Testimonial

"Phoenix didn't just help me graduate. It changed the direction of my life. When I came to Phoenix, I was struggling personally and falling through the cracks in a traditional school environment.

At Phoenix, I wasn't a number. I was a person.

The staff knew me. They noticed when I was struggling. They believed in me when I had trouble believing in myself. They didn't define me by where I was - they saw where I could go.

I graduated from Phoenix in 2019, went on to college, earned my degree, and built a life and career I am incredibly proud of.

The student who walked into Phoenix struggling is not the same person who walked out.

Phoenix gave me something I hadn't found anywhere else: a small, supportive community built for students who need a different path to succeed.

That kind of environment isn't a luxury. For some students, it is the difference between falling through the cracks and finding their way forward.

I don't know where I would be today if Phoenix hadn't been there when I needed it. But I know where I am because it was.

Someone once decided that a student like me was worth the extra time, patience, and resources.

Please make sure the next student gets that same chance."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Thank you for spreading awareness about this! I went to phoenix last year and it was such an amazing experience! I instantly connected with my peers, felt welcomed by the teachers and staff, and began to enjoy going to school. Before that, I had zero motivation and saw no point in going to school, but going to phoenix reignited my spark. Most of my friends share the same story. They too believe that phoenix made a really big impact on their lives. Phoenix has changed the lives of so many kids and has created so many opportunities. Phoenix must remain open for the future of teenagers to come!"

Anonymous Phoenix Alumni

Testimonial

"Phoenix Alternative had such a huge impact on my life, and I'll always be grateful for the time I spent there. The teachers were truly amazing and went above and beyond to make sure I was okay, both in school and personally. They didn't just see me as a student, they genuinely cared about me, looked out for me, and always made me feel supported and understood.

Phoenix gave me a sense of comfort and belonging during a really important time in my life. The relationships I built with the teachers and the support they gave me are things I'll never forget. They believed in me, encouraged me, and helped me become the person I am today.

I'm so thankful I had the opportunity to be part of Phoenix Alternative. It wasn't just a school to me, it was a home, a place where people genuinely cared, and that made all the difference in my life.

That's why it's really difficult to hear about the plans to relocate Phoenix into a basement. A school that has meant so much to so many students deserves a space that reflects the importance of the work being done there. Phoenix has always been a place where students could feel safe, comfortable, and supported.

I know firsthand how important Phoenix is to its students. I hope the people making these decisions remember what makes Phoenix special: the teachers, the support, the sense of community, and the environment that allows students to thrive.

Phoenix changed my life, and I'll always be grateful for it. I just hope future students are given the same kind of space, care, and opportunity that I was lucky enough to have."

[redacted]

Testimonial



"Ive suffered with anxiety for years and I used to miss so much school due to panic attacks and a whole bunch of other stuff related to it. Phoenix has been so understanding the entire time and ive never actually been so excited to get out of bed in the morning and attend school. I wake up at 6 everyday and do an hour and a half ride to get to phoenix and I dont even care. The staff are amazing and I genuinely do not believe id continue going to school at all if it shut down"

Anonymous

Testimonial



"For two years, I couldn't even step foot inside LJA. I panicked and had to turn around and those
years made me miserable and depressed.
The first year at Phoenix I still struggled with going in, but I actually went inside the school, I
actually went in and tried- something I never would've been able to do at LJA or LSA.
The teachers are extremely supportive and have helped not only me but everyone that goes
there.
I've been going regularly since the start of this year and going into every class, there are still
some bad days but I never would've ever gotten to this point without this school.
I constantly tell my friends at LSA that even though I miss them I love this school and highly
recommend it, some even wanting to transfer because of how much they dislike the school they
are in.
I don't know where I would be without the help of Phoenix and its staff." [redacted]

[redacted]

Testimonial



I wouldn't have finished high school without Phoenix, plain and simple.

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I was a very awkward person growing up. I had no friends I was always by myself and going to school in LSA was torture for me. I was outcasted I was treated differently and I wanted to drop out and I did for some time until my mom found Phoenix alternative. She brought me for a meeting and the teachers made me feel so comfortable and so did the principal and I took a chance with this school I put myself back into it. I made friends that were lifetime friends I made Family, especially with the teachers they cared so much about me and my well-being. I was alone for a long time and I was so sure that I was gonna be a dropout or an addict but this school saved me and gave me a second chance It made me the person that I am today and I encourage anyone to go to this school because it really changed my life and I can't even put into words how much It really did change my life, but they saved me when I didn't know I needed it. They have a warm place in my heart. For kids who need an outlet this is the place to have an outlet this place saves them. This place gives them friends and gives them family in a lifetime friends and family. Please don't remove it. I hope one day when I have kids that they can go to Phoenix. I want this place to be still there because I was so sure my life was going into a downhill until I put myself into Phoenix and I gave it a chance and out of it I made a family I made lifetime friends and I became the person I am today."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Phoenix Alternative High School changed my life, just as it has changed the lives of so many others.
Before finding Phoenix, I was drowning. I was battling severe depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts, which caused my grades to plummet. I wanted desperately to succeed, but no matter how hard I tried at my previous school, I felt invisible and doomed to fail.
That all changed the moment I walked through the doors of Phoenix. From day one, I knew my life would be different. The staff welcomed me with open arms—literally hugging me and making me feel like a long-lost family member.
For the first time, teachers took the time to truly understand who I was and how I learned. They tailored the curriculum to my specific needs, shaping each subject so I could finally comprehend, engage, and excel. And I did excel.
Having our own dedicated building gave us something we desperately needed: a second home. At Phoenix, your socioeconomic status doesn't dictate your worth. If you don't have money, nobody cares—you are still loved, valued, and deeply respected.
The staff looks after the whole student, not just the report card. If you are hungry, there is always food, and you are encouraged to serve yourself just like you would at home. If you have a bad day, you can talk to a teacher without any fear of judgment. Because we grow so close to them, their guidance truly matters to us.
Phoenix meets students with compassion instead of punishment. If you oversleep and miss the bus, they don't scold you; they gently tell you, 'We can do better tomorrow.' If you feel sick, they offer you tea, a heating pad, and a couch to rest on during lunch. If you fall behind academically and ask for extra help or one-on-one tutoring, the teachers are genuinely thrilled that you advocated for yourself.
What I am trying to say is that this staff and this building represent our home. We are a family, and because we are a family, we never have to feel ashamed. Even when conflicts arise, the staff teaches us to resolve our differences like mature adults. Within a couple of weeks, things are resolved because we are taught how to communicate.
Every day, we walk through the front doors and see a quote that I will live by for the rest of my life: 'Learning isn't about the destination; it's about the journey
This doesn't just apply to academics; it applies to life. We live in a society that rushes us to get to where we want to be, constantly pushing us to project an image of perfection. But we forget that the true value of the destination lies entirely within the journey itself.
My journey was, and still is, Phoenix. I attended two different elementary schools and two different high schools, but Phoenix is the only place that truly saved me.
Today, I am a proud mother of two beautiful boys, and I am married to an amazing husband whom I actually met right here at Phoenix. Our oldest son is on the autism spectrum. It breaks my heart—and I know it would break the hearts of many other parents—to imagine a future where Phoenix doesn't exist.
Some children simply need a smaller environment. They need educators who can dedicate the extra time required for them to succeed to the best of their abilities. They deserve a space where they can be proud of who they are without suffering mentally and emotionally. In traditional high schools, these children often slip through the cracks because they don't feel heard, valued, or capable of speaking up.
Needless to say, Phoenix is a sanctuary that we must protect and keep alive for our families and for future generations of students.
Furthermore, we must address the proposal to relocate Phoenix into a wing of an already existing school. Let me be perfectly clear: doing so would be immensely wrong, highly disruptive, and deeply degrading—not only to the students but to the faculty who pour their hearts into this program.
Our teachers are the absolute heartbeat of Phoenix. They routinely dedicate hours of their own time after school, working tirelessly simply because they love what they do and believe fiercely in our potential. They are our heroes, and they deserve to be treated as such. To shove these incredible educators and their students into a wing of an already existing school and call it a school is an insult to their dedication.
Teachers need their own dedicated building—their own autonomous space—to truly excel and effectively implement the specialized care Phoenix is known for. Cramming us into a corner of another institution will cause unnecessary stress and do far more harm than good to both staff morale and student mental health.
We cannot expect students to thrive when the very environment they are placed in signals that they are an afterthought. We are not prisoners to be hidden away out of sight. We are students, and they are teachers. We deserve to be treated with the exact same dignity, autonomy, and respect as any traditional school that enjoys the privilege of its own campus. Placing us in a wing of an already existing school sends a damaging message that we are 'less than,' destroying the sanctuary of safety and equality we have fought so hard to build. We need a proper learning environment to survive.
Just like the mythical phoenix, when we are tested, we will come together. And together, we will rise to defend our school."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"From grades 5 - Secondary 2, I had an extremely difficult time getting to school. With diagnoses of major depressive disorder and panic disorder it was nearly impossible for me to leave my house, let alone enter a large school with thousands of students.
Over those years I attended three different schools in the Sir Wilfrid Laurier school board, one being an elementary school, the other 2 were highschools, all with my best efforts to make it to class. The first highschool had too many negative memories, and the moment I'd catch the building in view it would send me into a state of panic. I struggled every day for 1.5 years. The second one was better, I had been given student aids to help me. Regardless of this, I still was unable to make it into a classroom with 30+ students given the nature of my anxiety.

Finally, in Secondary 3 I was able to attend Phoenix Alternative. Not only was it a completely fresh start, away from the establishments where so many negative memories were tying me down, but it was smaller, more involved, and a place where the staff truly cared about you and you never doubted that. I went from being completely shut down and withdrawn, to blossoming socially and academically. The staff of Phoenix is who I have to thank for that. Through out my time there they helped me through both my studies, and how to regulate my emotions.

This is not something you can find just anywhere. It takes a special type of person, a special type of care, and a different way of doing things to help students that simply can't make it in the mainstream system.

It's heartbreaking to hear that the value of an establishment like Phoenix Alternative is going unseen. Like many of my peers, if it weren't for Phoenix, I would not be the strong willed, educated, kind, and caring person I am today. Frankly I don't think I would have survived. Phoenix saves students, and Phoenix saves lives.

It absolutely saved mine."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Phoenix alternative was a safe haven for me. I had been outted as a lesbian at my previous school, my religious and abusive parents were thankfully advised to send me to Phoenix. Although I never admitted to the staff the extent of the abuse going on at home, they took care of me. They fed me when I was hungry, they were safe for me to confide in, they helped me gain confidence and independence, they gave me resources to help manage my depression and anxiety, they treated me with respect and dignity. Without phoenix I don't think I would be alive today. I would not have graduated, let alone been valedictorian. I've had teachers in my first high school tell me I'm stupid to my face, there was no way I could've gotten the education I needed with my undiagnosed learning disabilities at a regular school. Phoenix alternative and the staff there did not expect me to fit in some sort of mold. They lifted me up as I was, helped me learn and grow in the ways that come naturally to me. If it weren't for Phoenix I would not be who I am. That school saved my life and my education."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I have had anxiety my whole life, i have been made to feel lonely and unworthy my whole life, when i came to phoenix i felt like i finally belonged somewhere, the teachers became my family, ive never seen a teacher genuinely care like the phoenix teachers do, they made me feel like i finally had a safe place to go to, they never made me feel stupid if i got something wrong, they comforted me when i didnt wanna open up about my grandmas death and just sat with me, i could write so much on how much this school means to me, they saved me, they made me feel safe and like i belong somewhere, like i wasnt a freak for being trans, when i wasnt comfortable in the mens or womans bathroom they gave me use of a staff one, to shut down phoenix is to shut down a safe place for so many people, phoenix and the staff there have done so much for so many kids."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Hi I'm [redacted] I attended Phoenix for a few years. I graduated around 2022-2023. I didn't live a great life you see...my parents werent the best to me, but the staff at Phoenix were very caring and prepared me for the world much better than my parents did. Phoenix has amazing staff that don't talk down to you, and treat you like you're a fellow human being. They treat you like an equal and not an obligation at their job. They make a dialogue and great companionship instead of ignoring you. Phoenix is great for people on the autism spectrum who have trouble learning in standard schools. Phoenix lets people work at their own pace, explains it clearly in ways anyone can understand, and they have great classes that actually prepare you for the real world, such as the Home Economics class.

Phoenix is a staple on the community! It has to stay! Save Phoenix!!!"

[redacted]

[redacted]timonial

"My name [redacted]. I was heavily bullied when I went to Laval junior. I didn't feel like I belonged and I was extremely depressed. I was really struggling with not only the students but the teachers. Nobody listened and nobody really cared. The teachers liked to pick favorites, which left those that weren't favorites to deal with the consequences. It's hard. I used to lash out a lot, mainly because I wasn't being heard by the teachers but mostly because the students made my life miserable. There was a time where I generally wanted to die despite not having it in me to go through with anything. Once I transferred to phoenix, things got better. I actually had friends, people weren't complete assholes. For once I felt like I belonged. I started lashing out less, my grades went up and for once I was happy. The teachers were amazing, they actually cared and knew how to handle certain things. This school has help so many people, more than Lja and Lsa ever have. Myself included."

[redacted]

[redacted]timonial



"To the Phoenix Alternative High School staff,
I simply want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for my son and for me over the three years he spent there. During a difficult time in his life, when he was anxious, overwhelmed, and needed someone to lean on, you were there. You showed him kindness, patience, understanding, and genuinecare—and that meant more to me as his mother than I could ever express.
Thank you for being there when he needed you, for believing in him, and for helping him find his way. I will always be grateful that Phoenix was there for him.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Testimonial



"Phoenix Alternative High School changed my life. When I arrived, I was failing every class and getting into all kinds of trouble. By the time I graduated in 2000, I was earning honour roll marks and received the Lieutenant Governor's Award for academic and social achievements. But my experience at Phoenix was about so much more than grades.

For the first time, I felt a real sense of belonging and school spirit. I became involved in student government, helped run the "student dépanneur," and took part in just about any project or initiative happening at the school. I went from struggling in school to wanting to contribute to it.

Phoenix gave me a community—not only through my peers, but through the teachers who supported and encouraged me. That sense of connection helped me discover confidence, purpose, and what I was capable of achieving.

Looking back, I am deeply grateful for my time at Phoenix. It gave me the chance to see myself differently and changed the direction of my life."

[redacted]

Testimonial



"I'm not going to sugar coat it Phoenix helped me and saved my life I had come from the psych ward before joining Phoenix.

Phoenix was my last hope coming from a school that previously failed me in my needs. Phoenix helped me I went from seeing my grades in the 40's and 50's, to getting 60's and 70's in classes I previously had trouble in.

Before Phoenix I never thought I'd be able to graduate highschool, and not only did I graduate I now have a plan for the future and I could not have done it without Phoenix and their staff. Who helped me grow into the person I want to be.

To the kids who are struggling in a education system that has failed them multiple times Phoenix is a second chance for them.

I'd be dead, I would have given up if it wasn't for Phoenix."

[redacted]

Testimonial



"My names Cameron. I started going to phoenix because I was ready to drop out of high school. I was bullied for being trans and I struggled with things like depression, anxiety, adhd and I had such a hard time going to school everyday. Phoenix became a second home. It became a place I loved to learn and grow. The staff taught me to be strong and how to pick my battles. They showed me love and endless kindness. The teachers became like family and I simply could not have graduated without every one of them. Phoenix made me want to become a social worker to help other students like me. Everyone deserves a place to learn safely. And phoenix alternative was that safe place for me and so many others. I will forever be grateful. Thank you for letting me be the person I was meant to be. Thank you for being a safe space. We need more schools like phoenix.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Testimonial



"Phoenix wasn't just a regular high school for me, it was a place that I considered my second home during my secondary 4 & 5 years.

As someone who simply wanted a change after leaving my French private high school, this change was definitely worth it, as every day at Phoenix was filled with smiles, laughter and lots of fun memories I was able to create with the hard working teachers & staff as well as the wonderful friends I have made.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Before I went to Phoenix I would constantly say I was failed by the school system I was labelled a problem child since day one of my school career and like many children who get labelled a problem child every day was the same I'd show up I'd try to communicate get frustrated that I couldn't and lash out and I'd be sent to the principals office for the entire school day I missed every class for months of elementary and high school and because of that I genuinely never learned the proper way to express myself so I was bullied my whole life and instead of punishing the people who made me feel unwanted and made me feel like a burden for just trying to better myself and because of this I learned to just don't show up and if I did I wouldn't take it seriously because if you don't take it seriously it doesn't hurt as bad if you fail. and going to Phoenix and meeting the amazing people and learning how to become myself was one of the most amazing experiences of my life"

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Some places are just buildings. This school was never just a building to me.

It was my safe place.

During some of the hardest moments of my early adulthood, when I was struggling to find my way and become the student and person I knew I could be, this school gave me something I desperately needed: time, patience, and people who believed in me.

They didn't give up on me. They didn't see my struggles as failures. They saw potential. They pushed me when I needed to be pushed, supported me when I needed support, and gave me the time I needed to grow.

And I truly believe that the fact that we were our own little school, with fewer than 100 students, made all the difference.

We weren't numbers.

We knew our teachers. Our teachers knew us. They knew when something was wrong, they knew our strengths, and they knew when we needed someone to believe in us a little harder.

And somehow, across every grade, we became a family.

There was something incredibly special about walking through those doors and knowing you were safe. No fear of bullying. No feeling invisible. No constant anxiety about where you belonged.

This was where we belonged.

Being separated from the overwhelming environment of a large school wasn't a disadvantage. It was our strength. It allowed us to learn differently, grow at our own pace, and build relationships that made us feel valued.

For some of us, this school wasn't just where we went to learn.

It was where we went to heal.

When the outside world felt too heavy, these walls gave us somewhere to breathe.

And that's something you can't measure with grades, statistics, or numbers.

Because sometimes, the most important thing a school can give a student isn't a diploma.

It's the feeling that someone believes in you enough to help you become the person you were always capable of being.

This school did that for me.

And I will carry that with me for the rest of my life."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I'm here writing this speech today because Phoenix Alternative High School was so much more than just a high school to me. It was a place where I felt understood, supported, and accepted for who I was as a person, no matter how much of a struggle I was in when I first joined this school, the staff showed up for me everyday and genuinely cared about me and the other students. They always went above and beyond to help us succeed in our classes. I had family-like experiences there that I know I have never been able to experience at a high school with 1500+ students. Phoenix gives students who may struggle in a traditional school environment a second chance and a place where they can actually feel like they belong. Their system put me from a lost broken kid to the strong independent woman I am today. I always felt at home going to school which is something I struggled with at a regular school and even in my own home back then. Phoenix is the only school that raised my poor failing grades to actual passing grades. I was miserable at my old schools. I begged my mother to put me in Phoenix and it was the best decision my mother had ever made for me and my education. I used to live in Blainville at the time and I was taking the bus every day just to get there because it was the one and only school that put my education on top and the only school I had passing grades at because of how involved the teachers were with helping me. It also made it so much easier to concentrate for me as well because of the quantity of people in the classroom. Phoenix's home-like environment also made me so comfortable to be myself, even when I used to think it was impossible to put myself out there. I'm incredibly grateful that I had the opportunity to attend Phoenix. I'm also so grateful to have made friends at this school that I still talk to everyday. Having the opportunity to have been able to experience a regular school with thousands of students and a school with only around 55 students, I would send my kids to the school with 55 students if I know they get to experience the same education I did. Phoenix deserves to stay Phoenix always and I will always stand strong with the only school that shaped me into who I am today."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"To the rest of the school board system, I was #0086199 a student placed into different focus groups, evaluated by psychologists, and often defined by what others thought I needed. Growing up with two brothers who excelled in school and made the honour roll meant I was constantly looking at some very big shoes to fill. For a long time, I felt alone, misunderstood, and like I was the only one who struggled to fit into the traditional school system.

Then I got the call that I was going to Phoenix.

For the first time, I was surrounded by people who understood what it was like to have difficulties in school. I wasn't the only student with an IEP. I wasn't the only person who learned differently, struggled differently, or needed something different from the traditional school system. There was an incredible comfort in realizing that I wasn't alone.

Phoenix gave me something I had spent years searching for: a place where I felt seen, understood, accepted, and believed in. I arrived there feeling like a number in a system, but I left knowing that I was so much more than #0086199.

Hearing that Phoenix is closing its doors is difficult to put into words. To some, it may have simply been a school, but to so many of us, it was a second chance. It was a place for students who may not have found their place anywhere else a place that saw something in us when the traditional system sometimes couldn't.

Without Phoenix, I don't know whether I would have ever walked across a stage and received my high school diploma. That alone changed the direction of my life.

One of the greatest things Phoenix taught me was that once you're part of that family, you don't simply leave it behind when you graduate. You carry those people, those memories, and everything that school gave you wherever life takes you. We may not sit in the same classroom anymore, and we may go years without all being in the same room, but the class of 2016 will always be connected by the place that gave so many of us somewhere to belong.

A building can close. A school can disappear from a map. But a family doesn't disappear when the doors close.
After all, that's what a Phoenix does. We fall. We rise. And we carry the fire forward.

Phoenix didn't just help me graduate. It gave me a family, and it taught me that struggling in one system never meant I was incapable of succeeding in life.

I've learned something about the sir wilfird laurier school board since then: you cannot judge a plant by how well it grows in the wrong environment. Some plants struggle, wither, or never reach their potential in one place, yet flourish when they're finally given the soil, care, light, and space they need. Students aren't so different. Sometimes a child isn't failing the environment is simply failing to give that child what they need to grow.

- [redacted]

[redacted]

Testimonial



"I graduated from Phoenix in 2024 and like many others, I was on the path to dropping out. I hadn't attended school for over a year during COVID and had to repeat Secondary 3. I was also on the verge of failing math.

Because of Phoenix, I not only completed secondary three, but I surpassed even my own expectations. I went from sixties in math to nineties. I graduated from high school and got accepted into cégep. No, not every hardship in my life went away, but without Phoenix I would have been a lot worse off. The attentiveness that the teachers, behaviour technicians, and overall environment provided me taught me true resilience and hope. Without Phoenix, I don't know where I would be."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Phoenix Alternative High School changed my life. At my previous high school, I struggled with my grades and felt that my teachers had given up on me. At Phoenix, they believed in me. They pushed me to do better and be better, helped me back up when I fell, and taught me to believe in myself. Without their support, I never would have made it to college.

Since then, two of my children have finished their high school years at Phoenix, and another currently attends. One struggled academically, just as I did. The other two were being bullied and needed somewhere safe to learn. Phoenix gave them that safety, along with the support and acceptance every child deserves. Other children have come to Phoenix for the same reason: they needed a place where they could learn without fear.

Taking that away is reprehensible. Even relocating the school can mean putting vulnerable students back into environments where they did not feel safe.

The school board should be ashamed of considering changes that could jeopardize the security and sense of belonging these children have finally found.

Phoenix gave me a future I once struggled to imagine. Now it is giving my children—and so many others—the same chance. That deserves to be protected."

[redacted]

Testimonial



"For me Phoenix was more than just a school, it was a place of transformation that changed my life. At Phoenix, I learnt so much more than just academics. The school created a safe environment for me to learn to overcome my anxieties and begin to believe in myself. That wouldn't have been possible without the amazing staff that believed in me and showed me unwavering support and patience. Phoenix creates an environment where anyone can feel like they belong and I made great and lasting friendships there. I went from dreading going to school every day to looking forward to it. I have many fond memories from my time at Phoenix and I know I would not be the person I am today without my experience there."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I was a student at Phoenix Alternative High School from 2012-2014. Like many Phoenix students, I went to this school after the mainstream school system failed me. After the passing of my father in 2009, I was severely bullied and diagnosed with anxiety disorder soon after. To this day, almost 15 years later, just seeing the LSA building gives me a pang of anxiety.

When I started school at Phoenix, I instantly felt safe and knew that this was a place I could succeed. I went from missing school weekly at LSA to never missing a day of school at phoenix. I would get to Phoenix at 7am, 2 hours before class started, and not leave the school until the teachers were ready to leave at the end of the day and they had to drag me and my friends out of the building. It was home away from home and we never wanted to leave.

I was present when the integrity of the school had been threatened in 2013 and the school board changed the dynamic of the original alternative school system.

I can say from personal experience, that permanently relocating Phoenix to the basement of an existing high-school would be detrimental to student success. In the fall of 2013, we were temporarily relocated to the basement of LSA while the Phoenix building was having work done. It was a very difficult few weeks. While we were on a different schedule to LSA students, we would still see some of them in the halls and you could tell by the looks of their faces that we were seen as "the troubled kids", "the bad kids", "the druggies". Phoenix students have always been viewed as less than. Shoving us into a basement would only solidify that view. In reality, we all have personal reasons for going to Phoenix, but the one thing we all have in common is that we want to succeed, we want to do better and we want a good future. Phoenix has made that possible.

It is very disheartening to see that the school board is considering shunning this amazing place to the basement of an existing school. A building that many of my peers have escaped from. It is even more devastating that the school board would even think about shutting Phoenix down completely. The students and staff at this school should not have to fight to keep our home alive.

Phoenix saved me. I wouldn't be the woman I am today without it."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I hated going to school since elementary school, I got bullied every day for the way I looked and more.
High school before Phoenix was even worse.
My life at home wasn't perfect either and I needed an out, I struggled with anxiety and borderline personality disorder, it made my day to day life extremely hard and I started abusing substances to make me forget what was going on in my life, that's when Phoenix came around and they helped me immensely.
The help they gave me isn't something that happened overnight it's something that they gave me through the years and something I still receive to this very day.
Every single teacher at Phoenix is the reason I am sober today
The reason I am who I am
The reason I have a steady job a house a fiancée a child the reason I am alive and for that I will forever be grateful to have had the privilege of attending Phoenix.
And this is also the reason Phoenix cannot shut down or move into another school, teenagers deserve to have the help they need and that will not be achieved without Phoenix."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Phoenix has saved my life in so many ways. I've been in a couple schools before Phoenix and their systems have always failed me in different ways. I started off high school getting severely bullied to the point it caused trauma and when I changed schools I became very angry and violence oriented. Before I came to Phoenix I was trying to get better but I just couldn't do it. I remember when I first walked into Phoenix for my first day I knew it was my school. The teachers have become my best friends and they all know where I'm coming from. If I hadn't gone to Phoenix I wouldn't be here today or I would have gone down the worst path possible. So what I want to say to the Phoenix staff is thank you so very much for saving my life and turning my view on life around."

Testimonial



"Before phoenix i hated school so much. I skipped and wasted my life away thinking I wouldn't be anything. Lsa finally told me I needed to go, they didnt recommend I whent to phoenix but against their judgment I gave it a shot. Now im doing good in all my classes and I dont ever want to leave. I choose to go to school everyday. I love phoenix"

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Phoenix is not a typical high school. It's a place where our kids can be themselves and feel supported and safe. The staff is beyond compare and no amount of praise can possibly be enough.

Phoenix has done more in a few weeks for my daughter than any other school has done her whole life.

School has never come easy for her going all the way back to elementary. We didn't know what to expect but following the advice of professionals we gave Phoenix a chance. It brought a sense of renewed hope and the possibility of a brighter future.

Moving it or closing it should not be on the table for this school. It is truly one of kind and needs to stay where it is to continue and support the students it serves."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I attended Phoenix for 1 year but that 1 year alone changed my life. I hated school for most of my life because of the constant bullying. I didn't feel like I belonged anywhere and it only got worse when I got to high school. The bullying continued, but then there was harassment and it went as far as sexual harassment. I tried so hard to speak up and my mother came to my defense as well but my previous school turned their backs on us. Mom didn't send me back to school for the rest of the year...

I was ready to gave up on myself but my mother refused and suggested we get into contact with Phoenix since they helped my older brother. Mom has always had such huge respect for Phoenix and loves the staff. When we went for the interview, I explained my situation and they did not hesitate to welcome me with open arms.

Every single staff member was nurturing, supportive, dedicated, compassionate, encouraging, and empathetic. It was my first time being in an environment where people actually cared and looked out for not only me, but all the students. These incredible people love what they do and it truly shows.

I completely understand the concerns about CDC Vimont because I was once a student there too, and I do agree that their building isn't in a suitable place for their students. But to risk shutting down Phoenix and taking something that can help future generations that are struggling is unfair. There's a reason why Phoenix has been open for so long because what they do works. They give their students a safe place to learn and help them navigate the bumpy roads they struggle to walk themselves.

I may not be part of Phoenix anymore... But I will always support them and I know A LOT of former Phoenix students that will do the same"

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I'm writing this speech to tell everyone how phoenix has change my life forever...phoenix wasn't just a regular high school it was way more than that...it was a family...everyday I was so excited to get up and get to school I felt wanted accepted and appreciated by the staff and the students and that's what made me succeed and get my diploma,I always had a hard time with confidence in my self and phoenix taught me to have the confidence in myself to succeed ...and I have kept those precious memories in my heart forever.Phoenix is about growing,and becoming the best version of yourself and I will forever be grateful for what they have done for me, I know for a fact that students need too feel important and putting this amazing school with an amazing staff in a basement because of money is completely wrong.Phoenix changes live daily and they deserve their own school completely."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Good evening. My name is Anthony Kaltsis and I am a former student of Phoenix Alternative School.
I understand that the School Board has a difficult responsibility. There are budgets to consider. Buildings. Enrollment. Available space. Logistics. Those are all real concerns.
But I'm standing here because there's another part of this decision that deserves just as much consideration: The human impact. The impact on students. The impact on teachers. And the impact on young people who are already trying to find their place.
I can speak to that... because I was one of those students.
Before Phoenix, I attended Rosemere High School. At the time, football was becoming serious for me. I was playing at a high level and getting looks from colleges like Champlain Lennoxville, Vanier college, & school outside of Canada
From the outside looking in, it probably looked like I had everything going for me. But in the classroom, I was struggling. I was failing classes and eventually ended up in adult education. And that wasn't addressing the real problem.
I didn't need less education. I needed education differently. I needed someone who had the time to know me. To understand how I learned. To sit down with me and say: "Hey. Let's figure this out."
And thankfully, before I completely slipped through the cracks... someone did.
My former principal, Ms. Lorenz, from Rosemère high school personally reached out to my parents and worked to help me get into Phoenix. Looking back today... that intervention changed my life.
Phoenix was different. Smaller. More personal.
Teachers didn't just know your name. They knew you. They knew when to push. They knew when something wasn't right. They knew when you needed accountability... when you needed encouragement...or sometimes, when you simply needed someone to listen.
And that's the part I hope isn't lost here.
Because what makes Phoenix work isn't just having fewer students in a room. It's the culture those teachers build. Patient. Consistent. Personal.
It's the kind of work that takes time. It takes trust. And it takes the right environment.
When we ask teachers to convince young people that they matter...that they're capable... that their future can be bigger than what they're going through today... then the environment we provide those teachers should reinforce that message. Not unintentionally undermine it.
And placement sends signals.
Imagine being 16 years old. You already feel like you didn't succeed in the traditional school system. Then every morning, you walk into another high school... surrounded by their identity... and then you go downstairs to the basement for your school.
Administratively, that may simply be available space.
But from that student's perspective, it can feel like: "This is their school... and we're just being accommodated inside of it."
That's not just about bricks and timetables. That's about the message.
And that message matters.
Because alternative education should describe how we educate a student... not how much we value one.
Phoenix gave me more than academic help.
I met students whose lives were completely different from mine. Some were struggling academically. Some emotionally or behaviourally. Some were dealing with things outside of school that most people never saw.
I remember my friend Loule in particular. He was having a difficult time. And I found myself sitting with him... talking to him... trying to steer him toward something better.
And somewhere along the way, while my teachers were helping me... I started learning how to help other people.
Those lessons stayed with me.

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Phoenix changed my life in ways I never thought a school could. There was a point where I genuinely didn't think I would ever graduate high school or making it to the end alive. Because of my mental health and severe anxiety, I needed a school with more structure, understanding, and support, and Phoenix gave me exactly that. They created an environment where I felt supported instead of judged, and where people understood that sometimes I needed a little more help to get through the day. The support I received at Phoenix was something I didn't feel I had at LTM, and it made a bigger difference than I can put into words. Phoenix became more than just a school to me. It became a place where I felt at home, a place where I felt safe, understood, and surrounded by people who genuinely cared about me. I never really loved going to school, but somehow, going to Phoenix every day became something I looked forward to. There were mornings when getting out of bed felt difficult, but knowing I was going to Phoenix made it a little easier. Because of Phoenix, I kept going when I once thought I couldn't. They believed in me when I struggled to believe in myself, and they helped me get to a place I never thought I would reach. I walked into Phoenix unsure if I would even make it to graduation, and now I get to walk out with a diploma, and being in cegep. I will forever be grateful for the people who made Phoenix feel like home, because they didn't just help me graduate, they gave me a place where I could finally feel like I belonged."

Testimonial

"I will start off by saying that Phoenix quite literally saved my life. Thinking back to a few months prior to attending the school, I was not going to make it. Some of the simplest things in life became the most difficult. I was suffering in a "typical" school. My grades were suffering and my mental health was suffering. I was bullied pretty much my entire life. From family environments to school environments, insecurities grew left and right. Highschool was a brutal place for my mind and body to be. I felt I couldn't be myself. I lied to people about who I truly was. I lied about my sexuality, I sucked in my stomach and I was slowly hiding everything that made me Bryana.

Although therapy helped me so much, one hour meetings once a week wasn't enough support as I struggled daily.

To this day, I stand by the fact that switching to Phoenix alternative was without a doubt the best decision I've ever made in myself. I had relatively good expectations as both of my siblings graduated from here as well. But I had no idea how much I was truly going to grow and flourish as a person. I could write on and on about how amazing this school was and the wonders it did for me. But I wouldn't have enough time in a day to do that as there's just so much I have to say. I'll wrap it up by saying that because of Phoenix, I am on my own path to success and I've developed tools and strategies to help me overcome any obstacles that I face throughout my path. The staff will always respond with "you did it yourself Bryana" but I stand by the fact that I could NOT have done this without them. Phoenix has gifted me a countless amount of memories that I'll keep closely to my heart forever. I've fostered friendships that I will have forever. And I've learned lessons that I'll remember forever. And for that, I am forever thankful.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Before Phoenix, I was just another student struggling to find somewhere I belonged.
Like many of the students who have walked through Phoenix's doors, I came from a school where I was bullied. My grades were fine at first, but they slowly started dropping. Not because the education was too difficult, but because of the people and the environment around me. I was made fun of every single day, and whenever I needed help, I felt like no one cared enough to actually step in.
During the summer between Sec. 2 and Sec. 3, my friend told me about Phoenix, the new school she was going to. My mom and I talked about it, and she told me to give LSA a try first.
Within my FIRST WEEK at LSA, I was spat on in front of staff and pushed around, and not even a teacher would bat an eye. My mom called Phoenix, and I got my interview that same week.
I still remember walking through those halls for the first time. I was scared. Starting at another new school terrified me because I didn't know if it would end up being like my old school.
But something felt different.
Every room I walked past, teachers would say hi. Students would say hi. People acknowledged me. There was just this feeling in the building that I couldn't explain.
I remember thinking, please let this place be different.
And it was.
I walked into Phoenix as a shy, depressed, lost 14-year-old.
I graduated as a confident, happy 17-year-old.
Phoenix wasn't just a school to me.
Phoenix was home.
And I know I'm not the only one who feels that way.
Every staff member took time out of their day to check on us, to make sure we were okay, to make sure our grades were staying afloat, but more importantly, to make sure we were staying afloat.
It wasn't just the guidance counsellors. It wasn't just the superintendents. It wasn't just a few teachers.
It was everyone.
The people at Phoenix cared about us as people, not just as students. They listened to us. They supported us. They nurtured us. They believed in us. They treated so many of us like we were their own.
I genuinely don't know where I would be today without the people at Phoenix.
There are so many students who can say the same.
Phoenix has helped students who felt lost find themselves again. It has given students a place where they feel accepted, understood and safe. For some of us, it wasn't just a place where we went to get an education.
It was a place that kept us going.
I will never be able to thank every single staff member enough for the love, patience and support they gave me throughout those years.
Phoenix changed my life.
It gave me a home when I didn't feel like I had one.
It gave me people who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself.
And it gave me the chance to become the person I am today.
Phoenix saves lives.
And so many students who have walked through those doors can attest to that.
That is what Phoenix means to me and that is why Phoenix NEEDS to have its own space and stay open!"

[redacted]

Testimonial

"I was 8 years old when i was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. My anxiety disorder affected my school attendance and grades. High school became impossible for me. I would rarely show up and was failing. It wasn't until I transferred to phoenix in secondary 4 where I finally had a chance to succeed. Without phoenix, I would not be where I am today. Because of the second chance phoenix provided I was able to not only complete my high school diploma, but has led to my pursuing higher education at university. I am currently studying a bachelors of Education at Concordia University to become the teacher I needed as a child. I sincerely thank all my academic success to the staff and teachers at phoenix who gave me a second chance at school. Without them, I would have never succeeded."

[redacted]

Testimonial

"Before I came to Phoenix, graduating from high school felt almost impossible.
I had gone through a number of personal and academic struggles that affected me in ways that were difficult to explain at the time. School had become a source of anxiety, pressure and stress. I felt overwhelmed, discouraged and, more than anything, I had started to believe that maybe I just wasn't capable of graduating.
That belief was reinforced when administrators at my regular mainstream high school told me that I would not graduate.
Imagine being a young person who is already struggling personally, emotionally and academically, and then being told by the people in your school that you are not going to graduate. At a time when I already had very little confidence in myself, hearing those words made me feel even more defeated. I began to accept that maybe graduation simply wasn't going to be part of my future.
Then I came to Phoenix.
And everything began to change.
For the first time, I felt like people actually saw me.
They didn't just see my grades, my difficulties or the things I hadn't accomplished. They saw me. They listened to me. They heard me. They supported me and validated what I was going through instead of making me feel like I was failing.
And that is because of the incredible people who make Phoenix what it is.
The teaching staff, support staff and administration are not simply people doing a job. They are people who come to work with an incredible amount of heart. They care deeply about the students who walk through those doors, many of whom arrive carrying struggles that others may never fully understand.
Their patience is extraordinary. Their compassion is genuine. Their commitment is selfless.
They take the time to understand each student as an individual. They recognize that sometimes a student needs more than a lesson or an assignment—they need someone to listen. Someone to encourage them. Someone to be patient with them. Someone to remind them that one difficult chapter of their life does not define the rest of their story.
That is what the people at Phoenix did for me.
They never made me feel like I was a lost cause. They never made me feel like I wasn't worth the effort. Instead, they gave me something I desperately needed at that point in my life: people who believed in me when I had stopped believing in myself.
The staff took the time to educate me in a way that worked for me. They encouraged me, supported me and helped me recognize that I was capable of much more than I had been led to believe.
And eventually, something I had been told would never happen did happen.
I graduated.
Not only did I graduate from Phoenix, but I graduated with a bursary.
For someone who had once been told by school administrators that she would not graduate, that accomplishment meant more than I can put into words.
But my story didn't end there.
I went back to school. I continued my education, and today I am a Licensed Practical Nurse. I have a career that I love and a future that, before Phoenix, I honestly could never have imagined for myself.
There was a time when I didn't even believe I would finish high school. Today, I work in a profession where I am able to care for and help other people.
That is the difference that Phoenix can make in a young person's life.
When I think about the person I was before Phoenix—the student who felt anxious, defeated, dejected and convinced she wasn't capable of succeeding—and compare that person to who I am today, I realize just how much Phoenix changed the direction of my life.
What makes Phoenix even more special is that their support didn't simply end the day I graduated. Even years later, they checked in on me just to ask how I was doing.
There was nothing they needed from me. There was no obligation to do it.
They checked in because they cared.
That tells you everything you need to know about Phoenix and the people who work there.
At Phoenix, you aren't just another student passing through the system. You matter. Your story matters. Your struggles matter. And your future matters.
The teachers, support staff and administration understand something incredibly important: sometimes the student who appears to be struggling the most simply needs someone who refuses to give up on them.
They were those people for me.
I don't know where I would be today without Phoenix. But I do know that before I arrived there, I had been told I wouldn't graduate, and I had started to believe it myself.
Phoenix changed that story.
Phoenix gave me an education, but they also gave me confidence, hope and the opportunity to see a future for myself when I couldn't see one on my own.
Nobody could have supported me in the way Phoenix did.
I will always be grateful to every teacher, every support staff member and every administrator who gave their time, patience, compassion and heart to students like me. They saw something in me that I couldn't yet see in myself.
Thank you, Phoenix, for seeing me. Thank you for hearing me. Thank you for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself. Thank you for not giving up on me.
Most of all, thank you for showing me that being told I wouldn't graduate did not have to be the end of my story. It was only the beginning."

[redacted]