



# Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

1580 West Broadway

Vancouver, B.C. V6J 5K8

Telephone: 604-713-5000

Fax: 604-713-5049

Monday, December 21, 2009

Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid  
Minister of Education and Minister Responsible  
for Early Learning and Literacy  
PO Box 9045 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

I am writing on behalf of the Vancouver Board of Education regarding the Ministry of Education's cancellation of the Literacy Innovation Grant. This decision undermines Premier Gordon Campbell's commitment to make B.C. the most literate jurisdiction in North America and puts our most vulnerable children at risk of falling further behind their peers.

The monies provided by the Literacy Innovation Grant funded programs specifically aimed at helping students struggling to learn one of life's basic skills – reading. In 2007, the provincial government's audit of literacy in the province highlighted the need for government leadership in literacy through sustained funding for literacy initiatives and the need to base decisions about investments on promising practices.

School districts have been working on promising practices for the past five years using funds provided through this grant. A report on the results has been required each year and ministry staff has been clear that the results show funds are being well used and province-wide results have been impressive.

The loss of these funds mean, in Vancouver schools:

- Ten schools with the district's most vulnerable students will lose staffing that has been making a difference in children literacy development.
- Another five schools will lose staffing that provided them with the means to offer a comprehensive early intervention model, including Reading Recovery, coordinated classroom and small group work with Grade 1 students struggling to learn to read.

School districts have also been given responsibility to provide a District Literacy Plan that includes work in the community as well as in the schools. In Vancouver, we have been working with five communities, and have just started with another three, on developing and implementing literacy plans as the community level.

Last year, we had the support of a Literacy Outreach Coordinator, which was funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education. We also received \$10,000 from the Ministry of

Board of School Trustees:

...2

Patti Bacchus - Chairperson

Jane Bouey - Vice-Chairperson

Allan Blakey Ken Clement Ken Denike

Carol Gibson Sharon Gregson Mike Lombardi

Allan Wong

Education to support development of the District Literacy Plan. Additionally, two of the communities that were at the implementation stage of their literacy plan also received \$35,000 to hire literacy coordinators.

Sadly, with the Ministry of Advanced Education's elimination of its funding, we have also lost the Outreach Coordinator. Further, there are no additional funds for the District Literacy Plan. Now the Ministry of Education has said we will continue to receive the \$35,000, but that's all. And this \$35,000 grant is the same as other school districts receive, which fails to recognize the difference in size and diversity of our community compared to others.

The \$35,000 we will receive this year is grossly insufficient to support the eight communities developing literacy plans. Without restored funding, we will be unable to deliver the services that have proven successful in helping raise the literacy levels of Vancouver children.

I urge you to reconsider the decision to cancel the Literacy Innovation Grant.

Sincerely,



Patti Bacchus,

**cc.** All Vancouver Board of Education Trustees  
Laurie Anderson, VSB Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Brenda Ng, VSB Secretary-Treasurer  
BC School Trustees Association  
All Boards of Education in BC