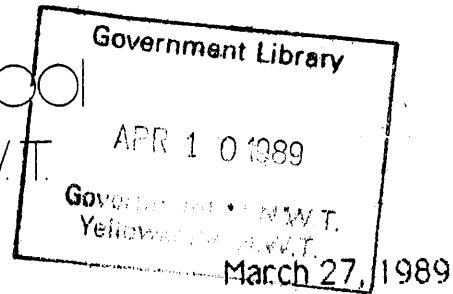




Umimmak School
Grise Fiord, N.W.T.



Brian Menton
Director
Baffin Divisional Board of Education
Iqaluit, N.W.T.
XOA OJO

Dear Brian:

The purpose of this letter is to voice some concerns of mine regarding the **planned staff reduction at Umimmak School, Grise Fiord, for the 1989/1990 school year**. I have been told by my supervisor that Umimmak School will have a .5 reduction.

I know you are very familiar with what can happen to a school when positions are cut. Current supervisors and former teachers at Umimmak School realize that Grise Fiord offers a special set of circumstances for teaching. As a result of these circumstances perhaps special consideration should be given to the staffing of Umimmak School.

The most obvious reason to take a close look at staffing for Umimmak School is the number of grade levels involved. Officially the school offers a kindergarten to grade nine program. (Grade nine starts at the beginning of the next school year) With an anticipated enrollment of 21 we expect to have students at all levels except grade 5. Students will therefore be grouped according to their reading ability for most of their day. In the morning this means grades 1-2 form a group, grades 3-4 form a group, and grades 6-9 form a group. These groupings need three teachers; this year we used 2 teachers and the Classroom Assistant. In the afternoon Kindergarten must be added to make a total of four groups. We managed this by having local instructors come to school in the afternoon.

This staffing arrangement worked because we had three groups in the morning and four groups in the afternoon with the right number of teachers to cover each group. If half a position is removed then you can appreciate the inconvenience to groupings and the doubling of the workload on the full time teacher.

I think it should be pointed out that there is really no such thing as a "free" period in this school. Also that very often there is no such thing as a recess break for teachers because of the juggling of groups and the supervision of students. We can add to these realities the fact that at least one full afternoon a weekend and sometimes two are required to plan and get the administrative tasks finished. This planning time must be considered because all the planning for the Classroom Assistant must be done with a teacher so that programs can be followed. Then that teacher has to do his or her own planning. This means that leaving the school at a reasonable hour is not realistic. Again, I am sure you can see the problems involved when half a position is removed.

Grise Fiord is a difficult community to find substitute teachers. This is simply because of the size of the community. Therefore, on some occasions, the teachers are required to work while sick. Also when local staff go for meetings or are sick the workload of the teachers or Classroom Assistant doubles. Cutting half a position would add a great deal of stress to this already busy school.

I would be overstating this case if I did not mention the high calibre of students at Uminmak School. The fact that discipline has not been a problem for us over the last two years and the fact that students are keen has helped ease what could have been a much more difficult situation. However, this does not change the fact that the realities I have stated above are real and call for an above average amount of motivation on the part of teachers and the Classroom Assistant to do even an adequate job.

The realities I have mentioned so far have to do strictly with school. I feel very strongly that with the long dark season and the lack of professional contact that two full time teachers making two full time salaries is an important motivator during the school year. I don't think it is fair to assume that a half time teacher would or should automatically take up the slack and do a full time job with his or her spouse. I would feel very used if that happened to me and I would also feel very obligated to go in to school with my spouse.

At this point in time the community of Grise Fiord has an excellent attitude toward education. This has not always been the case. I feel that the loss of a half position and the confusion within the school following that loss could seriously damage relations between the school and the community.



Finally, I feel obliged to tell prospective candidates for teaching positions at Grise Fiord some of these realities, both positive and negative. With two positions this school can work. With one and a half positions I feel that teachers would have a much harder job at making it work than we have had.

Brian, since you have spent many years in Baffin Schools I feel you can fully appreciate that what I have stated above is not professional belly-aching, but rather a genuine concern for the special situation that exists in Grise Fiord. Pauline and I have greatly enjoyed Grise Fiord and its children and we leave because it is time. We have appreciated the support you have shown in the past and leave the Baffin Board with a good feeling. Staffing in Grise Fiord seems a minor concern compared with the entire region, but please give this situation some serious consideration.

I have consulted the Grise Fiord Education Council about this letter. Some of the members felt that they would like to add their signatures as a way of showing support for keeping two full time positions at Umimmak School.

sincerely,

Mark Hunter

Tony Ullikatar-C.E.C. vice chairperson

OOLEESIE AKEEAGOK

Ooleesie Akeeagok-C.E.C. member

Annie Audlaluk- C.E.C. member

c.c. Fiona O'Donahue
 Chuck Tolley
 Lorne Levy
 Joe Enook
 Ludy Pudluk