

Henry Hudson Elementary Closure Analysis – A Community View

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hudson is a small, dual-track, English and Early French Immersion school that serves Downtown Vancouver and East Kitsilano. It is more similar to Downtown schools than Westside schools in terms of community and student demographics. The fact that enrolment has been growing, that district enrolments are projected to grow overall, and that neighbouring schools are all at or near capacity all argue against closure. In this report, we discuss additional factors that indicate that the school should not be closed, namely:

1. Continued growth of Downtown Vancouver and development of south Burrard Bridge area,
2. Long waitlists for Hudson Early French Immersion Kindergarten,
3. Loss of a rich learning environment,
4. Loss of a school that embodies VSB social responsibility values,
5. Loss of daycare for a school with the second largest percentage of vulnerable students on the Westside,
6. Ceding Kits Point and Yaletown to independent schools.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Community Profile and Demographics – Not an Average Westside School

Hudson is a small, dual-track, English and Early French Immersion school that plays two roles; it is a neighbourhood school for East Kitsilano and Kits Point and an Early French Immersion school for the rapidly growing Downtown area³. Enrolment for 2010/11 is 281 (167 English, 114 French). Capacity is variously calculated as the following: 310 with current 13 classrooms, 335 if the Art Room is repurposed, and 365 if the lunchroom/daycare space in the basement is converted to a classroom (though note this would mean a significant reduction of Hudson afterschool care capacity).

Most primary students at Hudson are local; the trend for the last four years has been to only take either in-catchment students or overflow from neighbouring Elsie Roy or False Creek Elementary schools. In fact, in fall 2009/10, ten in-catchment students had to be turned away because of lack of room and composition issues⁴. Many Hudson students live Downtown, particularly in the Yaletown neighbourhood⁵.

Hudson has a diverse mix of languages and cultures. Thirty two percent of students speak a language other than English at home; over 20 different first languages are reported. In 2009/10, Hudson had 40 designated ESL students (15%), 26 designated special needs students (10%), and 12 aboriginal students (5%)⁶.

Based on the BC Ministry of Education's Social Services Index, which is a measure of the percentage and number of vulnerable students at schools, Hudson has the second largest percentage of vulnerable students on the westside, second only to Lord Roberts and its Annex (Table 1). Ten percent of Hudson families are on family assistance⁷, and at least 10% of students have needs regarding hunger; forty students typically take advantage of the Friday morning breakfast program⁸.

Other socio-economic data for Hudson students and the Hudson community support the idea that Hudson is not an average Westside school (Table 1). While it is similar to other Westside schools

in the relatively high level of parental education for the community and the comparatively low percentage of ESL students at the school, it is more like Downtown schools in terms of community household income, percentage of single parent families, and transiency. The student community is also similar to those at downtown schools in that few Hudson students live in houses (4 %); most live in apartments and rental units. Some Hudson students live in safe houses.

Table 1. Average socio-economic data for different areas in the Vancouver School District

Area	Avg. Income	5 Year SSI Average*	% Single Parent	% with Univ. Degree	% Moved Last Year	% Moved Last 5 yr.	% ESL	% Special Ed.
Westside	\$89,000	3	23.6	51	18	48	29	7
Downtown	\$66,000	8.6	29.1	45	25	61	41	7
Eastside	\$56,000	11.9	28.4	26	15	43	54	6
Closure	\$58,000	14.1	28.1	30	16	43	49	8
Hudson	\$66,000	7.5	33.8	49	24	59	27	15

Closure = 11 schools on closure pre-notification list plus Garibaldi Annex, data for main school was used for the six annexes. Downtown = Lord Roberts, Lord Roberts Annex, and Elsie Roy. Social Services Index, 5 year average (Mar 05-09), calculated by the BC Ministry of Education⁹. The SSI is a measure of the percentage and number of vulnerable students, based on actual student data. Larger numbers mean a higher number and percentage of vulnerable students. Other data from the David Johnson/C.D. Howe Institute British Columbia School Performance Database (2010), Grade 4 student and Community Profiles¹⁰

There is a high demand for afterschool care at Hudson; 109 students are in Hudson Out-Of-School Care, representing over 40% of the student body, with another 40+ students on the waitlist.

School History – a Pioneer for Inclusion, a Model of Acceptance and Diversity

In the 1980s, Hudson's enrolment was typically in the low 200s. As a school with relatively low student diversity, Hudson added a district ESL program to diversify the school. At this time, Hudson also pioneered integrating special needs students. Since then, the school has typically had higher than average numbers of special needs students. This history, along with the transiency of the student body and staff emphasis on social responsibility, has helped to develop a diverse and tolerant student body.

As Downtown Vancouver began its explosive and family-friendly growth in the 1990s, Hudson enrolment grew to the upper 200s until Elsie Roy Elementary opened in 2004. The VSB added a French Immersion program to further diversify the school and grow enrolment. The Hudson proposal to add an Early French Immersion track had the highest community support of any of the proposals for new EFI programs¹¹.

The French Immersion program has been a success. The school has been able to attract excellent teachers, and the program has grown steadily every year.

FACTORS THAT ARGUE AGAINST CLOSURE

The fact that enrolment at Hudson is growing, that overall district enrolments are projected to grow, and that neighbouring schools are already full are all factors that argue against closure. As the VSB is analyzing these data, we will not discuss these points further, but would like to focus on several community-related factors that should be included in the VSB closure analysis.

1. Continued increase in the number of children in the City Centre. Enrolment at Hudson is likely to continue growing because of overall demographics for the district, which show increasing enrolment¹², and the continued growth of Downtown Vancouver as well as False Creek South. The

number of children in Downtown Vancouver has increased steadily from 1981 to 2006¹³, and will continue to increase due to the continued growth of this area. Population growth projections for local health areas by BC Stats¹⁴ suggest that the City Centre will undergo the largest population growth in Vancouver in the next 10 years (Table 2), growing by 17%, while the rest of Vancouver will grow an average of 10%.

Table 2. Projected population growth for different regions¹⁵ of Vancouver from 2010 to 2020

Region	% Change 2010-2020
City Centre	17
Midtown	13
Northeast	12
Westside	10
South Vancouver	9
Downtown Eastside	8

Data from BC Stats¹⁶. The City Centre region includes the West End, Yaletown, and False Creek South neighbourhoods.

Other factors that point to continued growth in the Hudson catchment is the redevelopment of 1818 Cornwall¹⁷ and the high-density mixed development planned by the Squamish Nation on ancestral land underneath the south end of the Burrard Bridge¹⁸.

2. Long Waitlists for Hudson French Immersion Kindergarten. The increase in Hudson enrolment in the last five years is largely due to the addition of the early French Immersion program in 2006/7. This program is typically oversubscribed (Table 3).

Table 3. Hudson French Immersion K Registrations by Year¹⁹

Year	Hudson EFI K Registrations for 22 spots*	District EFI K Registrations
2007/8	37	741
2008/9	42	780
2009/10	36	780
2010/11	66	919

* With the exception of 2009/10, in which two K classes were offered.

In fact, the Hudson French Immersion program has proved so popular and is in such a high-demand area that, despite being a relatively new program, it now is the most difficult in which to gain admittance in the district (Table 4).

3. A Rich Learning Environment. Hudson is located in a particularly rich learning environment. Educational and cultural institutions within walking distance include the Vancouver Museum and HR MacMillan Space Centre, the Maritime Museum, the Vancouver Academy of Music, Vanier Park (which currently hosts the Children's Festival), False Creek Community Centre, and Granville Island theatres (which often provide free tickets to Hudson students). Hudson is steps away from the beach, so students can study science topics, such as geology, marine science, or botany in a natural laboratory setting, in addition to having plenty of space for their daily physical activity requirement. It is also

close to two pools: Kitsilano pool and the Vancouver Aquatic Centre. It would be a great loss to the school district to give up such a stimulating learning environment, especially when the BC Ministry of Education is considering incorporating more ideas from the 21st century learning model.

Table 4: Chances of Successful French Immersion Registration in Vancouver Schools, 2010/11 ²⁰

Catchment	# K Spaces	# Registrations	Chance of Successful Registration	Chance of Success, Adjusted for Siblings*
Hudson	22	66	33%	25%
L'Ecole Bilingue	66	143	46%	31%
QEA/ Jules Quesnel	66	135	49%	32%
Quilchena	22	45	49%	34%
Hastings	44	89	49%	37%
Secord	44	84	52%	34%
Douglas Annex	44	77	57%	36%
Kerrisdale	44	76	58%	43%
Trafalgar	44	64	69%	53%
Tennyson	66	87	76%	62%
Selkirk	44	45	98%	96%
Strathcona	22	16	100%	100%

Calculated by removing siblings; siblings get first priority and have 100% chance of successful registration.

4. Loss of a School that Embodies VSB values. Hudson students effectively embody and act on VSB social responsibility values such as resolving differences peacefully, valuing diversity, and respecting human rights. Student satisfaction survey results (Table 5) show that, of twelve neighbouring schools, Hudson students are the least likely to feel bullied or teased or to want to go to another school. Hudson students rank in the top four in terms of respect for those who are different, feeling welcome at school and feeling that they have teachers that care about them.

The welcoming nature of the Hudson community was demonstrated by the transition to dual track in 2006. Though this transition could have been difficult, the atmosphere between students, parents, and staff has been very collegial and productive from the start.

Table 5: Student Satisfaction Survey Results, Average percentages for grade 4 and 7 students. Hudson rank in parentheses²¹

	Hudson	C	EC	ER	FC	GG	LB	LR	LS	LT	S	T
I would like to go to a different school	2 (1)	16	9	4	8	12	12	18			8	5
My teachers care about me	87 (4)	94	83	86	94	78	84	77	78	77	89	87
I feel welcome at school	89 (3)	82	77	90	91	75	84	74			85	89
I have been bullied, teased	4 (1)	4	15	6	11	10	6	8	21	9	9	8
I respect others who are different	92 (4)	92	86	94	88	97	87	89	85	94	91	91

C = Carnarvon, EC = Emily Carr, ER = Elsie Roy, FC = False Creek, GG= General Gordon, LB = L'Ecole Bilingue, LR = Lord Roberts and Lord Roberts Annex, LS = Lord Strathcona, LT = Lord Tennyson, S = Shaughnessy, T = Trafalgar

5. Loss of A Stabilising Influence and High-quality Daycare. The Hudson community has a strong demand for daycare, with 109 students in afterschool care and more than 40 on the waitlist. Shutting down Hudson would effectively deny high-quality and affordable daycare to Hudson students, as schools neighbouring Hudson all have long afterschool care waitlists (Table 6). The displaced Hudson students would go to the end of the line at their new schools. As stated in the United way and YMCA report on afterschool care (2008)²², “Once a child is able to access a program, they have priority to move up through the years. This is ideal for that child. The other side of this situation is that families who move into the area may find it impossible to get into a space as very few open up and the waitlist may be long.” This loss would be especially devastating for the relatively large percentage of vulnerable students and their families at Hudson.

Table 6: Daycare Waitlists for Neighbouring Schools

School	Daycare Waitlist Length
Hudson	> 40
Elsie Roy	> 100
Lord Roberts + Annex	N/A
False Creek	16
General Gordon	20-50
Carnarvon	N/A
Shaughnessy	Waitlist present, exact length not available
Carr/Cavell	> 100
Lord Tennyson	51-99
L'Ecole Bilingue	> 300
Strathcona	20-50

Data from YMCA Afterschool Care report, False Creek Community Centre, and Douglas Park Community Centre.

6. Ceding Yaletown and Kits Point to Independent Schools? About 18% of Vancouver students attend independent schools²³, however this percentage is likely higher in wealthy neighbourhoods such as Kits Point and Yaletown. Parents in some Yaletown residential towers report percentages as high as 50% of school age children attending independent schools. Shutting down Hudson would only induce more families to turn their backs on the public school system, as public school capacity would be diminished in these two neighbourhoods. This would be a loss to the school district, as it would reduce student diversity, further eroding our public school system. It would also be a blow to the city, which is trying to encourage families to live in the City Centre area²⁴.

- 1 E-mail: cpfvanorth@gmail.com • Website: www.cpf.bc.ca/vannorth
- 2 E-mail: robert@quokkasystems.com • Website: <http://hudson.vsb.bc.ca/pac.htm>
- 3 In this report, we use the term “Downtown Vancouver” in its more expansive sense, which includes the West End, along with the Coal Harbour, City Centre, and Yaletown neighbourhoods.
- 4 B. Porrit, former principal, personal communication.
- 5 B. Porrit, former principal, personal communication.
- 6 BC Ministry of Education school report data: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/school_data_summary.php
- 7 Valerie Overgaard, letter in support of Hudson's application to Alcan arts program.
- 8 M. Muress, head teacher at Hudson, personal communication.
- 9 Data from 2009 VSB Inner City Schools Project Review Report: <http://www2.vsb.bc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/F46FA556-E5D8-4388-B6FB-3E3E25613515/0/April272009SpecialCommitteeIIIIMeetingInnerCitySchoolsProjectReview3.pdf>
- 10 David Johnson/C.D. Howe Institute British Columbia School Performance Database (2010) http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/BC_2010_Grade4_CommunityProfiles.pdf
- 11 From a VSB report no longer on the VSB website.
- 12 BC Ministry of Education Projection Report for Public School Enrolment Headcounts 2009/10: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/capitalplanning/resources/databasesreports/enrolment/1558a-2009.pdf>
- 13 CityFacts Census Data Series: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/census/2006/popunder15.pdf>
- 14 From BC Stats Population Projections
<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/dynamic/PopulationStatistics/Query.asp?category=Health&type=HA&topic=Projections>
- 15 See <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/maps/lhamap.asp> for maps of different regions
- 16 <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/dynamic/PopulationStatistics/Query.asp?category=Health&type=HA&topic=Projections>
- 17 <http://1818cornwall.com/> and http://www.1818cornwall.com/downloads/1818_cornwall_oh1.pdf
- 18 From Vancouver Sun reporting <http://www.vancouver.sun.com/business/real-estate/Ambitious+proposal+still+early+stages/3055881/story.html> and <http://www.vancouver.sun.com/business/real-estate/Squamish+have+power+radically+change+city+skyline/3055882/story.html?id=3055882>
- 19 Data from VSB Learning Services
- 20 Data from VSB Learning Services
- 21 Data from Ministry of Education school satisfaction surveys:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/school_data_summary.php
- 22 http://www.vanymca.org/pdf/ymca_uw_sacc_report1.pdf
- 23 From Peters, L., 2005, Parental attitudes and school choice: the public/private distinction
<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/bitstream/1892/4201/1/etd2855.pdf>
- 24 See Baker, L., 2005, Spurring urban growth in Vancouver, one family at a time, New York Times,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/25/realestate/25nati.html?ex=1293166800&en=3747a72aa79b22aa&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>