



# Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

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## **2014-2015 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

Vancouver Board of Education  
Committee III / V



**April 14, 2014**

# VSTA RESPONSE TO 2014-2015 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association thanks you for the opportunity to respond to the Board's preliminary budget proposals for 2014/15. We recognize that the Vancouver Board of Education is faced, yet again, with the increasingly difficult task of producing a balanced operating budget within the constraints of the provincial government's downloading of costs and chronic underfunding of public education. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, inadequate funding for public education continues to erode services for Vancouver students, particularly those who are most vulnerable. The projected budget shortfall of \$12.34 million will no doubt result in a further erosion of services for Vancouver students.

To minimize the negative impact on the classroom and to ensure continuation of the mandate of "success for every student," the VSTA formally requests that the Board consider the following remarks. Please note that this written submission is not necessarily prioritized. All of our comments, questions, and recommendations are consistent with our core belief that stability and maintenance of direct services to students should underlie all budgetary considerations.

## **1. Commit sufficient instructional staffing to ensure full compliance with class size limits at the secondary level**

The number one priority for secondary teachers remains the same as it has been since Article 9 was illegally stripped (by Bill 28) from our Collective Agreement in 2002: a decision that has been upheld twice by the BC Supreme Court as unconstitutional and invalid. Data compiled by the VSTA reveals that as of October 1, 2013, there were 986 secondary classes with 4 or more students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). For over a decade now, Vancouver students have not known a time when teachers were not struggling for improvements to this district's working and learning conditions. The VSTA recommends that there not be a further reduction of 12.79 FTE teachers (as per the base budget) and that the teaching staff at City School (1.0 FTE), South Vancouver Learning Centre (0.686 FTE) and Eagle High Alternative (1.0 FTE) be maintained at their current levels.

## **2. Increase non-enrolling teachers to meet diverse learners' needs**

Counsellors, teacher-librarians, and resource teachers are essential to the day to day work of the classroom teacher and the success of students. As a result of successive budgetary decisions, reductions to non-enrolling teachers have been felt across the entire district. Additionally, years of reductions and amalgamations to special needs and alternate programs have directly impacted many of our neediest and most vulnerable students. There is also *a pressing need to disaggregate the non-enrolling staffing entitlements given to schools to ensure that a base line of service exists* in all areas in all secondary schools. The VSTA recommends that the VSB commits to a re-examination of non-enrolling staffing levels/ratios.

### **3. Strict adherence to the staffing entitlements for secondary school-based administrators**

The staffing entitlement for secondary school-based administration in 2007/08 was 45.1428, while the actual number of administrators assigned was 52 FTE. In 2013/14, the entitlement was 40.2863 and the number assigned was 52 FTE. *This is approximately 12 positions over the entitlement.* In fact, every secondary school embellishes/increases the size of its administrative team through the use of teaching blocks. While there has been an overall decrease in the number of students and teacher FTE since 2007/08, there has not been a corresponding change in the numbers of school-based administrators (see chart). Further, to suggest that administrators may be using blocks for instructional purposes is not a cost saving; rather, it is the most expensive teaching in the district. The VSTA recommends that the Board staff schools with the number of administrators they are entitled to under the formula.

Figure 1.1.3 of the 2014/15 Fiscal Framework document provides further evidence of this practice/trend. The Board's data for "Staffing by Type" shows 3,186.34 FTE for teachers in 2008/09 and 3,053.39 FTE in 2013/14: a DECREASE of 132.95 FTE. In contrast, the numbers for principals/vice-principals are 198.30 FTE for 2009/09 and 199.39 FTE for 2013/14: an INCREASE of 1.09 FTE. During this same period, the student/staff ratio has actually improved for principals/vice-principals from 288.01 to 271.11.

### **4. Provide adequate funding for learning resources and teacher in-service training opportunities to support revised curriculum and the BC Education Plan**

Ongoing development of curricula in a variety of subject areas means that new resources to support and implement these courses must be found. Funding for these resources must be factored into any budget setting exercise. The BC Education Plan has a very large agenda and while teachers are supportive of many of the changes, its successful implementation requires both a strategy and resources.

The BC Education Plan is ambitious and the revised curriculum represents a significant shift in teaching and learning. Teacher involvement is a key component of successful implementation of educational change; consequently, there must be in-service opportunities for teachers to develop/extend the knowledge and skills needed to successfully implement the new curricular directions. Teacher enthusiasm is not enough; concrete supports are essential if a "transformation" is to be achieved.

### **5. Mentors and Consultants**

While the VSTA acknowledges and recognizes that a conscious attempt has been made to keep the cuts away from the classroom, it is important to recognize the invaluable role that mentors and consultants play in supporting classroom teachers and their students. A further reduction of 2.6 FTE (1.4 Literacy/0.2 Anti-Racism/1.0 English Language Learner) will no doubt result in a further erosion of services for our most vulnerable students.

### **6. Peer to Peer Mentors**

The peer to peer mentors provide ongoing, *confidential* support to teachers who are struggling with their assignment and/or require assistance with the day to day operation of a classroom. Individuals accessing this support include TTOCs, those new to the profession/district, and experienced teachers. This employee support program has proven to be highly successful, particularly as the demands of our work have become increasingly more complex and stressful due to budgetary constraints.

The VSTA strongly recommends, yet again this year, that these positions be retained as an ongoing support for teacher wellness and professional growth. The budget proposal to create two new positions for the Health and Attendance Support Program to oversee employee absenteeism while simultaneously eliminating the peer to peer mentors both defies logic and undermines the Board's professed goal of promoting "employee wellness." Peer to peer mentors are often the first step in supporting struggling teachers and their very existence is indicative of the employer's proactive approach and authentic commitment to employee wellness and support.

## **7. Wellness and Attendance Support Program**

While the VSTA agrees that the health of all employees is critical for "creating a healthy and rewarding work environment," we continue to question the efficacy and underlying assumptions of the Wellness and Attendance Support Program, particularly the third module: attendance support. The proposal to create two additional positions (at a cost of \$177,000) to oversee and manage employee attendance seems counterintuitive at a time when teachers are facing unprecedented demands in the classroom. Additionally, in reviewing the 2012-13 audited statements of EOC salaries (for all employee groups) as a percentage of total salaries, it is noted that Vancouver's average of 3.5% is lower than the metro average of 4.12%, a difference of 0.62% or \$2.2 million. VSTA recommends that further research and investigative work be completed before the Board progresses further with this proposal.

## **8. District direction to secondary schools to not use instructional staffing for non-instructional purposes**

These blocks directly increase class sizes and restrict a school's ability to offer electives or specialty courses. School-based administrators continue to allocate teaching blocks for non-instructional purposes such as timetabling, computer support, grad transitions, daily physical activity, athletic director, school store, and year book. Clearly, this is not an acceptable use of teaching blocks, and it must be eliminated in ALL secondary schools. It is essential that school-based administrators be directed to cease this practice and use the blocks for instructional purposes only. The VSTA strongly recommends that school-based administrators *be directed* to cease this long-standing practice and that teaching blocks not be used for non-instructional purposes and be used for their intended purpose, direct classroom instruction.

## **9. Calendar Adjustment**

The VSTA strongly opposes the recommendation to close schools for 3 additional days in November. In addition to the consequences that school closure days have on student learning and families, they most directly our teachers on call by further reducing their opportunity for daily work. Additionally, this proposal is not consistent with the recommendation from the District Calendar Committee.

## **10. Parking Fee for School Staff**

To propose that employees pay a monthly parking fee is best described as "salt in the wound." As has been noted numerous times, there is a long history of teachers subsidizing the system. Teachers spend their personal income on basic classroom resources such as pencils/pens, art supplies, paper, white board pens, Kleenex, and nutritious snacks. Teachers also volunteer thousands of hours every year so that the students can partake in extra-curricular activities. To suggest that employees dig even further into their pockets to prop up the district's maintenance and construction costs is unacceptable.

## **11. International Education Program**

The VSTA notes that the projected increase of 100 international students to VSB schools will result in 5.72 FTE additional teachers. Currently, student support for issues of isolation and other health issues is woefully inadequate in secondary schools. The VSB is clearly intent on increasing the number of international students; therefore, it must provide the specialized support required for their transition and success. All students must be provided with the necessary supports required to ensure their academic success and overall wellbeing. The VSTA is recommending a further increase to secondary counselling services for international students.


## **12. Payroll**

The VSTA opposes the proposal to expand the Human Resources Department by hiring a Payroll Coordinator at a cost of \$92,000. Adding 3 new positions in Human Resources while cutting teachers and support staff in no way supports student learning. Let us begin by providing fundamental supports at the school level: resources, classroom teachers and non-enrolling specialists.

## **Concluding Comment**

The VSTA recognizes that this Board is committed to “success for all students.” Any decision to reduce district service will further negatively impact the working and learning conditions in this district. We look forward to working with the Vancouver Board of Education in providing a world-class quality education for each and every student in our district.

Respectfully,



Debbie Pawluk  
President



## Staffing Entitlement - Secondary School-Based Administrators 2007-2014

| SCHOOL          | 2013-14      |                  |                |           | 2012-13      |                  |                |                   | 2011-12      |                  |                |                   |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
|                 | Students     | FTE              | Admin          | Actual    | Students     | FTE              | Admin          | Actual            | Students     | FTE              | Admin          | Actual            |
| Britannia       | 659          | 40.3480          | 1.7143         | 2         | 680          | 43.3422          | 1.7143         | 2                 | 739          | 46.7581          | 1.7143         | 2                 |
| Byng            | 1312         | 67.0879          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1332         | 68.6561          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1358         | 70.8838          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| Churchill       | 2097         | 102.4290         | 3.1429         | 4         | 2064         | 103.9796         | 3.1429         | 4                 | 2106         | 106.4961         | 3.1429         | 4                 |
| D. Thompson     | 1724         | 88.5224          | 3.1429         | 4         | 1832         | 93.9128          | 3.1429         | 4                 | 1849         | 94.4628          | 3.0000         | 4                 |
| Gladstone       | 1144         | 60.5728          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1231         | 65.5576          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1251         | 67.2854          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| Hamber          | 1679         | 84.3935          | 2.7143         | 3         | 1689         | 94.0490          | 2.7143         | 3                 | 1919         | 96.5708          | 2.7143         | 3                 |
| J. Oliver       | 1141         | 60.4569          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1160         | 62.6092          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1156         | 65.4696          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| Killarney       | 1945         | 98.8565          | 3.1429         | 4         | 2125         | 108.3607         | 3.1429         | 4 + 1 SBO         | 2106         | 107.1881         | 3.1429         | 4 + 1 SBO         |
| King George     | 480          | 28.1360          | 1.4286         | 2         | 525          | 30.7184          | 1.4286         | 2                 | 530          | 29.9117          | 1.4286         | 3                 |
| Kitsilano       | 1422         | 67.0543          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1397         | 73.6170          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1492         | 77.4282          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| Magee           | 1260         | 60.9540          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1221         | 61.4629          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1260         | 64.9990          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| Point Grey      | 1170         | 60.4282          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1211         | 63.5914          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1275         | 66.4284          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| Prince of Wales | 1250         | 65.0555          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1275         | 67.7257          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1285         | 68.6658          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| Templeton       | 851          | 47.6189          | 1.7143         | 2         | 967          | 53.5896          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1067         | 59.4997          | 2.0000         | 2                 |
| Tupper          | 935          | 52.7863          | 1.7143         | 2         | 1015         | 57.6714          | 1.7143         | 2                 | 1016         | 58.3645          | 1.7143         | 2                 |
| U. Hill         | 803          | 38.3888          | 1.7143         | 2         | 690          | 38.4175          | 1.4286         | 2                 | 625          | 35.4966          | 1.4286         | 2                 |
| Van Tech        | 1640         | 84.6555          | 2.7143         | 3         | 1630         | 87.3973          | 2.7143         | 3                 | 1694         | 91.3245          | 2.7143         | 3                 |
| Windermere      | 1232         | 63.7788          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1333         | 69.5544          | 2.1429         | 3                 | 1379         | 72.6425          | 2.1429         | 3                 |
| <b>TOTALS:</b>  | <b>22744</b> | <b>1171.5233</b> | <b>40.2863</b> | <b>52</b> | <b>23377</b> | <b>1244.2128</b> | <b>40.4292</b> | <b>53 + 1 SBO</b> | <b>24107</b> | <b>1279.8756</b> | <b>40.1434</b> | <b>52 + 1 SBO</b> |
| SCHOOL          | 2010-11      |                  |                |           | 2009-10      |                  |                |                   | 2007-08      |                  |                |                   |
|                 | Students     | FTE              | Admin          | Actual    | Students     | FTE              | Admin          | Actual            | Students     | FTE              | Admin          | Actual            |
| Britannia       | 726          | 44.7941          | 1.7143         | 2         | 710          | 45.5120          | 2.0000         | 2                 | 780          | 45.9731          | 2.0000         | 2                 |
| Byng            | 1351         | 71.3094          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1336         | 74.2242          | 2.4286         | 3                 | 1245         | 66.2617          | 2.2857         | 3                 |
| Churchill       | 2106         | 106.7738         | 3.1429         | 4         | 2109         | 107.8022         | 3.5714         | 4                 | 2081         | 105.2988         | 3.5714         | 4                 |
| D. Thompson     | 1855         | 93.7074          | 3.0000         | 4         | 1838         | 95.3489          | 3.4286         | 4                 | 1835         | 92.3738          | 3.5714         | 4                 |
| Gladstone       | 1325         | 72.6928          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1307         | 75.2204          | 2.4286         | 3                 | 1335         | 73.2266          | 2.4286         | 3                 |
| Hamber          | 1732         | 99.1163          | 2.7143         | 3         | 1647         | 97.1463          | 3.0000         | 3                 | 1658         | 92.0146          | 3.0000         | 3                 |
| J. Oliver       | 1217         | 66.9045          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1115         | 64.9590          | 2.2857         | 3                 | 1124         | 61.3044          | 2.2857         | 3                 |
| Killarney       | 2010         | 101.0616         | 3.1429         | 4         | 2013         | 104.3228         | 3.5714         | 3                 | 2010         | 102.2949         | 3.5714         | 3                 |
| King George     | 490          | 27.6487          | 1.4286         | 2         | 482          | 29.5760          | 1.4286         | 2                 | 496          | 29.6828          | 1.4286         | 2                 |
| Kitsilano       | 1518         | 77.6740          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1470         | 77.7662          | 2.5714         | 3                 | 1420         | 77.8235          | 3.0000         | 3                 |
| Magee           | 1280         | 65.1206          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1294         | 66.3697          | 2.4286         | 3                 | 1250         | 64.2755          | 2.2857         | 3                 |
| Point Grey      | 1297         | 68.9126          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1270         | 69.6313          | 2.4286         | 3                 | 1270         | 70.2684          | 2.4286         | 3                 |
| Prince of Wales | 1265         | 67.5193          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1295         | 69.5643          | 2.4286         | 4                 | 1468         | 71.4389          | 2.2857         | 3                 |
| Templeton       | 1097         | 58.3890          | 2.0000         | 3         | 1087         | 59.3430          | 2.2857         | 3                 | 1058         | 57.9321          | 2.2857         | 3                 |
| Tupper          | 1033         | 58.8521          | 1.7143         | 2         | 966          | 57.0801          | 2.0000         | 2                 | 947          | 53.0886          | 2.0000         | 2                 |
| U. Hill         | 616          | 34.6560          | 1.4286         | 2         | 595          | 35.6185          | 1.4286         | 2                 | 582          | 34.3857          | 1.4286         | 2                 |
| Van Tech        | 1667         | 92.0560          | 2.7143         | 3         | 1663         | 95.1791          | 3.0000         | 3                 | 1661         | 90.4923          | 3.0000         | 3                 |
| Windermere      | 1322         | 70.0297          | 2.1429         | 3         | 1313         | 71.6971          | 2.4286         | 3                 | 1330         | 70.4828          | 2.2857         | 3                 |
| <b>TOTALS:</b>  | <b>23907</b> | <b>1277.2179</b> | <b>40.1434</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>23510</b> | <b>1296.3611</b> | <b>45.1430</b> | <b>53</b>         | <b>23550</b> | <b>1258.6185</b> | <b>45.1428</b> | <b>52</b>         |



## VEPVPA

### 2014/2015 Preliminary Budget Proposals Stakeholders Meeting Tuesday, April 14th, 2014

On behalf of the Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak at this Stakeholders meeting today to provide VEPVPA's response to the Preliminary 2014/2015 budget proposals.

Firstly, the Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice Principals' would like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work that SMT has put into the preparation of yet another preliminary budget which must address the enormous annual shortfall the district faces. As Superintendent Cardwell stated during the budget presentations last week -- 'there are no good cuts' and -- we are already 'cut to the bone'. All of these cuts affect our ability to carry on as an organization. We recognize that this year is 'harder than ever', and that despite all of these difficulties, SMT and the elected Trustees must continue to lead a district that is responsible for operating a system that addresses learning from K-12 --- along with having a continued real commitment to Adult Education -- all while being required to improve infrastructures, systems, and efficiencies to move this district and 'core purpose' of providing the very best possible outcomes for all learners in the Vancouver School systems -- forward.

We want to acknowledge once again the detailed and careful measures taken to build upon guidelines set out through such processes as the comprehensive sectoral review "Our Future" and the PwC "Resource Allocation Review" in your considerations for this year's budget as you build on the strategies that were implemented over the past years. Your continued efforts in this areas are so important as attempts are made to reduce costs through consolidations and replacement of less efficient systems. We appreciate and applaud the continued work by this Board to advocate for stable and adequate funding for what we all value: a strong and equitable public education system. This is a challenging undertaking and your steadfast approach is very commendable.

As we all know, numerous years of budget reductions have severely impacted the infrastructure of our District, thus impacting options for supporting valuable programs for students. With this year's budget, we once again face the challenge of developing a budget which meets Ministry requirements while attempting to provide the best possible opportunities for our students K-12, students in our Adult Education programs and all VSB staff. Some very tough K-12 + Adult Education cuts are on the table.

Yet, despite the cuts --- there is a great urgency to plan for the future, Although it comes with costs attached; the commitment to allocating funds for improved internet capabilities is very important. This was so clearly demonstrated after the return from spring break. At a time when school based administrators, and of course district staff, were working to confirm student placements to high school, working with families to confirm x-boundary acceptances, supporting elementary to high school transfers, welcoming new K families, as well as Adult Ed students --- all looking to further their education --- our servers were down making it very clear how vital they were to our daily work -- as our system slowed down to a standstill. A commitment to updating the infrastructure is vital so that the system can operate efficiently.

As Principals and Vice-Principals, our role is to support the school-based implementation of the Board's directions. Through last year's budget a number of cost-saving measures such as consolidated purchasing; implementing new district directions and changes in banking/investment policy; implementing photocopy strategies; and working with systems such as ePro to help achieve greater efficiencies and cost reductions were determined and implemented collaboratively with district staff and school based administrators. We will do the same with the 2014-15 budget decisions once passed. i

There has been much debate about school closure days -- and we recognize that there still are some unanswered questions. We fully recognize the challenges that these closures can pose for families and on-call staff; at the same time, we understand that exploring calendar options can alleviate budget concerns while also making a positive contribution to student and staff wellness.

As school-based educational leaders Principals and Vice-Principals, we are committed to our 'duty of care'. This is a very important and growing role during these times of heightened public concerns about safety and security in schools. We are committed to supporting SMT and the Trustees in facilitating new district and provincial directions, providing leadership and support to implement and follow through on our District's plans for student learning - for



example, the Early Intervention Strategy and the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. Work involving Reading Recovery, Early Intervention and Aboriginal Success Plans will continue to help us plan for and ensure learning success for all students. Providing the needed support -- ensuring that staff, students and parents have the best possible experiences in Vancouver public education ---continues to be a prime focus for us in all of our schools.

We recognize that as Trustees, you are aware of the increasingly complex and critical role Principals and Vice-Principals play in the District. This work is even more critical and urgent as we work to 'fill in the gaps' that have been left through the continued funding shortfalls over the past decade. As an Association, we continue to strongly value and support maintaining elementary Vice-Principals in our large schools; VPs in each of the elementary annexes; full-time Principals in each elementary school and Principals and Vice-Principals to adequately support our Adult Education Centres.

As the front-line in schools, our skills, knowledge and experience are vital for bridging District directives and initiatives with students, staff and parents. Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice-Principals are committed to working with SMT and the Board in a leadership role in the following areas:

- supporting excellence in learning (K-adult) for all students
- implementation of facility and systems changes, for example, supporting the important work of seismic upgrading and other Board-directed initiatives and savings plans
- supporting leadership and succession planning to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Vancouver School district

In closing, we thank you again for this invitation to provide input into the Preliminary Budget on behalf of the Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association. We are appreciative of the strategic direction and open process the Board is engaging in to develop a balanced budget. We recognize this is an enormous and difficult task for you. We look forward to our continued work together in supporting excellence in public education.

Respectfully,  
Liz Kloepper, President  
Vancouver Elementary Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (VEPVPA)

**VESTA RESPONSE**

**TO THE VSB PRELIMINARY OPERATING  
BUDGET  
2014-2015**

To the Vancouver Board of Education

Committee III / V

Monday, 2014 April 14

Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association

## **VESTA's Response to the VBE's 2014-2015 Budget Proposals**

The Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association expresses its appreciation to the Vancouver Board of Education for receiving our submission and for considering our responses to the 2014-2015 preliminary budget proposals.

Again this year, the Board is facing deep cuts to its base budget of a further \$12.34 million in order to present a legally mandated balanced budget. These cuts hurt the education of our students, damage the delivery of educational programs, and adversely impact teachers who struggle to provide for the educational and socio-emotional needs of their students.

We note with great dismay that the burden of the proposed cuts in the Preliminary Budget falls heavily and squarely on those elementary students who have the greatest needs.

Rather than directly cutting services to students and teachers, the Trustees should consider an institutional restructuring of the Vancouver Board of Education to achieve cost savings. Our response covers four themes: the budgetary process; consequences for students and teachers; new expenditures; and student to management ratios.

### **Budgetary Process**

First, VESTA finds that the current budgetary process is seriously flawed with the result that all attention is focused only on the cuts proposed by District Management in the preliminary budget. By creating a list of programs and positions to be eliminated, various special interest groups are incited to compete with each other to preserve their niche, to the exclusion of any global vision of the Board's overall budget priorities. The base budget and its spending assumptions are conveniently forgotten, and the focus becomes a battle to save one piece over another. Thus, instead of an honest appraisal of the entire Board's budget, we are diverted from the big picture to a smaller set of expenditures.

An illustrative example is the school monthly parking fee proposal. This has shocked teachers and in fact has incited disbelief from teacher colleagues province-wide. This is a downloading of capital and maintenance costs unto the backs of employees that is indefensible- yet, it is but one of many such proposals that we grapple with in this flawed budgetary process.

VESTA urges the Board of Trustees to ensure the development of a different budgetary process, based upon a transparent budgetary analysis broken down by program that shows staffing, ancillary costs, and associated revenues derived from student enrolment.

For over a dozen years now, the VBE's District Management has proposed a series of piecemeal solutions to the deliberate policy of underfunding public education pursued by the Government of BC. Consequently, the VBE is not truly prioritizing, investing directly in schools and implementing streamlined structural changes at the District Management level. The Trustees are facing a BC Liberal government with no change in their mandate for the coming four years. District Management's budgetary approach may have been tenable in the first BC Liberal government mandate, but not a decade later.

The current mechanisms only perpetuate an unsustainable institutional structure while stakeholders and students struggle through each budget and come out simply shortchanged with fewer supports for learning. Thus, the Trustees must look at system-wide restructuring of the District instead of inflicting hundreds of smaller budgetary wounds.



### **Consequences for our students and teachers**

This preliminary budget directly erodes services for our most vulnerable students. Three area counsellor positions are recommended to be cut, as well as a teacher-psychologist and a speech language pathologist position. The work of area counsellors is a preventative one, which helps to improve the learning conditions in our classrooms in underappreciated ways. Given the ubiquitous nature of anxiety in schools and among children, area counsellors importantly assist in building resilience in students, an essential ingredient for optimal learning. The reduction of the teacher-psychologist position is not sensible given that the assessments performed by these members allows students to receive Ministry designations that result in greater funding from the government and inform instructional design. Speech and language pathologists ensure that children with language acquisition difficulties are diagnosed and treated early to avoid lifelong impairment. Again, cutting these positions will be detrimental to student learning for all children as all of these positions help those children in elementary schools that are most in need. These recommendations also come on the tail end of an in-depth process undertaken to re-envision the Inner City Schools where VESTA and other stakeholders recognized student needs and advocated for more of these services, not fewer.

Eliminating three peer-to-peer mentors, who support teachers with increasingly challenging assignments, is truly a myopic cut, as it directly impacts our students' learning. These mentors support teachers' professional growth in a collaborative and respectful manner, developing and nurturing their teaching skills. It is those teachers who face the most challenging assignments who are at the same time working in classrooms with the greatest needs and demonstrably require this peer support. Removing these positions is in opposition to the Board's stated goals of fostering better Employee Wellness.

The proposal to add three additional school closure days in Nov. 2014 attached to Remembrance Day is ill conceived as it interrupts the learning of students at a key point in the school year, when the classroom environment has stabilized and is most conducive for students' work. Breaking for a week at this time does not serve our students' learning, and is furthermore detrimental to our teaching practice. In addition, this will require the employee groups to agree with this calendar change, or the Board will be in violation of provisions of the Collective Agreement. We urge the Board to abandon this item and avoid any further reductions to the school calendar.

Elimination of elementary band and strings program, a loss of 8.85 FTE, adversely affects the quality of our public educational system and how it is publicly perceived. Many parents and their children are drawn to our Vancouver schools precisely because our schools and their teachers offer such a myriad of options for learning. This is one of the very reasons why the Board's Trustees made decisions to create programs that give parents options in the hope to draw more students to the district, such as Montessori, Intensive French Immersion, Mandarin and other options at both elementary and secondary schools. The band and strings program is the most accessible option available to parents, while fully supporting neighbourhood schools. Children should be able to pursue the learning that is most optimal for their aptitudes, whether this is in music, the arts, languages or sports. The Board should decisively determine not to pursue proposals which serve to diminish the range of educational opportunities in public schools.

Furthermore, eliminating, for example, the English Language Learner Consultant and Literacy Mentor and Consultant ignores the essential services they provide to classroom teachers who benefit greatly in developing instructional techniques and strategies. The cuts here will hurt children who are acquiring English as a second language and hamper their educational and social achievement. The same is true of

the elementary French Immersion Resource teacher position.

These specialist and non-enrolling teachers make vital contributions to our students' education. When their valuable work is severed from our system, the consequences will appear, manifesting in behaviours that hinder learning when these children do not receive the pedagogically sound early interventions that they deserve. The proposals before us here are analogous in their detrimental impact to previous budget cuts that withdrew providing Teachers-on-Call for resource teachers until the third day of absence. All hurt the learning of our students, often our most vulnerable ones, and the Board must endeavour to find savings to balance the budget elsewhere.

### **Wellness and Attendance Support Program**

Third, we note that District Management is recommending the addition of two new PASA employees and required supplies for a total new cost of \$397,000 so as to implement the "Attendance Support" component of this program. VESTA urges the Trustees to re-examine the need for this specific program, as in this past year we witnessed a lower incidence of sick leave than anticipated, generating savings without this unnecessary cost. In the Feb. 14, 2014 Second Quarter Financial Report of the Secretary-Treasurer, it is reported that there was \$2.87 million saved in the overall school-based teacher allocation during 2013-2014, and this included a reduction in absenteeism without this expensive "Attendance Support" program in place. Moreover, the implementation of an "Attendance Support" program also involves a human cost that is not evident on a balance sheet- the erosion of trust between employer and employee. VESTA believes that the Trustees should deeply reflect upon this budgetary item and not proceed with this new expense, and adjudicate carefully all new suggested expenditures in this preliminary budget.

## Student enrolment to management ratios

Finally, we would like to draw the Trustees attention towards examining student enrolment to management ratios when compared with teaching staff, as a source of alternative fiscal savings for achieving a balanced budget.

In the fiscal framework document of April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014, chart 1.1.1 shows that VBE student enrolment has declined from 57,113 FTE in 2008-2009 to 54,057 FTE, a drop of 3056 full time students. When student FTE enrolment declines, a commensurate reduction in teaching FTE does occur. It is logical that if there are fewer teaching and student FTE at schools, then the justification for many onsite supervisors is also weakened, as the teaching FTE and the administrative FTE must be linked. In contrast, if we examine only the number of principals and vice-principals, chart 1.1.3 in the fiscal framework shows 198.30 in 2008-2009, giving a ratio of school administrator to students of 1: 288.01, as found in the staffing ratio chart, and a current ratio in 2013-2014 of 1:271.11. If we took the ratio of 2008-2009, 1:288.01, and applied it to the student enrolment this year of 54,057 FTE, then the Board would have only 187.69 school administrators employed this current year.

The difference between the exorbitantly high current number of 199.39 and a return to the staffing situation of 2008-2009 would have yielded 11.70 FTE fewer school based administrators. Yet, VESTA does not believe that even the ratio that existed in 2008-2009 reflected an appropriate degree of supervisory personnel- an even higher ratio is possible.

A glaring example of excessive management staffing in the Vancouver Board of Education is found in Adult Education. In the 2014-2015 base budget, teacher staffing will be cut to 64.45 FTE. However, from the current six principals and vice-



principal in these schools, the base budget appears to cut but one VP position. Consequently, one arrives at a principal to teacher ratio of 1 principal for every 12.89 teaching FTE. This excessive allocation, for a group of schools that has the student enrolment equivalent of Kitsilano Secondary- which has three administrators, is obviously disconnected from need. Moreover, principals and vice-principals in Adult Education do not have to contend with the demands of communication with parents and they very rarely encounter any problematic student behaviour. Further instances of such unjustifiably high allocations of management exist at the elementary and secondary levels. VESTA is strongly convinced that there is now a serious disconnect between these conjoined FTEs in our school district. It is imperative that this be corrected before the Board adopts its final 2014-2015 budget.

We would further urge the board to re-examine the current student enrolment thresholds that trigger the addition of any administrative personnel such as principals, vice-principals and PASA. VESTA suggests that the Board examine other jurisdictions that have successfully reduced their administrative staffing levels to determine new higher student enrolment thresholds that could be adopted in Vancouver.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, we recognize that the VBE must prepare and approve a balanced budget. However, VESTA recommends that the Board also submit a needs based budget that fully funds the operations and educational services so necessary to the success of our students in our public education system. We stress the need for the Board to investigate and to reflect upon all budgetary means available that will protect educational services delivered by our members that directly service our students' needs.

## VBE Budget Presentation from VESTA AE Sublocal

### Facilities

The recent decision by the Board to close (consolidate) Roberts Adult Education Centre, and to relocate Main Street Education Centre to a wing of Gladstone Secondary is of paramount concern to VESTA's Adult Educators, as the reduction of centres and classrooms creates mounting pressures. While the Board maintains that there is space at other centres to accommodate the Roberts School closure, and the downsizing of MSEC at Gladstone, there is much evidence to the contrary. As a result of the cutting of ESL programs at VCC, for example, our adult education centres are experiencing a major spike in enrollment. The need for additional classrooms and an adult education centre in the downtown core are needed to accommodate for the increasing number of students currently enrolling in adult education.

Furthermore, Robert students have expressed that travelling to another school would be largely prohibitive as many of them work, live and have families in the West End. The "consolidation" of REC is not tailored to the complex scheduling needs of adult learners, is likely to be costly in lost student FTE – a loss that is about more than dollars or cents; it is about the ability of adults in Vancouver to access the educational programs they need.

Currently, despite claims made that "there is sufficient capacity available in the existing school buildings on site to accommodate the classes and programs that are currently in the space proposed to be closed", teachers at this school tell us that is not the case. While it may be possible to create some extra space though timetable changes to other classes at this site, the current timetable is tailored to the complex scheduling needs of adult learners, and changing it in order to reduce space use is likely to be costly in lost student FTE – a loss that is about more than dollars or cents; it is about the ability of adults in Vancouver to access the educational programs they need.

## **Administrator Ratios**

Due to egregious policy changes from the current BC Liberal government to the Education Guarantee, which have denied many of our students' access to the full scope of our programs, Adult Education is experiencing declining enrollment. Last year, we saw a substantial reduction in staffing allocations for our learning centre teachers, and this year, we are again facing a reduction in teaching staff. In this context, Adult Educators are very concerned by how cuts have come right into classrooms and their effect on direct services to students, bypassing the administrative level; while teachers are being laid off, the ratio of administrators is increasing.

There is no question that administrating Adult Ed programs is complex, but two of our schools successfully shared a principal; there has been no negative impact on students or programs at these sites. Yet, today, our smallest sites continue to retain their own, full time administrators. Cuts are always painful, but we believe that burden needs to be shared, and that, whenever possible, cuts need to be kept away from classrooms. When enrollment and teaching FTE decline, so too should the allocations for administration.

## **Teacher Layoffs**

Adult Educators are both concerned and confused by the information in this budget about AE staffing. The teaching FTE reported in this budget does not match the teaching FTE of our district as reported to us in other contexts; the gap between those different FTE numbers is small compared to the discrepancies in the size of the reduction of teaching staff proposed here and within the layoff committee. We are concerned about the accuracy of this information. Moreover, we urge the board to seek clarity on the actual size of the reductions in AE, and to seek to minimize the layoffs as much as possible.

In the AE system, a layoff can happen at any of up to four points in the school year, so if further reductions are required, they can occur as needed. That said, it is crucial that no layoff be deeper than absolutely necessary. Big cuts mean narrow timetables, stripped of electives, and in some cases, an inability to offer a full graduation program. Adult students have choices for upgrading programs, and if we

can't offer them robust graduation programs, we may lose the ability to retain them, putting the future of our adult education system at risk.

### **Conclusion**

We all know that these are challenging times for Adult Education, especially in light of diminishing support from the Ministry of Education; however, we know our services remain crucial to our students and communities, and that this Board is committed to providing adults in our district access to the programs they need. To do so, the VSB needs to respond to these challenges in an aggressive and committed manner to ensure that Vancouver Adult Education not only remains, but grows and thrives.



## International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 963

### Budget Submission- April 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to address school trustees and management with respect to the Vancouver Board of Education's ("VBE") preliminary budget proposals for the 2014/2015 fiscal year.

We wish to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work that goes into creating a budget for a large organization such as the VBE, including the Superintendent of Schools and Finance personnel, among others.

We also recognize that significant and continuous underfunding by the provincial government has put tremendous and unfair pressure on VBE trustees, staff, students and parents. There will be no end to the deterioration of our public school system until the province provides adequate funding. So while frustrated with yet another budget that reduces needed services, we acknowledge that the solution is beyond the jurisdiction of the VBE. That said, we believe that we are offering constructive, practical and effective alternatives to some of the PBP budget proposals as follows:

**A1- Wellness and Attendance Management Program:** We note the Preliminary Budget Proposal ("PBP") intends to spend \$177,000 for one "advisor" and some \$220,000 on support materials. This is on top of the funding provided in the **2013/14 budget**, which included,

\*hiring a Disability Management Coordinator (\$85,000),

\*use of a third party provider (\$150,000),

\*software and tracking tools (\$20,000),

\*enhancement of EAP (\$45,000).

The VBE anticipated savings of \$500,000 in that fiscal year.

Stakeholders have not been showed the empirical data regarding the purported savings from the last budget. Committee 5 members have sought clarity but have received no such thing.

Incredibly, the 2014/15 PBP predicts more than double the savings sought in 2013/14, of more than \$1.1 million. We do not accept that the VBE has not produced to stakeholders this data as it informs future decision making, including whether to invest further or recognize the creation of an administrative black-hole; the ongoing "requirement" that additional investments must be made due to a "lack of expertise" or similar arguments.

The IUOE is opposed to the introduction of this program. Our objection to this program has been documented through Committee 4 and need not be repeated here.

We believe that a cooperative approach should be undertaken with the various unions and associations to address attendance issues that does not necessitate the hiring of more management personnel and consultants.

One of the areas not addressed in the Attendance Support document is what is likely to occur when the employee is "unable to meet their employment obligations."<sup>1</sup> The program has been sold by VBE staff as addressing only "non-culpable" (i.e. not blameworthy) absences. We do, however, wish to hear from school trustees regarding that little gem on page 4 of the Attendance Support document. **Does the VBE acknowledge that there will be terminations of employment as employees, for whatever reason, are unable to meet their employment obligations?**

Does this employer support the termination of an employee because they are sick? Does a custodian with cancer needing significant time off work become a burden on the employer such that the employee will be terminated because of the breach of this obligation, as defined by the VBE?

What about the maintenance worker with a long term illness? At what point is he/she unable to meet their employment obligations and sent to the unemployment line?

Stakeholders require an answer to this important question.

VBE trustees should understand that every unionized employee group, through a statutory obligation to represent members, will be forced to dispute any and all terminations through

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<sup>1</sup> Attendance Support Program doc to Committee 4, Feb 5/14, page 4.

grievances and arbitrations at great cost to both the VBE and the union. We believe any alleged budgeted cost savings will quickly disappear and be replaced with additional expenditures.

A more positive and productive approach would be to work cooperatively and provide incentives to all employee groups to find attendance savings that could then be applied to preserving critical services.

## **A2- District Administration:**

The PBP notes that “[o]ver the last decade, the district administration budget has been reduced significantly, especially in percentage terms.”

Through publicly accessible *Schedules of Financial Information* (“SOFI’s”), IUOE has tracked salaries of any school board employee who reached the threshold of \$100,000, exclusive of expenses, in any one fiscal year. This review has tracked these salaries since the end of fiscal year June 30, 2001.

The review does not support the assertion contained in the PBP. The study is not fully completed, however, there are some significant points that challenge the assertion of a reduced administrative allotment:

- For the fiscal period ending June 30, 2001, there were **30 employees** earning greater than \$100,000 annually (excluding expenses). By 2007, there were **80 employees** earning greater than \$100,000 annually. For the most recent fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, there were some **171 employees** earning more than \$100,000 at the VBE, an increase of **113% since 2007**.
- For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013 there were 103 employees who earned more than in the previous year. There were 12 employees whose salary was lower than the previous fiscal year. The **average annual increase in compensation for these 103 employees was 6.78%**.
- For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012 there were 114 employees who earned more than in the previous year. There were 43 employees whose salary was lower than the

previous fiscal year. **The average annual increase in compensation for these 114 employees was 5.58%.**

- For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011 there were 144 employees who earned more than in the previous year. There were 53 employees whose salary was lower than the previous fiscal year. **The average annual increase in compensation for the 144 employees was 6.73%.**

By way of comparison, compensation increases for IUOE Local 963 members (and other VBE support staff) in these last three fiscal years (2011, 2012, 2013) was **0%**.

At a time when income inequity is an issue of international concern, it appears the highest wage earners in the Vancouver school system are doing quite well comparatively.

Given the widening gap between the lowest and highest wage earners at the VBE it would be helpful to know what the anticipated cost of salary increments is for excluded staff and administrators. The PBP combines teachers' salary increments with excluded staff and administrators (<sup>2</sup>2014/15- \$830,000; 2015/16- \$1.23 million; 2016/17- \$1.25 million). **We request a breakdown of these latter two categories.**

The review also noted some very high final year compensation. For example, final year compensation of **\$406,409** in fiscal year 2004 was paid to an employee who earned \$152,575 in the previous year. In fiscal 2011, an employee's compensation was **\$351,925** compared with the prior year's compensation of \$183,156.

**A5- Secondary School Cafeterias:** Teaching cafeterias provide an excellent opportunity for students to learn important skills and gain possible employment in the hospitality sector. School cafeterias face difficult competition from fast food restaurants off school grounds. Unlike those private restaurants, school cafeterias face internal competition when schools allow different groups to sell food for fundraising activities.

IUOE is not opposed to fundraising for extra-curricular activities but believe that allowing the sale of food in direct competition with school cafeterias can only result in further cuts and a deterioration of the important skills training that teaching cafeterias provide.

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<sup>2</sup> Preliminary Budget Proposal, page 8.

**B2- Britannia Centre Cost Sharing Agreement:** This is not a “cost sharing” agreement- it is a direct staffing cut with significant consequences for public health and safety.

The PBP proposes a further reduction of 3.0 FTE in addition to cuts already made earlier this year of another 3.0 FTE. It appears that since the VBE did not achieve savings of \$300,000 from last year’s budget through a new cost sharing agreement with Britannia Centre/Parks Board/City of Vancouver that this is now being taken out on the people who keep the centre maintained. It is not these workers who have failed to negotiate a new agreement and it shouldn’t be taken out on them. It is not “cost sharing” if the full cost of savings is borne solely through employee job loss.

A memo from Britannia engineering staff to the IUOE addressed a number of concerns. These included,

- Britannia Complex is not like other VBE sites. It operates 7 days a week, from 5:30 am to 1:00 am daily.
- The Complex is an aging facility that is very well utilized. It is an important community hub for a wide variety of uses.
- The first 3.0 FTE cuts, referenced earlier, has already created complaints from users of the Pool. The Pool at Britannia has some 500-600 users per day. This area requires a thorough disinfection and there is a concern for mold growth which is “not visible to the eye until [it] grows bigger.” “With the cuts, staff does not have time to spend daily on areas like this. This will become a health issue with the public.”
- On the “community side” of the Complex, due to cuts already implemented, there “is one custodian doing a two custodian job” and as such, the proper work is not being done.
- Throughout the day, there is one custodian dedicated to constantly cleaning the outside areas of the Complex. At this site, it is a regular occurrence to having to clean-up after homeless people, remove graffiti, and address garbage left at the site, including animal and human waste.

**C4- Recover Maintenance Costs for School Staff use of Parking Lots:** Experience throughout Metro Vancouver has been that when pay parking is introduced, there is a significant

rise in the use of unpaid parking options. In the case of schools this will lead to a significant increase in side street parking and with that, additional patrolling by bylaw enforcement officers.

Car-pooling, the use of Car 2 Go, Zip-Car and MODO would be a far more effective incentive to get staff out of their cars and using more efficient modes of transportation. Has the VBE considered having these companies provide cars and parking maintenance funds in exchange for access to a potential market of 5,000 plus employees?

We also point out that there will have to be additional administration to ensure payment, should pay parking be introduced for staff.

Thank you again for this opportunity.



IUOE Local 963 members work in Operations (building engineers, head-custodians, assistant head custodians, custodians, ice-custodians, maintenance engineers) as well as school cafeterias (cafeteria teachers' aides, food service workers, trade qualified cooks and bakers) and as Hairdressers and Supervision Aides. The first known collective agreement with the Vancouver School Board dates back to 1945.



## **Student Feedback to Preliminary Budget Proposals**

*April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014*

Students are a key stakeholder in education, because of the effect that it will have on their future. These proposals will eventually have a direct impact on the students, so their concerns and input should be held in high regard during considerations about the budget proposals. After the preliminary reading of the proposals on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014, an online survey was released with a short explanation of several key proposals. Students who participated in this survey were asked a multiple choice question whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agree, have no opinion, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal. As well, students were given the opportunity to comment on each proposal in length. Over 500 students participated in this online survey in under a week, a level of student involvement in the budget that is unprecedented. This report outlines the findings of that survey, and is a direct representation of the student perspective in the district.

First of all, students do realize the severity of the difficult decisions that the Board of Education has to make, and would like to acknowledge the hard work that was put into these budget proposals. This report is meant to inform trustees and stakeholders of the importance of programs, facilities and positions.

### **B3 - Closure of Classroom Space**

For students, space isn't just a number of cubic metres that have to be cleaned in a school; it is a place that can be utilized for multiple purposes. Especially in high schools, classrooms that may go unused for a few days at a time are still vital to the school, as they can provide space for clubs to operate, or events to occur. Closing classrooms only compromises student learning by limiting the space in which they can operate. Through the poll, many students voiced concerns that closing classes will impact class sizes, and the number of courses that can run in a school, a major concern for students. As well, students at University Hill have commented that there are no portables at their school, while in the recommendation it states otherwise.

### **D2 - Band and Strings**

Out of 477 students who answered this question, 261 answered that they strongly disagree with this proposal. For many students, they have found their passion in music, and they found it because of elementary band and strings programs. Playing music made coming to school more enjoyable for students, and they benefitted greatly from the programs because not only does it teach musical skills, but also discipline, focus and dedication to a task. As well, the band and strings programs are continued into high school, while general music is not as popular in secondary courses. Band and strings have become more than just a program in elementary and high schools, it becomes something that students can identify with, and therefore builds self-esteem. If the VSB were to cut this essential program, it would drastically affect students' education.

### **D5 - SACY**

Unfortunately addictions have become a major problem in high schools across the city, and programs like SACY work to educate and prevent students from becoming involved in drugs and alcohol. By reducing staffing to this program by 2 FTE, other staff will be spread thin, and this program won't be able to reach as many students as they have before. Students across the district recognize the importance of education when it comes to preventing drug and alcohol use, and would not like to see a program such as SACY jeopardized.

### **D20 - Athletic Coordinator**

A major part of a school community is the athletics program, and how well they do in competing across the city. Thousands of students participate in school sports every year, and it is a major part of their life, building self-confidence and promoting physical health. The most pressing concern from students is that eliminating the position of Athletic Coordinator would directly affect the amount of athletics programs offered by schools. If this is the case, students can in no way support this recommendation, as it puts vital programming at risk.

### **D21 - Additional School Calendar Days**

While it is hard to find students who don't want school closed for a week, many comments highlighted key concerns of this proposal. Students have concerns that this will disrupt the delivery of curriculum, as it will effectively make fewer days in the school year. Many classes are already pressed for time when it comes to completing the curriculum, and by closing schools for an extra three days in the year, it only makes it more difficult for students and teachers to complete that curriculum. As well, comments were made that highlighted the concern of child care for elementary aged students. A grade eleven student from Britannia had a viable suggestion for this problem - "One proposed solution to this would be to have a couple schools, or sections of schools open, and then with a few teachers/adults and high school volunteers, to provide low cost child care for parents who need it during this time." As well, students would like more information on how closing school for three days will affect the amount of time added to each regular school day.

### **E3 - Technology Deployment Team &**

### **E4 - Unified Communications Project**

These two proposals, while very important, are perhaps less pressing when compared to the severity of the budget cuts this year. As school is a service for students, we would like to see how these two proposals will directly benefit students. Computers, tablets and handheld devices have been deployed in a number of schools in the past few years, and as students we believe they are not properly utilized. We believe that education to teachers and students on how to use technology properly would be more useful, and cheaper than proposal E3. For proposal E4, students need more clarification on how this will better help communication in schools.

## **Feedback From Students**

The quotations below were gathered using the online survey, and are representative of the feelings of students across the district.

*"You can't get rid of the athletic [coordinator]. There are hundreds of talented Vancouver students that live and breathe sports. Some of these kids aren't able to play sports out of school because of the high costs, but schools offer these students the chance to do something they love at an affordable cost for low income families. If you take away athletics you are robbing them of the opportunity to grow out of their comfort zone and develop new skills. Last year in grade eight I made it onto the volleyball team and honestly it has changed my life. I've made unbreakable bonds with my teammates and I have developed the ability to work as a team. When I am feeling stressed or confused I turn to volleyball. Volleyball is my therapy, and I do believe that there are other students who feel the same way as I do. So please, you can't take away athletics. Please.... that's all I ask for."*

*Grade 11 Student – Eric Hamber Secondary*

*"Classrooms will ALWAYS be useful. I've attended John Henderson Elementary and there is not extra space there, in fact I've seen two teachers put a wall in the middle of a classroom and teach two different classes at the same time in the same room."*

*Grade 12 Student – John Oliver Secondary*

*"Kids need to have the opportunity to experience music in any way they can. Most families cannot afford instruments or music lessons and school music programs are the only place where children can learn arts without the stresses of money and time commitment weighing on them. When kids are involved in their school band or choir, they are more invested in their communities at school, and they are more engaged in their learning. I began playing the French Horn in Grade 6 at Nootka Elementary. For most of the students in my band class, that was the first time they'd played in an ensemble, and the feeling was magic. Music programs, especially in elementary schools are more important than they are given credit for. The music room at my school is a room where anybody can go and feel connected. It is a room worth keeping free and accessible to everyone."*

*Grade 10 Student – Templeton Secondary*

Students are a key stakeholder in education because it is their future that is directly affected. With this in mind, we hope that you as decision makers take our concerns into consideration before choosing to eliminate essential services to our schools. We realize that the budget process is difficult for many, but we just want to ensure what is best for students. We believe that eliminating music programs, the athletic coordinator position, or closing classroom space is not what's best for the future of students. These proposals only destroys key opportunities for students in the district. We hope that you can agree with us.

*"A society that fails to invest in its youth is vested in its own failure."*

*Grade 12 Student – Templeton Secondary*