



VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD

## BOARD / COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

Wednesday, April 13, 2016 at 7:00 PM,  
Education Centre Boardroom  
1580 West Broadway, Vancouver BC

### REVISED AGENDA

The meeting is being held on the traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Coast Salish peoples.

- I. Call Meeting to Order
- II. Motion to Dissolve the Board Meeting into Committee of the Whole
- III. Delegations re: *2016/2017 Preliminary Budget Proposals*

***Delegations will commence at 7:00 pm and will present at 5-minute intervals.***

1. N. Wilkes
  2. A.P. Moosmann
  3. L. Grieves
  4. John Oliver Secondary Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
  5. J. Smith
  6. N. Reithstein and Family
  7. Douglas Elementary/Douglas Annex Parent Advisory Council (PAC) – E. Jaaf
  8. J. Lazar
  9. N. Graves Macul
  10. Brock Elementary Parent Advisory Council (PAC) – K. Knight
  11. Mackenzie Elementary Parent Advisory Council (PAC) – D. Smythe
  12. C. Morgan
  13. Dr. R.E. McKechnie Elementary Parent Advisory Council (PAC) – S. Russell
  14. J. DelRaj
  15. C. Chung
  16. D. Day
  17. C. Li
  18. Access to Music Foundation – E. Yarlowe
  19. K. Min Lee
  20. S. McPeake
  21. I. Minty
  22. Hastings Elementary Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
  23. L. Cohen
  24. S. Jackson
  25. S. Coderre
  26. N. Lee
  27. V. Geary
  28. M. Hussain
- IV. Motion to Rise and Report from the Committee of the Whole
  - V. Motion to Reconvene the Board Meeting
  - VI. Adjournment

Good evening; thank you trustees and staff for allowing me to speak tonight. My name is Nathan Wilkes, a proud parent of a grade 11 Hamber student.

The dilemma in which the VSB finds itself—chronic, systemic underfunding—is deplorable. And, in truth, every year brings similar false choices: is this the year that we cut LGBTQ mentor staff? Or primary music programs? Or counsellor support staff? Or perhaps now the district-wide athletics coordinator will finally go?

The history of accommodationism is rife with regret, societal failure, and abject misery. And, local history teaches us that any success at balancing the budget this year will only result in new reduction demands next year. I won't comment directly on possible motives of the provincial government, but I can assure you of one thing:

**The cuts to educational funding will never end.**

As I see it, the VSB has three (3) options:

- 1) Create and pass a balanced budget, despite the severe educational impact of incremental, yet continual and ongoing cost reductions.
- 2) Either refuse to present a balanced budget, or vote against one.
- 3) Make significant cost reductions, at a much larger and unprecedented scale.

Two years ago I stood before you—stating the merits of music, of participation, and of inclusion—for building great citizens. I also argued that the government is, in fact, all of us, and that we must reclaim the governance of our province. Obviously, this last point has not been successful quite yet.

So, in closing, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you, our elected school trustees, about what should be the only priority that guides you, and no other: that is, to provide the very best educational system for all of the students of Vancouver, to help them become our next generation of world-class citizens. It is this, not any ideological preconceptions, which should be your focus.

The students of Vancouver are depending on you, so choose your path wisely.

Thank you.

**Presentation to the April 13, 2016 VSB Committee-of-the-Whole meeting for public input on the proposed budget**

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Alan Patola Moosmann. I have a daughter at Henry Hudson Elementary and a son at Kitsilano Secondary. I'm currently serving as one of the PAC vice-chairs at Henry Hudson, and I'm speaking tonight in a personal capacity as a citizen concerned about this proposed budget, and about the many years of underfunding and erosion of the quality of public education in B.C.

I acknowledge the difficult position trustees and board staff are in – without having adequate resources to maintain quality of service, painful choices are necessary to meet the legal requirement to balance the budget. I also acknowledge that these meetings inviting public response to the bad news are long, emotionally challenging and require absorbing information at well beyond the usual capacity of we mortals. Thank you for your attention and your patience!

I wish I were able to suggest creative and realistic alternatives to these budget cuts, but I don't yet have the depth of understanding necessary. I also don't want to get into a divisive "cut that instead" approach. What I can do is describe the four most likely impacts of the proposed cuts on Henry Hudson Elementary, based on conversations with the current school administration:

- 1) Cuts to school flex budgets on the order of 20% – this budget pays for basic supplies – pens, pencils, bandaids, textbooks, etc. This may well result in a greater dependence on parent fundraising for basic needs, with the attached danger that the differences between fundraising capacities of parent communities at different schools exacerbate inequities across the system. Some PACs manage to fundraise four figure sums in a year with difficulty, others can with little effort raise six figure sums, or a hundred times as much, (Hudson sits pretty much in the middle) but all children have an equal right to an adequately resourced education.
- 2) Cuts to the elementary band and strings program – this would involve a complete loss of the grade 6 and 7 band program, leaving the school choir, an extracurricular program organized through the Community Schools Team, as the only regular music activity at the school.
- 3) Cuts to district-based gifted staffing – this cut has been reduced in the updated preliminary budget proposal. It will still make it more difficult for students who are gifted in particular areas to access challenge programs that expose them to work more in line with their capabilities. Hudson has on the order of half a dozen children participating in challenge programs each year; typically applications are successful for about 60% of those students in the school community who could benefit from the more challenging work.
- 4) Cuts to enhanced services literacy teachers, special education support entitlements and elementary non-enrolling staff – these cuts have all been reduced in the updated proposal by more than half the amounts originally recommended. At the moment our school seems to have adequate resources to meet special needs within our current group of students. Any reduction in resources will damage that capacity, particularly if needs increase, either through more new students needing additional support, or new students needing more intense levels of support.

These concerns are likely common to many elementary schools in Vancouver. And although we need discussion about how best to share the pie, the deeper problem is that the pie hasn't been "right sized". A recent analysis

by the Parent Advocacy Network estimates the actual provincial education budget as having shrunk 11% between 2002 and the present, once inflation is taken into account. The same analysis shows that the proportion of GDP spent on K -12 education has shrunk from 3.8% to 2.7% over the same period (1). So in a province with an expanding economy and an overall budget surplus, we are both spending a lower proportion of our resources on education than before, and not keeping up with the real costs required to maintain a high quality system. The VSB's restoration budget draws a similar picture. We, through our government, are viewing education as a line item cost to be managed with maximum short-term efficiency, rather than a long-term investment fostering the growth of productive citizens ready for active, informed participation in public life.

The saddest example of this I have seen is the recent decision of School District 53 to close the only secondary school in Osoyoos in order to cope with a projected \$1.1 million shortfall. At the same time, construction continues on a new provincial prison near Osoyoos, a \$220 million project. Of course, the provincial government is but one of the partners in the project, and I haven't been able to find out what its share of the cost is, but I imagine it would be a significant proportion of the total. Say it's as low as 20%. We save \$1.1 million at the cost of closing a community's only secondary school, and spend \$44 million to open a prison. Understand that people with learning disabilities (somewhere between 5 and 10% of the overall population) have a much higher chance of becoming involved with the criminal justice system (25% of inmates in the correctional system with learning disabilities is one estimate provided by the system itself) (2) and the deeply uncomfortable question emerges – why are we as a society unwilling to pay for an ounce of prevention, and willing to pay for tons and tons of arguably not terribly effective cure?

So I ask all of you on the Board to please continue to frame the budget balancing task in terms of the least impact on the quality of education provided to the upcoming generation. Please also use the information all these parents are bringing forwards regarding the situation on the ground in their own schools and neighbourhoods in your own ongoing advocacy work – tell the stories you are collecting where they need to be heard. I also urge us all to take our concerns to our elected officials at the provincial level, where the source of the problem and the power to solve it lie. To better equip myself and my school community for effective advocacy I've been connecting over the past months with our DPAC, and with well-informed parent advocacy groups such as the Parent Advisory Network and Families Against Cuts to Education. I hope that many other parents will do the same.

Finally, I ask each of us to search our own beliefs and behaviours and question our own parts in creating this situation. Are we willing to become informed and take active roles in shifting our social priorities to place greater value on public education? Are we willing to take on our fair share of the taxes necessary to invest wisely in our future, and that of all of our children? Are we willing to support each other – parents, teachers, administrators, trustees, political representatives -- with openness and compassion while we struggle? And when we are not willing, what is it that gets in the way?

Thank you for listening.

1.

[http://www.panvancouver.ca/uploads/6/7/1/4/67145647/pan\\_questions\\_on\\_bc\\_budget\\_2016\\_moe\\_final.pdf](http://www.panvancouver.ca/uploads/6/7/1/4/67145647/pan_questions_on_bc_budget_2016_moe_final.pdf)

2.

<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/forum/e073/e073g-eng.shtml>



April 13, 2016

Presentation to Committee of the Whole of the Board of Trustees at the Vancouver Board of Education

By Lorraine Grieves, M.A., RCC

Thank for you for adding an extra evening for additional feedback on the decisions you are faced with making. I respect the grave situation you are in and understand that you are faced with numerous, competing, impossible decisions.

I am here tonight to implore you to reverse the budget proposal to eliminate the VSB Anti-homophobia and Diversity Mentor position. As a Provincial Program Director at the Provincial Health Services Authorities', Trans Care BC program, I oversee provincial work to enhance services and supports for transgender people of all ages- this work includes the VCH/PHSA Transgender Health Information Program (THiP) -a referral, resource and support hub for anyone with a transgender health related question and the CALL Out! initiative, that provides support to schools to build inclusion policies and safer spaces for LGBTQ2 students.

Over the many years that I have worked in health services, the Vancouver School Board has been a critical partner in efforts focused on increasing safety and inclusion for LGBTQ2+ youth in schools. This district knows that in order to do your job as educators, schools need to be safe enough environments physically, socially and emotionally for all students.

**This is a high risk cut to critical supports for LGBTQ2+ and other students.**

In 2014, I presented to this Board of Trustees as an invited guest on a panel of experts to voice support to the revision of your ACB - R - 1: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities policy. This was a heart-wrenching time for those of us who were here – it was high stakes work that involved numerous, heated consultations.

Other experts also spoke, most importantly, courageous, queer and trans students stood up to tell their stories of being bullied and harassed at school and their resistance to that violence. Transgender and gender diverse students spoke about needing access to safe washrooms and change rooms; of needing adult support to safely attend school. These stories were told in the face of shocking backlash opposing the policy. The trustees (with the exception of 2 members no longer here) took a strong position to stay centred upon the critical human rights and safety of your student population by

adopting the amended guidelines that expressly support the rights of Trans and gender diverse students along with LGBTQ2 students. You are still working on implementing this policy. The works needs to continue to happen.

Without this dedicated role to support the policy implementation, I am concerned that vulnerable students will miss critical supports that will enable them to stay in school, to graduate and most importantly to be safe.

There are reams of evidence to show that despite great resiliency and strengths, gender and sexuality minority youth face many forms of discrimination, violence and harm in schools. Some data to support you in your decision making:

From the UBC SARAVYC Institute's, National Trans Youth Health survey, "Being Safe, Being Me" N=323 were ages 14-18, all transgender youth:

- More than half of the youth surveyed experienced bullying at school in the last year
- One in three were physically threatened or injured in the last year at school
- 9% were threatened or injured with a weapon
- 64% taunted or ridiculed at school
- 65% seriously considered suicide
- Over 1/3 of 323 students had attempted suicide in the last year (37%)  
(National results, BC report forthcoming), Veale et al, 2015

Reports from around the world - UK, Netherlands, US, and Canada - indicate that trans youth are coming out in greater numbers and at younger ages. Some gender clinics are noting a four to five-fold increase in recent years.

The ongoing work to improve the learning environment for these students needs a dedicated resource. These students will require support to be safe in their school environments. In short, a policy is simply words on paper unless there is a plan to support it.

In searching your website I was pleased to find the following commitment statement cited by the VSB Board of Trustees, "The Board will provide a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination, while also promoting pro-active strategies and guidelines to ensure that lesbian, gay, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, bisexual and questioning students, employees and families are welcomed and included in all aspects of education and school life and treated with respect and dignity."

Without this critical position, the anti-homophobia and diversity mentor, how will you uphold this commitment?"

Provincial Health Services Authority

Please consider reversing this proposal. It represents meager savings in the face of potentially grave harms.

Thank you for being thorough in your efforts to ensure that all students have the right to a safe educational space.

With Respect,

Lorraine Grieves, M.A., R.C.C.  
Provincial Program Director, Trans Care BC  
Provincial Health Services Authority  
604 675-7443  
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### References

GIRES. (2011). The number of gender variant people in the UK - Update 2011. Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES). Retrieved from <http://www.gires.org.uk/Prevalence2011.pdf>

Konishi C, Saewyc E, Homma Y, Poon C. Population-level evaluation of school-based interventions to prevent problem substance use among gay, lesbian and bisexual adolescents in Canada. *Preventive Medicine*. 2013;57(6):929–933.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2013.06.031>

Veale J, Saewyc E, Frohard-Dourlent H, Dobson S, Clark B & the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey Research Group (2015). *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*. Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia.

Spack, N. P., Edwards-Leeper, L., Feldman, H. A., Leibowitz, S., Mandel, F., Diamond, D. A., & Vance, S. R. (2012). Children and Adolescents With Gender Identity Disorder Referred to a Pediatric Medical Center. *Pediatrics*, 129(3), 418–425.  
doi:10.1542/peds.2011-0907

Reports from around the world - UK, Netherlands, US, and Canada - indicate that trans youth are coming out in greater numbers and at younger ages. Some gender clinics are noting a four to five-fold increase in recent years. Citations to support this are here:

Sharp increase in the number of adolescent referrals over the last decade (CAMH, Toronto, Zucker – terrible article, but good data) (Canada)



Wood, H., Sasaki, S., Bradley, S. J., Singh, D., Fantus, S., Owen-Anderson, A., ... Zucker, K. J. (2013). Patterns of referral to a gender identity service for children and adolescents (1976-2011): age, sex ratio, and sexual orientation. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 39(1), 1–6. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2012.675022>

“After establishment of a multidisciplinary gender clinic, the gender identity disorder population increased fourfold.” (p. 418) (Boston Children’s Hospital) (US)

Spack, N. P., Edwards-Leeper, L., Feldman, H. A., Leibowitz, S., Mandel, F., Diamond, D. A., & Vance, S. R. (2012). Children and Adolescents With Gender Identity Disorder Referred to a Pediatric Medical Center. *Pediatrics*, 129(3), 418–425. <http://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-0907>

“An increasing number of GN youth are presenting for gendersensitive health services.” (US)

Vance, S. R., Ehrensaft, D., & Rosenthal, S. M. (2014). Psychological and medical care of gender nonconforming youth. *Pediatrics*, 134(6), 1184-1192. Retrieved from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/134/6/1184.full.pdf>

Number of youth under 18 referred to the gender clinic in London has increased 5-fold in four years. (UK)

Harvey, D., & Smedley, L. (4 February 2015). Referrals for young transgender people increase. *British Broadcasting Corporation*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/31120152/referrals-for-young-transgender-people-increase>

“An increasing number of students in college, high school, middle school, and even elementary school and preschool express a gender identity that does not conform with expectations of the sex assigned at birth, and schools are learning to accommodate these students.” (p. 148) (US)

Mallon, G. P. (2009). *Social work practice with transgender and gender variant youth* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

“Compared to the early years, the number of referrals increased considerably. To date, more than 400 children and an almost equal number of adolescents have attended the gender identity clinic.... In the past decade, 12- to 18-year-old adolescents have been attending the clinic in ever greater numbers and at ever younger ages.” (p. 302)  
(Netherlands)

Annelou L. C. de Vries MD PhD & Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis PhD (2012) Clinical Management of Gender Dysphoria in Children and Adolescents: The Dutch Approach, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59:3, 301-320, DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2012.653300

John Oliver Secondary School PAC  
530 East 41<sup>st</sup> Ave  
Vancouver, BC

Dear members of the VSB and government,

Every year we're told there is another huge deficit to be balanced out somehow; usually, a little bit of money is found, but inevitably: positions are cut, programs are cut, (occasionally) buildings are closed down -- AND MOST IMPORTANTLY -- our children and families suffer, and the moral of the remaining staff and parents sinks further.

This year's list of cuts is impossibly harsh and will truly result in a massive change to all public schools.

Here are other risks we face if the budget as written gets passed: We'll lose fine arts, ESL, Aboriginal and special needs resources, literacy, mini schools, gifted programs, and music.

Why?

Because you're proposing to cut the people that run these programs, and it is very likely these programs will collapse or falter. No one has time to run all these programs off the side of their desk at this same level. Specialists cannot be in four places at once.

Are we prepared to see a drop in age appropriate literacy rates because there are fewer librarians and no literacy specialists to support what the classroom teachers are doing with reading?

Are we prepared to rob current (and future) elementary children – especially the ones whose parents cannot afford to provide private lessons – of the opportunity to build skills in music (through band and strings) as well as the mathematical, kinesthetic, memory, teamwork and organizational skills that go hand in hand with this type of program?

Are we prepared to deprive children with special needs the ability to learn to their utmost competency because there is insufficient support staff to help them?

The VSB and government might think that having a balanced budget is the best way to move forward, but the loss of staff and proposed program cutbacks are a huge move backwards.

Quality public education in Vancouver and BC as we've known it is eroding with funding cuts (and the continued supply of money to private schools). Soon we'll be left with a very basic education in classrooms that are overcrowded and under-supplied.

How does that prepare our children for jobs in the real world? It doesn't.

How does that prepare our society for a productive, safe, equitable future? It doesn't.

We know that 90% of funding for public schools comes from government. It is up to everyone to convey the message that quality public education is a worthy investment for government – looking at numbers – a good quality public education system is ultimately more cost-effective than under-funded, low quality public schools. Research shows that individuals that have access to quality education throughout primary and secondary school are more likely to find gainful employment, have stable lives, and be active and productive citizens. They are also less likely to commit serious crimes, less likely to place high demands on the public health care system, and less likely to use welfare.

A good education provides substantial benefits to individuals and, when aggregated throughout a community, this creates broad social and economic benefits.

What to do:

- Pressure government to increase funding:  
<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/math+vancouver+school+funding/11768385/story.html>)
- Pressure government to drop the requirements for school districts to self-fund government-imposed increases to costs such as MSP and carbon offset (might save you \$0.5M)
- Look at more creative ways to increase revenue (sell off properties and rent more spaces after school hours), decrease costs for utilities (practice power savings)
- Close certain schools that don't come close to meeting the density requirement (less than 65% enrolment) as long there are other schools within the neighbourhood that can take on the displaced students.

It's time for the government and VSB to work together and make sure that public schools have the same opportunities that private schools have, so that all of our children can achieve their full potential.

Sincerely,

Anne Montgomery, John Oliver PAC Chair  
Lara Spence, Member at Large

Hello,

My name is Jessie Smith. I was co-chair of the Nootka elementary PAC for three years. Now I am a parent of a grade 8 student at Templeton Mini. I teach at Langara College, so I also have professional reasons to be concerned; if the K-12 system fails, it's up to me to pick up the pieces.

I have two key points that I hope the VSB will not only consider, but also emphasize in your communications strategy. The public really needs to know this.

1. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak out about these proposed cuts, but I feel it is the wrong location and the wrong audience. We should be speaking in Victoria to the Premier and the Minister of Education.

This crisis is NOT caused by mismanagement on behalf of the VSB, but rather by chronic underfunding, and downloading of costs, by the provincial government. It is a false crisis that the government has created.

I hope the VSB, and parents across Vancouver, will contact the government and demand that they invest in education. Ask them to roll back the tax cuts that they gave to the most privileged British Columbians (and to stop our citizens from hiding money in tax havens) so that we have money to invest in K-12, or even better, K-post-secondary.

If cuts *are* to be made, the government should cut *public funding to private schools*.

2. The simple fact is that we cannot afford these cuts. They offer false, short-term savings. The individual children who are most directly affected will suffer tremendously, that is clear. What is not obvious, but inevitable, is the longer-term costs to society at large.

It may sound crass, but let's talk numbers. How much would we lose in lost potential in the children who do not get the support they need in these early years? If supported now, they could go on to do great things for our city and our economy – and pay lots of taxes down the road to boost government coffers.

If not, they will likely make lower wages and thus pay less taxes. Who knows how much on-going financial supports they may need down the road. Properly funding education is not just a human rights issue, it's simple math; it costs less to give support now.

3. If I were to pick ONE of the items on the *horrifying* list of proposed cuts to highlight, it would be the proposal to increase class size in secondary schools. This flies in the face of the brave teachers who stood up in their strike to ensure that classes do not get too large.

Thank you.

Good evening. Thank you, VSB trustees; yours is an unenviable position, and the job ahead of you is surely a terrible, impossible one.

I'm Erica Jaaf, representing the Douglas Elementary and Douglas Annex PAC.

Douglas Annex is K - 3 French Immersion and Douglas Elementary is K - 7 English and 4 - 7 French, with a combined enrollment of almost 700 compassionate, smart, funny, beautiful, thoughtful, and kind young people (Annex 198, Main 483). I have a child in each school. Our school community is socially, economically, and culturally diverse, with more than 30 different languages spoken at home. We are fortunate in that the Main School (as we call it) was rebuilt and our students moved into a seismically sound building for the 2012-2013 school year.

Like every other school, our classroom sizes are larger, there are fewer supports for ESL students and students with special needs, and our literacy programs have been reduced. We are saddened to see gifted learning opportunities cut. Our elementary band is now offered only once a week to Grades 6 and 7, where previously band was offered a couple of times a week, beginning at Grade 4. Last year, we lost our qualified fine arts instructor.

Our PAC has fundraised for a playground rebuild, sports equipment and uniforms, technology to support learning and to help teachers teach, art supplies and equipment, and musical instruments.

And I am tired. And the women I work with on our PAC - and make no mistake, it is mostly women - are tired. It is Wednesday and this is my second education meeting of the week. We take vacation days from our paid employment to coordinate bottle drives and clothing drives and walk-a-thons, and to write speeches. Some who can afford it pick up their kids after school and drive them to "learning academies" or private tutors, music lessons and programming courses at the community centre, to cover the inevitable learning gaps left when you're in a class of 29 students (four of whom have undesignated special needs), one teacher, and zero educational assistants.

And we recognize that this is not an option for everyone. Fundraising is not possible in every school, and many parents cannot afford the costs of supplementing their child's education. This is another way the costs and consequences are downloaded - to school boards, to schools, and to families. And it is another way in which the most vulnerable are left behind.

We need to acknowledge that the purpose of the public education system is to provide the guidance, support, and opportunities for student success, and that the costs will differ depending on the existing social circumstances of each child. We need to understand that educating some students will cost more money than educating others. And we need to believe that that cost is worth it - because the contribution of every child in the province is important and we must be able to provide them what they need to make that contribution.

I have followed the commentary about the budget, provincial and municipal; I have seen parents and schools and communities pitted against each other, PACs pitted against teachers when we forget that it is a teacher's job to teach our kids the skills to help them achieve their goals, not to help us fundraise.

And we talk about this as though the choice is between closing community-based schools or cutting programs. No. Instead, let us demand together that public education be adequately funded.

Another group of remarkable women I have the great good fortune to work with, the Parent Advocacy Network, put the lie to the Ministry of Education claim of "unprecedented funding increases to school boards." Since 2002, Ministry of Education funding has decreased by 11%; we have also seen a decline in the percentage of nominal GDP spent on education. The provincial allocation for public education in this budget is arbitrary and we need not accept it; so, too, the 95% capacity requirement. All Vancouver schools belong to the citizens of the city and should be available for use by the entire community, especially where and when new needs arise. StrongStarts, daycare spaces, adult education centres, refugee welcoming centres are all examples of how schools also become vital community spaces. The provincial government should not be pressuring the Vancouver School Board to sell or close schools.

Let's fund public education properly, fully, and completely through the taxes the BC government collects from us. That way, we don't end up punishing the kids and families at schools where fundraising is virtually impossible. In a province where 1 in 5 children lives in poverty, when our government touts an expanding economy and budget surplus, it is simply unacceptable that we have the second lowest per-student funding in Canada.

The public education system is not a registered charity and we shouldn't be treating it like one. Education - the kind that makes a difference to children - costs money. Let's not fund it with bake sales.

Let's together offer a public education system that meets the social, emotional, and academic needs of all kinds of kids, not only because we're altruistic, but because it is a collective investment that will pay dividends in the years to come. Thank you.

8

## A Compassionate Society Starts at School

By Joelle Lazar

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604-788-2804

Presentation for the Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting on behalf of Laura Secord School,  
Wed April 13th, 2016, 7:00pm

Fellow parents, Educators, and citizens of British Columbia,

Thank you for being here.

I am presenting on behalf of the parents of Laura Secord school who are stressed, exhausted, and disheartened by the current 2016/17 Budget.

An outcome of systemic underfunding, this budget threatens the health and well being of our school, children, and our society as a whole.

I have a son with special needs who finds himself in a classroom with 5 other children with developmental, behavioural, emotional and sensory processing issues.

You can imagine how 6 children with impulse control, emotional dysregulation, sensory processing, emotional, behavioural, and developmental issues might influence a learning environment...

Snapshot from the classroom:

Child #1 flips over a table and starts screaming.

Child #2: runs from the classroom into the hallway.

Child #3: wanders from his desk and starts spinning, and laughing.

Child #4: arms wrapped around bent knees, and watches the scene looking overwhelmed

Child #5: takes the opportunity to angrily demand the SSW's attention while the SSW bolts to retrieve child #2.

Now imagine how one teacher, and one Student Support Worker might handle such a learning environment.

Having witnessed it firsthand, I can tell you that none of the children in that classroom are getting their needs met.

Though my son's teacher and SSW care deeply about his and the other children's success, everyone involved recognizes that chronic underfunding has resulted in our current 24.2 million dollar deficit, and the shameful lack of resources in our schools.

With no limits on the number of special needs children in the classroom, all children's learning and future is in jeopardy.

We want inclusive education that supports every child's learning needs because a society that cares for children with diverse learning needs, is a caring, compassionate society.



When children suffer in an under-resourced learning environment their self-confidence and self-esteem plummets; when parents - especially single parents, those with financial constraints, and/or mental health challenges - have their children on extensive wait lists for psychological educational assessments, occupational/ speech language therapy, and/or psychiatric/ psychological support, parents - tax contributing citizens - feel angry, anxious and helpless.

It took me many hours of research, emails, advocacy group meetings, and conversations with parents to write this speech.

Much of this work took me away from my family, and from enhancing my professional and community life.

This is the hidden cost to myself and thousands of parents across this province: precious time, energy and resources that could be infused into our province are being siphoned into advocacy efforts as a result of the government's lack of accountability for public education.

Here are a few out of a long list of cuts that we stand to lose with this current budget:

- Essential support for special education programs (resource rooms, specialised programming for children with special needs)
- Supports for resource teachers, SSWs and gifted teachers
- Early literacy consultants to service reading recovery and early intervention programs for at risk readers.
- Positions that support anti-racism and anti-homophobia initiatives.
- Staffing for district wide sports events
- Bigger class sizes, fewer resource teachers, and less support for utilizing technological aids.
- Elimination of school library programs and teacher librarians

These cuts preclude public education's ability to be an vehicle of happy, healthy, thriving kids and families.

Chronic under-funding to Public Education in BC:

- Fails to honour our human right to have equal access to free, adequate education
- Devalues our teachers, and their ability to equip our children, the future generation to lead this province.
- Punishes the most vulnerable people in our communities - marginalized, poor and disadvantaged.
- Destroys music programs, arts spaces, art specialists and trained educators, and opportunities to impart cultural wisdom, self expression, creative exploration, problem solving, empathy and self-confidence.

Without proper funding, today's under-supported students will become tomorrow's societal burdens.

We must invest in public education now if we are truly a compassionate society that values and nurtures all perspectives, differences and abilities.

Thank you,

Joelle Lazar

My name is Noel Macul and I'm here to speak in favour of keeping two full time teachers at the Beaconsfield Home Learners Program. I have an eight year old daughter who has been in the program for three years. I'd like to thank the members of the community who have volunteered their time to share their stories, and the trustees who have sat patiently listening to each of us.

Unfortunately, there's no time today to talk about the value added to our communities by investing in the education of our children. There's no time to contemplate the leadership skills our neighbourhoods so desperately need and the programs that encourage them. There's no time to discuss the necessity of an education plan which nurtures intrinsically motivated individuals who can withstand the demands of the future work place. There's no time to examine the unstable work environment of short-lived, replaceable contracts which awaits our children.

We don't have time to assess the risks of displacing public programs such as music, drama and the arts from public schools. Nor can we delve into the dangers of removing alternative programs for those struggling with mental health issues such as anxiety, aggression or hyperactivity. There's no time to explore the existing programs where students like this have the opportunity to learn the life skills needed in order to survive without the stress of peer judgement and the possibility of being ostracized.

Living in Vancouver, we face many dilemmas: the housing crisis, the job crisis, the education crisis. These are the multiple pressures which have driven many families from this city and are keeping many more from moving in. There's no time to consider how the cut-backs in such programs will drive even more families out of this district to seek education elsewhere. There's no time to ponder the choices these families face as they leave Vancouver thereby gutting it's middle-class population and leaving it to the business tycoons, the off-shore bankers, the drug-lords and the trust-funders who already use BC as their playground.

There's no time to debate these things, because they've already happened. Cuts have been made and many programs dissolved. Privately-run education centres have taken their place and only those who can afford them benefit. Do not think that this type of discrimination is going unrecognized. Do not think the families of BC are ignorant to the preferences of wealth and power over community from this current government.

I would like to share an example of one district that has invested in alternative education. That's district 40 of New Westminster. In 2002 a Distributed Learning program was developed there which eventually grew into a strong, diverse community now known as Hume Park Learning Centre. Occupying the recently closed Hume Park Elementary, this school is home to 106 students with 3.3 FTE covered by 4 teachers. These numbers coincide with the current and projected student-to-teacher ratio while

providing in-depth, enriching programs for children throughout the lower mainland. This program provides an updated curriculum, field trips, music and art. This is just one example of a local program thriving when given the attention and support necessary. We must continue to create awareness around publicly funded alternatives to the school system for children in need and the families who are able to support them. We must educate our citizens of what education can look like. We must support the alternatives or soon there will be none.

We in the Home Learning community believe that everything is a learning opportunity. Whether it comes from workbooks, outdoor activities or the local news. How we as a community present the world to our children is how they learn about the world around them. What, then, are we teaching the children of Vancouver about social responsibility by removing their special education programs? What are we teaching them when we close another school, lay off another administrator, or let go of another teacher? The long-term effects of these budget cuts are yet to be realized. Do not think that the children of Vancouver are unaware of the decisions being made. Do not think that these decisions have no long term effects on their lives.

My daughter, for one, is afraid. She loves her school, she loves her friends, she loves her teachers. Yet, her world is fragile. She's afraid of the consequences of speaking out. She's afraid she'll get kicked out of school if she writes a letter to the board. She is afraid of losing her program. So I stand here today to represent her, to show her that speaking our mind does not have to result in discriminatory action. Speaking our mind is a right we still have here in Canada no matter what our background is. The other community members and myself are here now to show our children that speaking our mind can have a positive effect, and that every so often, when we speak, we are heard.

10

General Brock Elementary PAC Submission to the VSB  
re. proposed budget 2016-17

On behalf of the parents of students at General Brock Elementary, we are here to voice our deep concern for the current state of the proposed budget and public education in Vancouver. Actually 'concern' doesn't cover it, we are angry.

We all ask ourselves who should we be angry at - the VSB, the Ministry of Education? The truth is, we don't care any longer. It seems to us that both parties all get paid a lot of money to make this system run well but you are all failing at it.

Many say public education is underfunded by the Ministry and we know that the pain of underfunding is felt across the province. But we also know that every school board gets the same amount of money per student and Vancouver seems to be chronically suffering to a much higher than other regions.

Students in public school in other parts of the city like North Van or Surrey or Richmond or Burnaby will experience a much richer education system than the one here in Vancouver. More families will leave this city because they don't want their kids going to school in Vancouver to fall behind their peers who live on the other side of a bridge.

From reading the proposed budget and cuts, it seems to us that the VSB is prioritizing infrastructure - including in low utilization schools - over staffing and quality of education.

We ask you though, what is the point of the infrastructure if what is happening inside the buildings will be sub-par and will only lead to marginalizing many groups of Vancouver's children:

- cutting the gifted and challenge program
- cutting non-enrolling staff which impacts those students with designations
- cutting literacy teachers and librarians
- cutting anti-racism and homophobia support and multicultural liaisons

In the latest update, some portions of the proposed cuts have been saved, but it is not nearly enough.

Just 2 examples:

- Our understanding is that currently 1100 (or 1 in 50) students are being serviced through all the VSB Gifted Education programs. How will 2.3 teachers manage the entire Gifted/Challenge/MACC programs? How will children who need it receive proper assessment?
- The new curriculum (live to all in September) has a huge focus on technology...it's all over the curriculum and is widely agreed as the direction we need to be heading. Yet, technology resource teachers and support will be entirely cut though it has been mandated that every kid in the province will learn coding. How are they going to learn coding without technology support or mentors?

The new budget will benefit no students and will leave many lost behind.

**The mandate of the BC School System says: "promoting social, emotional, intellectual, artistic and physical development". With so many of these proposed cuts you are going clear against the very words and meaning of this mandate.**

We believe the board needs to look at other means of budget-tightening and revenue generation rather than the classroom-focused cuts proposed.

- We think the board needs to repurpose existing underused schools: this doesn't mean accepting the "95% capacity" Ministry designation but does mean that amalgamating and closing some annexes (and not just by attrition) and closing certain individual schools that are well below capacity needs to be looked at.
- The board needs to work harder to find ways to bring in money by renting spaces as well as leasing out some of its land to create ongoing revenue.
- Why is the VSB subsidizing school supplies? There has been no increase in the parental cost of school supply fees in 20+ years. The Board should either raise that cost to families or entirely get out of the school supply business and get parents to buy their own kids' supplies - subsidize only families who need a little help with this.
- The optional Strings and Band program doesn't need to be cut, it needs to be reconsidered as self-funded, like it is in other districts such as North Van. Participating in Strings right now costs a student \$50/year but could easily be \$50/month and pay for itself. Again, subsidize only families who need help with this.

- The Board needs to look for opportunities to partner and collaborate with other community agencies. The Board (and the Ministry) should stop thinking about schools as an isolated institution delivering only education, but should rather think of schools as a community hub, where families can be reached and serviced most accessibly. Look for opportunities for sharing properties and infrastructure with other funded agencies – thereby bringing in more budget dollars.
- We note in this proposed budget that there are no cuts to the management of the board, not one clerical job, not even a pay decrease. Now nobody expects the board to run for free, but when we are talking about cutting away large portions of our kids' education because there is nowhere left to cut, we would expect first to see a leaner Board.
- Lastly, we propose the Board needs a CFO and not politicians to work toward balancing a budget and creating a sustainable plan.

Thank you.

11  
April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Committee of the Whole Meeting

Re: Sir Alexander Mackenzie Elem. School's concerns regarding budget cuts

- Lack of support for teachers attending to children with special needs.
- Implied threat to library services critical to enhancing literacy.

+++

Re: Direct Impact of Budget Cuts on Students of Sir Alexander Mackenzie Elem. School

- Reduced resource time to assist children with special needs will inhibit learning.
- Loss of our elementary band will threaten student enrolment in favour of private schooling offering a more dynamic education.

Mackenzie Elementary PAC  
960 East 39th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5W 1K8  
Tel: (604)713-4799 Fax: (604)713-4801

David Smythe - Chair (1-778-952-0222 cell)  
Sue Bains - Treasurer  
Maggie Lee - Secretary

School website: <http://go.vsb.bc.ca/schools/mackenzie/>  
<http://go.vsb.bc.ca/schools/mackenzie/Pages/calendar.aspx>

Follow us! Facebook: [facebook.com/mackenzieelementary](https://www.facebook.com/mackenzieelementary)  
Twitter [@Mackenzie Elem](https://twitter.com/Mackenzie_Elem)



# Dr. R. E. McKechnie Elementary PAC Presentation to VSB Budget Committee

April 13, 2016





# About McKechnie

- 254 students
- Small school with a strong sense of community
- Incredibly dedicated staff and administration
- Active PAC
  - ▣ Parent volunteers
  - ▣ Fundraising
- Parents have been trying to fill in gaps caused by budget cuts
- 2016/2017 proposed cuts will result in loss of critical programs that will have detrimental, long lasting effects on our school



# Impact of Budget Cuts on McKechnie

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- Elimination of optional Band and Strings Programs
- Cuts to Library Programs



# Elimination of Band Program

- History of strong band program with >90% participation
- Music enhances students' school experience
- Previous cuts have already impacted our students
- Complete elimination of optional elementary band will take away an important part of students' experience at school



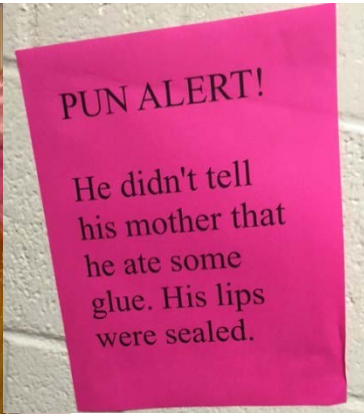
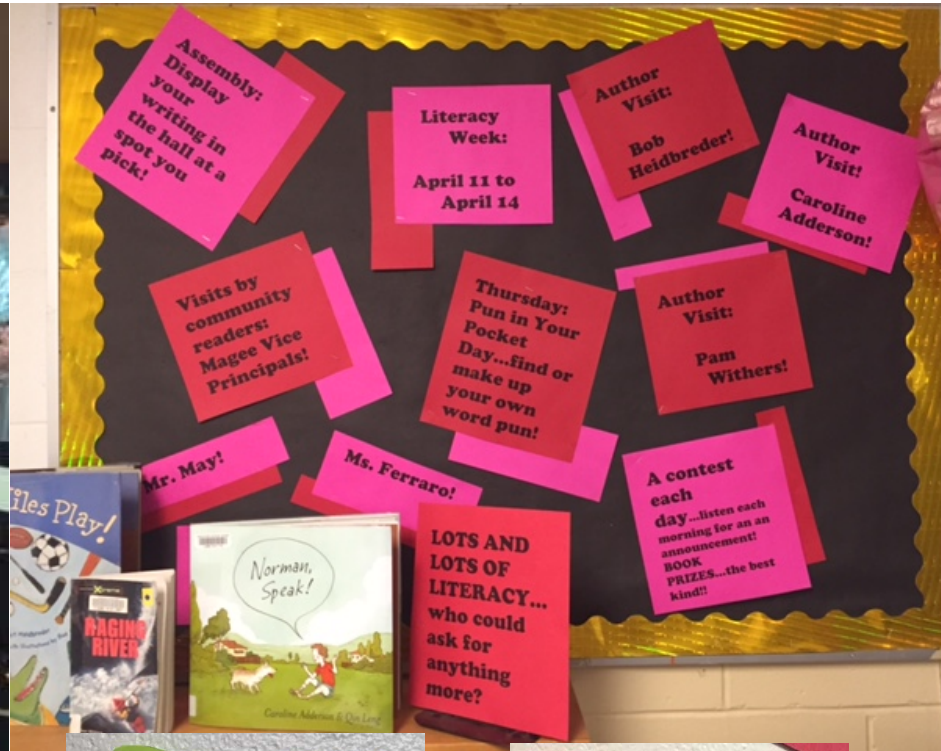


# Library Program

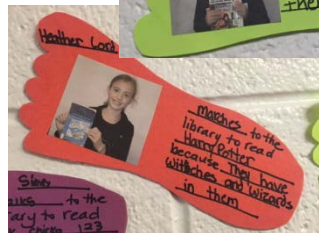
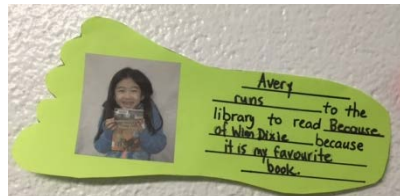
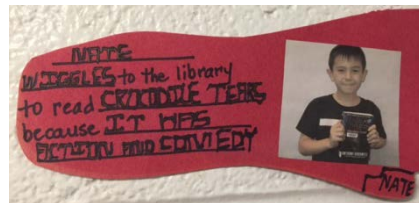
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- Librarians perform many roles that cannot be replaced by volunteers
- McKechnie's long-time librarian, Nancy Hundal has uniquely inspired our students to be passionate readers and writers
- Proposed cuts will further reduce library time to 2.5 days/week

# Literacy Week at McKechnie



PUN ALERT!  
I took a poll recently and 100% of people were annoyed that their tent had fallen down.





# Closing

- Challenging as parents to decipher mixed messaging from the VSB and the Provincial Government → children caught in the middle
- As parents, our hands are tied to help bridge this gap
- Please re-consider the planned cuts to the Band and Strings Program and the Library Program



**Parent's speech at the Public Input concerning the cutback of the Vietnamese  
Multicultural Liaison Worker position.**

Dear School Trustees,

My name is Cuoi Chung. I have two sons currently attending David Thompson Secondary School. I have learned that the Vancouver School Board are proposing to cut the position of the Vietnamese Multicultural Liaison Worker for the next school year. I am extremely concerned and oppose of this cut.

My family have been supported by the workers since my two sons were in Fleming Elementary school. They had maintain thorough communication between the school and my family.

When my son was entering high school, it was the workers who assisted my family through the transition to the high school system in Vancouver. I became more aware of the differences of the two educational systems between Vietnam and Canada. I became more comfortable with our children's schooling thanks to the their help.

The workers have always been there to respond to our queries about parenting issues in our Canadian society. They have kept us informed about upcoming events at David Thompson as well as in the community. As a result, I have had opportunities to attend several workshops at David Thompson such as: "What Parents Should Know About Online Media", and "Course Planning and Graduation Requirements", and "Impacts of online Gaming on Adolescents". I also have been granted opportunities to join other workshops organized by the workers, such as: "How Parents can protect your children from Gang Recruitments", and "The

Educational System in Vancouver”, and “Special Needs Programs in Vancouver School Board”, and “What Parents Of Autistic children Can Do” .

As I have mentioned, I have two children currently attending David Thompson Secondary School. I am very happy of the progress they both have made, but their progress did not come naturally. Whenever I have concerns, or questions about my children’s schooling, the workers will be there to explain to me thoroughly. There is no doubt in my mind that his tremendous support has contributed to my children’s success.

I understand that Vancouver School Board is proposing the cutback of the Vietnamese Multicultural Liaison Worker position. This news has worried me terribly. The parents from the Vietnamese Community are very concerned about the high rate of high school drop-out among the Vietnamese Students and the youth gang issues in our community. I’m afraid that your proposed cutback of the Vietnamese Multicultural Liaison Worker will only worsen the situation. We are of refugee background, our population may not be as big as some other communities, but our needs are significantly critical.

We all want our children to be successful and become productive members of our society. There’s a saying, “It takes a village to raise a child”. Your proposed cutback of the Vietnamese Multicultural Liaison Worker will have negative impact on our children’s success. Please think about the consequences of this proposed cutback when you make your final decision. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cuoi Chung



Underfunding by the Ministry of Education... it seems that the district has had constraints for some time but how did the school board get to this point without any communication to education advocacy groups until the community and staff people found out about this budget!? My name is Carven Li, my ancestors are from the Pearl River Delta of Southeastern China. I have lived on unceded territories of the Coast Salish first nations peoples for about 20 years. In making this acknowledgment, I make known my complicity in being a settler in Canada and I assert to my Han Chinese community the need to recognize the reality of being on lands stewarded by Indigenous People since time immemorial. I stand in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples' struggles against state violence and settler colonial society. Today, I voice my concern for all students, but especially transgender students and children of trans\* parents, students on the autism spectrum, students with special needs, Black students, Indigenous students, students from racialized refugee families, and students from ethnic communities that have a shortage of English-speaking advocates and political representation. The communities from which these students are from, I strive to stand in solidarity with. Two years ago, I came to this School Board supporting the policy update for the policy in support of transgender students and gender-nonconfirming students. I have watched you trustees and the public hear from medical professionals, families and young students about the need for dedicated staff to build capacity among educators and students for more understanding and safer schools. The policy update can continue to be supported by the Anti-Homophobia and Diversity mentor, if this budget isn't seeking to eliminate it. The new budget also proposes to eliminate the Anti-racism Teacher Mentor. Research indicates that aboriginal and African Canadian students, immigrant youth of colour and disabled youth are disproportionately targeted for discipline practices that push them out of school. Such exclusion is a strong predictor of dropping out and subsequent poverty and incarceration. I will draw from SFU Professor Dr. Ann Travers's speech from last night, which shows that Vancouver School Board has to date taken good measures to support student-centric policies: You have emphasized change and support at the level of school culture; You have had an anti-racism teacher mentor since the 1980s; You quickly complemented your anti-homophobia policy with the establishment of an anti-homophobia and diversity mentor in 2005; You recently updated the gender and sexual diversity policy – leaning heavily on the work of the anti-homophobia mentor to do so.

Yet with this year's budget, you are cutting many important positions, including the two multicultural liaison workers for racialized immigrant groups, negatively impacting various ethnic communities of colour. I think VSB should not eliminate the anti-homophobia and anti-racist mentor positions. That said, I am not saying a few positions should be saved at the expense of others. The main point from me tonight is to signal to you trustees and also the public that I expect the School Board to be in much better communication with grassroots education advocacy groups, such as the Safer School Coalition, which I am a part of, and with grassroots media, such as ACCESS TV community television. I ask trustees to extend consultation for two more weeks, with at least one meeting each week. Your school board is in crisis: you need to hear more concerns from the grassroots and develop some sort of crisis media campaign to get funding from this BC Liberal government to restore much-needed programs and trust from students and community.

Presentation to the Vancouver School Board of Trustees, Committee as a Whole  
Wednesday, April 13, 2016

Good evening Trustees, Stakeholders, Parents and Honoured guests

My name is Elka Yarlowe, President and CEO of Access to Music Foundation and I am the 2015-2016 recipient of the McCreary Society Award for outstanding contributions toward the overall emotional and mental health for BC's children and youth. It is within the context of music education's role in supporting children's mental and emotional health that I make my comments to you this evening.

Before I begin, I would like to state that I recognize your position in balancing a budget to satisfy all parties concerned is not an enviable one, and I do believe that it is our shared goal to maintain the very best education and services for our students.

But we have been at this juncture several times before. It was in 2007 that our organization first responded to the board's band and string program budget cuts by providing \$30,000 worth of instruments to Lord Roberts Elementary school. We have continued to fund several of the neediest schools in your district as; sadly, we have had to face each other over the threat of more cuts to these programs in 2009, 2011, 2014 and now. As key stakeholders we were called to the table to consult with Valerie Overgaard in the hopes that we all could find an equitable and lasting solution whereby elementary school band and string programs could be sustained. That protracted exercise resulted in no concrete data or solutions to maintain music programs. In our opinion, it was a drain on human and financial resources that could have been better used had it been directed to the people that would most benefit; namely the music specialists and music students.

Music education is not optional: it is essential. More than any other learning modality, music education and music creation are proven to have the ability to ameliorate feelings of isolation and depression in children as young as age 10. In older youth, regular participation in a music program is known to reverse harmful behaviours and often, suicidal ideations. In a 2014 survey of street and gang involved youth who were asked what activities they participated in while still in elementary school that made them feel good about themselves, 43% of respondents said it was music class. And of those same youth surveyed, when asked what teacher they considered to be a mentor and confidant outside of the classroom, the response was their music teacher.

Closer to home, we recently asked 6<sup>th</sup> grade band students at Beaconsfield and Nootka Elementary schools, for which we are currently raising \$10,000, how they would feel if their band program did not exist. The most common response was "Depressed". How a young 11 year old clarinetist or drummer can use the word "depressed" to describe how they would feel if music were not in their lives is unfathomable. And yet, it is a new reality that young children, particularly those who feel themselves in the throes of deprivation, are showing warning signs of clinical depression. This leads to negative behaviours, absenteeism and poor academic performance that escalate in higher grades.

When you speak of eliminating music programs at the elementary school level, you are really speaking about eliminating opportunities for children to reach their human potential. Children do not magically learn the language of music, which is the universal language of all cultures, in grade 9 or 10. There will be no opportunity to make up that time to reach the high performance standard that currently exists in your exemplary secondary school band and string programs.



With BC's thriving and growing music, film, television and gaming industry relying on skilled musicians and composers to provide scores and ringtones, one would think that early music education can be considered the entry point to potential job opportunities for next generations. Those industries need highly skilled creators. Without that early learning, many persons who are now in elementary school will be ill equipped to meet that job demand. I urge you to remind Premier Clark of this particularly in light of the \$15 million given to the music industry with a promise to allocate a portion of that to music education which has yet to be fulfilled.

I urge you to work toward an equitable solution to maintain elementary band and string programs and join your counterparts in Surrey, Delta, Burnaby, and other districts in the province that have mandated music instruction. I further urge you to work with us and other music education stakeholders in finding permanent solutions, as surely it is the overall health of each student that is at the core of what we do.

I thank you and I await your questions and comments.

## Regarding Korean multicultural worker hours

By Kyung Min Lee

The first time we heard about reduction of Korean multicultural worker hours, I was reminded of all the hardships my daughter and I had encountered, and at the same time afraid that the chain of hope that had helped us maintain a healthy relationship with the school system could be severed.

The very thought of losing perhaps the only mean of keeping touch with the school petrifies me.

I am especially concerned that without Miss Inyoon, there may be no one I can reach out to should any trouble between school, my daughter, and myself arise due to cultural differences.

With every opportunity and encouragement to join school partnership come various challenges which can prove intimidating to immigrant parents.

To an immigrant family such as ours, a Korean Culture Worker is the only agent who could help us overcome this psychological, thus invisible obstacle.

It is true that we have an option of simply asking school counselors for advice. However, narrowing the cultural gap between our children under current Canadian education system and ourselves is no easy task.

This is much more than a simple language barrier problem and requires an experienced and knowledgeable mediator who could help us communicate with our child, teachers, and even school counselors.

When attending school events such as PAC meetings or consulting with our teachers, we would frequently rely on Miss Inyoon.

I must ask the school board not to disregard Korean Culture Worker as a mere translator for new immigrant families.

Miss Inyoon has been so far our only way of keeping a meaningful partnership with school despite our ignorance and unfamiliarity regarding Canadian culture.

Please take this into your consideration.

Please help us truly integrate into Canadian society in which education plays an enormous role.

This journey could be made immeasurably easier with the help of Korean Culture Worker.

Thank you for your time.

Presentation To VSB on Budget Cuts 2016-2017  
On Behalf of Hastings Elementary PAC: Melina Auerbach

I am here tonight not only as a deeply concerned parent with 2 school aged children but also as an advocate for the quality of public education in Vancouver and in BC. My family lives in East Vancouver and my children attend Nootka Elementary in the Fine Arts program and Hastings Elementary in French Immersion. I was at a meeting this week with our PAC and I can assure you there was a large roomful of worried and upset parents. I am here tonight on behalf of the Hastings PAC.

My children have had an amazing collection of teachers over the past 8 years, who have taught their classes with skill, enthusiasm and endless dedication. But they are working within a system that has been stripped to the bones.

I am deeply concerned about the chronic underfunding of public education in BC. And I am deeply worried about the proposed VSB cuts currently on the table-- and the long lasting and detrimental impact this will have not only on my children, but on all students across the city (now and far into the future).

Our school, Hastings Elementary, is one of the largest in Vancouver. The student body reflects our neighbourhood-- incredibly diverse culturally, linguistically, and economically. The needs of our student body are many-- and the educational needs and supports for all students will simply not be available if the current cuts take place. Public education is supposed to give every child an equal chance at developing to their potential. If the current cuts go through, the children who will suffer most, are those who are already most vulnerable, either educationally, socially or economically. This is not only unfair it is unjust. Our children deserve better.

The cuts to literacy and early intervention specialists will be devastating. We are a Tier 2 Inner City School and losing literacy support teachers will have a large negative impact on our students. Research on the need for early intervention and extra support for literacy is undisputed. How can a province as rich as BC deny its public school students a decent and fair chance? (Though these are the cuts of the VSB, I understand that the VSB has been forced into making cuts because of the chronic underfunding and because of the requirement that they deliver a balanced budget to the province).

Cuts to modern language, gifted mentors as well as the staffing reductions for elementary non enrollment will also seriously affect how teachers can meet the needs of Hastings students.

Cutting all band and string programs across the city would be a travesty. Children at Hastings and the 43 other schools that have band and strings programs get a chance to learn and play music when they would otherwise never have the chance. This opens up their minds and gives the children a chance to express themselves and be creative --- it is **not** an extra. Even Venezuela, a so-called third world country, recognizes the value of teaching children music and has a thriving national music education system that has proven results of engaged, successful graduates, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds. If the VSB program is cut, children across the city, but especially those kids who would not otherwise have the opportunity to learn and play music will suffer. Children from low and middle income families, children of recent immigrants, children whose parents never had the same opportunities-- these are the children who will lose out the most. And in the process, our whole school community and wider society loses. The music program's goal is not to create professional musicians, It is to help children develop a new skill, use a different part of their brain, learn how to work with others, perhaps excel when they have not yet had the

opportunity to do so, develop self esteem, confidence and the ability to express themselves. And with one budget line. GONE. Gone the years of knowledge and expertise of the teachers. Gone the programs that have been built up and which have given endless students new direction and focus.

This year my daughter participated in her school choir-- ( run on volunteer time from the amazing music teachers at Hastings school ) The pure joy and excitement that she and her peers experienced by practicing and performing for a festival was incalculably valuable. And it is experiences like this that should make up the rich tapestry of education that our children deserve and which BC can afford to provide, but chooses not to.

The loss of teacher librarian supports, of enhanced special education support workers, of multicultural workers, of ELL and special education staff , of mentors for anti racism and anti homophobia, the list goes on and on, will have long lasting and detrimental effects. The proposed budget cuts are all for critical programs that contribute to the quality of education and school experiences of our children. And the repercussions will be felt for years as the children who could and should have been helped struggle. These struggling children will end up costing our society far more than the wise investment now in public education costs.

Coming from East Vancouver it is hard not to talk about inequities. Many of the proposed school closures will affect Eastside schools. The cutting of school programs, the closing of neighbourhood schools, all will have a disproportionately negative effect on vulnerable communities. Schools are community hubs. I am sure that all of us here today recognize that supporting public education is not the same as running a fortune 500 company. There needs of course to be responsible management, but these are our children, our future citizens, and the bottom line should be a human one not a dollar sign.

I urge Vancouver School Board Members to use your conscience and adequately fund our educational system so that the system meets the diverse needs of our students. The role of a public education system is to provide equitable and high quality education to all, no matter their background or where they happen to live. Our children are counting on you.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Presentation To VSB on Budget Cuts 2016-2017  
On Behalf of Hastings Elementary PAC: Melina Auerbach

Naia Lee - VSB Budget Presentation

My name is Naia Lee, and I am a grade eight student at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School. I have many fears. However, right now my biggest fear is that the people in this room won't listen to me. That what I speak about won't make you think, won't make you talk, won't make you leave tonight slightly changed, because I am not an adult, or for any other reason. So please, that's all I ask, is that you listen to me.

I am not here to talk about any specific program, though many, especially those that provide services on gifted students, are important to me. I am not here to convince you to save something in particular, because many have already tried to do so, and are much more informed and eloquent than me. I am here to represent the students. I am here to ask you to save us. I am here to speak like a kid, to kids and for kids.

I don't know how many of you are familiar with the game Jenga, but it consists of building a tower of interlocking wooden blocks, before competing to see who can pull the most blocks out without the tower collapsing. The way I see it, this is an accurate representation of the province of British Columbia. Education is the base, supporting the entire structure and making sure it doesn't give out. Everything is planted on education, including jobs, healthcare and government. As the game progresses, players continue to pull out wooden blocks, gradually getting more daring, and closer to the base. They soon arrive, as have we, at rock-bottom. One day, someone will make a decision, say something or put into place a plan that will, in essence, pull out our last block. Of course, this is purely metaphorical, but we will still soon see its very real effects. The adults of this day and age, particularly those in positions of power, will continue to maintain the façade that everything is fine, until one day the veneer will be peeled away, the false front exposed, and our entire society will collapse, just like a wooden tower.

And yet, just like most others, I wonder why we are having these conversations in the first place. We shouldn't feel pitted against each other, as if whoever speaks the best will win the deliverance of their program or service! Politics has no place in education, and education should not be reduced to politics, but rather thought of as a collaboration amongst those of all ages, from all walks of life. However, on the other hand, I wonder why we are talking about cutting public psychoeducational testing and strings and band programs when my sponsor child from Ghana walks long distances just to be able to learn how to read. As Malala Yousafzai, activist for girl's educations and women's rights says "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." I have wondered about these polar-opposite type things all my life, especially after the continuous bickering between teacher's and the province, and the lesser known argument between anesthesiologists and the province. How is it that doctors can be ordered back to work, when teachers aren't? How is it that medical care is an essential service, while education can be out on the streets during recess and lunch? I don't know the answers to these questions, and I don't expect anyone living in this province to, but I do expect someone to realise that there is a solution: the kids.

Here in BC, we are stuck with an education system better suited for the students, teachers and parents of the past. Kids, and the world around us, are constantly changing, but we are being left behind. Many



agree that education is the most important part of a child's life, but as long as our education doesn't keep up with that of the rest of our generation, our learning will be outdated and our dreams sacrificed. To "put families first" means to put children first, and to put children first means to put education first, and all of our differences aside. The children are the future. In that future, we will be in your places, directing, demonstrating, teaching, and learning alongside of our kids. We will be the ones to take charge, the ones that will govern the world. We will make the decisions that will decide the futures of generations to come. You can make the same decisions. You can take charge. You can teach us and prepare us for when we take on your roles.

After you leave tonight, I would be honoured if you did something for me. If you went home, and asked a kid about their thoughts. After all, all these meetings are centred around students, yet few are attending and even less are speaking up. Kids, get involved. Parents, talk with your children, if they are interested, and let them know more about what will happen if these cuts get put into action. Have a discussion during dinner, about what school would look like without their librarians, with no musical instruments to try, without someone to challenge them, and talk with them about their day. Please, ask a kid. It could make all the difference.

Thank you for your time.