

# Briefs Submitted 2011 May 03

## Friends of School Libraries Presentation, Vancouver School Board May 3, 2011

On behalf of the Friends of School Libraries (FOSL), I want to thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Board tonight. I am a member of FOSL and I have a son who attends Kitsilano Secondary School and attended Jules Quesnel in his elementary years. During my son's years at Jules Quesnel, I was impressed by the school's teacher-librarian. Over the years, I had many opportunities to observe her working with students and learned from my son how she guided students through the challenging process of learning how to do research. This set him up very well for high school.

In Grade 11, my son is readily able to research a range of topics and is accomplished at preparing everything from PowerPoint presentations to research papers. I believe that he has teacher-librarians to thank for much of these solid academic skills.

Today, more than ever, teacher-librarians are essential for teaching students how to access, understand, and use information. They also help prepare students for future academic success. Students, indeed all of us, are in danger of information overload, TMI, as students might say, without such trained guides who can help us navigate the Information Superhighway of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Now, some people might think that we don't need teacher-librarians for this. Won't students, most of whom have computers in their own homes, just automatically learn how to use the Internet for research and homework? Well, perhaps they have a different sort of child than I do. My son uses his computer to play computer games, watch silly Youtube videos, and – yes – to do homework. He has learned his excellent research skills at school, with the help of teachers and teacher-librarians, not at home with the help of friends. My point is that one cannot replace teacher-librarians with computers. There is no substitute for the human interface of teacher-librarian and student.

I would like to briefly restate what FOSL is asking for from the Board:

- That the District set minimum staffing levels for school libraries that will guarantee reasonable access to collections, student interaction with and instruction from teacher-librarians, and a welcoming physical space. Inequity of service from school to school is unacceptable.
- That the District set a minimum standard for technology in school libraries to ensure equitable access to computers, technology instruction, and digital resources across all libraries within the District.
- That the Teacher-Librarian Consultant position cut last year be reinstated to full time in order to facilitate communication, training and support to understaffed school libraries.

Finally, I would like to address the questions raised in April by the Trustees.

**Question 1:** If non-enrolling staff were not cut last year, how is it that school libraries lost staffing?

At each school in the District, the principal decides how much staffing the library will receive from the allotment of non-enrolling teacher time. Some principals allocate almost nothing to library staffing, others allocate a lot. Establishing a minimum level of teacher-librarian staffing based on school population, would reduce the inequity of service between schools, without requiring a reduction of service in some schools.

**Question 2:** If the VSB were going to establish a ratio, did FOSL have a specific ratio in mind?

Without recommending specific numbers, FOSL urges the Board to implement an equitable standard that would set a guaranteed minimum ratio of teacher-librarian time per school, based on school population. Before 1997, for example, Vancouver elementary schools had one teacher-librarian for every 400 students, pro-rated for smaller schools, with a minimum of two days per week of time in the smallest schools and annexes. All secondary school libraries were staffed with at least one teacher-librarian and a school with 1700 students had two teacher-librarians. That was at a time when library staffing included clerical assistants, which means that there is now significantly less teacher-librarian time available to work with students.

Recently, BCCPAC passed a resolution asking for one teacher-librarian in each elementary school, and one for every 702 students in high school. FOSL supports this resolution.

On behalf of FOSL and parents and students throughout the Vancouver school system, I ask the Board to support school library programs and the teacher-librarians who play an absolutely essential role in today's educational system.

Thank you.

To: Chair Patti Bacchus, and Members of the Vancouver School Board,

We, the undersigned instructors at South Hill Education Center, respectfully request that the Board reconsider its Preliminary Budget Proposal 2011/2012 proposal to increase minimum class sizes in Adult Education centres from 18 to 20 students; this, of course, would be the second such increase within a year. Please consider the following:

1. The word "adult" in "Adult Education" is somewhat misleading, for approximately fifty percent of students within this system are twenty years old or younger. Therefore, this student body is identical to the core mandate of the K-12 system—namely, public education for all British Columbians up to 20 years old.
2. Due to nominal course and book fees charged students (\$40 combined) as well as the absence of costly students support services (district teachers, designated students, IEPs), most adult education centers contribute reasonable revenues to the Board's income.
3. For British Columbians older than 20, there is no other avenue other than Adult Education to acquire the academic and language skills necessary for post-secondary admissions or gainful employment outside of the service sector. For B.C.'s most motivated new Canadians, Adult Education is *the* ticket to academic, business, and professional success.
4. Some sections of Adult Education, notably Gathering Place, Downtown Eastside, and the various Adult Education Youth Programs, are essential elements of a social safety net servicing some of British Columbia's most at-risk individuals. For many at-risk British Columbians, Adult Education is a step away from dangerous or criminal behaviours.
5. The prior class minimum increase from 15 to 18 students has clearly resulted in increased class cancellation; the move to 20 would exacerbate this trend. In cancellation, the learning needs of affected students are not met, while student mistrust and resentment increase, thus discouraging future participation. This is the beginning of a negative spiral of student participation, and revenues from registering students must then also drop.

Therefore, the proposed increase from 18 to 20 students will have the effect of further reducing Board revenues, disrupting services to students within the Board's core mandate, and, most unsettling of all, erecting institutional barriers for at-risk, low-income, and newer British Columbians. The

Preliminary Budget Proposal 2011/2012 suggests budget cuts will occur "as far away from the classroom as possible," but the change under consideration to Adult Education minimum class size will definitely occur in the classroom—empty ones.

Thank you for your consideration of these crucial points,

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## *International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 963*

### *Budget Submission [2011-2012 Operating Budget]*

May 3, 2011

**Dear Trustees of School District #39 (Vancouver):**

Thank you for taking the time to review this submission. The IUOE Local 963 wishes to acknowledge the hard work that was put into creating this preliminary budget by Board staff.

We wish to point out the following areas in the Preliminary Budget Proposals documents of April 12, 2011 (DMT first budget) and April 27, 2011 (REVISED budget) that are of concern to the IUOE:

**1.16 Reduction in Cafeteria Subsidies (page 9- REVISED) of 3 FTE staff (\$100,000) plus an additional \$100,000 in supply costs.**

Given the opportunities that are clearly available for a revitalization in the cafeteria sector that will enhance student engagement and learning, improving nutritional content in food (i.e. moving away from fried food and boxed pizza), responding to government and ministry guidelines regarding food policy, tapping into the enormous talent pool that already exists in VBE schools (excluding private contractors), preparing students for the workforce with modern skills and techniques, developing cost-effective ways to prepare healthier food, and acquire supplies and other goods from local suppliers- an initiative recently raised through the work on sustainability in the district.

The time is now to invest in school cafeterias. The approximately \$200,000 budget reduction, we fear, will devastate the affected cafeterias to the degree where they will not be in any position to function properly, let alone "break even." We urge Trustees not to let this happen and reinstate these cuts and further,

- to ensure educational opportunities are widely available, investigate the viability of Killarney and Churchill Secondary school cafeterias being teaching cafeterias.
- to ensure initiatives desired by the Board (and we believe, parents) can be implemented effectively and efficiently, reintegrate privatized cafeterias back to VBE control.
- review cafeteria sales revenues to ensure market value is being charged.

**1.10 Introduce Electronic Pay Advices for All Employee Groups (page 7-REVISED)**

There are a number of problems with this concept including:

- Pay Advices are required by law. *Section 27 of the Employment Standards Act states,*

**“Wage statements- (1)** On every payday, an employer must give each employee a written wage statement for the pay period stating all of the following:

- (a) the employer’s name and address
- (b) the hours worked by the employee

.....etc.....

**Subsection (2)** states, “An employer may provide a wage statement to an employee electronically if the employer provides to the employee, through the workplace,

- (a) confidential access to the electronic wage statement, and
- (b) a means of making a paper copy of that wage statement”

.....etc.....

IUOE Local 963 is opposed to this suggested change for two primary reasons. Firstly, most if not all VBE collective agreements contain clauses that require a paper transaction. Since these clauses were collectively bargained it is unlikely union members or their bargaining representatives would accept a self-serve option they didn’t bargain for nor ratify.

Secondly, the basic requirement of subsection (2) quoted above cannot be met. Employees in the IUOE bargaining unit (and very likely others) do not necessarily have confidential access to a computer and even if they do, there does not appear to be enough dedicated, reliable printers available to them.

It is not an acceptable alternative to print off a “confidential” document in an office somewhere else in the building.

Thank you for taking the time to review this submission.