

Montreal parents camp outside Royal Vale School to enroll their kids



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Every year, parents camp out for the chance to enrol their kids in the prestigious Royal Vale School in Montreal for the fall.

The practice of camping out for kindergarten spots has been a tradition at the school for decades, but it's not because of the overcrowding. Rather, some programs are popular and the school is zone-free, meaning kids from outside the area can attend.

Sarah Smart, one of the parents camping out, previously lived in Ontario and was shocked by the fact parents camp out.

But it's for a reason, she said.

“The reputation from Royal Vale has kind of come to us from the annual sleep out every year; if other parents are willing to sleep out in January, February, then I assume it's a good one to go to.”

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Parents said they enjoy the chance to camp outside and mingle with the other parents.

“It's a great time because the parents get to know each other,” says volunteer Alison Aylward. “Your kids are going through this journey for a least six years, some through high school, so it's kind of like being the trenches together. You get to know people really well.”

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Despite that silver lining, some parents say the system is broken.

“It always used to be schools like Royal Vale that had this system in place and it's been around for like 30 years, but now it's gone to the other zone schools in the neighborhood, and I think once it gets to the zone schools and people have to line up like in Cote St.Luc and Montreal west, then their definitely something wrong with the system,” mother Jennifer Miller said.

Cote St-Luc Coun. Mitch Kujavsky agrees.

“As a parent, I feel like this shouldn’t be the case, I believe it’s up to the school boards to have a long-term vision to plan for the demand and make sure that the supply for spots is taken care of and meet that demand in the long term. I believe that takes surveys asking people questions.”

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Royal Vale School has been known to have parents camp outside the school in order to secure a spot for their children in kindergarten, and now other schools in Montreal have started to follow the trend, such as Merton school. The school has filled its open spots.