

Good afternoon,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Kylee Bashirelahi, and I am the parent of a second grader and an incoming kindergartner at Ashburton Elementary School.

Since my daughter first enrolled at Ashburton over two years ago, I have become increasingly concerned about the ongoing issue of overcrowding. During her time in Kindergarten, I often wondered how one teacher could effectively manage a classroom of 26 students, many of whom have additional needs, without adequate support. This concern has only deepened as I've seen the challenges faced by both teachers and students in the absence of additional resources.

Furthermore, I have had the opportunity to volunteer during lunch and recess periods, where the safety risks associated with overcrowding have become glaringly apparent. Each grade level shares these times with approximately 3 adults overseeing 130-170 students, depending on the grade. Given the large areas and natural blind spots on the playground, it seems unfeasible to expect that 3 adults can ensure the safety of all students in the event of an emergency. Despite my previous recommendation to the principal two years ago, no safety drills have been implemented during recess. When I would ask my daughter what she would do in an emergency during recess, she responded, "I don't know." As a result, my husband and I have taken it upon ourselves to teach her emergency preparedness strategies.

In addition to safety concerns, I am alarmed by the continuing growth of infrastructure within the Ashburton district and the projections for future building projects. Overcrowding directly affects students' safety, well-being, and the overall learning environment, and I fear the situation will only worsen if left unaddressed.

The 2019 Capacity Study for the WJ and BCC Clusters indicated that Ashburton Elementary was already 95 students over capacity. This issue has not disappeared, and the need for increased resources has only intensified. As the largest elementary school in the district, Ashburton's students deserve more support, including additional paraeducators to assist overwhelmed teachers and more advocacy to ensure that the well-being of our children is prioritized over profit-driven development projects.

I respectfully urge the findings of the 2019 Capacity Study to be addressed by MCPS and for there to be work put towards viable solutions to alleviate overcrowding. The safety and educational quality of our children's school experience should be of utmost importance, and I hope for swift and effective action to ensure that Ashburton Elementary is equipped to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kylee Bashirelahi

Ashburton Elementary School