

As parents of the students at the Roger Clap, we are shocked and saddened to learn of Superintendent Johnson's proposal. Without warning as being a turnaround school or being given a probationary period, Ms. Johnson informed the school on Tuesday that the Clap would be closing its doors at the end of the current academic year. Many of us heard the unfortunate decision on the news before it was presented to us by our school's administration.

The description of our school on the Boston Public School's website, in our opinion, is inaccurate and falls so completely short of who we are. We are the quintessential neighborhood school. We have students whose grandparents went to this school...a school that boasts the title of historical landmark, being the second oldest school in Boston. We refer to ourselves as the Hidden Gem, a school that, despite its urban framework, remains a tight knit community of families who are committed to their children's education and the prosperity of the school. We view ourselves as a welcoming environment of parents, staff, educators and students who are committed to excelling academically, emotionally and socially. We pride ourselves on our values.

We value our size. The fact that there are 166 students across seven grades enables not only the administrators, faculty and staff to know personally each and every family, but it enables the parents of our school to know all the children as well. We also value the fact that, because we are small, there is a lot of social interaction amongst the different grades. Our children do not experience bullying or any sort of elitism issues that many other schools face.

Because we are a small school, we also enjoy a degree of safety that is unique to the city of Boston. Our students and parents all know one another, and children can run around on our playground, sometimes out of sight, with the knowledge that we are all looking out for one another.

We value our diversity. Our school is a beautiful and accurate picture of the community it serves. We are made up of many different ethnic groups, religious affiliations, and socioeconomic statuses. You will not see a more beautiful picture than Ms. Casey's second grade portraits, where there is no majority race represented but instead a vibrant and varied image of humanity, reflective of our beautiful city. Furthermore, we are a school whose student body is comprised of $\frac{3}{4}$ regular education and $\frac{1}{4}$ special education, all of whom are appreciated and esteemed.

We value our location. The majority of our students this year are walkers. We feel strongly that the Roger Clap is a school that serves her immediate community. Every day you can find myriad parents and children socializing in the school yard after school, enjoying one another's company and developing stronger neighbor relations and friendships. This improves our neighborhood (as well as the perceived value of Dorchester). These relationships enable us to make Dorchester/South Boston a place where we feel known and esteemed.

Furthermore, our school is a historical landmark, the second oldest in Boston. Our school is in partnership with the Dorchester Historical Society, founded by Roger Clap, a commander at Fort Independence in South Boston (at Castle Island). Roger Clap was one of the predominant founders of Dorchester, and we are proud to be a part of that history.

We have many alumni who still live in the neighborhood, who took their children to the Roger Clap, and whose children now are students at our school. This loyalty is rare among other elementary schools, but is par for the course for our school.

We value our faculty and administration. We are a part of a school whose teachers truly, deeply care for their students and their families. We as parents feel that our advocacy for the needs of our children is heard. For example, we spoke often last year at School Site Council meetings to address the desire for art at our school, and this year we have an art teacher! We see our teachers and our principal continually go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the well-being of our children.

We are deeply saddened by the news of our schools' closing, and will do what we can as concerned parents to attempt to keep our doors open, so that there may be new generations of students who can take advantage of the great education available at the Roger Clap. We as the Parent Council feel that our school ought not to be closed based, as the decision was, solely on our MCAS scores. We urge you to consider the greater context of the thriving community that we enjoy at the Roger Clap, which is a service to not only our children but to Dorchester/South Boston as well. We believe that the mark of an excellent student goes beyond his or her ability to achieve high scores on a standardized test, but in his or her ability to become decent, compassionate citizens who are appreciative of, interested in, and concerned about the world around them. This is the beauty and

benefit of a child's education at our school.

We are willing to consider proposals to hear how we might advance our MCAS scores. These past few years our school has attempted to do this, but we are constantly overlooked for funding and endowments for things like tutoring due to our size. We look forward to coming to a mutually beneficial position that will benefit both Boston Public Schools as well as the friends of the Roger Clap School.