

Good evening. My name is Julie Mazzuchin and my children attend MacLeod Public School.

Some of you may be wondering why a parent from MacLeod is doing a presentation tonight. The fact is that everyone here has a great deal in common. We are all here because we want the very best for the children in our communities. When you are a parent to one or more of these children there is a whole other issue to contend with...that being emotion. We are all here tonight fighting for our schools, fighting for what we believe will be the best environment for our loved ones. No final decisions have been made by the board as of yet and I felt that it was important that MacLeod have a voice here tonight too.

I am not here to tell you that MacLeod is a superior school in any way, but I am going to tell you why it is special and why I feel very fortunate to have my children enrolled there.

Five years ago my husband and I had a very difficult decision to make. Where was our daughter going to go to school? With 19 years of post-secondary school between the two of us, we felt strongly that a school's environment is very important in the shaping of the student. Do we go French immersion or English? Public or separate? Do we go by reputation or by first impressions? It was daunting at the time.

We did agree on certain things. We agreed that we wanted the following criteria in the school that we chose. We wanted a school with a strong academic program. We wanted a school that had numerous resources and extra-curricular programming available to its students. Most importantly we wished for a school and staff that held the same values that we do. A school that was less than 40 years old with air conditioning would have been nice too, but 3 out of 4 ain't bad!

Having recently moved back to Sudbury after over a decade away, we were a little out of the loop as we began our research. MacLeod certainly came with high accolades via word of mouth. Friends and family had nothing but great things to say about the teachers and the positive learning environment that they consistently

created. I don't think it was a coincidence that I just happened to be leafing through the Today's Parent magazine that highlighted MacLeod as being one of the 40 top schools in our country the month before kindergarten registrations were starting. So off to the school I went to begin to develop an opinion of my own.

I have always been big on first impressions and when I attended the school for a tour, I was not disappointed. I have some friends who have chosen their child's school because their first impression was the school seemed like home... warm and inviting. What I loved about MacLeod was this: Immediately upon entering the school, even though you could hear a pin drop down the main hallway in the middle of an instructional block, you were surrounded by an intensely positive energy. Students were engaged with their teachers in their classrooms, staff smiled at you as you walked by their classes, colourful artwork and positive poster messages were splashed on every wall, the physical space was as clean as its obvious wear and tear would allow it to be... but that wear and tear was indicative of something else... of the history... it told a story of the thousands of students that had graced those hallways in the many years before. It was that first impression that sealed the deal for me.

Now, almost 5 years later, what I feel amazing about is that MacLeod has exceeded our wish list of the three criteria that we wanted in a school.

First, MacLeod has a very strong academic program. In the EQAO provincial testing, a very high percentage of our Grade 3 and 6 students consistently perform at or above provincial standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. This may at least in part be attributed to the following:

- MacLeod offers small reading groups to struggling grade 1 and 2 students with 30 minutes of instruction each day.
- Resource teachers are available to promote literacy in all of the classes and to provide best practice strategies to students who made need extra help.
- The school hosts numerous literacy sessions that the teachers organize to assist families in implementing some of these strategies within the home.

- Tutors are available within the classroom setting to help the child to comprehend and apply the concepts being taught
- With such a large enrolment, there are no triple and quadruple classes. There are split grades, and a great deal of thought goes into which students are put into these classes to ensure that all of the students in split classes are being appropriately challenged.
- When there are multiple grades (for example 4 grade 2 teachers) the teachers are able to plan together, which allows them more time and energy to devote to instructing their students. In many cases it is true that 4 heads are better than one.

The second criterion that MacLeod has met is having numerous resources and extra-curricular programming.

- MacLeod has a wide range of athletic opportunities for its students. With a large staff, there is a greater likelihood that there will be volunteers to coach the many teams. MacLeod is fortunate enough to have junior and intermediate levels, which means more students can participate in sports that they might not have the opportunity to partake in outside of school. Some of the teams include basketball, volleyball, soccer, golf, cross-country and track and field.
- MacLeod also has a strong arts component with instrumental music instruction beginning in grade 6 and a very highly regarded concert band.
- Two extra-curricular activities that we have had first hand experience in are city and region-wide public speaking competitions and the city-wide Spelling Bee. I think it is truly amazing that so many of the teachers will give up their break time in order to do practice sessions for the 3 months that precede the Spelling Bee competition. I'm sure it is rewarding to see their hard work pay off with excellent representation by MacLeod in all three age

Perhaps the most important criterion that we were looking for in a school was that the school promoted and encompassed a value system that was parallel with our own: one that allowed our children

to develop empathy and that fostered in its students a true sense of community. This is perhaps what I value most in MacLeod. The following highlight a few of the ways that these values are demonstrated:

- Students at MacLeod are very diverse, with strong representation from numerous ethnic and cultural backgrounds. MacLeod students also come from a true variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. I think the school is representative of the melting pot of cultural diversity that Canada is, just with a smaller sample size.
- The Intensive Support Program provides support and instruction to children with all types of disabilities and allows these individuals to be integrated into the regular school system.
- Children with behavioural difficulties and developmental delays are able to integrate directly into the classroom because of the excellent and consistent staffing of Educational Assistants that we have
- The Pay-It-Forward initiative is something that I value most about the school. It was created by 4 teachers at MacLeod who wanted to teach their students about the benefits of doing random acts of kindness for people, with no expectations in return. MacLeod has monthly pay-it-forward assemblies in which they highlight a different character trait and students who personify that trait are chosen by their teachers to attend a Friendship Tea to celebrate that trait at the end of each month. When asked what she liked most about MacLeod, my daughter answered the Pay-It-Forward assemblies.
- MacLeod has undertaken numerous projects which demonstrate its commitment to developing strong community ties. Instead of teacher gifts at Christmas, the school endorses that parents purchase Food Bank cards, they have collected toiletries and school supplies to send in shoe boxes to Third World countries at Christmas time, they have raised funds for a Sudburian soldier injured in Afghanistan, and they participate in several annual fundraisers including the Terry Fox walk/run for the Canadian Cancer society, Jump Rope for Heart for the

Heart and Stroke Foundation and Nickels for the North for Easter Seals.

- MacLeod's own community comes together each May for the annual Fun Fair, which is our largest in-school fundraiser. This year, the MacLeod family raised over \$15K... a strong testament to the investment our families have in this school.

It is in large part due to these numerous outstanding qualities that makes MacLeod such an appealing school to parents in the South End. Because of this, the school is literally bursting at the seams. The current enrolment far exceeds the school's capacity, making it an ongoing challenge to find the space to house all of the students and staff.

Besides this most obvious one, there are other good reasons why MacLeod should undergo construction for a new school. The current state of the building is less than impressive, with leaking pipes, leaking roofs, rumoured mould problems and the general break-down of structure that accompanies an ageing building. Fortunately the school does have a significant amount of property and the understanding is that the new structure will go up around the current one, to minimize the disturbance of the students during construction in the school year.

A new green school for MacLeod wouldn't just be the environmentally conscientious option; it would be the only logical solution to the capacity problem currently facing this school. MacLeod Public School with its amazing staff and resources, its dedication to community involvement and its 400+ families will continue to provide its students with the optimal environment for learning if given the right opportunity.

Thank you.