

Dear Trustees,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you regarding the potential closure of Midway Elementary School. As the administrative assistant for Greenwood and Midway elementary schools for the past several years, I have seen the dynamics of both schools operating separately. While there have certainly been advantages to this setup, I believe those have been exhausted, and the benefits of merging are greater than the benefits of remaining separate. I look forward to all K-7 students in the same building for the following reasons:

1. a greater age spread to provide peer support/learning opportunities (big/little buddies)
2. more support for students from CYC, principal, EAs, SPED teacher, who are often pulled between two (or more) directions.
3. ability to provide an increased level of supervision if needed
4. improved connectedness between staff, students, administration

Thanks again, and I wish you the best in your decision-making process.



Donna Boisvert
Administrative Assistant
Midway/Greenwood Elementary Schools
250-445-6616

To the Board of Education of School District 51:

As the question of closing Midway Elementary School sits before you, I, Nick Bond wish to convey my thoughts on the matter as from both a member of the extended Midway community and recent experience as Principal of Midway and Greenwood Elementary and current Principal of West Boundary and Beaverdell Elementary.

I echo the 'Current Challenges of the Two-School Model' as described in the School Closure Proposal Information Package. In particular, those faced by the principal. I would like to stress that the listed challenges are systemic and not a reflection on the abilities of the principal. I faced these same challenges when I held the position as have other principals.

I also want to echo the 'Implications for Student Learning and Staffing' should a merger occur. The benefits would be significant and ultimately improve the learning experience. Children are more likely to thrive when they have consistent supports from multiple adults. Having support staff always available in the same building improves opportunities for collaboration, relationship and community building, and timely interventions. With efficiencies in supervision, opportunities for food programs, extra-curricular clubs and sports develop. These experiences make school a rich and vibrant place where students can feel connected beyond the classroom.

The support gained from fellow students all being together also has many benefits in a K-7 setting. Intermediate students benefit from having leadership opportunities within the routines of the day (lunchroom helpers, buddy reading, etc.) and special event days when house teams come together. Younger students are also important models for the intermediate students: they bring a sense of play, curiosity and wonder to the building. While not always apparent in the home, siblings often do support each other at school.

Yet despite the opportunities and benefits this merger could offer to create a rich learning community, I also value consideration for the intangible effect a small elementary school can bring to a community. I am fortunate to regularly witness this in the community of Beaverdell. There resides volunteers who provide meal preparations, one-to-one reading support, field study chaperones and a committed PAC who raise and spend money to improve the school experience of their students. The joy from supporting a school exists because supporting a school brings joy.

Naturally, residents want amenities that benefit their community. However, would a fuller, more supportive learning experience not benefit the youngest members of the Midway community? Could the community benefit from other uses of the building? Is there another alternative altogether? "That's the way it's always been" is not a reason that supports students. Education needs to change with the times and reflect the needs of the learner. Should Midway Elementary face closure or not, I ask: what supports can we build together?

Thank you for listening,

Nick Bond
Principal
West Boundary and Beaverdell Elementary
nick.bond@sd51.bc.ca

Re: Proposed closure of Midway Elementary School

As a grandparent of a child who is currently attending Midway Elementary, and the grandparent of a child who will attend this school in the near future, I would encourage you to think carefully about whether or not the school remains open.

In many ways, schools are the heart of the community. People choose to live here because there is a school that their children can attend without having to be bussed long distances every day. I think you may find that if there is a school closure in Midway, many parents may choose to homeschool or drive their children to another school other than Greenwood Elementary.

If the school is closed and the property sold, as is likely, it will be very difficult and expensive to reestablish an elementary school in this community. This alone should be enough to prevent the possible closure of the school.

Regards

--

Len Caron
Norwegian Creek Farm

Feb. 15, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

This past year I have been blessed to work in both MES and GES. I can connect with all the students enrolled in the Indigenous Education program in each school with ease. Working in each school two days allows me to do so.

In the spring both the k/1's and the 2/3's go to Raven Park for their outdoor education day. They read stories and learn about the transition's plants go through from spring until fall. The student picks a tree and throughout the school year they document the growth and change as well as the changes to other plants. They also gather at the Gateway Learning Circle that was created by David Seven Deers. When the students are there, they have opportunity to drum and learn about Indigenous culture and their relations to the land.

Once spring arrives the Midway students go on walks around the community and over to the Community Garden. They have 2-3 beds for their vegetables and flowers that they plant, water, and harvest all themselves. With the help of staff and members of the community watering on the weekends when the days become too hot, so the beds don't dry out. The students also enjoy watching and feeding the chickens bugs and grass.

Throughout the school year Jamie Stewart takes the students on adventures along the Kettle River and go crayfish and insect hunting (don't worry they release the specimens after they are studied). They also learn about different local ecosystems with Jamie. The students are always amazed at how many crayfish are caught and how they are a much-needed food source for our local wildlife.

All these locations are within walking distance for Midway students. They have so much outdoor activities close by. Outdoor learning weather it's in Raven Park or near the Kettle River is so important for our little learners.

I feel the school closure could result in discouraging young families moving into the area and driving young families out. When schools are closed, the families with small children will feel disadvantaged for local learning. I feel that all students need to learn about both local areas-Midway and Greenwood-because we are rich in Indigenous history.

Sincerely,

Tanya Dagg

Indigenous Culture and Student Success Facilitator

I have now had two kids attend and my last is attending MES currently. My main concern with MES remaining open is the asbestos problem that wasn't properly dealt with and the safety and health of mine and other kids. I also understand wanting to keep a school open because it brings more money to the district/ schools but if we have a school that is able to hold all the students K to 7 comfortably than I dont see the big deal with making that move. It makes sense for the kids to all be in one school anyways as they end up bussing back and forth for multiple events and I don't see that as very cost effective.

Kate Day

To Whom it may concern,

I am a Greenwood parent. My two oldest are now graduates. They started at MES, moved to GES then to BCSS. When they were young, I hated that they had to bus to MES at such a young age, most days they were asleep on the bus..as the school days were longer than the kids attending GES (really almost an hour longer). And always wondered why with such a limited student body, they were not all being taught in the same facility, especially since GES was much newer and had the total capacity to hold all. Now I do have an 8 year old.. which really he is finally going into grade 4 in the fall, so it really doesn't pertain to us any longer.

But I will say that unless someone or a whole lot of community members can get together to raise enough money to fix the roof, asbestos and many other defaults which have gone unnoticed by many but still noticed just the same. Then there maybe a chance of a plausible plan B.

I absolutely can not see any parent feeling safe enough to send there children, regardless of busing or community, or ratios as to how many from each small community attending, knowing of these deficiencies.

I know of the petitions and of the back and forth from angry Midway citizens, and just citizens in general, wanting all schools open.. But I ask, is that enough to just say.. " ok, let's put these kids in harms way, because we can't lose a school." That to me and many others I'm sure is unacceptable.

Like I stated before, this really doesn't affect our family any longer but as a community member, it absolutely does!

Pros:

- one bus route.. straight from midway right to GES.
- same start/end times for all students grade K-7.
- having children all at one facility, no more busing back and forth for creative days , plays... or assemblies.

In the meantime if repairs can be made and MES can be utilized some other capacity... then fantastic.. win win!

But it's also my belief that the decision has already been made.

That is just my input!

Either way, we are all neighbours, we are all struggling and we are all in this together. So let's act like it and show everyone the respect to hear their opinions and thoughts on a very difficult community decision.

Thank you,

Nicole Drinkwater

Dear Schoolboard of SD #51 and Staff:

Thank you for the information presented at the first public meeting on the possible closure of the Midway Elementary School.

The items listed below from point 2.2.1. of the Policy and Regulations concerning school closure were not addressed adequately in the meeting.

The Regulations

g. consideration of future enrolment growth of persons of school age, of less than school age and adults;

i. educational program/course implications for the affected students;

k. impact on the Board's five-year capital plan;

l. possible alternative community use of all or part of the school;

m. proposed use of the closed school(s) including potential lease or sale.

Item g. regarding future enrolment growth was not addressed. Mention was made of the down and up cycle in the School District, but no significant data was produced on the future in the Midway-Greenwood portion. With the influx of people coming into this area, it is obvious that the market has changed, and the recession of interest after the closure of the sawmill in Midway has reversed.

Item i., which was presented as a major concern was not significantly addressed. How will moving two classrooms of students in K-4 to the Greenwood Elementary School improved the hour by hour learning experience of the students? If equipment is an issue, then spend the money that will be retained by not closing the school and put it into the classrooms in Midway. Ultimately, the quality of learning is the product of the programme implemented by the teacher and the teacher him/herself. There has not been adequate reference to the improvement of learning by making this transition.

Item k. It appears that this requirement has not yet been considered. If it has, then a written statement should be presented to the public.

Item l. It was my impression from listening to staff comments that alternative community use of the facility would not be considered until after the decision to close the school has been made. Is that not a violation of this regulation?

Item m. Similar to item l, no information was forthcoming or likely to be forthcoming on this point until after the decision to close the school has been made. This too appears to be a violation of the regulation

The Issue as Perceived from the Presentation.

There are two issues that stood out from the presentation involve staffing. There is a concern for insufficient staff to handle issues that arise in the classroom with behaviour (one assumes), and the need for a principal to go back and forth between the two schools. If that is the reality, then it makes a strong case for adding a third teacher in the Midway Elementary school. If two teachers and two teacher aides are insufficient to handle the needs of these children, then add another teacher or support staff that can serve in more than one capacity as does the principal.

That does mean there will be an increase in cost. However, since money does not appear to be an issue in the closure and keeping the school open will retain 232,00 dollars in the budget, then adding that staff person is a reasonable consideration. Ideally, it would be a person with administrative capacity, such as a principal or vice principal, so that the frustration expressed by previous principals of travelling back-and-forth can be eliminated.

A third teacher or administrator would be valuable for collaboration, administration, behaviour interventions, preparation, programme enhancements, relations with parents and community, and facilitating communication during the school day.

If staff concerns are a basic issue, then making changes similar to the one suggested above should be addressed in fresh ways in the coming school year before making a very, very major change of closing a school in a thriving and growing community.

Retaining Teachers

Would you please make public the complete list of reasons why it is being difficult to attract and retain teachers? The market shortage has been mentioned. Is it

wages? Is it housing? As it has been done by the RCMP, could the School District work with its community partners to revive the concept of teacherages to accommodate this need. I am sure the community will work with you if specific issues can be identified.

There are people of all ages who are committing themselves to find solutions with the School District to the challenges facing the Midway Elementary School.

Community

As mentioned in the question period, this facility is in a prime location in Midway. It represents the community's interest in the growth and well-being of the upcoming generation. The original schoolhouse, situated adjacent to the First Nations Learning Circle, represents Midway's long-time commitment to its children. The community has a skating arena, tennis court, and a school playground configuration that were completed through community initiatives.

The Midway Elementary School is a very significant part of the development of our children. Please, keep it open as a component of Midway's on-going commitment to our young people.

Martin and Elaine Fromme

17 February 2022

Hello,

I am a resident of Midway, BC. I moved here in 2020 with my husband and two children. My husband is an RCMP member in the community. When deciding on a location for our transfer in 2019 we fell in love with Midway and what it had to offer our young family. One of the top deciding factors was an elementary school in the community. Along with an elementary school, we were looking for a community that offered strong start in the community. These were our two “must haves” when looking at communities to move to. Had Midway not had an elementary school we would not have considered moving here as a young family.

As an RCMP spouse I know a lot of RCMP families also consider an elementary school an important factor when looking at communities to move to. I rave about this community to other RCMP members/spouses and the big draw for young families is an elementary school and strong start program.

Losing the elementary school could result in losing the playground at the property. That playground is the main playground used by children in the community. It offers significantly more than the playground by the village office and is always the playground of choice for my kids. As a member of the community in Midway, I am very concerned at what would happen with the building/property. Other schools that have closed in the area have left an eye sore in the community. Midway Elementary is in the centre of our beautiful village, to have an abandoned, run-down building and an overgrown property would be an eye sore for our community.

The strong start program and playground both played a pivotal role in meeting other young families with kids of similar age. With COVID, all community events were cancelled. Strong start is where we were able to meet other families, connect and make friendships. The playground at the school played a huge part in socialization for my kids. They were able to meet other kids in the community and build friendships of their own. When COVID restrictions prevented us from having people in our homes, the playground was a “COVID friendly” spot to meet, socialize and engage with other kids/families.

If the community was to lose the elementary school, I believe a lot of families would be hesitant to move to the community. For this reason, it is important we have these programs/schools in our community to aid in making connections and drawing young families to the community.

We are so lucky to live in such a beautiful place, it would be a shame to lose the school and lose out on the potential of young families moving to the community.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Hansen

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to provide my input on the proposed Midway Elementary School closure. I have always heard from parents and community members how valuable and special Midway Elementary School is. Whenever I work with itinerants from around the area, they are always so impressed by the school's culture, atmosphere, and the unique benefits that a small school can provide to students. Our staff works closely with all the students in the school as we are a very fluid unit. I oppose the school closure.

We are in a unique position to be able to provide whatever support is necessary at the time it is needed. As head teacher, I understand my role is to provide support when the principal is not in the building and in the past 4 years I have been at MES I have been able to fulfill this role as needed. Often when we need the principal, he/she is actually teaching and this has been the biggest barrier to access. I also know that the time allotted to principal duties has been reallocated to other district duties so it seems this role is not valued as it should be.

I also know that the school is old, and it seems like there are constant repairs. Staff certainly loses morale when projects are not finished or as in recent years, not started because we seem to be in a holding pattern. Rumours have been swirling for years around the school's potential closure. Because of this there have been many projects put on hold or given priority to GES. Last year, GES got a mural painted and we did not because we were not sure if MES was going to be open. We also had a gazebo planned for MES but it was put on hold because we weren't sure if it would be better placed at GES. Even now, GES is being casually prepped for our arrival. I hope it is all for not.

Despite the challenges we face at MES, we are providing our students and families with an educational experience that is second to none. We should be investing in an institution that supports the community and provides unique opportunities. Families have moved into Midway with the impression that a school would be there for their children and indeed a school is a draw for young families that Midway desperately needs. Our families deserve to have an elementary school in their community, and we know they appreciate it because they walk over to volunteer. Many schools in the west boundary have closed and this has changed the communities forever.

We are deeply rooted to our community. We have been gardening yearly at the community garden, skating at the community rink, interacting with the seniors at Parkview Manor, visiting the fire hall and police station and building relationships with community members who enjoy our students. We have created a wonderful relationship with teachers and students at Boundary Central Secondary School and collaborate to provide our students with French learning, biology, foods, and literacy opportunities. This relationship is so important for the high school students who love coming to MES to work with the

primary students or who have provided hot lunches to our students as part of their food studies curriculum. And of course, the students at MES adore the big kids who we watch coming down the street through the big windows in our classroom. I have also had 2 individual students from the high school come to work in my class for work experience credits and I anticipate more in the future. It would be a shame to lose this. Our connection to place is a large part of our curriculum and includes the Kettle River, Raven Park, and the forest across the bridge. Midway is an amazing place to teach connections to nature and learn about community as we have been doing.

Yes, there are challenges that apply added pressure to our staff, like having a shared secretary who works at GES, but we rarely complain. We are all great secretaries at MES! We are extremely flexible and in turn we can model this for our kids. We take it in stride and appreciate the magic that happens. We love our students and have a connection that makes it easy to go above and beyond. Our roles and responsibilities encompass anything that will make the day successful for our students and staff. Please keep Midway Elementary School open.

(Denise Herdman)

17 February 2022

ATTN: BOARD MEMBERS SCHOOL DISTRICT #51

RE: PROPOSED MES CLOSURE

In response to your request for additional submissions, please add our individual response to that submitted previously by our community group. As this group submission was attached to a petition with 600 plus signatures, we would certainly expect it to be given the attention it deserves from Board members.

John and I are solidly in opposition to the closure of Midway Elementary School. The information package supplied by the Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer contains many issues that seem somewhat misrepresentative of the current situation at MES and deserve further study. A few examples: the enrollment figures represent declining numbers over the entire district with statistics ending in 2004/2005. There is no information to suggest an effort has been made to determine current projected enrollment by examining the increased number of preschool aged children in our community. Nor does there appear to be any statistical data to support educational deficiencies/underachievement at MES. The presentation seemed to focus largely on problems related to lack of a full-time principal, travel time, and housing for teaching and support staff. Could not the potential \$232,000 annual loss in Ministry funding, cover the cost of additional administration in Midway? As well, the housing situation in Greenwood is similar, if not worse than that of Midway, so closure is not a solution in that regard either. These are just a few of the questions we would like to have addressed by the Board.

Community members have many other concerns; therefore, it would be pertinent for the Board to publicly disclose the structure of the February 24th meeting in order to ensure residents adequate opportunity for verbal questions and comments. For instance, do we have to make application to speak and is there a time limit for each individual? I assume this information will be available with adequate advance notice, allowing attendees sufficient time to prepare their responses to this vital community issue.

Respectfully,

Bev and John Hibberson

School District 51 Boundary
PO Box 640
Grand Forks, BC
VOH 1H0

February 16, 2022

Re: Possible Closure of Midway Elementary School

Dear Trustees,

My name is David Hoenderop, I am a resident and homeowner in the Village of Midway. I moved here when I was younger and finished my schooling. I have since called the boundary area my home. I attended large schools growing up in Surrey and can tell you that the learning environment in the smaller schools in the boundary is far more beneficial to student learning and well-being.

I do not currently have any children in school however I do have 2 nephews who attend school in SD 51 and 3 nephews and one niece who will all be attending MES in the next five years. All of these children live in Midway. We are also expecting our first child who would also attend school in Midway.

I believe that although Midway is a small community there is a lot to offer to elementary school aged children that is easily accessible without the use of a bus. I have often seen the children walking to the river front park or the river to learn about nature. They are also able to walk to the arena for skating days or visit the community garden to learn about where their food comes from and how to grow it.

I ask that the board keep Midway Elementary school open for the benefit of the student and the community.

Yours Truly,



David Hoenderop

School District 51 Boundary
PO Box 640
Grand Forks, BC
V0H 1H0

February 16, 2022

Re: Potential Closure of Midway Elementary School

Dear Trustees,

I am writing you to express my displeasure with the possible closure of Midway Elementary School. I would like to request the trustees either stop the progression of the closure process or delay the decision in order to give our community and the school district time to work together to come up with a solution to keep Midway Elementary school open.

I strongly believe that our schools are the backbone of our communities. They not only provide an education to the young children in our communities, they also provide a safe environment to learn healthy socialization and opportunities for indoor and outdoor activity. Even more so our small rural schools such as MES & GES provide much more personalized learning for students as there are fewer distractions for students, teachers, EAs and other support staff. This allows students who may be struggling to be identified and assisted sooner.

I feel that if you ask many of the older generations, not only from the boundary, you would find that when they attended school even in larger cities, those schools were smaller and focused more on students than some of the larger schools of today. These same people would likely feel that their children who attended large schools did not receive the same education and support as they did in the smaller schools. It is my belief that combining schools to have more students in one building will not only allow students who are struggling to fall through the cracks but also does not allow the teachers to identify those students who could excel but are not being challenged. This does not provide the best education possible for all students.

I do not personally have a child who attends a school in SD51 yet. I am expecting my first child later this year and things such as schooling and strong start are very rapidly becoming much more relevant to my own personal situation. If Midway Elementary school is closed I will be forced to make my own decision as to whether I send my child to WBES or GES once she reaches the age where she needs to attend school. This will be a decision to be made by all parents who have a child that live in Midway. I will also be forced to take my child to another community to attend the strong start program.

If MES is closed it may be decided by many parents that they can drive their child to WBES just as easily as sending them to GES. If this creates a decline in students at GES will School District 51 then consider closing GES and bussing those students to a different school as well?

Although I do not have my own child, I do have a sister who has 2 children who attend different schools in SD51. I been very active in both these children's lives from the time they were born to present. I have spent many hours discussing with their parents and them about school and what they are learning and the challenges they face. Each child will face challenges throughout their time in school. From what I have witnessed the child who attends MES got support much faster than the child who attends the

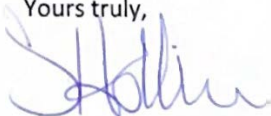
bigger school. So while the time support staff may be in the school maybe more in a bigger school it does not mean that all students will have more access to support. I also have 3 nephews and a niece who live in Midway and will be attending MES within the next 5 years.

I am also concerned that as a resident of Midway we will see the building that houses Midway Elementary School fall into a state of disrepair like many other schools in the area that have been closed. Not only will this be an eye-sore in our beautiful community but it will also be a higher liability risk to the School District.

I do not feel that the presentation made by the superintendent and secretary treasurer provided adequate and relevant information required for the trustees to make an informed decision.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Yours truly,



Tasha Hollingsworth

Date: February 9, 2022

To: Chairman and Trustees of School District #51

We would like to express our opposition to the proposed closure of the Midway Elementary School.

We feel it is a step backward for our Village – and don't understand your reasoning. Economically our village has recently had - the opening of the Vaagen Sawmill and then the development of the Marijuana farms which has increased our population and desire for families to live in our area. For example – it is hard to find a residence for sale or rent in our area. If the school currently has lower classroom enrolment it could be due to the covid situation with parents choosing to home school their children but that will change once it is under control.

Another concern of ours is that if you did close our school and the class numbers increase considerably would the Greenwood school be able to accommodate the students. Then you would have the problem of increasing classrooms which could lead to portable classrooms.

Please take our concerns into consideration.

Respectfully,

Colleen and Stan Jensen



Barbara
Kowalik

C r e a t o l o g i s t & T r a i n i n g D e v e l o p m e n t



To the School District 51 Board of Trustees:

My name is Barb Kowalik. My career over the last 30 years has been in adult education and training. I have owned a home in Midway for over 30 years. I am part of the Committee to keep Midway Elementary School open.

The SD51 school board is charged with managing the district's schools as best possible, using the best information available, considering the communities the students live in, and working under the fiscal constraints that exist. We have elected you and we should be able to trust you to do just this. If the board deems it necessary to close Midway Elementary School — and this is not a decision I believe that you would take lightly — you need to take a measured and careful approach that explains the reasoning behind this drastic choice. I do not believe the Administration has considered all possibilities. I have five main concerns regarding the school closures:

- The condensed timeline in which these decisions are being made,
- Covid closures and life upheavals (which are still on going),
- Regional population and economic changes,
- Not all cost-saving measures have been explored, and
- Closing schools will “erode community support and trust” in SD51.

With all the upheaval to students and parents from Covid, the diaspora of people from larger centres and the growth of several businesses in Boundary Country (since the last available census numbers) indications are that there could be a growth of school age children in our area. Prior to taking such a drastic measure to close MES, the School District should have at least prepared a 5 year plan for the building and lands, as well as how they would handle an increase in school age children. I believe a measured, researched and thoughtful approach, prior to finalizing any closure, would not only be to the School District's benefit, but to the greater community (I include all of School District 51 from Big White to Bridesville to Christina Lake) would go a long way.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barb Kowalik'.

Barb Kowalik

To the board,

as a Midway resident for 40 plus years. I have watch our school change many times over the years. In it's present configuration it is a primary school. One of the benefits of this is that it is so easy for a small group as this to actually be a part of the community. Just yesterday they walked over to the seniors manor and delivered Valentine's. They are an integral part of our communities identity they hike the trails visit the community garden the healing circle and are delighted by them and learn about being part of a community.

On a more serious note. I am one of the under signed on the group letter and I support it and the group that worked hard to draft it with input from former staff and community members. Safety concerns and quality of education seems to be an issue with senior district staff. None of which have been proven only perceived by senior staff. I have personally talked to long time staff current and past and they have never thought either were a concern. Please reconsider and at the very least postpone the process to a later date when everyone can feel comfortable being involved. Zoom does not make for quality community involvement I myself struggle with it and belong to several groups, boards and committees.

Now on a personal note. I find the timing of this whole process very disturbing. We are in the midst of a pandemic and people are out of touch and fearful of public gathering. We all know that this wave has been more contagious than ever and many people we know have contracted the virus recently . Some of the board members themselves have said they have never seen the school or talked to the staff. This alone has caused far less public involvement with the process that should be as accessible as possible. What's the hurry?

Yours truly
Heinz Kreuzer

February 16, 2022

To Whom It May Concern.

My name is Dan Macmaster and I am a manager at Vaagen Fibre Canada in Midway, BC. I am writing on behalf of our company in regard to our concern over the possible closure of the Midway Elementary School. We are the main employer in the area with over 90 local workers directly employed by Vaagen along with another 100+ contractors that depend on our business for employment.

In turn, we depend on the hard-working residents and families in the Midway area for our operation to be viable. Most of our employees are mothers and fathers of young families that call Midway their home. Without these workers, our company could not thrive.

When hearing about the possible decision to close our local elementary school, it raised a lot of concern for our company. How can we attract new families to our village without a local school for their kids to attend? How can we retain the current families that have students at the school and many young parents who are looking forward to many years as residents of Midway? Closing the elementary school will have massive implications to our business.

I was a schoolteacher for 15 years before becoming involved in forestry and sawmilling. I fully recognize the importance of a local elementary school in a rural town to bring a community together and establish a strong economic and stable base where families can be built. We are partnered with the West Boundary Community Forest and run a local Outdoor Education centre for young kids to learn about forestry and ecology. We rely on small, rural schools to join us in the forest and be part of our local environment. Less families in Midway means less students, and in turn, means less opportunities for us to run our Outdoor Education Centre.

The Village of Midway is a wonderful community that has recovered from the economic fallout of 15 years ago when the previous sawmill closed. Since then, we have worked together to make sure our company and Village support each other as we grow and focus on stability.

This closure would be devastating to all of us. Please keep our elementary school open.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Macmaster", is written in a cursive style.

Dan Macmaster

Fibre Manager – Vaagen Fibre Canada

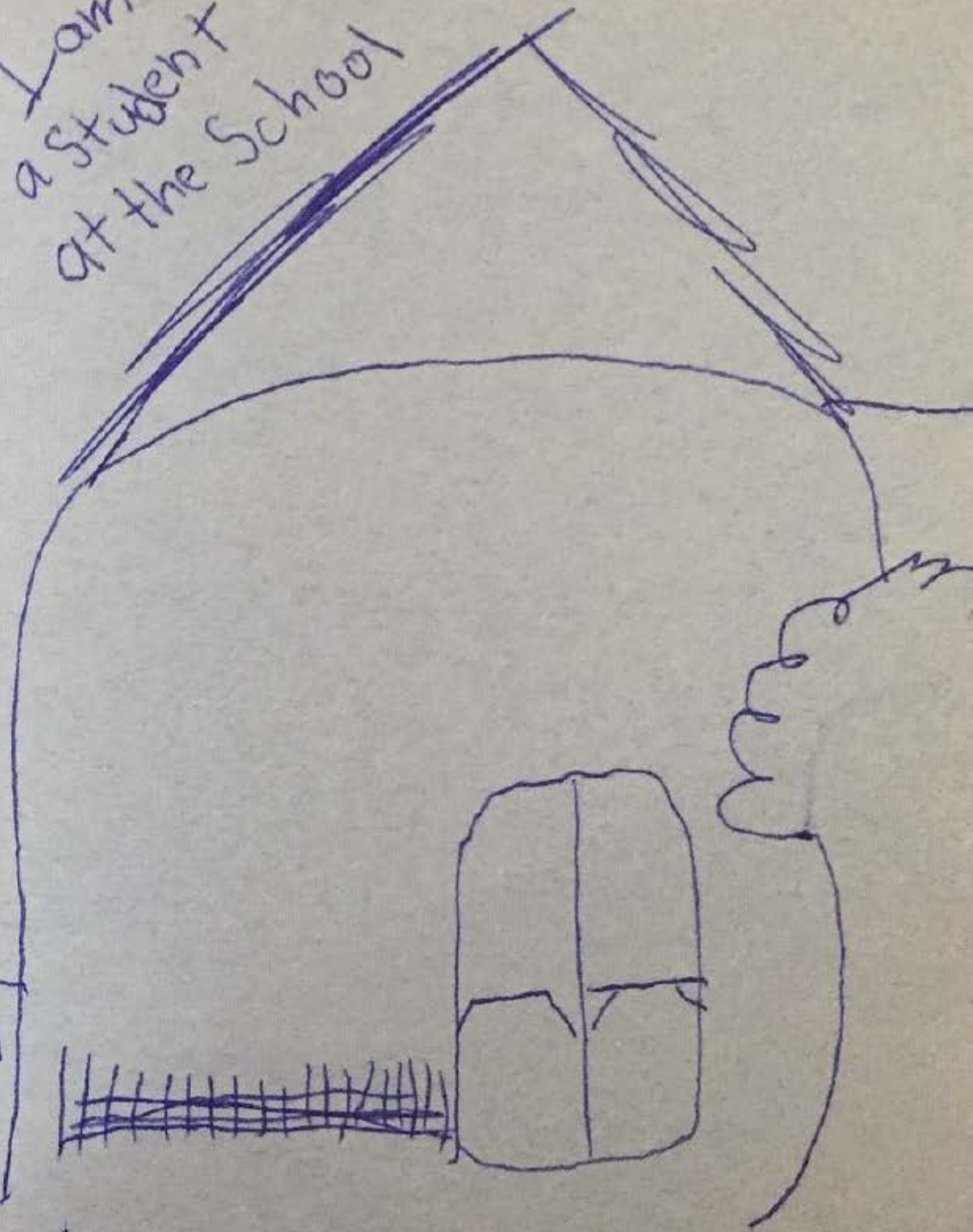
x⁰.

From: Atin Drummmond

If you close the School
Please do not Smash it, no
Kidz are going to go to the
Daycare. If there is no School
no people will move to midway.

What will hapen to my Play
Ground? Kidz like it
here. And parents who were
Kidz were in the School
want the School Open.

I am
a student
at the School



From: Atlin.

February 17, 2022

The Board of Education of School District 51
Box 640, Grand Forks, BC, V0H 1M0

Re: Proposed closure of Midway Elementary

Dear Board Members:

My husband, 2 school age children (K/3) and baby are 'new' residents of the Village of Midway. We moved from a crazy busy metropolis and chose this quiet location to take a very necessary break from the rat race. Our housing options included a small, old house here in the Village, or a large, new house on a beautiful acreage. **We chose the Village because we recognize the importance of spending significant time with our children and embedding ourselves in a community. One of the best ways to do this is to accompany our children on their journey to and from the centrally located Midway Elementary School every day via bike, scooter, roller blade, on foot, or in a vehicle.**

While most organized social events and occasions to meet locals have been impeded by COVID, spending time on the streets of Midway with our children in tow has given us endless opportunities to connect with its people. Kids are really great at 'breaking the ice!' We talk to Bill about his cows, walk with Mary, discuss bird sightings with Margaret, pet Deborah's puppies, laugh about home-ec classes with Alexa, chat about the Fall Fair with Larry, Martin pushes the girls on his snow shovel, Bev tells us about Hib's latest play, Heinz says hello after dropping off Abby, Nathan shows off his tractor(s)... Over the last few months we've become a part of this community. **These beautiful connections have been made possible because we have young children who attend a school here, and we choose to commute with them.** As a parent and community member, I've done my best to invest in and thus strengthen the Community at all levels, in many ways. We should ALL carry this responsibility. Midway Elementary School, along with its students, should be considered an integral part of the Community. Over the years of Covid, perhaps some people have forgotten this. A school and its community should be so interwoven that one cannot thrive without the other, **and maybe they are.**

It is with interest and concern that I have followed the recent 'proposed closure of Midway Elementary School' process and contemplated having my children attend Greenwood School. Thank you for taking the time to compile and present information about the schools and staff. **I am concerned that the limited timeline the Board has provided to make this hugely impactful decision is not adequate to provide a good exploration of all options and impacts.** I also observed that the presentation did not explore any 'pros' to keeping Midway school open.

The peripheral location of the school in Greenwood, and it's exposure to an interprovincial highway makes it more difficult and less safe for parents in the City of Greenwood to commute (via bike/foot/scooter, etc) to school with their little ones. With incidents of criminal activity in Greenwood being much higher than Midway, we do not feel as comfortable considering settling and raising our wee ones there.

My children have had an excellent experience thus far at Midway Elementary School. They previously attended a K-3 school with 325 students. During covid, they experienced being split into 'covid cohorts' designated to one part of the school grounds (like, the tarmac) for a week at a time during recess/lunch to prevent intermingling. It certainly had a negative impact on their mental health. **Attending a small school with limited student numbers where children can all run and play together on a real playground and grassy field, unfettered, has been an incredible relief and wonderful change!!!!!!** As covid continues, why would we put all our students together in one school, with the potential of having to subject them to these terribly stressful segregations and the potential of increased exposure to disease? We are pleased to hear our children report all the time they've spent during school hours exploring all the things within walking distance of their class. They've built forts across the river, caught crayfish in the river, toured the community garden, sung songs for the Seniors at Parkview, listened to stories in Raven Park, and expended abundant energy on the playground at the Village park. We feel absolutely safe having them walk the streets of Midway because traffic is minimal and slow moving. The location of Greenwood Elementary School, on the periphery of town and beside a main highway, does not offer these opportunities and the same level of safety.

I come from a career in Law Enforcement. Any file we investigate has the potential to be brought into court; thus, we carefully gather evidence that can be presented to the courts which will prove the elements of each charge beyond a reasonable doubt. As I listened to the presentation from the School Board, and as I reviewed the notes and presentation, I observed that parts of it were weak, contradictory, or lacking evidence and information on many levels – hardly ‘making the case’ to close a school. The Board has asked parents to weigh in, to provide ideas for keeping Midway Elementary School open. I would like to be part of the solution, but how can I ‘propose options’ when information provided seems to be best guesses? As well, when I’ve posed questions regarding the students, teachers, building, and land, no one really seems to know the answers. I have many questions, and need for clarification, some which I’ve outlined below. I hope the Board provides more, evidence based information to us, with increased transparency.

Students:

The presentation states 9 students are from Midway (I assume you mean within the Village limits) and ‘22 students are from Greenwood’. How many of those 22 actually live within the City of Greenwood limits? For accuracy, should the statement actually be ‘9 students are from Midway, ## students are from Greenwood, and ## students are from the surrounding area’?

Staffing/Student Learning:

The presentation states **‘teachers are choosing assignments that don’t require travel.’** Has anyone asked the dedicated staff we do have, including Angela, **who lives in Midway**, Melissa, **who lives in Midway**, Vanessa, **who lives in Midway**, Doreen, **who lives in Beaverdell**, and Denise, **who lives closer to Midway than Greenwood**, how they feel about now having to commute full time? Who will provide child care for their children before and after school? Did the teachers who didn’t fill contracts actually provide a definite reason, in writing, or are we just guessing?

Have there been documented safety issues involving students currently attending Midway? Have there been documented safety issues involving students currently attending Greenwood?

Principal

Angela has not yet completed one school year as principle, but from a parent’s perspective she seems to be invested, dedicated, and caring. Why hasn’t the board given her a full year to settle in, identify issues, and present solutions? Are intramurals cancelled because a principle isn’t available to coach... or because there’s a covid issue?

The presentation states that Midway Elementary ‘should have two [supervisors] and the presenter stated they have been unable to fill the empty position and this unfairly shifts responsibility and time constraints onto teachers and the principle and may even cause safety issues. I excitedly questioned this as I’d love another opportunity to spend more time with my children and invested in the school, but I learned that **no empty position is advertised and actually doesn’t seem to exist**. Is the Board using ‘lack of employees’ as an argument for closing the school while not actively trying to fill empty positions?

Configuration and Staffing

The presentation states ‘no staffing changes,’ yet one school only requires one janitor, so what will happen to Midway’s janitor? The loss of a steady, 25 hour/week job to a small Village like Midway is impactful.

Will Doreen retire in June? What will happen to her position?

Facility

What are the issues with the roof? Do they require some repairs or an entire remodel? Where is the asbestos located? Where did the figure of \$400,000 come from? Were there 3 estimates provided?

This country has been experiencing supply and demand issues, recently exacerbated by covid. This has inhibited building construction where supplies and work force are unavailable. This has been clearly demonstrated by the many, many, many months it has taken to complete updates to the skating rink. How then can the Board state and believe that supplies can be purchase and repairs to Greenwood school can be completed within 2 months over summer?

Uses of Midway Elementary Facility and Grounds

Who decides what will happen to the prime realestate that the school is located on if the school does close, the Board, or the Ministry? Who does the land belong to? I have posed this question several times and been assured, adamantly, that ‘it’s the Ministry, not the Board, and ‘it’s the Board, not the Ministry.’

After a quick drive by of the old Greenwood Elementary School, the old Bridesville School, and the old Kettle Valley School, I observe they are all a blight to their communities. Will the board promise to

maintain the school playground long into the future if the school is closed? If it is removed, it constitutes a 50% loss in Village playgrounds, in a community that already offers little (right now), beyond a school, to small children.

Besides a wonderful school and the social network it provides, in the past 8 months that we have resided in Midway, **there have been no organized activities or recreational opportunities for small children.** If the school is closed, there is nothing. This stands in vast contrast to the town we moved from where children's activities, and schools, were various, abundant, and highly valued. In fact, upon closure of Midway school, the one program that is available to parents of infants/toddlers, Strongstart, will no longer operate here because it must be tied in with a school. This appalling void should resonate with our Village and the Board.

The more questions I've asked of residents of Midway and people invested in the school as staff or parents, the more I've begun to realize that perhaps the problems aren't with or in Midway school. I suggest that closing Midway Elementary School to solve the issues of Greenwood/Greenwood Elementary School is absolutely not the answer, and may actually result in more issues.

I understand that one could argue the aforementioned assets are lost to Greenwood parents of Kindergarten to Grade 3 students while these children attend Midway; however, with an operational elementary school in each community I argue that these opportunities are available, as they should be, to parents of students in each community, in their time and fairly shared between the two communities.

Our family is *opposed to the closure of Midway Elementary School based on the 'facts' provided in the presentation.* If there is more information supporting a closure that has not been shared with the public, it should be shared so that we can all collaborate to create the best solution with good information. Closing a school will have many effects, likely negative and likely not all predictable, on the Village of Midway and its residents and families that will ripple into the future. I do not wish for my legacy in this community to be 'stood idly by and watched a school close'; instead, I want it to be 'recognized the interwoven values of a strong school and community, and via investment at many levels, supported the growth of both.' I'm here to help build a strong future for our community and our school.

Sincerely,

Chloe Marshall

Board Members of SD 51 and their employees: Superintendant and Secretary Treasurer:

We, Fred and Jane Marshall, also want to weigh in on the discussion regarding possible closure of Midway Elementary School (MES).

We agree with the points brought up in the many letters, for retaining MES, which have thus far been submitted from the Midway area and are signatories to the group letter.

It is a good thing to have the younger students separated from the grades 4 to 7. The young ones encounter more bullying when with the older ones.

MES is well situated in the center of town rather than on Highway 3.

Our two children attended MES and the highschool and we were involved in PAC and DPAC. Our grandchildren are currently in MES and do enjoy the school.

Schools are important to bring young families to communities.

Rooves can be repaired a section at a time and will require repair whether or not the building is occupied by kindergarden to grade 3.

sincerely, Jane and Fred Marshall

I have worked at Midway School for four years now and have found the support from staff exceeds that from other schools I have worked at. Yes, there are a few shortcomings with working at a small school, such as not having a colour photocopier, a full-time secretary, and a full-time principal. But as a team we have come together knowing that all these things are only a phone call away and have adapted to only having these things part-time.

We have become resilient and very flexible. The children that are lucky enough to come to our school also feel that flexibility and become part of the team that work together to make every day amazing.

The closure of this school will be such a sad occurrence for the staff, children, and the town of Midway

Thank you for listening

Doreen McGrath

February 15, 2022

Attention: Board of Trustees of School District 51,

I am writing this letter to express my concerns with the potential Midway Elementary School closure. I attended the zoom meeting on January 24th. I was very impressed with your presentation and grateful to have so much information. I understand from the meeting the expressed intent of the closure discussions, is for the wellbeing of the students, and that this review is not financially driven.

I myself rode the school bus my entire school career and it was mostly the highlight of my day, I don't feel that any of us felt it was too long of a day, or that it was an inconvenience. School bus rides are part of our rural lifestyle.

One of the challenges mentioned that is a significant driving force for this discussion were, staffing levels, which I believe are province wide issues, we are not unique. With the exception of custodians and supervisors will we require the same number of staff if Midway and Greenwood are amalgamated? Same amount of student and grades, so I am wondering where this is going to help the issue. We did discuss the Child Youth Care workers not having to visit each school, and that a child in crisis does not pick a set day to require assistance, my issue with this is that we are still going to share the CYC with West Boundary and Beavertown, my concern is that the CYC will now have a floater day rather than two dedicated days in Greenwood if the school closed, which takes away from the Midway and Greenwood students. Also mentioned was that the Principal is covering teaching time, when a TOC is unavailable due to shortage of TOC, amalgamating the schools does not bring more TOCs there is still a shortage. I have never heard that there is an issue finding supervisors or TOCs, perhaps better advertising is necessary. I am sure there are some new community members in both Midway and Greenwood who would be willing to step in. The hours for a supervisor are not enticing, are there other duties that could be combined in order to provide more hours for applicants?

As a community member, and business owner, discussion around what would come of the Midway Elementary School building were of most interest to myself. Anna Lautard advised that if the Midway school was to close, it would be minimum three years before anything could be done with the closed school, the board would look at options, from sale of the building to leasing to a third party. It is paramount that the community be involved with the disposal process if the Midway School closes. The Midway Elementary School is the centre of our community, many families use the playground, and sport fields during non school hours. Previous school closures, Bridesville, Kettle Valley, Westbridge, and Greenwood, all but one is a disgrace to our communities, they are not kept up, the property and buildings are in disrepair. The esthetics of an attractive, well kept school can be a source of student and neighborhood pride, a community asset. Please do not overlook this issue.

I may be able to understand if the district was able to show a significant financial loss in keeping the school open, however it was stated very clearly that this was not financially driven. In fact, it is noted that the district would be at a loss of over \$232,000 per year, this does not factor in any renovation costs to put the Greenwood Elementary School back to its original state for smaller students, and the years of upkeep for an empty building in Midway.

During the zoom meeting there is a slide that shows possible uses for MES, in there is mention of Ministry of Education will soon have childcare portfolio – if this happens, would it not make sense to have childcare in each community, since there are empty classrooms in each school? What an amazing opportunity for all communities. With childcare in each school, I believe that would interest more families with young children to move into each community, raising the student count. What a success that would

be for our Board. Closing the Midway Elementary School before our government rolls this program out, I believe would be short sighted and detrimental to our community.

Enrollment projections for the area were not available at the time of the meeting, I am hoping that they are available soon, to assist the board in making an informed decision.

Miranda mentioned that the district will absolutely place a crossing guard at the highway if needed, who determines the need? If finding staff to cover supervision is difficult, wont this be the same issue finding a crossing guard?

I am not in favor of closing Midway Elementary School, I understand that having two schools under one principal and secretary is an inconvenience. There are many schools that run successfully this way, perhaps taking a look at other models who are in the same situation, could solve the issues.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns, and understand that there are many moving parts to running the district successfully, most of which the general public is unaware. An primary elementary school of this size allows the young students to have uninterrupted education, taking charge of their education. My hope for this decision is that each of you take into consideration of what closing the school means to our community, it is not just an elementary school, it is a meeting place for families and young children, it is an asset to our community, one of which draws young families to move into our community. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Leanne McLaren

School District 51 Boundary
PO Box 640
Grand Forks, BC
V0H 1H0

February 17, 2020

Dear Trustees,

My Family has been in the boundary area since the 1870's creating a long and historic past in the area. My Grandmother and Great Aunts were all teachers in local schools. My Grandfather and my father were trustees and very active in the development of the schools in our area.

As a young child I remember my Dad driving to Penticton for School meetings, as many districts shared one superintendent. Along with Chairman Terry Smith, superintendent Lautard's family member, trustees, Jim Forshaw, F. Arnusch and T Drinkwater, and my Father worked hard to solve the issue of bussing kids from this area to Grand Forks and Oliver every day to attend high school. At that time the roads were harder to pass and the busses either had to travel through the USA to Grand Forks or traverse the Anarchist Mountain pass to Oliver. These visionary men and women saw the need for a high school to accommodate the areas secondary students and set about the seemingly impossible task of providing it. Their hard work resulted in a complete School District, SD13 with the construction of BCSS in 1969.

Midway has gone through some hard times, but the most devastating was the closure of Pope and Talbot. Many families were forced to pack up and move to find work, fast tracking our community to becoming a ghost town. Our Village was left with very few children. Looking out the windows of our businesses left us feeling desolate and anxious that we were losing our community. Seeing a child walk by would raise spirits of not only our staff but also customers who would remark that it was so nice to see children.

With the hard work of a committee, that included Reid Hedlund, Rick Hanson, Stephen Hill, The Village of Midway, and Grace Macgregor, who was on the board of the Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust, we were able to raise 4 million dollars. This allowed us to secure a deal with Vaagen Fibre Canada which created 80 jobs. Residually 300 new jobs were created in the area. These jobs were created in the forestry and logging, the mechanical, the fuel suppliers, and the retail sectors. This deal with Vaagen Fibre Canada allowed us to turn the loss of Pope and Talbot around, and after over ten years are just beginning to realize the return to a thriving community.

This is a good example of how a group can work together to accomplish success.

We, in Midway, find ourselves at a crossroad again.

Two major issues are looming that could have far reaching implications for our Village. Doctor Jesse Thomson, is leaving, moving to Trail, and at this time, it doesn't appear that we have a replacement. Our community is trying to muddle through this untenable situation to find a solution.

Now, we are facing the closure of a well-loved part of our community as well. The loss of our beloved Elementary School would have a devastating consequence to our whole community.

As the manager of Family Foods and Ace Building Centre in Midway, in the last 10 years I've seen a regrowth in Midway as Vaagen Fibre Canada settles. The Stats Canada census shows a population increase for the west end that is over 800 new people. In Midway there are four housing starts this year alone, and a 30-unit Strata housing project that a local developer will be starting this year. As an

overflow of the Okanagan and the lower mainland, Midway is now seeing many new families relocate to our community. Many people have learned that they can work from home and are able to bring their families to smaller rural areas that offer a less hectic lifestyle.

How would the school closure affect our community and our business?

First, let's consider previous closures of schools in the west end. Bridesville was once a bustling small community that included a post office, a General Store, and an elementary school. When the school closed, the businesses closed and all that is left is a shell of a community with a few residences and a truly sad future. Where the elementary school once stood is an eyesore of a property that has become a source of consternation for many of the residents. The closure of the Kettle Valley School has left another poorly maintained and unattractive site in the West Boundary. The Westbridge school that closed, helped to demoralize the once thriving little community. Along with the school closure the Post Office and General store closed. The Westbridge Elementary School site sat vacant for years before someone bought it. Recently a feed store and a slaughterhouse have opened.

The idea of one school, that being West Boundary, taking in all of the west end shows how communities change by restructuring. It shows how truly devastating a closure can be to a small community. When the K-3 school in Beaverdell was in danger of being closed, the residents of the West End rallied to help save it. At the heart of the argument to keep Beaverdell open, was the idea that schools are the heart of a community. The elementary school in Beaverdell, had eight students, at that time and the district had a mandate that there must be no fewer than ten. The parents and stakeholders from the community made the argument, successfully, that numbers of students, or lack thereof, do not represent what that school means to the community. Beaverdell's struggle emphasizes that the importance of a small school, in any community is paramount in regard to the identity and prosperity of the area.

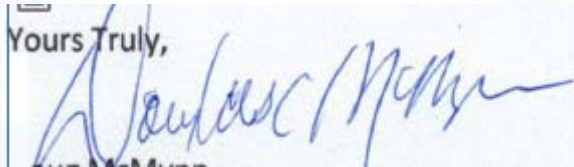
On a personal level, the rush to decide upon the closure of Midway Elementary School, makes no sense to me.

In these times of stress, tension, uncertainty and turmoil seem to be an rapidly increasingly part of life. Covid, the Freedom Convoy and the incidents such as the one in Oliver, when a protest group stormed a School bus and made racial accusations, have only served to put our communities on edge and seemingly waiting for the next disaster. The kids in MES know they are safe in their school. The young students know that our community is always there for them. The children know that the policemen and firemen are always close and will do anything for them. The school isn't losing money, as a matter of fact 34 student at \$7885 per student is \$268,090, then add in the rural funding of \$232,000, for a total of \$500,290. It runs a surplus, which if applied to just that school would be a start to solving problems. Closing MES would result in the loss of \$232,000 in rural funding, from the Provincial Government, and also create a deficit operation budget on the building.

So, I ask of you two things, look at what our community has done in the past when a problem has presented itself. We rally and join together to support each other to try to not only find a solution, but also to see that solution to fruition. Secondly, let's slow the closure process down, to hopefully ease the tensions that the kids and their families are experiencing in this already stressful time.

Our committee is eager to discuss and to try to help find a resolution that benefits all stakeholders in this issue, please work with us, don't ignore this opportunity.

Yours Truly,



School District 51 Boundary
PO Box 640
Grand Forks, BC
V0H 1H0

Re: Midway Elementary School closure

February 16, 2022

Dear Trustees,

I would like to introduce myself, my name is Jackie McMynn. I am a mother to two daughters, a grandmother to two grandsons and soon to be a granddaughter who have all attended or will attend school in School District 51. I finished high school in BCSS after my family moved to the area. I have been a resident of the village of Midway for 25 years. I have been involved in many family-based community events over my time here and have seen how much our community has changed in respect to the number of young families and children.

My own daughters grew up and attended school here. After they finished school they both moved out of the area to obtain further education and build their careers. They have both decided to return to Midway and raise their own children here.

I do not believe that closing Midway Elementary and combining the students together at Greenwood Elementary School would be beneficial for all students for the following reasons.

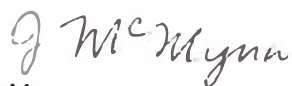
- I have seen firsthand how the K-3 environment can be beneficial to students who may struggle in a school with older children. I have watched my own grandson be bullied and ridiculed because of a physical ailment by the older students when attending a K-7 school. It caused him severe grief and anxiety to the point where he did not feel safe attending school. He has since started attending MES and is now much happier and excited to go to school. He is thriving in the environment offered at MES.
- Midway Elementary School is located in the heart of our community and well away from any major highways that may pose a threat to these young children if they happen to go outside the fence. Often times children with special needs feel the need to escape the environment which has caused them stress, if this was to happen at GES the child would immediately be on a major highway where vehicles do not obey the school zone speed limit.
- The amenities in Midway allow the school to easily partake in unique learning experiences that they may not be able to elsewhere. The proximity of the school to the amenities available allows teachers to take their students to experience and learn at these locations with just a short walk, requires very little planning and plans can be easily changed based on inclement weather.

It is one of my core beliefs that young families and children are the most important part of our small rural communities. Midway has come a long way with the number of young families and children who reside here and it appears this trend will continue.

The Village of Midway and the community members have long proven that they value the children who attend Midway Elementary by the inclusion of these children in many different community-based programs and facilities. This will continue this should the school remain open.

There is so much more I could say, I will be attending the meeting and will be happy to discuss this and many more items in more detail. I would like to thank the trustees for taking the time to read the submissions and look forward to seeing you all at the meeting. I would request that the community be heard and the process to close our school be stopped.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J McMynn". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jackie McMynn

I feel that both schools are underutilized. Empty rooms that seem to be storing extra stuff. Schools are gotten together occasionally for events, together they can be involved all the time.

On the flip side if that it would be a waste to not have a plan for using MES. It would be good if it could be turned into alternative schooling such as Fred Walker in GF.

I realize some changes would need to occur at GES but I don't think it would need to be that large of scale. Some repairs would need to be taken care of and some different fixtures would be beneficial ie., large roll toilet paper dispensers.

Of course staffing would need to be adjusted as well. I think changes in all departments would just need to be written down. Of course lots of number crunching like I know is taking place already. Don't know all the ins and outside but that's my thoughts.

(Faye Nelson-Terashita)

School District 51 staff and Trustees,

I am writing this letter to the SD51 trustees and Staff, to voice my concerns for the possible closure of Midway Elementary School.

I was born and raised in the Boundary. I graduated from Boundary Central Secondary in 2008. I moved to Kelowna to attend Okanagan College where I completed the Certified Dental Assisting Program. There I met my husband and after completing the program we moved back to Midway where I took a job at the local Dentist office.

My Husband worked away from home which eventually led to our decision to move to Alberta to be closer to his work as we were expecting our first son. Not long after arriving in Alberta we realized we would like to raise our children in the beautiful Boundary. My husband had also grown up close by in Grand Forks so we moved back to Midway where we purchased our first home and started our family.

When we were considering moving back to Midway we looked at all of the services that would make us want to raise our family here. Besides family and friends, the main thing that drew us home was all of the services Midway has to offer. Services such as the elementary school, high school, Strong Start, The Roots of Empathy Program, Mother Goose Reading Program, Little Explorers, the library and summer reading programs, kids soccer, baseball and hockey teams, the local arena, beautiful parks and trails, the doctors office, pharmacy, grocery store, hardware store, Dentist office, Parkview Manor, local restaurants, many community events, a new saw mill (Vaggen Fibre Canada), a fire station, ambulance service, and a police station.

Growing up in Midway I knew that this was an extremely safe community and an excellent place to grow up and raise children.

I have two sons which are in schools within SD51. My oldest son Hudson is in Grade 4 and attends West Boundary Elementary School in Rock Creek. He started his schooling in MES and moved to West Boundary in Grade 1. My youngest son Karston is in grade 1 and attends Midway Elementary school. He started his Kindergarten year in Midway but in Grade 1 switched to MES.

Both of my sons and myself have attended all the extra programs that were offered inside of MES from birth until entering Kindergarten. Those programs include, Strong Start, Roots of Empathy and Little Explorers, and were great for helping the kids prepare for their journey into kindergarten. The Strong Start program allowed the little ones to go into the kindergarten room to visit the school aged children and explore their future classroom, which made the transition from home to school much easier.

Karston and I were lucky enough to be asked to be part of an amazing program within MES so he was the Roots of Empathy Baby for the K/1 class in Midway Elementary in 2015/2016.

Having Children in two different schools in the district run by two different groups of people has given me an interesting perspective. I have firsthand experience having children in a k-7 school and a k-3 school. As with any siblings, my children are very different, but I have noticed some of the same struggles with both boys. I have watched both of my children try to be part of the older group of kids to avoid being called a “baby” playing with children their own age. I have noticed that when the kids are in the k-3 school it allows the little kids to let their imaginations run wild and they play in an age-appropriate manor, while still learning and discovering.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic the Students from BCSS would walk over and mentor the kids at MES. I can remember Hudson coming home so excited to tell me about his big buddy helping him with his French work. I know that there have been many wonderful opportunities for the little ones of MES to be mentored by the Students of BCSS.

There are also many occasions where MES students travel to GES for special days to spend with the 4-7 students. A few of these occasions include, Halloween, Harvest lunch, Christmas craft days, literacy day, pajama days, winter fun days, recognition assembly's and many more. This allows the children many opportunities to learn from and with their older peers but to go back to MES to learn and play without the fear of what their older peers may think or say.

I personally am a board member of the West Boundary Elementary School PAC and a member of the Midway Elementary PAC. I have volunteered at many events within MES and GES and weekly volunteer for the breakfast program at MES. The atmosphere of MES is very welcoming and inviting and the children all seem eager and ready to learn. As a parent, I have not noticed a gap in the learning differences between MES and West Boundary Elementary. Both of my sons have also used the extra services within both schools and we have had an equally good experience with both. My son in MES received these services more quickly than my son at West Boundary.

One of the reasons we are so fortunate to have this school, and the children are so lucky to be in MES is because the school is located right in the heart of town. We have so many extra learning opportunities within our community merely because of the location of our school. MES is located one block away from the Gateway (Stekthal) Learning Circle. “The space represents a gateway to the world, to learning, to community and to understanding each other. It is a learning destination for area students.” MES is also a short walk to BCSS and only two blocks away from Riverfront Park where the outdoor education teacher took the students crayfishing. The school is approximately 3 blocks from the local arena and community garden where the kids go to plant, grow and learn. It is also close to the local seniors center, the police station, firehall, Ambulance bays, community park, grocery store and hardware store. I know that the children Pre Covid were taken to all these locations to learn and explore.

The location of the school within walking distance, makes it a very safe walk to get to these destinations and adds a little more physical activity on their way to their outdoor learning and fun. I feel our students and community are fortunate to have our school right in town as it allows

them to not only have an indoor learning experience but to also use many of the wonderful locations in our area to learn and explore.

I have watched all the children from my office window multiple times on their way for outdoor learning or scavenger hunts. This brings joy to not only members of the community but also to the children as it allows them to feel that they are a vital part of our community and to learn from the interactions with other community members outside of the school setting while still feeling safe with their trusted teachers and EAs.

I have reached out to many Administrators and Teachers that have taught me throughout my school years in SD51. Many of these individuals have also taught at MES/GES. Here is a direct quote from past principal, Darryl Turner of MES/GES, "First of all I will start by saying that I absolutely loved the years I spent at MES/GES (BCSS) and in Midway. Still feels like its home and for sure is for my children." Also quoted "I will assure you that when I was there our students knew I cared about them and MES/GES was not something where their education and the product we delivered lacked from any other school. You can chat with the teachers and staff at BCSS. They will confirm that the students coming from GES in grade 7 were prepared for success at the HS. Confidence, academics, athletics, social- emotional, development, etc. ". "I loved my time at MES/GES and would not change a thing about how they ran. My three children still miss the boundary very much as I mentioned it is home to them. All three of them went on to post-secondary school as did many other graduates from my tenure as Administrator of MES/GES. And many other former students have gone on to be very successful contributing members of society as a result of confidence and their time at MES/GES.

As a parent of a MES student, resident and homeowner in Midway I would love to invite all the trustees to travel to our beautiful community and see why we are so happy and fortunate to have our school. If you choose to come to see Midway Elementary, and all that it has to offer and the community that supports it, then I will offer to personally show you around the community and tell you why Midway Elementary school needs to remain open.

Thank you for taking the time to read through my concerns.
Tia Nordstrom

SD51 Board Members and Trustees,

I am writing this letter in response to the possible closure of Midway Elementary school.

I grew up nearby in Grand forks. I moved to Midway with my wife in 2012, we moved to Midway because of all the amenities. We now have two elementary school aged children.

Midway is a very small community with everything. The location of MES truly allows it to be the heart of our community, the loss of MES would not only be detrimental to our community but also to our young children. The possible closure of Midway Elementary does not only potentially affect me as a homeowner but it hugely affects me as a parent as I have a child that attends MES. The thought of his school closing has added unnecessary stress to my son in an already stressful time of COVID.

The education and support from teachers and staff that my son has received in his short time at MES has been exceptional, any issues that have come up have been dealt with in a very timely manner. My son feels very safe and supported at MES and he knows he is cared for.

I as a parent have noticed the principal position at MES/GES has had a lot of turnaround. Before considering closing our school maybe you should consider input and try to refigure the current two school system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Toby Nordstrom

Dear School Board Members and Superintendent of Schools:

Please consider this email as confirmation of my **complete opposition** to the possibility of closing Midway Elementary School.

As a current taxpayer, resident of Midway and former long time principal at SD 51, I am recommending the Board accept the proposal submitted in the letter composed and submitted by the large group of concerned citizens who are also adamantly opposed to the closure of MES.

The timing of this could not have come at a worse time. The pandemic has made people irritated, indignant and distrusting of those who hold office. Most are not able to see a distinct logic for a closure. Those of us who have worked with educating children over the years have always advocated solutions be obtained by a collective process. It is important that adults use the same process. As occurred the last time the Board considered closure of MES, the forming of a committee to find appropriate and amenable solutions to the issues the Board outlined was the optimal choice. That needs to occur this time as well. At the very least people will feel they have had an opportunity to truly examine the issues.

Closing of schools is a distinct detriment to communities and the children served. Closure of schools will also have a long lasting effect on the attitude of those who have been impacted. Some of you fought to keep other small schools open. You should do the same in this situation.

Leave your legacy as one of a Board that is caring, enabling and empathetic.

Walt Osellame
Retired Principal- BCSS, MES, BWCS

Melissa Ping

Feb. 14, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Melissa Ping and I am the parent of a student in Greenwood and Midway, and an employee of SD 51 since 2007 and I have been working at Midway Elementary since 2017. My letter may have a small parent side note or two.

Working at Midway Elementary has been amazing experience overall. It is a gem of a place to work. I love that we are a smaller school and that allows us more time to work with students that need more support and we can spend time with students when they need some 1-1 time-whether its for emotional, physical or mental support. I believe we have a strong team and our students feel safe and can talk to any one of us when needed. Of course there are challenges that have popped up and we have been able to work through these challenges. I, sadly, feel that the decision to proceed with the possible closure of Midway school has caught us off guard. I feel that some challenges that have arisen have been due to the constant shuffle of staff over the last 5 years that I have been there. I have worked for 3 principals and 4 part time K/1 teachers, and four 2/3 teachers. I'm not sure how a team can expect to create fluency, consistency, and build relationships when administration and teaching staff are changing every year. I feel that this decision has been rushed and the board/trustees have not given our-again-new admin a chance to make changes or to build a stronger team and to have consistency. Changes sometimes take a few years to show, please allow us to have that chance to make that bigger change.

Sharing resources-yes we do share a secretary, principal, support staff etc, but we do have our own photocopier, I-pad set and gym equipment and laminator. Our only wish has been a colour printer hahaha.

I have also had the amazing opportunity to join the K-3 classes-pre covid-to walk over to the high school for Christmas and Easter cookie decorating with different foods classes over the years. It's amazing to watch all the students interacting all together and having fun. It's also been amazing, and such a great memory, for the k/1 class to have the French class come to MES and teach them French and create some fun activities-which my child will still talk about when she sees something that reminds her.

Having the school in Midway we have had various opportunities for small excursions within the community and for Community workers-police, fire department, and a paramedic-to come to our school. We have walked around Midway and enjoyed the community garden for at least the last 5 years. The students have had opportunities to talk to members of the community and those members have left with big smiles.

We have been able to enjoy the skating rink 1-2 times a week. We have been walking over to Raven Park a few times a month and we have been able to experience story telling, fires, cooking Bannock over a fire, and other learning opportunities from guest speakers working with our Indigenous nss Student Success Facilitator. We are also lucky to be able to walk to Parkview manor different times of the year and deliver messages or pictures the students have created, sing for them, and we were able to wish them all a Happy Valentines on Monday. All of these various learning opportunities have created some pretty amazing conversations between students and staff and possibly some family. Personally I love that my child is able to go and experience all of these opportunities and we can have pretty neat dinner or long drive conversations and memories.

I believe that the students at Midway Elementary have some amazing learning opportunities because of where we are and what/where we are able to go safely. I also know that community members like seeing the students around town as it lets them reminisce about their kids or youth.

I truly hope that trustees are able to come and see what a gem Midway Elementary school is. All the substitute teachers that have come to Midway have enjoyed the small school and the comfortable feel it has.

Thank you for your time,
Melissa Ping

To whom it may concern;

My name is Raymond Porter and not only am I a resident of Midway, but I am also a Realtor with Century 21. My office is based out of Greenwood. My wife and I moved into this glorious community roughly 7 years ago, and since then, our 3 adult sons have chased us up here. We are originally from the Fraser Valley. We needed a change from the hustle and bustle of daily life in a busy city and fell in love with Midway right away. Our children saw this beautiful Village in the same light we did, and have since started their families in this community.

There is value in having amenities in a community, and as a Realtor, I boast strongly about what Midway has to offer. To be quite honest, Midway is an easy sell, whether you are at the age of retirement, or a young family starting out. Where else can you go where we have the ability to walk everywhere without encountering hills, being able to shop locally, and able to provide for all our daily needs.

I feel, both as a resident, but more importantly as a Realtor, that closing the elementary school will lower the value of the houses in this community. This community needs to encourage new faces in order to survive. Closing the school will have a negative effect on young families thinking about purchasing in Midway. Having both an elementary school and a high school in close proximity is a benefit, as well as a selling feature. This is highly desired.

What would become of the building, if it were no longer housed with students? I have heard through the school trustees as well as other sources, that the shortfall of funding can be made up by renting out the building for a variety of ways. The one that makes most sense would be a day care. I believe the funding shortfall is over \$200,000. That's over \$16,000 per month. How can any business afford that? There is already a hint that the grounds may not get as much attention as it does now. Without an operating school, my fear is that the playground will become off limits to anybody, as it would be a liability issue for anyone using it. This would be another blow to our community. As a resident who lives close to the elementary school, I see it in use quite often.

The school in Greenwood is right on the highway. Currently, if a teacher wants to take their class on a local field trip, they have to be extremely careful while traversing the side of the highway. At this time, these are older students, who are a little more aware of their surroundings and can realize the danger of vehicular traffic a bit better than a younger group of students. Think of the danger a kindergarten group would be in to go on a similar trip. I can see the children going to the outdoor pool, or the local library, which is on the other side of town. There is no concern with children going on field trips in Midway. There are very safe ways of walking along the side roads to go to any location. It is also much closer.

I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to close the school as I fear that decision will have a long-lasting negative impact on all the residents in this area, not only financially, but will become less desirable to live here. We need growth to keep our Village financially stable. Senior citizens are a great asset to our community, but we also need the next generation to keep this area alive.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope you understand just a little more why the elementary school is so important for Midway.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ray Porter", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

School District 51 Boundary
PO Box 640
Grand Forks, BC
V0H 1H0

February 16, 2022

Dear Trustees,

My name is Chris Robinson, I have been a resident of Midway for the last 22 years. I work here and love the community I call home. I have watched this community go from a retirement community with very few children to where it is now. It is a thriving community with many job opportunities and many more young families.

I believe it is unfair that the kids will have to bus from Midway to Greenwood and then wait extra time after school for the bus to come from Midway to Greenwood before picking the Midway children up to return home.

The decision to close the school and lose the funding of approximately \$232,000 does not make any sense to me.

I do not believe it would be in the best interest of the district, the students or the community to close Midway Elementary school. I request that the board vote against the closure of Midway Elementary School.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Chris Robinson



Boundary District Teachers' Association

Box 634, Grand Forks, BC. V0H 1H0

O: 250-442-3330 / C: 250-442-6330

Feb. 16, 2022

SD51 Board of Education
Box 640, Grand Forks, BC.
V0H 1H0

Re: Consultation Process – Proposed Closure of Midway Elementary School

Dear Trustees,

With the consultation process regarding the possible closure of Midway Elementary School well underway, I know you have a great deal to consider before voting on this issue. A decision of this magnitude can only be made after a full examination of the initial pros and cons as well as the potential long-term ramifications to staff, educational programs, and the larger school community.

While there are some sound educational reasons to have all the K-7 students from Greenwood and Midway together in one building, the potential negative impacts are very concerning to the BDTA.

At the Jan. 24th information meeting, it was stated that the closure of MES, would result in the loss of approximately \$233,000 in provincial funding. The potential savings related to the closure would be minimal if the property was still owned by the district. It was also stated that the 74-year-old building will require some significant renovations, but unless this property is sold, costs to upgrade the facility are simply part of the ongoing budget process. If MES is closed as a school and then rented out to another organization, it will still be the responsibility of the Board to ensure needed repairs and maintenance are completed. Do you see the possibility of a lease agreement being able to offset a significant percentage of lost ministry funding? If not, is the board willing to take on the liability of such an agreement?

If MES is closed and the board determined it was too costly to upgrade the facility, what are the chances of receiving fair market value if it was decided to sell the property? With significant renovation costs looming, many potential buyers could be scared off. Would the board be willing to sell at a heavily reduced price just to shed the financial anchor? The loss of an asset with little in return wouldn't seem like a wise decision.

Even if the sale of MES was successful, would SD51 receive all of the proceeds or would the ministry take a large percentage? Would monies generated from the sale be restricted or part of general revenues? If you consider selling the property as a viable future option, are you willing to risk a very poor return or does it make more sense to simply maintain status quo and keep MES open?

In talking to my colleagues in neighboring districts, I was reminded of the fact that once a school is closed, it is rarely re-opened, especially if sold. There are many instances where schools have been closed due to declining enrollment only to have an influx of families to that neighborhood a few years later. In many cases, there was no option to re-open the local school and numerous families were frustrated that their children were unable to attend a school close to home.

Current enrollment at MES has just 29% from Midway, but there is no way to determine if there will be an increase in young families moving to Midway in the next few years. If there was a significant increase in primary aged children, it would be most beneficial to have them attend a school in their own community. At a time of considerable instability due to Covid and its impact on the economy, it makes much more sense to maintain stability wherever possible. Keeping MES open is definitely a way to maintain stability.

Coming back to the potential negative impacts a school closure could have on staff and students, I want to reiterate the loss of provincial funding. \$233,000 equates to the salaries of two full time teachers even when considering some reduced maintenance costs. At the last meeting, it was stated that there would be no staffing changes for the 22/23 school year, but there were no promises made in years beyond that.

In neighboring districts, school closures usually resulted in a reduction of staff and / or programs in the combined school within a few years. With the possibility of declining enrollment caused by the inability of families to find affordable housing in the area, I worry that a K-7 Greenwood school could face three or even four grade splits and fewer teachers in the building down the road. The loss of the \$233,000 in funding from MES could force the Board to make some very difficult decisions.

Prior to Covid, SD51 usually carried a surplus of approximately \$1,000,000. The loss of MES funding could easily eat up that surplus in a few years, especially if declining enrollment contributed to even less provincial funding. Keeping MES open, increases the chances of families moving to the area and adding more revenue to the district budget.

As you can see in the last two paragraphs, I suggested the possibility of both a decrease and increase in the number of new families to the area. If the past two years has been any indication, it is clear the housing market is extremely unpredictable. At a time of such uncertainty, are you really willing to take a chance on closing MES and dealing with the possible fallout soon after?

In the presentation three weeks ago, arguments were presented that outlined the educational difficulties in having the principal and some staff travel between Midway and Greenwood. I have to point out that inadequate staffing is a separate problem that needs to be addressed on its own. Claiming a cause & effect relationship may be simple, but if all vacancies were filled and there were enough TTOCs and spare support staff available, this wouldn't be an issue. I am aware that staffing is a problem for most districts, but it is clear the board needs to put more time and effort into attracting more certified staff to SD51.

Providing more continuing contracts, future employment protections for staff on temporary or TTOC contracts, and guaranteed meaningful work hours for all staff are some areas that should be considered to make SD51 more attractive to applicants. I wonder what factors were in play that caused some teachers to turn down job offers in the Boundary this summer?

Regarding the difficulty in finding specialist teachers, the Board may want to consider supporting continuing teachers in upgrading their qualifications to enable them to take on learning support positions. This is something SD51 did years ago and with so many new teachers hired in the last few years, some constructive shoulder tapping may generate the specialist teachers you are looking for.

Another problem that was discussed in the presentation relates to logistics around supplies shared by the two schools. Wouldn't it make more sense to simply fund each school in a way that all required supplies are always in each building for teachers to access?

The BDTA cannot support a plan that could easily result in the loss of teaching positions or programs offered to students. While it is easy for district management and the Board to claim there is no intention to make any cuts if Midway Elementary School is closed, we all know that isn't always the case when conditions change. When faced with new financial realities, those who make important decisions are often forced to alter even the best laid plans.

On behalf of the BDTA, I hope you will examine all information presented and carefully consider the possible future ramifications of this decision. From my point of view, it makes much more sense to keep Midway Elementary School open and take a much more pro-active stance in addressing the other staffing issues in play. When it is time to vote, I hope you agree SD51 is stronger with Midway Elementary School than without.

Sincerely,



Norm Sabourin
President, BDTA

Monday February 7, 2022

My name is Peter Scott, I am the former Principal of Midway and Greenwood Elementary. I joined the Midway and Greenwood elementary team, a seasoned administrator, during my two-year appointment there I found it challenging due to being charged with two schools. Presence and availability are two important aspects of leading a school versus simply managing it. Unfortunately, both those components are lacking when a principal is split between two schools. Combining both schools would address these issues. The school and all its stakeholders would also be more aligned and collaborative if the schools were combined. Thus, it's in my professional opinion that Midway Elementary should be closed and the two schools combined at Greenwood Elementary.

Sincerely,

Peter Scott
Principal of Hutton Elementary

Dear School District 51,

The consultation of the closure of Midway Elementary has been a topic that has been weighing heavily on my heart. My thoughts continue to bounce back and forth between wanting to join with GES and then wanting to remain independent. Being both the grade 2/3 teacher in the school, a community member and a future parent to this school I can see all the perspectives. I am going to list all my thoughts and concerns for both options, but in conclusion I would like to see Midway Elementary stay open.

I think one of the biggest problems that Midway has been facing is lack of consistency. I believe that if we had consistent staff for multiple years (and I recognize that I have not helped that case as I was off on Maternity leave and back again) that the students could get use to the adults and expectations. As the staff rotate, so do expectations. Over the past few years, we have had multiple grade 2/3 teachers, multiple K/1 prep teachers, different principals, different CYC's and Indigenous support teachers. So there hasn't been enough consistency to really establish a solid support system. I believe we are in a place now where we have reached constancy, where most of the staff will be staying and the students can start to count on that and really build positive relationships.

Benefits to keeping Midway Elementary Open

- We are a strong working team, we all get along, we support each other, we plan and work well together, we have strong communication.
- The children get to stay "young". They are not influenced by the older students. At GES there are different "rules" that students follow. For example, at GES students are allowed to play hands on games, such as king of the hill in winter. And at MES we have a hands-off policy. Students at GES are also reaching stages of puberty and maturity, which brings up different topics of conversation, boyfriends and girlfriends, gender fluidity. These are conversations that will be spoken of on the playground and won't be kept from the little kids.
- The grade 3's get to be the leaders of the school and act in a leadership role to the students younger than them.
- MES has easy access to community things such as the community garden, skating rink, manor and partnering with the high school. Before covid, MES would join with the high school French and food classes and they got to have big buddies.
- Strong start can continue to run in the elementary school, and midway families have easy access to participate, for example families who can't drive.

Benefits to joining

- All the classes can do more group things.
- All staff are in one building.
- We can share resources such as a color printer, large laminator and receptionist, principal.
- When students are sick or families need to be contacted, it will not be on the teachers at MES to make phone calls or answer the door because we would have a receptionist.

Hesitancies about joining

- Supporting staff such as the Indigenous support worker, and the CYC and SLP will still have the same workload of students, so their time for each student is not going to change.
- Midway staff not being fully welcomed into GES, personally I feel like it will always be their school and we are just visitors. I think the 2 schools have established their teams well, and I don't know how they would blend. I personally feel and this is just option, but there would always be a hierarchy of teachers.
- When we have done collaborative things as the 2 schools before we have had to deal with conflicts and bullying because the big kids don't want to be around the little kids.
- The hallways are very crowded when we are all there. If we are going to do different recess and lunch, then the staffing and supervision is going to be no different than it is now.
- Regarding having trouble finding staff to fill positions, I think a lot of it has to do with the housing crisis right now. There is nowhere to rent and houses are getting more expensive. Therefore, new teachers or families who want to come to the area do not have a lot of options for housing.
- If the building is not going to be used as anything and is just going to be closed, I feel that is a real shame.
- There is talk of a daycare being put in MES, but that is a few years away and I feel like that it may never really happen, and who will staff it? We would need certified ECE's, are there people willing and qualified to do that job?
- We have been putting money into MES over the past few years and it teachers have been investing in their classrooms, it feels sad to leave it behind.

Other options

- Can the high school and MES share a VP?
- Could the principal do less prep time at MES, and MES could have a 3rd full time teacher who works as a prep teacher, librarian, literacy support worker, and maybe a couple more roles?
- Can the principal and prep teacher have times at each school that are the opposite, and that way we always have an extra person in the building if we need support.
- Can the receptionist do more time at MES?

I hope I did not offend anyone in this letter, I am just being honest. I want what is best for the students and at the moment I feel the best option is to keep MES open and have the staff continue to do their amazing work.

I also personally want my children to go to school in their community for as long as they can, which is Midway.

Sincerely,
Vannessa Smythe

Dear School Board Members and Superintendent of Schools, SD #51

Please consider this as confirmation of my opposition to the possibility of closing Midway Elementary School.

As a resident of Midway since 1964 with my parents teaching at the aforementioned MES and BCSS, a current taxpayer/resident of Midway, a parent of two successful graduates of the MES, Greenwood Elementary and BCSS configuration of the day, and an active PAC member when my children were in school at MES and BCSS I would like to address this situation.

The Midway Elementary School is ideally located in the centre of town with an easy walk for students to the amazing Community Garden, the fantastic arena, the curling rink, the Indigenous Learning Circle/Entwined Trees park, Boundary Central Secondary School, the excellent Kettle River Museum, and Parkview Manor to entertain seniors. The school is always well kept and is truly the centre of our community. Over the long years of my connection to the MES the school has been able to adapt to the ever changing demographics of the community and the surrounding communities.

I find the possibility of closing the Midway Elementary School at this point to be puzzling. I do not see any financial benefit to it and educationally I do not see any proven merit either. The community is experiencing a turnover in real estate and young families have discovered the benefits of small town living including having a local elementary school. Midway has employment opportunities so will continue to attract new residents. This is not the time to make such a final move.

Closing a school is one of those changes that never seems to be reversible. I really hope careful consideration can be given to keeping Midway Elementary School open and flexible as it's always been to the changes that affect our communities.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L Walker", with a stylized initial "L" and a long horizontal flourish.

Leslie Downing Walker

February 15th, 2022

School District #51
P.O. Box 640
Grand Forks, BC, V0H 1H0

RE: Proposed Closure of Midway Elementary School

To School District #51 Board and Trustees,

I am in favour of the Midway Elementary School closure.

I have been working in the West Boundary Schools for the last 16 years. I firmly believe it is best when the school staff, secretary and principal are all in the same school at the same time. This is ideal for safety and for children's learning. There are interruptions during the day by people from the community, parents, delivery people or others stopping by a school and sometimes, or almost all the time in the case of MES, there is no secretary to handle it. The teachers and or EA's must stop what they are doing to deal with it every time someone rings the doorbell. There are lead teachers to handle things and safety issues, but it is best when the secretary and principal can do their job in a single location each day.

Having all staff in one building brings about the ideal opportunity for team building, networking and everyone being on the same page. This is a huge win-win for the students.

Hiring has been and will continue to be an issue for small schools. If there was only one school, there would be more opportunities for staff overlap when there are absences, or possible opportunities to combine small part-time positions to make it more attractive to potential employees.

There would be less wasted time and expense for staff to go between the two schools. Time is vital with our shorter four-day school week.

It would be easier for the Parent Advisory Council to only have to plan for, attend to and fundraise for one school.

GES is the newer building and has the capacity to hold the current students and many more that may move to our area. The reality of the necessary upgrading and repairs that need to happen at MES makes it an easy choice to move all the children to the newer building. There may be grants and government funds to cover expenses like the roof but is it the best use of taxpayer money to fix up the old building when there is an easy, viable, close-by option?

Midway still has the high school so it won't be detrimental to home and business owners of the Village of Midway.

There would be less logistics for daily bussing and holiday and special event bussing if one school is no longer in the picture. It would be easier for families who have multiple children in the two different schools as they have different drop-off and pick-up times depending on which school they attend.

Each year there seems to be more and more challenging children and more diagnoses. Families are complex and face a lot of challenges in our small rural towns. I feel it would be best for the children's education to always have the principal on site to deal with issues and challenges as they come up each day both for the children and their families.

The bonus of having a multi-age school is the interaction between the younger children and the older children. Just like multi-generational communities are good for children, so is the age span at the school. It gives the children the opportunity to interact with and be around children of various ages. This is especially true as families have fewer children than they used to. These are day-to-day skills they gain and use in a safe, monitored setting. I see this played out at StrongStart in Rock Creek when the children have the same recess time and get to interact with children of multiple ages and sometimes older siblings. It is wonderful to watch.

One con would possibly be if StrongStart was not offered in Midway. I feel this would be more than unfortunate for Midway. It is ideal to have families able to walk to StrongStart, or have their young children ride their bikes or arrive in strollers. If StrongStart was only offered in another town, having to drive would be a barrier for some and a deterrent for others.

All these points have already been made; I am putting into writing my agreement with what I believe would be best.

I don't think all families or staff who have a vested interest in this decision will send in written submissions. I suggest that the School District send out an anonymous poll to staff and each family affected by the decision including StrongStart families as it affects them too. It could be simple, asking only if they are for or against the proposed closure. This method may reach more families and may more accurately reflect the true feelings of the people. The board could then decide how much weight they give to the results depending on how many people participate.

I am writing this letter as a long-time homeowner in City of Greenwood, community member, a SD#51 employee, and a long-time StrongStart facilitator in the West Boundary.

I would like my letter to remain anonymous.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion.

February 16, 2022

School District No. 51 Board of Education

1200 Central Avenue
Grand Forks, BC V0H 1H0

RE: Proposed closure of Midway Elementary School

Dear School District No. 51 Board of Education:

We are writing in response to the proposed closure of Midway Elementary School. We request that our written submission remain **anonymous**, please.

As parents of children in both Midway and Greenwood Elementary Schools and as residents of Midway this has been a difficult decision for us to make. Midway Elementary School has always provided a wonderful and welcoming learning environment for our children.

After reviewing all the information provided on January 24, 2022, we fully support the proposed closure of Midway Elementary School. The students of MES and GES deserve equal access to learning support staff which other schools in School District No. 51 benefit from; including, Learning Support teacher, Librarian/ Literacy Support teacher, Child and Youth Worker, Indigenous Culture and Student Success facilitator, Principal, and Secretary. The gaps in supervision are also very concerning. Wellbeing and safety of the students are paramount. We believe that MES should be closed in order to bridge the learning support and supervisory challenges faced by the two-school system.

As Midway residents we do have some concerns about the future outcome of the MES building, should the school close. It is our hope that School District No. 51 Board of Education will include Midway community residents in the decision process if or when the opportunity arises. The future outcome of the MES building will greatly affect the community of Midway as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our opinion.

February 14, 2022

School Board # 51 Board of Trustees
1200 Central Avenue
Grand Forks , BC. V0H 1H0

RE: Proposed Midway School Closure

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am writing in response to the proposed closure of Midway Elementary and I request my written submission to remain **anonymous** please.

As a grand parent of children who attend both MES and GES, I certainly acknowledge the challenges faced by your board. I firmly believe that the final decision made should be in the best interest of the children and having all children in one school would be a benefit. It would address the board's concerns in regard to staffing issues and would allow the children to have access to the same level of teaching supports and supervision that other schools in School District #51 benefit from. For these reasons I support the closure of Midway Elementary School.

MES and GES have wonderful teachers and that has been echoed by my grandchildren who have nothing but admiration and praise for their teachers. It is my hope that if the schools merge that the day-to-day challenges they face, due to the 2-school system, will be resolved.

I am requesting anonymity.

Please accept this letter as notice of our strong opposition to the proposed closure of MES. I am aware of families that have recently moved to the Midway area with the anticipation of their children attending MES over the next few years. Pushing this project through in such a hurried fashion is not fair to people that have made plans for their future that involved a move that included their children attending school in their home community, within walking distance. More notice so people can plan their lives would be appropriate.

If there are factual reasons, that make both educational and financial sense, then a plan should be developed to explore all options and time frames. The fact is that there is a perception that this process is being rushed through. This begs the question, why? If there is another plan in place I would hope that the Board would be transparent and provide all of the information.

If the argument is that a merger could potentially improve the learning experience and that more teachers/supervisors can support the students better, then I would assume that this strategy would need to be consistently applied across the School District. Does this mean that Beaverdell is next?

With the location of the school, along with the nearby amenities and supports that MES has, maybe we should look at moving the K-7 to Midway instead? I wouldn't suggest that though because it would be wrong for a member of one community to try and take away from a neighbour.

Please reconsider any plans to rush through a closure of Midway Elementary School.