



EDUCATION / PARENTING / APRIL 1, 2016

## Ask Ariel: School Boundary Changes — Ugh!



Dear Ariel,

My son attends kindergarten at a wonderful public school whose boundaries have been targeted to change by the school district. We also have a preschool-age daughter, and we would like her to attend the same school as our son. No final decision has yet been made, but it seems likely that our house will be in the area of another elementary school and even more likely that our middle and high schools will be different as well. I have two questions. Should we just “pull off the band aid” and change schools now so our children can have the same peer group throughout

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their public school careers? Should we talk to our son about these changes when it is still undecided?

–Boundary Anxious Parent

Dear BAP,

Our job as parents is to protect our children. We usually think of protecting children in terms of keeping them safe from harm. In the case of prolonged decision-making by the bureaucratic behemoth of a large urban school district, we need to protect our children from chaos. I strongly recommend against telling your son about a possible school change. He is still quite young and doesn't need to share in your anxiety about the possible school boundary changes that are causing a citywide uproar.

The “pulling off the band aid” part of your question is a bit more complicated. Your instinct is right that there is value in your children attending the same schools as their peers through high school. There is great comfort in knowing that a classmate from second grade is now your high school biology lab partner. But many kids have totally different sets of friends from different school levels — there is just no way to know how this will play out for your children.

However, if you love the elementary school, both of your children will likely be able to complete fifth grade there due to something called “grandfathering.” Your family will be connected to that elementary school community for as many as eight to ten years, depending on how old your daughter is. The relationships you and your son have built at your current school will guide your choice. If the school is as wonderful as you say, that is a good indication you have landed in the right place.

0 SHARES

Ariel Frager

Ariel Frager is a school counselor and has a private therapy practice that



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