

**Testimony Before the Board of Education
November 9, 2005**

A year ago at this time I stood before you and asked that you reconsider your decision to close Seven Locks Elementary School and surplus its land. A lot has happened in that year: our son Jack, a 3rd-grader at Seven Locks, has learned to multiply, divide and hit a bases-clearing triple when it matters most. Our daughter Jenny, a Seven Locks 1st grader, lost 4 teeth and perfected the cartwheel. Our youngest son Tom, Seven Locks graduating class of 2013, finally learned to say the word "computer" rather than pronouncing it "perooter" -- much to my dismay. Obviously, a lot has changed for our children in the past year. What hasn't, however, is that I've still not heard compelling justification for closing their school.

We've been told, for example, that a new school will address overcrowding, yet plans for the school include space for future trailers while talk of surplus an existing school that would alleviate that need continues. We've been told that a new school will solve traffic and spatial concerns with the current site, yet the proposed site serves only to raise new ones: narrow roads will not be widened, sidewalks will not be built and field sizes will actually be reduced. We've been told that gymnasiums are critical to all new school construction, yet plans for the new school reveal the possibility that no such gym will exist. Most importantly, we've been told that a new school is in the best interests of our children and our community, yet the Seven Locks PTA and associations representing the neighborhoods from which Seven Locks students hail remain overwhelmingly opposed to it. In truth, the only people I've heard passionately support the new school won't have children there. While I have no doubt that other supporters exist, their silence is deafening and their kids don't seem to go to school with ours.

In the final analysis isn't that who this is about? Isn't it about Jack, Jenny and Tom and their triples, cartwheels and mispronunciations? Isn't it about their classmates, and the generations of their classmates to come? More fundamentally, isn't it about a collaboration between those entrusted with the educational well-being of our children -- this board -- and the parents and communities most effected by their actions? It's in that spirit of collaboration that I urge you again to slow this process down and look more closely at the concerns and desires of the Seven Locks community. It's in that spirit that I urge you again to take a long term view of that community's educational needs and requirements. Finally, and most passionately, it's in that spirit that I urge you again to think about the children of Seven Locks, and to work with their parents and neighbors to ensure that the cartwheels will continue down its hallways for many years to come.

Thank you.

