

June 9, 2021

To whom it may concern:

We are writing to express our concerns about the proposed catchment change for the residents of Juniper West from Juniper Ridge Elementary School to Ralph Bell Elementary School. Our family has lived in Juniper Ridge for the past 7 years. All three of our children have lived in Juniper for the entirety of their lives. Our oldest is 5 and is currently in kindergarten at Juniper Ridge Elementary School. Our younger two are 3 and 1 and attend the Juniper Early Learning Centre.

We are vehemently opposed to the proposed catchment change for many reasons that we are going to discuss below. Our first and most significant concern is the location of Ralph Bell. Our number one priority as parents is to ensure the safety of our children. We are concerned about having our young children attend school in an area known for significant criminal activity and drug use, particularly in such formative years of their lives.

In addition, our daughter will be one of the only one of her friends affected by this catchment change. While we understand that children are resilient and capable of change, it still devastates us that the friendships that she has created over this past year at Juniper Ridge Elementary, as well as the friendships that she has made from the 3 years she attended Juniper Early Learning Centre, will now be taken from her.

We support the option of making Ralph Bell into a grade 6/7 school. This solution would still greatly affect our family. We will have 3 children that will still attend Ralph Bell for grades 6 and 7. However, we feel much more confident sending our 11- and 12-year-olds to this school knowing that we can better equip them to protect themselves in an area like this. This solution still is not the best solution for our family, but it is one that we would prefer over the alternative.

In regard to splitting up families, our family would still be split up with a 6/7 school. This change would still affect us. However, we would prefer this option over having to send our 5-year-olds to a school in a location like Ralph Bell and having them separated from their peers that live in the same neighbourhood. Families are already split up when the grade 7s move onto high school. We don't find this to be a valid argument.

We implore the school board to reconsider their decision to make Ralph Bell a K-7 school and adjust their plan to make it a 6/7 school. While we can appreciate the position that you are in with having to make a decision that will not please everyone, we hope that you can appreciate the position that we are in as parents who are trying to do the best we can by our children and ensure that they have the most opportunities for success and a happy, healthy childhood.

Sincerely,

Josh and Melanie Andrews