

Why We Believe in Strong School Libraries

To: The Board of Trustees, Vancouver School Board

From: Author Panel of Sarah Ellis, Susin Nielsen, Glen Huser & Linda Bailey
on Behalf of *Friends of the School Library*

April 15, 2014

Sarah Ellis, Governor General's Award-winning Children's Author

Once upon a time, in 1958, a little girl started school. This little girl had books in her home and she went to the public library but her main guide to the information in the world was her school librarian. By information I don't just mean data. I include the education of the heart that one gets from stories. The school librarian, lovely Miss Fletcher at Lord Roberts Elementary, was the ideal person to be a guide because she knew information and she knew that little girl who was, of course, me.

Fast forward to 2014. My great-niece starts school this year. She has books in her home and she goes to the public library. There's another factor. She has an i-pad. How much information is there in her world? The world of the information explosion is expressed in words like "zettabytes." Here's one way of looking at it: When I was a kid information doubled every sixteen years. Now it doubles every eighteen months. Who is going to prepare children for this world? Who is going to prepare children for zettabytes? Teacher librarians, that's who. They know information and they know the children. They are essential.

Susin Nielsen, Governor General's Award-winning Children's Author

Growing up, the school library was my refuge. I was an offbeat kid, and to be blunt, sometimes books were the only friends I had. But what friends they were! How I loved entering the new worlds in the books my helpful teacher-librarian would recommend. I can honestly say I wouldn't be where I am today without my school library. My single parent mom and I couldn't afford to go to bookstores – but it didn't matter. Because my school library was a club that every single child could belong to.

And that, for me, is the number one reason (among many great reasons) why libraries and the knowledgeable teacher-librarians who run them are so vital: They are the heart of the school. They are *the* place where every child, regardless of his or her background, can have access to the same wealth of information, creative voices and, of course, *distinctly Canadian books and culture*.

School libraries allow *all children* the chance to better themselves and expand their horizons. They are a place where *all children* can have their minds opened to new ideas and explore new worlds under the guidance of passionate and informed teacher-

librarians. Children who live in households without books, or whose parents can't afford books, still have an equal playing field in their library. Thank you.

Glen Huser, Governor General's Award-winning Children's Author

We all know that school libraries are so much more than rooms filled with materials or machines that can access materials. A key player in how those materials are accessed, though, is someone called a 'teacher-librarian'. Yes, a double-edged word where you cannot easily separate one part from the other part. That person is trained to build the 'library' so that it is effective and inviting, but that person is also a role-model, a mentor, a curriculum co-ordinator—someone who, as the teacher side of the word, takes on the challenge of getting students to love literature and the arts and sciences and the cultural heritage of these disciplines, who assists teachers in developing programs that are richly resource-based, and who sets up a learning centre so that is truly the hub of the school.

For 25 years, I served Edmonton Public Schools as a teacher-librarian and then as a consultant in school libraries and I know firsthand how crucial a well-staffed and inviting school library is as we aim not only for excellence in student achievement but to enrich students' lives as they move beyond the corridors of required education. There's a world of wonderful resources to explore out there, but it's so important for kids to have a sense of the dimensionality and colour of that world before they head out. My plea is that, in school restructuring, we don't wash out that colouring and dimensionality by doing away with or decimating teacher-librarian staffing

Linda Bailey, Vancouver children's author of 26 books
(Written Submission Only)

May I speak briefly about school libraries as centres of Canadian culture? This point is not always seen or understood. But any author who does school visits quickly learns that teacher-librarians act as experts in, and doorways to, the books in which *Canadian children can see themselves* — their own culture, history, and daily reality.

Excellent, award-winning books are published every year about growing up Canadian. They show the incredible diversity of the word "Canadian" — books about Chinese-Canadian immigrants in Toronto, First Nations children in rural BC, Saskatchewan farm families during the Depression, and on and on. And how do these books find their way into children's hands? Usually through the expertise of a knowledgeable teacher-librarian, who finds, reads, critiques, chooses and purchases the very *best* of all Canadian resources for his/her library. This wonderful teacher-librarian will also start book clubs, involve children in Canadian readers' choice awards, invite Canadian authors to speak, and general foster a strong "culture" in the library itself of inclusion and welcome, based on a classically Canadian sense of tolerance.

Conversely, what happens *without* a strong school library and teacher-librarians? As authors, we sometimes visit schools in various parts of Canada where the library has been neglected, and the teacher-librarian's role has been greatly diminished. Often these

libraries end up looking like sad “twins” of similar schools in the U.S. They carry the same generic picture books from Disney, the same non-fiction from American giants such as Scholastic U.S., and the same computer resources from the same single American software corporation. Those school libraries are, in my experience, sad places. because they offer their students such a very minimal an experience of their own country and culture. They are also sad because, with no welcoming voice at the door, they are often empty.

I hope that the Vancouver School Board trustees will continue to support school libraries as much as possible and will work to address some of the problems outlined by Eric Meyers in the attached brief. School libraries staffed with full-time teacher-librarians really are “the heart of the school.”

TL Staffing Summary 2006 - 2012/3

Elementary

	FTEs	Students
2006/7	62.6	31,594
2007/8	57.83	30,623
2008/9	56.14	30,330
2009/10	58.46	29,539
2010/2011	53.53	29,305
2011/2012	52.55	29,017
2012/2013	50.65	28,767
Percent drop	approx 19%	approx 9%

Secondary

2006/7	27.63	23,478
2012/3	25.78	22,765
Percent drop	approx 7%	approx 3%

Statistic collection for this year is not yet finished but it can be said that there are still huge inequities across the system. If we take a look at schools with student population between 395 and 430 students the teacher-librarian staffing range is huge. It varies from .5 to 1.0, yet the enrolment is very similar. This inequity is a true problem.

The Case for Strong School Libraries

Dr. Eric M. Meyers
On Behalf of *Friends of the School Library*
April 15, 2014

To the Board of Trustees:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Board on the issue of the 2013-14 Preliminary Budget Proposals. *Friends of the School Library* represents hundreds of parents, educators, and community members across Vancouver who value the role that school libraries play in building strong and effective learning experiences for young people. This year we have asked a panel of community members, well-known authors, some of whom have won the Governor General's Award, to talk about the value of strong school libraries. School libraries are still alive in Vancouver but they have faced—and continue to face—many challenges, including inadequate staffing, technology, and budgetary resources.

School Library Situation for the Academic Year 2013/14

School libraries in Vancouver continue to show significant inequalities in terms of staffing and technology. Particularly at the elementary level, there may be enormous differences in access to library personnel among schools of similar size. On average, Vancouver schools provide only .4 FTE for the library. Technology access is similarly inequitable. Proposed cuts of \$50,000 will significantly impact the collections and services these understaffed libraries provide.

School libraries can make a real difference. Research indicates that well-funded and well-staffed school libraries positively affect student achievement, reading motivation, and technology fluency. Furthermore, school libraries have the power to narrow achievement gaps between high and low performing students. We cannot afford to underfund school libraries!

What We Can Do:

Friends of the School Library continues to advocate for strong library programs city wide, as we have done for many years. We hope that the Board will carefully consider these points as they finalize the 2014-15 budget:

- 1) Vancouver Schools should set minimum staffing levels for school libraries. This would create a stable foundation for the work of teacher-librarians with students and educators, and reduce inequalities in instruction and facilities access.
- 2) The Board should reconsider past cuts, such as the Teacher-Librarian Consultant position, as well as proposed cuts to Library/Media staff that support the work of teacher-librarians. Human infrastructure is one of the most important elements of any technology integration program.
- 3) Vancouver Schools should address the inequalities in access to digital technologies in school libraries. A basic level of access to digital tools, including computers and

high-bandwidth Internet access, should be present in every school library. Access to digital resources is at the heart of developing digital literacies, which are vital to success in the Information Age.

- 4) Vancouver schools should safeguard library budgets and restore past cuts. Library materials and equipment can become quickly outdated or inaccessible without adequate funding. Libraries are a benefit to all students, staff and faculty.

I recognize in times of financial constraint we must closely examine every expenditure in terms of outcomes. It is easy to forget that some benefits are intangible, such as the hidden work that teacher-librarians do to foster a culture of literacy and inquiry in their schools. The best support for inquiry instruction and technology integration is site-based and built upon existing relationships. Teacher-librarians can be pivotal to the success of a strategic approach to developing digital literacy and deep inquiry skills for all students.

Sincerely,



Eric M. Meyers
Assistant Professor
School of Library, Archival and Information Studies
University of British Columbia
eric.meyers@ubc.ca

VSB Committee-of-the-Whole Presentation

Presenter: James Neufeld, Continuing Education Instructor, Digital Media

A. EXCESSIVE/REDUNDANT STAFFING ISSUES

- We have 1 Program Coordinator and 5 Course Programmers, 1 budget clerk and several casual CUPE support staff. North Seattle CE has 1 Director, 1 Marketer, 1 Programmer, and 1 Operations.

VSB Continuing Education

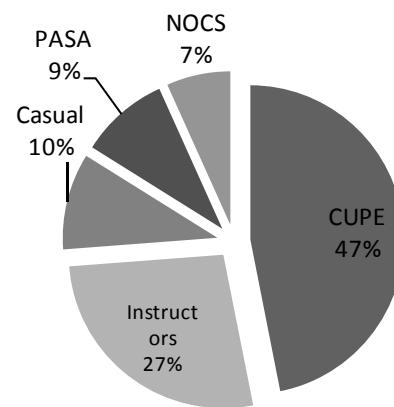
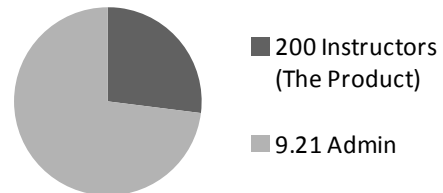
- 1 Program Coordinator (PASA)
- 2 Senior Course Programmer (CUPE)
- 3 Senior Course Programmer (CUPE)
- 4 Course Programmer (CUPE)
- 5 Course Programmer (CUPE)
- 6 Course Programmer (CUPE)
- 7 Course Programmer (CUPE) - vacant
- 8 Brochure (CUPE)
- 9 Budget Clerk (CUPE)
- 10 Receptionist (CUPE)

North Seattle Continuing Education

- 1 Director
- 2 Programmer
- 3 Marketing
- 4 Operations

- 73% of the salaries and benefits are for administration (9.21 full-time positions) while 27% of salaries go to our 200 contract instructors;
- 47% (nearly half) of salaries go to CUPE staff alone; this is grossly unjustifiable from a budgetary perspective;
- Our product is the instructors and their courses yet *three-quarters of salaries go to administration*. This is absolutely not how you run a profitable business.
- We currently program 350 courses with 5 course programmers (average 70 courses each); North Seattle Continuing Education programs 2-3 times the number of courses (150-200 per term) with only 1 course programmer; It is both feasible and economical to run CE with only 2 course programmers;*
- 25 years ago "[CE] ran a program about the size it is now considering the number of courses being offered in the current flyer. There were only 4 or 5 staff then." - Peggy Logan, CE Instructor; *10 years ago our programmers programmed 350 courses each;*
- The PASA Program Coordinator does not program any of our courses and is an unessential position;
- We have a lack of continued leadership/support from the non-essential PASA position and far too many course programmers for the number of courses being run;
- As mentioned in section D-1 of the budget, *new positions will be created for Adult Education and Summer School*. This is not a reduction in overall costs but rather a shift to another department. *PASA will end up in a new position.*
- On paper it says we'll save over \$500k but all the jobs will be shuffled to other departments; shuffling CUPE jobs to other departments isn't going to reduce anything. It's all smoke and mirrors and will result

Salaries



in virtually no cost savings to the Board. *The only cost savings will be Night School instructors and school administrators. Custodial staff and CUPE staff will still be working.*

- We have too many night school centers for the number of programs being offered and run;
- Staffing at night school centers is currently by costly admin staff (NOCS - \$64k/year), we can replace with more affordable clerical staff like at Education Centre;
- Burnaby and Richmond subsidize continuing education;
- Several stakeholders brought up excessive administration in their departments at the Preliminary Budget Meeting on April 8th. This seems to be a recurring theme in many departments. Top-heavy administration never has and never will reduce budgets for any organization.
- *Our \$868,988 revenue is nothing to sneeze at;*

B. MARKETING & ADDITIONAL ISSUES/IMPROVEMENTS:

- "Currently, we are reviewing all our marketing strategies with a consultant." – Rob Schindel (April 2, 2014); let's continue putting efforts into marketing and reduce the administration by half.
- Balancing a budget means that expenses should not be higher than income.
- "If you want to learn how to cook, you watch YouTube," Bacchus – Vancouver Sun. Why do we need elementary school teachers then? Can children learn solely from YouTube and books? Mentorship is essential even in a digital age. Millennials value group learning and community; Computer courses can teach people how to create the next YouTube.
- We need to focus on acquisition of new students, primarily millennial age group;
- We need better print, email and social media marketing;
- "Facebook only has engineers here and not a full office because they can't find good talent in Vancouver." – Elim Kwok, VSB Student and Marketing Professional; CE lets Vancouverites learn more affordably and at their own pace;
- VSB Continuing Education has hundreds more Facebook "Likes" than VSB and SFU Continuing Studies;
- Email newsletters are emailed too late, usually days before classes start, not segmented into major course categories (cooking, computers, photography, etc.);
- Email newsletters should go when the brochures drop and again the last week before the classes start;
- network issues caused website shut down during peak Spring registration period;
- We need advertising consistency, tracking, and follow-up;
- Brochure quality has not been addressed (Langara has slimmed down their brochure);
- Marketing consultant hired by Senior Management, charged to CE; where's the follow-up?
- Price Waterhouse fees also charged to CE; no marketing suggestions in this report;
- Amalgamating Summer/Fall and Winter/Spring brochures would reduce brochure costs, mailing/postage by 50%;

C. SUGGESTED STAFF CUTS/CHANGES:

- Cut half of the Course Programmers (CUPE 15)
- Replace Night School administrators (NOCS) with cheaper clerical staff
- Cut Program Coordinator (PASA)
- Continue working with already hired marketing consultant

D. ESTIMATED SAVINGS:

- \$200,000-\$250,000 – Course Programmers (cut a minimum of 3-4 full-time positions)
- \$88,000 – Program Coordinator (1 position)
- \$30,000 – Clerical staff replacing NOCS administration

TOTAL \$318,000-\$368,000



**Presentation to the Vancouver School Board Trustees:
Public hearing on proposed budget cuts 2014/2015
April 15, 2014, Mount Pleasant Elementary School
Delivered by Elka S. Yarlowe, President and CEO Access to Music Foundation**

Ask your doctor, your mechanic, your bank teller, your manicurist; ask anyone you meet what was the single most memorable and meaningful experience they had in elementary and secondary school and they will tell you, unequivocally, that it was their participation in a band or orchestra. Ask them to talk about their experience, and watch as their body language changes from being closed to open. Watch a light come over their faces, as they exude an air of confidence and joy. Watch, and listen as people from all walks of life, from all levels of education and profession, credit their participation in an elementary band or orchestra with making them good parents, good friends, good citizens and has helped them develop a life-long relationship with music.

Every professional musician, every athlete, every renowned scientist, every astronaut, has been deeply involved in their chosen field since childhood. Wayne Gretzky learned to skate as he learned to walk. Gustavo Dudamel, from the one of the poorest barrios in Venezuela, who learned to play the violin at age 6 is now the esteemed music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Even our own Mayor Robertson learned to play the tuba in elementary school. And for those who have ever seen the film "Music of the Heart" chronicling the work of my personal hero, Roberta Guaspari, who founded Opus 118, the Harlem School of music after saving one grade 3 and 4 violin class in Harlem, know that her students have gone on to great achievements in many fields besides music.

Your newest proposed budget cuts to elementary school band and string programs will rob thousands of young people of this experience. It will rob them of the chance to explore new horizons, to find their place in an unfriendly world, and it will, most assuredly, rob them of the tools to reach their human potential.

My name is Elka Yarlowe and I am the President and CEO of Access to Music Foundation. My presence here tonight has presented me with a personal dilemma, but never the less, I am here to add our voice in response to a crucial issue. Access to Music Foundation are the first responders to barrier-free music education and BC's only charitable organization that is devoted exclusively to providing financial and mentorship support to public and Aboriginal school music programs. Each year we provide schools with thousands of dollars worth of quality instruments, teacher stewardship, and mentorship opportunities for band and orchestral students. In fact, we have provided VSB school music programs with close to \$85,000 in funding since 2007; the bulk of which was given in the last 3 years. We work hand in hand with music specialists, district Fine Arts Coordinators, parents, funders, and other music education stakeholders to ensure that music programs remain robust and will continue to provide students with extraordinary educational opportunities that will have a profound impact on their lives starting in the music classroom through adulthood.



Tonight, my colleagues will speak to you about the unique benefits of music education. They will speak eloquently and knowledgably about how music opens neuro-pathways that are integral to language, science, and math and how band and orchestra programs contribute to the development of children. They will speak to you about how children who participate in band and orchestra are less likely to be involved with crime as teenagers, and are more likely to develop better coping skills in adulthood. And you should, you must, listen. But you've heard these words before. You heard them in 2007, 2009, and in 2010. And now, in 2014, we are compelled once more, to speak to you on this very same issue. It grieves me that these words still have not moved you to consider any alternatives to budget shortfalls, other than reducing and in some cases, eliminating the very programs and resources that provide the most benefit to a child's education and development.

Reducing support for elementary band and string programs, removing itinerant music specialists and increasing parent and user fees is about more than just music. It is, about economics- the economics of poverty. It is about poverty of resources, a poverty of cultural expression and identification, and a poverty of spirit. It is about paucity, already so profoundly felt by your students and parents, that will leave even less chance for academic achievement and human development. It is a poverty that will widen the gap that already exists between the "haves" and "have not" schools.

A recent article in the "New Scientist" reports alarming findings by the National Academy of the Sciences in the US, that poverty has a chromosomal effect, that is, aging and old age related health conditions, on poor children as early as age nine.

A study by the Departments of Music and Psychology at Sheffield University, Sheffield, England, cites early music education as the primary aid for children with dyslexia and temporal processing stating " **It has been proposed that temporal processing ability can be improved through training, and that this will lead to improved language and literacy skills (Tallal et al., 1996). Music training, requiring very accurate timing skills, can offer a medium for the development and improvement of temporal processing ability, and thus may provide a valuable form of extra remediation for dyslexic children.**"

I visit our recipient schools often. I speak to teachers and students and parents and I know how hard they all work to sustain their music programs. I know the parents who are struggling between the ability to put food on the table or pay a monthly instrument rental fee for 2 or more children. I know the music teachers, especially the itinerant music specialists who travel from school to school and who know and love each of their students and I know that they are doing much more than just teaching music. I talk to the students, many with ADHD, fetal alcohol syndrome, and are on the autistic spectrum who tell me that if it wasn't for band or strings, they would have nothing. As one student has said "playing music calms me down".

And I know too, that your single decision to cut these programs, to cut these life affirming things from these people's lives, will cause irreparable damage that will last far beyond your understanding.



Yes, your budgets must be balanced according to provincial directives and we recognize that the province does not provide the funding you need to do so without compromising your constituent's welfare. However, the fact that we need strong advocacy at the provincial level warrants discussion and action far beyond the scope of tonight's purpose. For tonight, the decision to cut programs and services; an excision that defies the purpose for which a good education is intended, lies squarely on your shoulders.

Through this process of balancing a fair budget, you have an opportunity to stand with other district boards like Surrey, Delta, Richmond, Central Okanagan, Port Simpson, and Port Charlotte who are investing in their music programs to a remarkable extent-and you can defy the current Provincial government while enriching your students by keeping your music programs.

By willingly choosing to make these proposed budget cuts, you will willingly chose to shut our financial partners like Access to Music and MusiCounts and that the amount of money you hope to save will be dwarfed by the contributions you will no longer receive from us and organizations like us. This is your opportunity to become educational leaders. This is not a decision to be made by the province. This is yours alone.

Thank you.

In Defense of the District Athletic Coordinator (DAC)

At

Budget meeting 2014

April 15, 2014

Presented by

FRIENDS of VSSAA and VEPAA

History

- 1980's – Athletic Consultants + Secretary under the direction of a District Principal in charge of Physical Education and Athletics
- Mid 1990's - District Principal, Consultants and secretary Eliminated and District Students Event Assistant introduced as a CUPE position
- 1996 District Athletic Coordinator introduced to replace previous position (a CUPE position)
- 1999 Current DAC was hired after 3 years of unrest and disorganization.
- New DAC responsible for overseeing :
 - 20,000 student Athletes
 - 2,000 volunteers
 - 1,500 teams
 - 18 sports leagues in Secondary with 4 to 5 tiers (Grade 8 to 12)
 - 8 Sports leagues in Elementary with 2 tiers (grades 6 and 7)
 - Plus Cross Country running (Grades 1 to 7) with up to 1000 students participating in one day events.
 - And Track and Field (grades 4-7)
- There has already been a HUGE reduction in Budget considering the cutback of positions in the Early 1990s to the present.

Purpose of Athletics

The Enriched Education of the "WHOLE CHILD" in a Comprehensive Educational Program

- Extension of the Physical Education Program
- Extension of the classroom
- Students learn to set goals with commitment and responsibility
- Increase school spirit
- Connection to school
- Opportunity for all students regardless of socio-economic background
- Opportunity for students at Risk
- Greater student participation
- Develop Life Skills

Cooperation

Leadership

Self- confidence

Time management

Physical fitness

Sport specific skills

Respect

Persistence

Self-Discipline

Losing with dignity

Winning Graciously

Stress Management

Emotional well being

Satisfaction

A Sense of accomplishment

Sharing wisdom

Giving back – Volunteerism

- School Sponsored Sports seem to increase academic success as outlined by Daniel H. Bowen et al. in their Article in Atlantic Journal in the US - "High School Sports are not Killing Academics"

Scope of DAC

The current scope of the District Athletics Coordinator (DAC) for the Vancouver School Board (VSB) involves administering and managing extracurricular athletic programs for all secondary and elementary schools. The job activities are listed below:

Governance - ensure that teams and individuals comply with the rules and regulations for league, association (VEPAA or VSSAA) and BC School Sports.

Policy and Procedure Development and Implementation – discipline, league & sport policies.

Budget Planning & Purchasing - responsible for allocating funds for VEPAA & VSSAA accounts.

Sponsorship & Grant Procurement - summer sports camps, city championships, and all-star game.

Scheduling – complete league and playoff schedules for most elementary and secondary school leagues.

Tournament and Championship Coordination - oversee all elementary and secondary city championships.

Referee Allocation – recruit and allocate officials for leagues and city championships.

Facility Allocation – liaise closely with the Vancouver Parks Board, VSB Grounds Department and community organizations for league, championships and special events.

Conflict Resolution – address challenges/issues that arise from students, parents, coaches, athletics directors, principals, and VSB staff.

Discipline - ensure protocol is followed with student athlete misconduct during league or championship play, assist with complaints filed against student athletes and coaches.

Community Liaison – work with community leaders, teams and Provincial Sport Organizations to promote VSB leagues & events. Represent VSB on community committees.

Organize Special Events for VSB Staff - VEPAA Coaches' Recognition, VSSAA Coaches' Recognition, Baldwin Bash Staff Volleyball Tournament, VSSAA Staff Volleyball tournament

Website - Maintain and update website for all VSSAA schedules, update athletics web pages on VSB website.

Desktop Applications – Create tournament programs, and other event materials (posters, entry forms, t-shirts).

Gender Equity - Advocate equitable resources for female teams and leagues, promote female sports.

Clinics & Training – coordinate certification training, referee and rules clinics.

Professional Development - assist with the VEPAA after school workshops and October PRO-D workshops, assist and lead with the VSSAA Athletic Director workshops.

Risk Management – work towards the highest standards of safety for all student athletes and educating Athletic Directors and Coaches on the need to identify and minimize risks.

Supervision – volunteers, clerical staff, district events.

New & Enhanced Programs Implemented by the Present District Athletic Coordinator

- Initiated the VSSAA Summer Sport Camps (2005-present).
- Developed guidelines to expand Supervision policy to allow more participation of community coaches.
- Instituted championship medals/certificates for all VSSAA leagues ensuring equity for all sports.
- Facilitated the introduction of website technology for all leagues.
- Established a formal coaches' recognition dinner for secondary school coaches.

Consequences

Losing the DAC position will have tremendous impact on the way the VSB tries to deliver an ENRICHED EDUCATION TO THE "WHOLE CHILD" in Vancouver

- Loss of opportunity for students to get connected
- Loss of School SPIRIT
- Loss of History and the creation of a void in schools as athletic programs erode
- Without leadership the VSSAA and the VEPAA programs for students/athletes will not be sustainable
- Without leadership and support to develop programs for student/athletes, it may become prohibitive for teachers to volunteer their time
- Parents will become frustrated with the lack of extracurricular and Intramural sports activities in PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- Parents may decide their children will be better educated at PRIVATE – non-public schools
- The potential erosion of the PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM while enriching the Private Schools with STUDENTS that should be in the PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
- The loss of teachers and thus the loss of opportunities for our students as a decline of enrollment will be augmented
- The loss of a position such as the DAC, which per capita, because of the amount of students it has direct impact on, would be a grave error. The \$72,000 for 20,000 students per year and the opportunity for connection for those students, it's a great bargain.
- Please understand the significance of a well-coordinated athletic program means to the wellbeing of our students and the VSB

Vancouver Secondary Schools Athletic Association

(VSSAA)

Vancouver Elementary Physical Activity Association

(VEPAA)

Vancouver School Board

(VSB)

April 9, 2014

Dear Parents, Student Athletes, Teachers and Community Coaches,

The preliminary budget has come down from the Vancouver School Board. We are sad to communicate to you that the District Athletic Coordinator (DAC) position has been put on the "chopping block" and is to be eliminated in the School Board's preliminary budget. This position is critical to the organization of the VSB athletics and the manner in which it delivers athletic opportunities to our students. Without this position the VSSAA and the VEPAA would be seriously compromised and potentially dissolved which would thereby reduce the opportunities for sport participation for our students within our schools.

The function of Athletics in our schools is critical to the comprehensive education we are trying to deliver in our VSB schools; educating the "whole" child. The estimated number of athletic participants in our schools is above 50% of our school population. Our student/athletes participate in school athletics in one form or another from intramurals to elite level extra-curricular teams. The estimated numbers of participants is 8000 student athletes in our secondary schools and 12,000 athletes in our elementary schools. With the loss of the DAC position, a great number of opportunities will no longer be available for our students, impacting the entire district.

Please join the VSSAA and the VEPAA in our efforts, so that together we can save the DAC position. We need you to contact your school administrator, your trustees and your local union (VSTA or VESTA) to let them know that you support our programs. It is critical that we flood the offices with calls of support so that a clear message is sent about how we all feel about the value of athletics in our schools. Athletics is important to the overall growth of our kids and it is important to offer these sporting opportunities to students in the Vancouver School District. Your help is vital in order to keep the DAC position.

Please see the list below to make the appropriate calls.

Trustees

Patti Bacchus – 604-250-1130	Fraser Ballantine – 604-356-0526	Ken Clement- 604-266-7616
Ken Denike- 604 889- 0564	Mike Lombardi – 604-306-6948	Cherie Payne -604-356-0389
Allan Wong – 604-437-6074	Sophia Woo -604-862-6870	Rob Wynen – 604-355-9721

Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA) – 604-873-5570

Vancouver Elementary Teachers Association (VESTA) – 604- 873-8378

S. Cardwell – VSB Superintendent – 604-713-5100

M. Ciarniello – VSB Associate Superintendent in charge of VSSAA and VEPAA – 604- 713-4594

VSB Switch Board – 604 – 713- 5000

Everyone who cares about the role Athletics and Sports play in our public school system should be aware that this is a huge mistake. The message that the preliminary budget is sending is that school athletics is not supported by the VSB. We must reverse that!

Yours truly,

Mike Allina

VSSAA President

Vancouver Technical Secondary School

Raja Sabbagha

VEPAA President

Chief Maquinna Elementary School



The Coalition for Music Education in British Columbia responds to recommended cuts to Elementary Band and Strings Program by Vancouver School Board

My name is Christin Reardon MacLellan. I am the President of the Coalition for Music Education in BC, the conductor of a youth band in the Greater Vancouver Youth Music Academy, and I am the Education & Community Programs Manager for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

I am here tonight on behalf of all of my colleagues, and thousands of voices of students, teachers, parents, arts supporters, and concerned citizens who are fiercely opposed to the recommended cuts to the VSB's Elementary Band and Strings Program. I am not here to tell you how to balance your budget, for that is not my job. I am here to tell you why you need to retain the elementary band and strings program. I asked my students why they need their school bands and orchestras. A grade 8 student said "because I'll never outgrow music. It's something I can do forever."

As suggested by a vast body of research, playing in a music ensemble offers children an experience they can't get elsewhere. In band and orchestra, students learn non-verbal communication, self-expression through an instrument, development of fine motor skills, positive social interactions, and how to participate in the creation of something bigger than oneself. Most importantly, all of this happens SIMULTANEOUSLY. Consider students with special needs- some of whom function best in music, a subject that allows them to express themselves in unique ways. Consider First Nations students, and the unifying power of music education- the way it creates positive bonds between students, and within schools. How could taking instruments out of the hands of thousands of elementary school students even be considered?

Imagine the first day of elementary band or orchestra class- it's September, it's something brand new to students. They can't wait to open their instrument cases, they are overcome by curiosity. If you've ever been in a classroom on this day, you know that the excitement is wonderfully genuine. The earlier students begin music instruction, just like with any subject, the better they are at it. Students learn so much in their first years of playing a band or string instrument, as concepts progress sequentially, and always comprehensively. Now imagine if you choose to eliminate these programs: "Sorry kids, I hope you've enjoyed learning to play these instruments. Now give them back." Who will have to deliver that horrible news?

Fast forward to secondary school band or orchestra class. Students are building upon what they learned in elementary school and developing musical sensitivity. As a conductor, I've experienced astonishing communications with students. Not a word had to be spoken. Music was the voice. I want you to imagine looking into the eyes of a young person, giving them a visual cue through the movement of your hands or the expression on your face, and the only way they need to communicate is by looking back into your eyes and creating a sound on their instrument that means something. And that's what music is. "Music is the movement of sound, to reach the soul, for the education of its virtue" (Plato).

I sympathize with the VSB, and realize that school boards across our province are faced with difficult financial decisions, however your recommendation to eliminate the band and strings program is

regressive and short-sighted. The excuse in the budget proposal suggesting music will be taught through general music programs is most alarming, because in addition to losing band and strings, you will also lose 12 music specialist teachers. There is a reason why the BCTF recognizes music specialists: they are the ones with the pedagogical knowledge who bring quality to music programs. Their training cannot be undermined. So what then VSB? How do you plan to effectively implement the BC Music Curriculum in grades 4 through 7? Generalist teachers are not able to teach concepts such as compound meter, minor scales, melodic form, and understanding repertoire based on historical, cultural, and social contexts.

Music is NOT an expendable area of study. The Coalition for Music Education in BC recommends equitable cutbacks across all programs and expenses in the entire district- cutbacks that do not single out music and that do not propose elimination. We also reject the "pay to play" option, as it will immediately restrict access and make playing music at school unaffordable for many Vancouver families. Perhaps consider the approach taken by the Richmond and Delta School districts, who have implemented a mandatory band program. Can the VSB accomplish a mandatory program for band AND strings?

I strongly recommend you find a solution that considers the big picture and the long term benefits for the thousands of students involved in band and strings each year, without placing a petty price tag on your investment in music. Please think of your students and preserve the humanizing parts of their education. Consider the return on your investment into music.

I'll leave you with this quote, by a university student in response to the question of why we need music in schools: "Through any type of adversity, people naturally turn to music to express themselves. To remove music because of adversity is backwards."



Coalition for Music Education in British Columbia

A Response & Call to Action regarding Vancouver School Board's proposal to eliminate elementary band and strings program.

The Coalition for Music Education in BC Society strongly opposes the recommended elimination of the elementary band and strings program in Vancouver schools by the Vancouver School Board.

These recommended cuts in funding and programming by the VSB will eliminate the opportunity for thousands of Vancouver elementary students to learn to play a band or string instrument.

The educational benefits gained from participation in a school band or string ensemble, taught by a **qualified music specialist teacher**, are not replaceable with any other means of instruction. These benefits include self-expression and nonverbal communication through an instrument and development of individual skills on an instrument while creating something with others that is bigger than oneself.

The alternative proposed by the VSB, to charge an annual fee of \$250.00 per child per year to participate in the elementary band and strings program, would immediately make playing music at school unaffordable for many Vancouver families and **restrict access** to this important aspect of music education.

The Coalition for Music Education in BC **strongly urges** the Vancouver Board of Education Trustees to amend their proposed budget and **preserve current funding levels** for the elementary band and strings program, so that thousands of Vancouver children will continue to have the opportunity to play music in their **school band or orchestra**.

A Call to Action

The Coalition for Music Education in BC urges parents, community members, and concerned citizens to make their voice heard in support of the elementary band and strings program in the VSB.

EVERY VOICE COUNTS and time is of the essence. The budget goes to vote on **April 30**.

Please consider the following:

1. Write to Patti Bacchus, Chair of the Vancouver Board of Education Trustees, urging the board to preserve the current funding for the elementary band and strings program. (Sample letter attached). Email: patti.bacchus@vsb.bc.ca
2. Attend and/or register to speak at the upcoming Public Consultation Budget Meeting on Tuesday, April 15 (or Wednesday, April 16 if required) by emailing budget2014_2015@vsb.bc.ca.
3. Follow the Coalition for Music Education in BC on Facebook and Twitter for updates and action items. www.facebook.com/cmebc; Twitter: [@cmebc](https://twitter.com/cmebc)
4. Share this information with your friends, families, and neighbours and encourage them to make their voices heard in support of school music education of our children.

Who we are

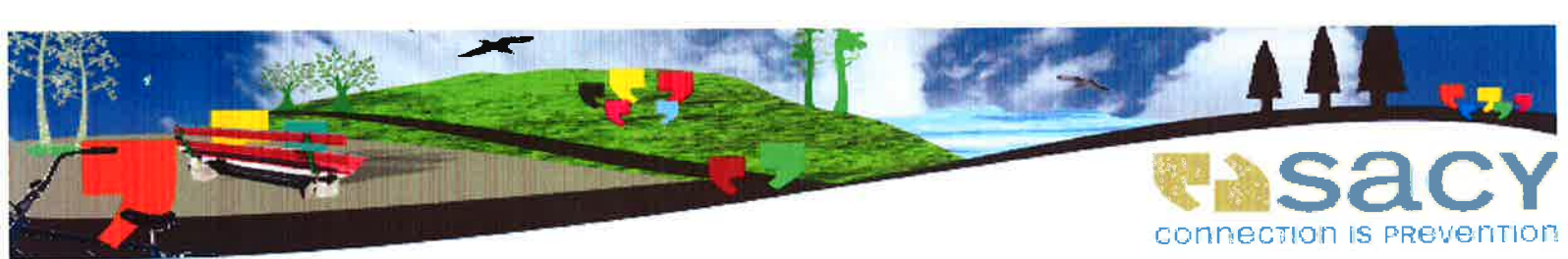
The Coalition for Music Education in British Columbia Society (CMEBC) is a registered non-profit society made up of parents, educators, arts organizations, and supporters from across our communities whose mission is to protect, promote, and advance music education in British Columbia.

For questions or comments, please email president@cmebc.org

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SACY INITIATIVE PACKAGE
VSB BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL BOARD/COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
BUDGET MEETING
15 APRIL 2014

LORRAINE GRIEVES
MANAGER
VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH
YOUTH ADDICTION AND PREVENTION SERVICES
(SACY)



School Age Children and Youth (SACY) Highlights From Final Evaluation 2009-2013

*Conducted by Arbor Educational & Clinical Consulting Inc.

**Full report available on request (604-713-5233)

SACY Aims to Increase:

- Education regarding substance use & harm reduction.
- School and community engagement.
- Connectedness to adults, schools, & communities.
- Help & support seeking behaviors.
- Self-reflection and optimism.
- Communication between youth and parents.
- Building youth and parent resiliency.

AN OVERVIEW

SACY is an evidence-informed initiative that aims to enhance substance use prevention, support, and brief intervention in Vancouver School Board (VSB) schools and surrounding communities in order to promote health and wellness for youth and families.

NUMBERS REACHED FROM 2009-2012 SCHOOL YEARS

Youth Stream:

- 25,500 Students participated in a classroom education session.
- 8,400 contacts in workshops or groups.

S.T.E.P: (a three day, structured, educational opportunity for students experiencing substance use related issues)

- 511 youth.

Parent Stream:

- 3000 contacts through which parents/ caregivers received support or education.

Curriculum & Parent Teaching:

- 225 School staff participated in a total of 8 professional development events.

SACY'S FOUR STREAMS



HIGHLIGHTS FROM YOUTH STREAM

Increased Knowledge about how to avoid drug use:

- 74% of youth report that they know where to go for help for issues related to substance use.
- 67% of SACY-involved youth reported they better understand how substance use can impact their lives.
- 62% of youth indicated that the information learned will be helpful in their life.

Harm Minimization in Substance Use

- 22% of youth indicated that they intended to make changes in their lives as a result of participating in SACY.

"I like the approach to dealing with issues, triggers, and coping as opposed to drugs themselves." - Teacher

HIGHLIGHTS FROM S.T.E.P. YOUTH

Knowledge: The top three ways that S.T.E.P. youth identified ways to avoid substance use were:

- 60% deciding not to buy substances.
- 52% telling others that you don't want to use.
- 51% telling others that you have to be somewhere so you can't be drunk/high.

Harm Minimization in Substance Use

From the S.T.E.P. program to ten weeks post-S.T.E.P., youth reported:

- 12% decrease in weekly marijuana use.
- 20% decrease in daily marijuana use.
- 34% of S.T.E.P. youth thought that they would easily be able to avoid alcohol and drugs if they chose to do so.

YOUTH STREAM: FOSTERING RESILIENCY

As a result of participating in SACY, youth reported:

There is an adult who really cares about them.
71%*

There is an adult from SACY with whom they can talk.
79%*

Participating more in school
54%

Feeling more involved in their community
65%

* SACY-Involved youth.

"The school is now more youth friendly" - Student

"I joined SACY to have a place to be heard." - Student

"Thank you for being here, your support has been critical in helping my daughter work through this time." - Parent

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PARENT STREAM

As a result of attending a workshop or Capacity Café, adults reported:

94%
of parents intend to enhance their communication with their youth.

57%
intend to spend more time talking with their youth about substance use issues.

59%
strongly agreed that they know where to get more help or resources.

62%
continued to use some of the techniques they learned in their day-to-day parenting.

S.T.E.P. STREAM: FOSTERING RESILIENCY

As a result of participating in S.T.E.P., youth reported:

School Engagement

- 84% that it was very important for them to graduate from high school.

Connectedness to Adults

- 84% strongly agreed that they felt understood by S.T.E.P. staff.

Help Seeking

- 25% became involved in SACY after their return from the program.

Optimism

- 69% strongly agreed things would go well for them when they returned to their school after the program.
- 71% agreed that they can make whatever choices they want for their future.



**Boys & Girls Clubs
of South Coast BC**

April 14, 2014

Board of Trustees
Vancouver School Board
1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6J 5K8

Re: *SACY Program*

Dear Trustees,

Boys and Girls of South Coast BC (BGC) has been providing Substance Abuse Counselling Services for at-risk and vulnerable youth since 1988. We believe it would be a terrible loss to families and teens in Vancouver if the number of SACY positions are reduced.

When the SACY project was presented to community stakeholders 8 years ago, we were all excited and relieved that a prevention program had finally been created that would reach out to the youth in effective ways and also engage with the parents, evoking change on all levels.

Although BGC has been connected to the SACY program for several years, a formal partnership was created between SACY and our Parents Together support program two years ago which led to an increase in the quality of services for both programs. Together, SACY and Parents Together provide workshops in the schools to maximize staffing and enhance accessibility to our services. We have, as a result, seen more parents coming to our parent support groups and more parents from our support groups accessing the supports of the SACY team. By combining our resources, we feel better able to respond to the needs of parents and better able to support their teens.

By broadening the scope of our support to parents and their teens, there is a positive impact on the youth's social and emotional development and an increase in a family's knowledge and skills around effectively parenting teens who are struggling with substance use issues. Our connection with SACY helps with the transition of families whose teens may be leaving home or changing schools, and also with the transition back for teens who have been out of the school system and want to get reconnected.

The SACY program provides an exceptional service to teens and families in the Vancouver school system, and in particular, those teens who are marginalized and at risk of being disconnected from the educational system. We therefore respectfully request that the Vancouver School Board retain the existing staffing levels at SACY.

Sincerely,

Kathy Snowden
Director, Counselling & Support Services

AGENCY DIRECTORS:

Otto Ehinger, chair
Ariana Arguello
Gigi Chen-Kuo
Rahim Dadani
Alyn Edwards
Ann Fehr
Lawrie Ferguson
Doug LePard
Gail Martin
Bryan Price
Rick Sleski
Aryn Somanl

PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

Clubs:
Fraserview (Vancouver)
Grandview (Vancouver)
Hillside (North Delta)
Kilmount (Vancouver)
Kivan (Vancouver)
Langley
North Burnaby
Norvan (North Vancouver)
Richmond
Surrey
Winkill (Tsawwassen)
Wintemute (Ladner)

Camp Potlatch

Counselling and Support Services:

Early Years
Parent Support
Substance Abuse Counselling
Youth & Family Counselling

Employment Services:

WorkBC
Skills Link
Job Options BC

GET INVOLVED!

Donate
Follow us @helpBGC
Volunteer

OFFICE LOCATIONS:

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2875 St. George Street
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T 604.879.6554
F 604.879.6525
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North Delta
3rd Floor, 11861 88th Avenue
Delta, BC V4C 3C6
T 604.591.9262
F 604.591.8971
E deltainfo@bgcbc.ca

www.bgcbc.ca

Good evening Trustees. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight about the SACY initiative. My name is Tina Tsobanis from Vancouver Coastal Health. I am part of the SACY leadership team and provide clinical supervision for both VCH and Vancouver School Board staff.

I am here today to speak on behalf of the VCH managers and directors Lorraine Grieves, Anne McNabb and Andrew MacFarlane.

For 8 years now, VCH has been working in direct partnership with the VSB to create the SACY infrastructure. SACY is a health promotion initiative focused on substance use. It was borne out of community consultations that implored both VCH and the VSB to do more in relation to student substance use issues; to build an infrastructure to create a responsive culture in schools and their communities so that students, teachers and parents could become more literate and skilled at navigating difficult decision making regarding drugs and alcohol.

Our society is one that both stigmatizes substance use and celebrates it. How many of us started our day with coffee or had a glass of wine with dinner last night? VSB students will have to grapple with choices around alcohol and other substances at some point in their lives. For some it will be later in life, for others it is right now.

By creating a collaborative team of staff from VCH and the VSB who work in partnership with key members of schools and their community, we have fostered student health and wellbeing, connectedness to school and social emotional learning.

We have a list of impact stories that demonstrate the difference that our team made at critical times in a youth's life where re-engagement with school was the key; or where families needed help reconnecting with their youth- the list is long. As one parent has written to the trustees, "As, I'm sure you are aware, there exists a strong cannabis culture in Vancouver which unfortunately permeates to our school-aged children. With this risk, I am thankful that SACY exists as an educational tool".

The VSB needs to be congratulated for being a partner in this excellent work. This partnership is a point of pride.

So how did we get here?

For VCH getting here has taken a long time.

VCH wrote and administered the first grant after key stakeholders conducted a gap analysis.

VSB wrote the 2nd grant and VCH committed to in-kind resources to expand to city wide work.

Seeing many positive results reflected through external evaluation, VCH conducted a challenging redesign process. 6 staff became dedicated to the work of SACY creating the formal partnership we have today.

We built up to serving all 18 high schools with dedicated youth and parent engagement staff who have worked with thousands of youth and parents. VSB budget cuts last year stretched this ability and SACY today has less than the minimum resources required. We have made difficult choices to limit services to some schools this year and this has meant that some youth and parents are already going unserved.

So what is our Collective Impact?

By working together VCH has seen that we can have a far greater impact than working in our siloes.

In the handout package you have received you will find a snapshot of our evaluation results from the last 3 years of our work together. Our collective impact is powerful with over 25,000 students engaged in education sessions about substance use choices. Instead of being suspended, 511 youth went through STEP, a productive alternative with educational and remedial results for the youth and their family. Youth are seeing STEP as an opportunity for important learning with over 50% of students attending STEP this year self-referred.

With SACY involvement, youth who identify that they may benefit from mental health or addiction services now have clearer referral lines and fast-tracked access to VCH adolescent mental health assistance. This is because VCH recognizes the relationships that the SACY group has with students.

And in conclusion...

Federal grant money never provides ongoing funding but is well suited to testing ideas and strategies in order to see their value.

VCH has seen that value in SACY and has reallocated resources in order to support staffing by shifting 6 fulltime positions specifically focused on SACY. In addition, we have maintained a clinical supervisor, a coordinator, administrative support and manager support.

We require stability in order to sustain this complex work.

The budget proposal means we are faced with losing 2 positions- a 40% reduction in VSB SACY staff in 12 months. It means scaling down activities and serving fewer schools.

After building up this work over so many years, this is a tipping point. If these proposed cuts go through this work will no longer look the same. We will be reverting to a model that was in practice many years ago and which was seen as insufficient to meet the needs of the VSB community.

We want to be sure that this important, working partnership is viable and equitable. As a result of this budgeting process, VCH will be requesting follow up with VSB leadership to talk about improvements in process and our sustainability.

To echo the words of a SACY parent "I would request that the (Vancouver) Board of Education ensure that funding of this program continues. Budgetary cuts to this program will negatively impact many vulnerable youth across the District."

Please consider reversing your proposal to cut the 2 SACY positions and maintain our service levels so that this important work can continue.

Thank you for your time.

Vancouver School Board 2014/15 Preliminary Budget Proposals Public Consultation:
Submission of Queen Mary Elementary School PAC
April 15, 2014

The Queen Mary Elementary School PAC opposes the proposed elimination of funding for the elementary band and strings program. For over thirty-five years, the VSB Band and Strings Program has been one of the most successful music programs offered in the BC public education system.

This year alone, the VSB Band and Strings Program has over 2500 elementary students enrolled from Grades 4 through 7 learning to play the Brass, Woodwinds, Strings and Percussion Instruments in a group setting. The students, through participation in the band and strings program, gain in four important areas:

- cognitive development (learning the language and symbols of music, and developing counting/math skills)
- physical co-ordination (psycho-motor development, small muscle and breathing skills)
- affective learning (connecting to, and expressing feelings and ideas)
- social development (teamwork, compromise and leadership)

In many cases the band and strings program offered through the schools is the only access many of our children have to formal music instruction.

Our high school music programs will be decimated if they do not have a pool of music educated elementary school children coming into their schools. The outcomes related to a music education that begins in grade 4 versus grade 8 are significantly different.

The removal of the band and strings program would represent a tragic withdrawal of public funding for a valuable program that makes our district shine.

We further oppose the proposed implementation of a \$250 user fee (\$25/month over a 10 month school year) for the following reasons:

- Taking into account the existing \$35 music fee and the cost of renting an instrument, it is estimated that it could cost a student as much as \$385.00 to join the strings program for a year.
- This user fee would result in a significant drop in enrolment in band/strings;
- This drop in enrolment will result in the VSB having difficulty in achieving the target of \$350,000 in the budget proposal;
- The \$250 user fee would highlight the inequity between various schools and create a divide between lower and higher income areas of the city;
- There VSB has a policy that no children should be denied participation in a program due to financial hardship. The user fee is a barrier as families that apply for financial relief are often too embarrassed to ask for assistance so they don't end up signing up for programs that could benefit their children;
- It is often the program, or school, or school board that will waive the user fee for the families who cannot afford the fees. This means that the money allocated for something else will be used to support the students in need.

For all these reasons, we ask the VSB to reconsider its proposal to eliminate funding for the strings programs, and to consider other cost-saving measures as an alternative.

The Queen Mary Elementary School PAC also opposes the proposed elimination of athletic coordinator position. The district currently only has this one person coordinating all of the district wide sports events and tournaments. We fear that without this position, what is left of athletics in our school district will fall apart as this is not realistically a job that can be picked up by the school teachers or administration.

We, the parents of Queen Mary Elementary, have prepared a letter with over 100 signatures from parents to our MLA, the Minister of Education and the Honourable Christy Clark to ask for additional funding for education however any changes that could come from the Ministry would most likely be too late for this year's budget deadline.

The Preliminary Budget Proposal 2014/2015 that was made public on April 8th contains very detailed information on all of the proposed cuts however there is no information on what the VSB proposes to spend their 485 million dollar budget on. Our concern is that program funding is being cut in lieu of other areas which parents may deem not as impactful towards our children's overall education and without the whole picture it is difficult for parents in general to have a clear understating of the VSB priorities. We respectfully ask that this information be made available to parents.

In reviewing the past five years of audited financial statements and in particular the Schedule of Operating Operations (Operating Fund) it appears that an operating deficit was budgeted for all five of these years however only one year, 2010, end up in a deficit whereas the other ran a surplus. Making a decision to cut some of these fundamental student programs whose costs are significantly less than the annual fluctuation between the budgeted vs. the actual operating surplus (deficit) appears difficult to justify. We would appreciate a more detailed explanation as to this trend.

For all these reasons, we ask the VSB to reconsider its proposal to eliminate funding for the strings programs and for the athletic coordinator, and to consider other cost-saving measures as an alternative.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Queen Mary Elementary Parents Advisory Council

Good evening. My name is Roger Cole. I am the Principal Oboe of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the Music Director of the Vancouver Youth Symphony Orchestra. I speak to you tonight on behalf of my colleague, Maestro Bramwell Tovey, Music Director of the VSO who is overseas this week. My remarks are written by Maestro Tovey but echo the sentiments of the entire Vancouver Symphony Society and constitute the orchestra's presentation to the VSB this evening.

Bramwell writes:

In April 2010 there was a similar public hearing when the Vancouver School Board had proposed eliminating band and strings programs. Extensive public consultation resulted in the proposal to abolish being withdrawn. The VSB were widely praised for this action which was in response to the overwhelming message of support for music in our schools from parents, pupils, the VSO and many other interested parties. The VSB listened and reacted with great leadership and insight.

At that time, I made a submission in person, which I am unable to do tonight as ironically, I am in the UK leading the spring course for the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain, an organization dependent on the music education programs in British schools.

Our 2010 submission contained many details about the value of music in the lives of children. I would refer you to those remarks which were published in the Vancouver Sun and are available online. It is not necessary to repeat why music is so essential a part of a rounded education - but briefly, may I remind everyone present that music is the only language understood by everyone in our wonderfully diverse community of citizens.

Music is the expression of the inner narrative of every child, the common thread of communication to those who participate in a band or orchestra.

Tonight we wish to express the strongest disapproval of the VSB's latest proposal to eliminate the Elementary band and strings programs. We are extremely sympathetic to the predicament of the Vancouver Schools Board whose budgets must be balanced and whose role is to make difficult decisions, the depth and complexity of which require an understanding and judgement which by its very nature is highly specialist.

We are aware that VSB are encouraging those against the cuts to take up the matter with the provincial government. However, we sincerely believe that there is a particular concern about the elimination of the Elementary and String program that it is only possible for the VSB to solve.

Reinstating an eliminated program is very rare indeed. The teachers' jobs have gone, the pupils have departed, the instruments have been sold. The whole support infrastructure has to be recreated from scratch, a very expensive undertaking, even when money seems to grow on trees.

Restoring levels of funding to an already existing program at a later date in better circumstances, is a much simpler scenario. It is difficult to believe that if VSB eliminates this program at this moment, a future VSB would welcome the opportunity in better times, to face all the financial issues of recreating it. This is why we are urging the VSB not to eliminate the Elementary band and strings program entirely. It would be impossible to resurrect it at a later date.

If the Elementary program were to be eliminated now, it seems inevitable that at the next VSB budget, high school programs would follow the same fate.

We cannot begin to understand the depth of the issues facing VSB in the many essential areas of public education for which they are responsible. Our only expertise is in music. We have seen the power of music to unite people of widely disparate backgrounds. We have been in the schools, working with the students and teachers with the full support of the VSB under the banner of our program VSO CONNECTS. As VSB knows, as music director, I have been fully involved with this program with the presentation "Meet the Maestro," conducting school bands and orchestras, meeting with parent/teacher groups, raising money for groups and much else besides.

We are aware that the VSB is urging those against the cuts to speak out against the provincial government. The VSO will pursue its own private channels with the provincial government to communicate our serious concerns about the situation regarding the VSB budget problems. We are a non-partisan arts organization, but when it comes to the education of the children in our community, we realize that as a centre of excellence in performance and education, we have responsibilities.

For the VSO the stakes are much higher in 2014 than in 2010. VSO Connects, which was only in its infancy in 2010, is now a fully fledged program, drawing on several years of success and operating in every school district in the Lower Mainland. In 2011 the VSO School of Music opened its doors, offering additional individual lesson capacity, group learning from infancy, adult classes and a great deal more.

Perhaps most importantly, the VSO is in a community partnership with the extraordinary work going on in the St James Music Academy on the downtown Eastside where opportunities for young people are few and far between. As mentors and partners to SJMA, working with students and ensembles the VSO has renewed its mission to bring music to as many children as possible in our community.

If I might repeat one thing from our 2010 submission it would be this -

The social benefits of music are extraordinary - If a student holds a musical instrument then he or she can't hold a knife, or a joint, or a needle or a crack pipe – or a gun.
If a student is in a choir or a band or an orchestra, they are communicating through the universal art of music at the heart of our community.

Please support the children who play music as one Grade 8 student said this week, because it's something they can do for their entire life.

The VSO recognizes the dilemma facing the VSB, but please, do not take the instruments away from the elementary students.

Submitted with great respect on behalf of the Vancouver Symphony.

Submission to the Vancouver School Board 15 April 2014

2014/2015 Preliminary Budget Proposals

City School District Mini-school located at King George Secondary

In reference to City School (page 45) - Currently has 2.0 FTE teaching staff as well as support staff assigned. A reduction of 1.0 FTE will create a 1:15 student teacher ratio.

It is recommended to:

- 1) Reduce 1.0 FTE teaching staff at City School.

The uniqueness of City School was established in 1971. The program states **Education is Everywhere** and the teachers have put that mission to action. Every student is unique and education cannot be delivered in a one size fits all approach. This is not a debate about class size which polarizes education debates. This is a strategic decision. If you eliminate the mission of City School then you cut off the possibilities for students who have the potential to learn beyond the text book.

City School @ King George Secondary **Education is Everywhere**

City School is Unique

- Highly sought after non-traditional educational environment
- Greatly enriched curriculum full of learning opportunities in real world settings
- To facilitate this type of learning the teacher to student ratio must be higher than traditional classroom

City School Since 1971

- Making a unique learning impact on students for 43 years
- **Education is Everywhere** mission
- City School teachers have put that mission to action
- Education cannot be delivered in a one size fits all approach

Teacher Reduction Impact

- A dramatic shift in the ability for City School to operate
- Difficult to provide the quality and quantity of workshops, plays, conferences and lectures which occur during school hours, but outside of City School
- Find balance between fluctuating enrollment, without focusing on traditional teacher to student ratio

City School Month at a Glance

February	3	"Navigating the digital landscape in our lives" – workshop with Ross Laird
	7	Windermere Leadership Climate Change Conference Event - Youth Engagement: Revolution Documentary Viewing & Youth Panel Discussion at The Rio
	7	Bowling - Grandview Lanes
	12	"Imagining a Beautiful Green Future: Vancouver 2032" – talk by Guy Dauncey - VPL
	24	Food Week: Food Safe Training with Harry Dhaliwal of Vancouver Coastal Health
	25	Food week: Southlands Heritage Farm visit; cob oven baking (& met Steve the duck)
	25	Food week: <i>The Cheese Nun</i> documentary
	26	Food Week: Bannock by Shaundrea; "Indigenous Foods" - talk by Trent Gauthier
	26	Food week: Burgers by Jake; Pie-making workshop
	26	Food week: <i>The Secrets of Sugar</i> documentary
	27	Food Week: <i>Farmageddon</i> documentary; Anatomy of tasting workshop; Happy Lunch
	27	Food week: Bread-baking workshop; (Dealcoholized) Wine and cheese seminar
	28	Careers Day - Vancouver Aquarium

Building Capacity at City School

- Active recruitment & awareness of City School through social media
- Update City School website with dynamic content
- Add a social media component to website to promote school activities
- Proactive awareness & sharing of City School activities through VSB site

What City School Takes to Deliver!

- More than traditional effort required by teaching staff to embark on this real world learning environment
- City School is VERY different than teaching in a classroom every day
- Students from all over Vancouver & the Lower Mainland travel outside of their catchment to attend City School to gain the benefits of this truly unique school environment!
- **NO TEACHER CUTS!** Please

Every student at City School has the right to engage in creative literacy activities and honour the individual learning philosophy which has been put in place in 1971. Policy decisions based on reduced class size benefits and class size and teacher workload cannot be applied to City School as they would to a grade 10, 11 or 12 class at King George Secondary.

The beneficial facts are that City School provides its students with great opportunities for participation in the real world in a capacity that is unheard of in other VSB schools. This type of learning through hands-on experience may prove to be invaluable in the near future when apprenticing carries more career opportunities than a post-secondary degree might bring. It brings home a grassroots approach to education which has been left by the wayside in favour of template teaching and in an era when individual instructional relationships with students has become impossible in today's traditional classrooms.

Please take the time to evaluate the quality of the City School program and the effort required by its teaching staff to embark on this real world learning environment. It is very different than teaching in the classroom every day. Students from all over Vancouver and the Lower Mainland travel outside of their catchment to attend City School to gain the benefits of this truly unique school environment.

Sincerely,

From the Concerned Parents and Students currently attending City School

April 15, 2014

Vancouver Board of Education
1580 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC
V6K 5K8

RE: 2014/15 Preliminary Budget Proposal

Taking a look at the numbers, we see
2014/15 base budget = \$497.19 M
2014/15 projected revenues = \$484.85 M
Shortfall = \$12.34 M, or 2.5% of overall budget

Imagine: Family with earnings of \$50 K/year, and a shortfall of \$1,250

What should they do?

Pull kids out of hockey or soccer or baseball?
Stop attending VSO kids performances?
Tell the family they need to sleep on the park benches for 8 days throughout the year?

Of course not. Instead, every attempt would be made to keep to the current standards and not impact their daily lives. Small, discreet changes would be all that is needed to cover that small 2.5% shortfall.

Where our public schools are concerned:
Cuts that reduce waste make sense.
Cuts resulting from improving efficiencies make sense.
Cuts that reduce spending to align it to standardized levels make sense.

However, when we look for that last 2.5% of funding:
Cuts that impact 100% of the full-time VSB students do NOT make sense.
Cuts that merely offload the VSB's costs onto the families of these students do NOT make sense.

You have a difficult job. No one disputes that. But you must be up for the task. As my mentor used to say, "Anyone can steer the ship through calm waters, but it takes great skill and focus to do so when the storm comes in."

You have a duty to students first and foremost. Your efforts and focus should be on them at all times. It appears that you are using these children and their families as pawns in a political game and that is nothing short of shameful.

Irit Uzan

Lord Tennyson School Parent Advisory Council
1936 W. 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

April 11, 2014

Vancouver Board of Education
1580 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C.
V6K 5K8

Attention: Administrative Coordinator, Secretary-Treasurer's Office

RE: 2014/15 Preliminary Budget Proposals – D2 – Band and Strings Program Recommendations

On behalf of the parents of Lord Tennyson Elementary School, we are writing to express our significant concerns and opposition to the recommendations regarding the existing Band and Strings Program as set out in the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) Preliminary Budget Proposal.

Recommendation: Elimination of the Band and Strings Program (savings of \$630,651)

The elimination of the Strings Program would profoundly weaken the music curriculum available to Tennyson students as it is the only formal music program offered at our school. We do not otherwise have a dedicated music teacher teaching at Tennyson. Indeed, it would severely diminish the musical component of our students' education - the value of that component should not be underestimated nor compromised.

The Strings Program provides incredible benefits to our Grade 4-7 student participants. Learning music in such a group setting exposes children to new and creative ways of thinking and communicating. It teaches teamwork, collaboration, patience and persistence. The experience of playing in a group where children have the opportunity to be supportive of each other and gain the valuable experience of working as a team to accomplish a shared goal cannot be underestimated. There is also the sense of accomplishment, through hard work and practice, in mastering a piece and performing for the enjoyment of others. Music can build self-confidence. Our Strings Program has successfully brought all of this to current and past students. It must be allowed to continue to do so for future students.

It is also important to appreciate the impact of the Strings Program not only on our current intermediate students but also our primary aged students. Notably, our primary students are exposed to the music of this program through concerts to the school at large. They see their fellow, older school mates develop into enthusiastic musicians – for many, these budding and aspiring musicians are wonderful role models. As a result, the Strings Program is for many of our primary students a much anticipated opportunity upon entering Grade 4.

As a French immersion school, we are keenly aware of the benefits that a second language may bring to our children. Music, in many respects, is itself a language but one that can transcend the spoken word and have an amazing, positive and very personal (even life-long) effect on almost every child. Music can be a very powerful way to communicate - it can help heal, it can inspire. As parents of French immersion children, we are very sensitive to the significance of the loss of exposure to this third “language” which for so many years has been afforded by the Strings Program.

Many of our concerned parents have shared their thoughts regarding the proposed elimination of the Strings Program. While it is not practical to list all comments shared, below are a few which, we trust, the Board will recognize as speaking to the far-reaching potential implications that the elimination of this program may yield:

- “Our kids at Tennyson are too young for the Strings Program [currently] but they are going to be crushed to hear of its demise. They have wanted to be a part of the band since before they started school.”
- “We have made a conscious choice to send our children to public school...The more that programs are cut, I feel that I need to re-evaluate our decision which saddens me... I also believe that the challenges in funding in the public school system could be alleviated with more entrepreneurial effort on the part of the VSB.”
- “Arts education helps empower our children. It feeds their minds and souls.”
- “As a parent of a grade three student at Lord Tennyson, I am saddened to hear of the proposed cut to the Strings Program. My child and I were looking forward to the formal music training the Strings Program provides.”
- “I can’t even begin to tell you how much being a part of the Strings Program has enriched [my children’s] elementary years. It has cultivated a love of music and an ability to work as a team to accomplish a goal...We were very disappointed to learn that the Strings Program is on the cutting block...”
- “The entire school is so proud of our Strings performers and the program...This program should not be taken away from our children.”
- “If there are no bands or strings in the early grades, how will this impact [Fine Arts] programs at the secondary schools?”

We recognize that the Board's task to deliver a balanced budget is extremely challenging. The \$630,000 proposed cost savings represents only about 0.12% of the entire 2014-15 preliminary budget yet would fund the entire 2014-15 Band and Strings Program to the benefit of our students and those in other schools throughout the district. Accordingly, we respectfully submit that the elimination of the Band and Strings Program represents a prohibitive diminishment of the music curriculum available to Tennyson students (indeed, to all Vancouver district students) and is an unacceptable solution to the current budget shortfall. We urge the Board to revise the budget proposal accordingly.

Alternative Recommendation: Imposition of \$250 User Fee (to generate additional \$350,000)

We would like to briefly comment on the Board's alternative recommendation to increase the annual fee for the Band and Strings Program to \$250/year, which would apparently generate an additional \$350,000.

While we may not be viewed as an inner city school, it is not unreasonable to expect that such a fee may well be prohibitive for some of our families as well as many others across the district. In essence, the incredible benefits afforded by Strings Program as detailed above will no longer be accessible to all. While we understand that the Board has a policy that no child should be denied participation in a program due to financial hardship, our concern is that a user fee in general (and certainly a \$250 annual user fee) may still create barriers as it is plausible that some families would not be comfortable seeking financial assistance and would therefore choose not to sign up a child for the program. Even if families who cannot afford the proposed fee seek financial assistance, it is important to recognize the likely source of such assistance and the implications thereof. Perhaps the fee is waived (thus decreased revenues otherwise targeted by the Board) or perhaps it is the school and/or school parent advisory committee that provides the funding/bursary. In either case, scarce funds that are otherwise allocated to a myriad of other identified needs will now be diverted.

It is also noted that an anticipated decline in enrolment consequentially will negatively impact otherwise projected revenues and may be expected to impede the Board's achievement of the targeted \$350,000 new revenues noted in the recommendations.

We therefore respectfully submit that the alternative user fee recommendation is not a desirable solution to the current budget shortfall. Again, we urge the Board to carefully consider other more viable options to address the shortfall and revise the budget proposal accordingly.

Sincerely,

Lord Tennyson School Parent Advisory Council, Executive Committee and

The Parents of Lord Tennyson School