

20 Walcheren Loop  
Borden ON L0M 1C0

16 Oct 2015

District Education Council  
Anglophone West School District  
1135 Prospect St.,  
Fredericton NB E3B 3B9

LETTER OF SUPPORT  
BURTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the staff of Burton Elementary School in Burton, NB for all of the work they did last year to ensure my oldest son, Ethan, had a safe and productive learning experience. Ethan, who has Down syndrome, attended kindergarten at Burton Elementary from Sept 2014- June 2015. While the thought of sending Ethan to school was the main source of stress for both me and my husband for six years, all of our concerns were completely relieved when we first met with the school staff during a transition meeting held in the spring of 2014.

From our first transition meeting through to the start of school, Ms. Denise Watson made every effort to ensure that Ethan would be included in the school. I'm not only talking about being present in the classroom but as a contributing member of the community that makes the school so great. When we sent Ethan to school, we knew he would be safe, he would be valued, he would be challenged and he would belong. Ms. Watson took the time to truly listen to our concerns and discussed our goals for our son. She took the time to interact with him and recognize his strengths and abilities. When we expressed our concern about Ethan being a flight risk, she advocated on his behalf and searched for an Educational Assistant (EA) that would fit his personality and energy level.

Over the course of the school year, we received positive and productive feedback from Ms. Watson as principal and resource teacher, Ms. Appleyard as kindergarten teacher and from Ms. Thorne as Ethan's EA. Because of this open communication, we were able to target concerns and build meaningful goals in a timely manner—minor problems never became setbacks.

Burton Elementary is a small school. We all know this. We all understand that on paper, running a school that size may not look fiscally sound- in fact, it would probably be a quick solution to a tight budget if the school were closed. What most people won't see, however, is that Burton is a true example of what inclusion should be. Burton can provide a gold standard to which all other schools in New Brunswick might aspire to achieve.

My little boy started his first year of public education with a very limited vocabulary and minimal social skills. Burton Elementary provided a platform where he could grow both academically and socially. At the end of the year, Ethan was able to clearly express himself verbally to those who know him, read at level A, count to

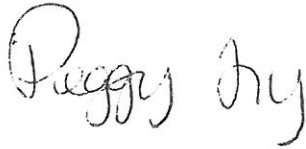
10 and say the alphabet. More importantly, he had gained a sense of belonging-established friendships, went to birthday parties, and taught other children in his class that being different isn't bad.

Unfortunately, due to my military career, my family was posted out of New Brunswick in July 2015. I can honestly tell you that we had seriously considered keeping my children and husband in Burton for the sole purpose of allowing Ethan and his younger brother to continue attending Burton Elementary. Even during the transition to a new school in Ontario, the staff of Burton went over and above to ensure all of the measures were in place to ensure a successful start for Ethan.

I am certain that we will never find another school that can offer such a high and meaningful level of inclusion as we found in Burton. It saddens me to think that other young children with special needs from Burton will have their chance at a good start stripped away if the school were to close. I sincerely hope that when the difficult decisions are made in the upcoming months that your council will consider the value of inclusive education and community as higher values of measurement than dollar signs on a piece of paper.

Please feel free to contact me should you want additional information and I welcome the distribution of my letter.

Sincerely,

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

Peggy Fry

**Clark-Caterini , Carol (ASD-W)**

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**From:** Margaret.Fry@forces.gc.ca  
**Sent:** Friday, October 16, 2015 4:36 PM  
**To:** (ASD-W) Public Website Contact  
**Subject:** Letter of support for Burton Elementary School  
**Attachments:** burton dec.pdf

Good afternoon,

Please see my attached letter of support on behalf of Burton Elementary.

Thank you,

Peggy Fry  
506 238 3418  
Peggyfry8@gmail.com