exist in Haultain as no child is separated from their grade, or their friends in their grade even though all Haultain children beyond Kindergarten work in split grades currently. (Note: Haultain children also tend to socialize with a very broad range of ages as well as within family groups without social stigma which relates to both size and stability of the current environment and therefore is not likely to continue in the new environment).

### **Reinvest.**

Commit to enrichment of programming and staffing at Glen Elm school and Board-located staff resources to provide better than average quality education.

### **Programing for success:**

Create Glen Elm as a non-provincially designated community school.

Everyone knows that cracks exist in every education system. These are cracks between the points of (A) Achieving academically and socially at near full potential and (B) Failing (in at least three subjects because that is when the red flags go up). (A) can be a good reason to come to work every day, but (B) generally takes a lot of resources to get through the system. Between very good and very bad, somewhere in the middle, there is "struggling but good enough to pass" which is not achieving at a child's full potential, and therefore can be the biggest crack of all. Parents, when they have the time and ability, can be great advocates for kids who are falling through the cracks., but go into the high risk neighborhoods and the cracks get wider and advocacy is rare. It's best to try to fill the cracks in or risk a general social downturn. Someone else saw these cracks a long time ago and came up with some programs designed to help. Some of these programs became what is the Community School Program.

**Option A: Transfer current programming**

Re-purpose current facilities to run a breakfast club or toast club in the morning when children arrive allowing all children 15 minutes to eat something before school starts. Requires agreement from staff to take on toast club supervision and administration responsibility, and funding at roughly double the current costs for Haultain.

Re-purpose school facility as a kitchen area for Snack Program with possible help from Food for Learning (*Note: Food for Learning provides one part-time staff person and most of the funding for the morning snack program, but is recently been unable to afford the Haultain program, so funding to run this program for a group over twice the size of Haultain would have to come from as of yet unidentified sources*). Also requires agreement from administrative staff as snack is provided during teaching time.

Johnson Area Music Inc. (JAM Inc) currently supplies Haultain students with instruments at no charge for their music program. Merging with Glen Elm may not affect this program, but merging with another school may.

Pre-school programming. If transportation is also provided, space may be found in the new facility to offer free pre-school programming for Eastview residents. (Please review the information from the Regina Children's Initiative and Understanding the Early Years website <http://reginakids.ca/> for more information on why Eastview's preschoolers are particularly at risk and why extra supports are needed in our community)

**Option B: Design new programming for 2012/2013**

Many of the non-educational support programs are at risk due to a lack of resources. The money saved from shutting schools down is currently allocated to programs that support teaching in the school, like reading programs, and to bus transportation and the addition of portable classrooms. If funding for the nutrition program is not available for a larger population, other programming would have to be examined and implemented within a reasonably short time frame. Please note that current Haultain programming is uniquely inclusive and is offered on all school days. Other available nutrition programming options currently run three days a week and may not be inclusive of all children. Underfed and/or impoverished children will often avoid charitable programs in order to avoid stigma when there is a perceptible division. Programs that require application and financial disclosure from parents create an additional barrier, and don't address situations where parental absence or neglect is more of an issue. Loss of all non-academic support programming would have a tremendous impact on the majority of children involved with the school merger.

**Staffing: Enrich School and Board-located staffing to provide better than average resources.**

Programming is only as effective as the person-hours we give to run it and currently, we are a bit skimpy on most counts, even in the community schools. Administrators amalgamate part-time positions to enrich the opportunities for employment. Individual employees must prioritize the duties of the various positions based on need and there are a lot of needs that are simply too dire to ignore. We can therefore have programming that we effectively eliminate simply by under-staffing it. We want effective quality education, so let's staff it well.

The Community Co-ordinator position is currently .25 position at Haultain. The staff person who receives this designation (as it is unlikely this would not be amalgamated with another position) would now be responsible for liaising with two geographically distant and unique communities,

one of which is currently experiencing great apathy towards changes in the community. However, it is foreseeable that as Eastview is separate from all receiving schools, and as other support programs would have to be maintained in the community, a liaison position would be helpful for this merger to be a success.

Library staff can be increased for additional support. Haultain's Librarian has been pivotal in organizing and executing Haultain's additional literacy programs and regularly providing additional teaching support that is having a notable impact on the school's literacy achievement tests.

Haultain's Learning Resources Teacher provides countless hours of small group teaching, one on one support, additional supervision and team teaching assistance that is not available in schools with greater demands on person-hours from sheer numbers of students. An increase of .25 over the current .75 LRT allocation would be a tremendous benefit for the new school and would be of minimal cost.

Teaching Associates would need to be increased as the number of classrooms will increase potentially beyond 5 or 6 more classrooms as enrollments rise and the population is redistributed.

Board-located support team staff such as counsellors, psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, have extremely high demands on their time and resources. All schools will cherry pick their worst students for additional help, but the more restricted these resources, the more we risk missing the timeliness of intervention, and the more we move towards budget education vrs quality education. It would be good to pay attention to response time lines and work load capabilities to see that we have created an effective, high quality system regardless of how we change the schools that children attend.

### **Post Haultain Eastview; Social downturn? The Broken Windows phenomenon**

If Haultain school was abandoned, it is unknown when or if it would be resold and how that would affect the community, but an at-risk community is more likely to have a social downturn when abandoned buildings are present. Gang related activity has already been noted in the community, although not as heavily as it exists in other inner city areas. Gang activity in our area focuses on recruitment, targeting youth and children and occasionally makes it's presence known with graffiti, running shoes strung across wires, and violent acts. Attending school deters this activity for those students that attend during the day. It is the students who stay home who are most at risk. Abandonment and disrepair creates signals that anti-social behaviors are more likely to be overlooked and thus criminal activity becomes more pronounced. In current practice, we allow for a school to be empty for roughly a year before putting it up for tender. It may be advisable to take a different direction and keep the school functional unless and until it's sale or destruction. There is no real reason a school needs to sit idle to discover if the city has need of it if steps can be taken in advance.

## **Cutting Back or Investing?**

Running a budget sometimes mean investing rather than cutting back. Investing is a long term way of thinking, and it take a lot more guts in times when shortfalls loom and you have little tolerance for debt. Even though we talk about enrollments as though we mean the ability to have team teaching break out sessions and more extra curricular activities, we do so by ignoring academic success in small enrollment settings. Haultain wouldn't have such an impressive Learning Improvement Plan, and simply could not score as high on Value Added Assessments if it was all about multiple teachers for every grade level. We break education down into the cost per student, not the average amount of success per student. We talk enrollment numbers, but we mean money. It makes sense to use what we have and spend less where we can. However, there are some dangerous realities in funding education. For one: *Public education is simply an enormous drain on the economy with absolutely no direct financial refund or return.* And Two: *If we don't invest in schools, we will invest in jails.* Most people understand the inherit benefit of spending on children so that they become, at the very least, capable and functional adults and that the benefit to society is worth the investment. However, we have come to interesting economic times this year. We are reacting to income inequality and tax burdens that effect 98% of the population, and we are at the same time pulling away from the social support networks that taxes built up. We stopped allowing school boards to set mill rates and started handing them fixed amounts and told them to somehow stay out of the red when enrollments just bounced. The goal has to be to maintain quality while increasing the quantity, to get more bang for the buck. That naturally creates a downsizing model. Facility and administration costs get cut and all the savings are redirected. The Renewal Plan is trying to be efficient, but it's not trying to be efficient at the cost of quality education for everyone. However, even though our best intention is to maintain quality, occasionally, we misstep. How could we not? Schools have gone over enrollment capacity and we have to shuffle everyone in one direction or another to try to keep the equilibrium. That is why there is some danger in the larger capacity competency model. Running a big school or running a small school is going to cost money and there is no way around that, so the trick is to keep adjusting to make sure the investment is still a wise one.

Scenario Two:

Vote to keep Haultain school as a receiving school for the 2012/2013 year.

### **Investing for the future**

Keeping a school open makes sense when it is the best way to meet the education needs of a community and when closing the school would put a high needs population in jeopardy. Although the expense is greater, investment at this end of the social spectrum saves us money in the long game, and that is also fiscally responsible.

### **Stable environment with a stable enrollment**

It's not possible to say that Haultain would stay open indefinitely, but it is likely that the enrollment will not drop significantly in the meantime. We can not ignore that there are other options for those who are amenable to busing their children. However community data show us that we have always been a stable community, and we are becoming a uniquely stable First Nations community, (with a very low rate of transience, unlike comparable communities). We can actually expect a higher birth rate per capita than other neighborhoods, so although we have not predicted growth, we have predicted stability and while any school under an immanent threat of closure will lose students, Haultain has thus far has lost very few, which is also telling.

**At - Risk Population.** Risk is a term we use to describe the combination of various factors that make academic, and by extension, social and economic success more or less likely. Students who attend Haultain by and large fall into the "at-risk" category, also called *high needs*, which is similar to *special needs* because we are essentially describing children for whom greater care must be taken if we are committed to helping them succeed.

### **Singular Option**

Haultain provides the singular option for education within the community of Eastview. Keeping the school open provides the only option for parents for whom busing is undesirable, and provides the only school that can be safely accessed on foot or on bicycle. Pathways, sidewalks and crosswalks could potentially be developed to other schools outside the area, but high traffic roads will always surround the community. The School Board is already committed to providing geographically accessible programs for students with special needs and if we agree that communities with many high risk variables present special needs for education, keeping Haultain in operation is in-keeping with this principle.

### **Educational Success**

Haultain School is extremely successful amongst community schools. Achievements are celebrated every month with multiple awards given to students at every grade level. Literacy and Numeracy rates climb steadily every year from the typically low average found in community schools to near provincial averages. First Nations students have no marked difference in achievement from the level of their non-aboriginal peers. There are numerous extra-curricular incentives to encourage literacy at home and staff is very vigilant at working past barriers where ever and when ever possible. Aside from additional nutritional and academic support the administration works very hard to ensure attendance does not lag by creating incentives and raising awareness about attendance at every celebration assembly. The



Principal will routinely visit homes where absences have become problematic and has been very creative in keeping in touch with families that avoid contact with the school. Being present in the community provides a better profile and makes this role far more effective.

### **Inclusive Programming**

Haultain's programming is entirely inclusive. There are extremely few demands on families to provide even minimal financial support for school or extra-curricular activities. The staff is highly resourceful at securing sponsorship or fundraising whenever necessary so that students are never barred from participation due to lack of funds. Students are provided musical instruction on a range of instruments that are provided to the school at no charge from the F W Johnson foundation. Students are all invited to participate in the morning toast club and the snack program is provided to every classroom every day so that children are guaranteed to have some nutrition at a time of day when it is the most beneficial for learning.

Some extra-circular activities operate at the school and some after-school programming is available at the community center. Transportation to and from activities is rarely required and is generally provided for when it is. Occasional student transportation to activities outside of the area is provided by volunteers and staff when necessary because transportation does present a barrier to participation for many students and residents. Most, if not all, activities at the school and in the area operate without fees for participation.

**Reputation.** Every school has a reputation and every school will, for better or worse live up to it's reputation. Reputation is both an experience and advertising. My son is at Haultain because when it became obvious that he was struggling in the French Program, I researched my options. Research revealed that curriculum is fairly standard, but the reputation of a school and it's staff is the key to deciding where a child has the best chance of success. The recommendations I received were hands down for Haultain with glowing reports of the staff. I resisted making this decision because I knew this school was slated to close and even the principal questioned if it was wise to come to a school that might close the following year. I was also concerned how well my son would fit in coming from an advantaged community to a high-risk community, but after meeting the principal and staff, I decided they had a value that would make even one year worth the risk. My son has flourished beyond my expectations and is achieving his potential. I could not be more pleased, and I would like him and his classmates to continue to flourish together. However, if I look for another school, I can't say that my choice of school would be Glen Elm. For a parent, the reputation of a school is more important than the enrollment numbers, high or low. When we blend schools, it would be nice if we were also looking beyond numbers.

**Responsive and Resourceful:** Haultain is responsive and resourceful, which may not be unique, but it does explain to a large degree why it is so successful. A school is responsive when it flags an issue and has or is able to locate or create the resources to address the issue. Partnerships with outside sources is sometimes the answer. Most schools are struggling with the growing demands on their time and resources, but not every school is responsive and not every school will work well with outside resources, let alone seek them out. When working with recommendations from outside professionals, one administrator commented: "We consider recommendations and implement what we feel we have the capacity to do and do properly." It goes to reason that rising enrollments are playing a large part in responsiveness, but some schools project a greater capacity to try than others.

At the individual student level, flagging issues starts with the teacher. Unfortunately, the process often exposes them to some encumbering work-place situations and may not always result in

valuable assistance. Teachers in communities where action is limited to only that which can be done properly should avoid encumbering themselves, and perhaps this is why some schools are different from others. In the months that I have worked with Haultain's staff to ensure my son stays in step with his peers, they have avoided nothing. They have always found time, always given generously from their expertise, and have never given any impression that a child does not merit assistance because children of higher need are a greater priority, nor have ever encountered a single situation where it was felt that resources are too scarce or that expertise is too lacking. To be clear, my son has been blessed by amazing teachers throughout his education, but at Haultain, we have been doubly blessed.

### **Teaching space and facilities**

As you know, Haultain is in the rare position of having ample space for programming. There are separate rooms for Arts and Music programs as well as a fully equipped kitchen for the snack program also serves as a lunch room, and an additional lunch room that also serves as a family meeting space following monthly celebration assemblies. There are separate spaces for the Pre-K and kindergarten programs. The availability of space makes the school ideal for the expansion of community programming and pilot programs. Repairs to the school would cost far less than building a new school should the school need to be replaced for any reason and the school is very comfortable and appealing. Haultain is not wheel chair accessible, which is not currently a concern, but were it to undergo repairs for long term operation, accessibility would have to be included in future plans for the school.

### **Cost per child**

There is no denying that Haultain is an expensive school to operate, however, if quality of education is truly our first priority, and if we understood that dis-advantaged children merit some advantages in education that would in effect create equity, then the related costs can be justified, especially in instances where a school is highly successful, and other options are limited, create unacceptable barriers or are currently non-existent.

### **Shared Values**

We want to teach children to value belonging, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. To impart these values on them we recognize that they have to identify themselves as belonging to the community of the school. In a disadvantaged area, schools can become an alternative community in which belonging can also mean safety and security. We have the ideal environment for a community with shared values at Haultain because of the one factor we are most at risk from, our size.

### **Social Channel Capacity - 150**

***“ When we want to, say, develop schools in disadvantaged communities that can successfully counteract the poisonous atmosphere of their surrounding neighborhoods, this (social channel capacity) tells us that we are probably better off building lots of little schools than one or two big ones.”*** (Gladwell, Malcom. *The Tipping Point: How little things can make a big difference*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2002. Print)

There is a natural limit to all human capacity. Studies have shown that the human capacity for cohesive social groupings is roughly 150. As Malcolm Gladwell explains, social cohesion

is necessary if you want shared ideals and beyond 150, humans simply lose that capacity. However, studies also have shown that most children do well in schools that are about 200 to 400 in size. That's possible because schools use hierarchy and rules to operate, much like a militia. When you operate as a large group of individuals, conformity is king and hierarchy takes over. If you need a school to be a meaningful community, as you would in a disadvantaged area, a militia is less effective but often inevitable because there is generally a conflict of social values. Once a group grows beyond 150 individuals, what develops are groups within groups and a relative anonymity between individuals. In large groups, people can identify faces with names and some relative social status, which is sufficient for most interactions, but they cannot have that many interpersonal connections, so they get selective about who is in their group and who is not. While larger schools have more options for student placement, and extra-curricular sports, teachers and administrators will only know *some* students and families well. As it was explained to me, "In a small school everyone knows you, but in a large school, the people that need to know you, know you." So yes, teachers and administrators only know some students and families well and the selection criteria is *need*. If you need to know someone better, you first have to identify that need. For the kids who stand out as disruptive the case for attention is easily made, but the quiet are so easily passed over. Those kids somewhere between point (A) and point (B) who just aren't making much of a fuss, those who don't have quite as many red flags, may still merit closer scrutiny. Are those kids known by more than just their names to the people who need to know them? Not usually.

In groups that are smaller than 150, individuals become known to each other in a much deeper context, and when it comes to educating children in disadvantaged communities, this is golden. When we exist in small communities, we naturally experience social cohesion, or the feeling of belonging, of being in a family. Families are the most effective teaching unit. They are essential for socialization, for passing on knowledge, ideals and beliefs. Some children conform well to rules and social norms, but others will always stand out as different, quirky, or even misfits. Every child at Haultain can stand out without standing out from the group and every child can be known without being apparent. Every child can be a unique character and every child can know every adult as more than a status holder. When a child can experience school as a place where they intimately and uniquely belong, where they fit regardless of their character the extending values of respect, knowledge, and responsibility are more easily imparted.

### **Staff cohesion**

Social channel capacity may further explain why the staff at Haultain is such a cohesive group, but it's also likely we just got extremely lucky. When we discuss team teaching, we assert that we need a minimum of 8 teachers to make it work. We don't. Haultain has team teaching created from a unique unity of purpose, a willingness to step in and out of roles to assist others and from the culture of the school itself. Anyone who has worked in human resources or administration will understand how difficult it is to create a cohesive team atmosphere and how much success can depend on the ability of a team to work together for a common goal, for members of an apparent hierarchy to share equally in responsibilities and for the group celebrate each individual achievement as a whole. That is an extremely hard mix to right get

and when you do, you have to count yourself lucky.

### Scenario 3

Vote to merge the population of Haultain with Imperial and/or McDermid schools.

#### **Advantages:**

Both schools are currently functioning as Community schools. Programming may be easier to transfer and school philosophies may be more closely aligned.

Demographics are similar to the demographics of Eastview, and students may have an easier time fitting in.

McDermid is a full kilometer closer to Eastview than Glen Elm and walking or cycling paths may be easier to establish.

Imperial school has a reputation as being progressive and responsive, similar to Haultain, which again, would help create a better fit for transferred students.

#### **Disadvantages:**

The schools are set to merge soon which would: a) force Eastview's children to have to relocate to a new school shortly after relocating from Haultain b) create a population that is higher than the recommended enrollment for a community school.

Glen Elm would not have the a population with which to prop up its enrollment numbers and may be slated for closure, which would mean Haultain, Glen Elm, and one of Imperial or McDermid would all be eliminated as receiving schools in the future,. The potential for over-enrollments may increase substantially as a result of having so few operating schools.