

**Vancouver Board of Education
Multicultural and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee
2011-2012 Budget Proposal
VBE SPECIAL BOARD/COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
April 19, 2011**

Vancouver has one of Canada's most diverse populations. Canadian Census figures for 2006 show that for a population of 571,600, a total of 286,135 had a mother tongue that was neither English nor French. 291,740 were of a visible minority, representing more than 50% of the total population in Vancouver. Such diversity brings many unique challenges.

The Vancouver School District is recognised as a leader in the area of social responsibility and diversity. We have a proud history of supporting schools in the areas of school safety, positive school climate, abuse prevention, violence prevention, anti-homophobia and anti-racism education. Research shows that this work is fundamental to creating safe, inclusive and positive climates for learning, which results in higher levels of student achievement. As well, it tells us that student achievement will only improve when barriers to inclusion are identified and removed and when all students are respected and see themselves reflected in their learning and their environment. (UNESCO 2008)

The Multiculturalism & Anti-Racism Committee recently completed a substantial revision of our policy, now pending board approval. One key aspect to that policy is the direction that the Anti-Racism and Aboriginal Education work more closely together to facilitate implementation of the *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement*, as both areas share the responsibility for advancing the goals of 'Belonging', 'Mastery' and 'Culture and Community', to support the holistic and increased success of Aboriginal (and all) learners.

School Codes of Conduct now include language directly referring to the *B.C. Human Rights Code* prohibition of discrimination on specified grounds within the school community. However, despite our innovation and on-going supports in Social Responsibility and Diversity, continued demographic change and increasing diversity in our school populations results in incidents of racial discrimination that require continued attention and work to address the needs of these students, staff and their families. Furthermore, racism is a historically-rooted, institutionalized aspect of society that is experienced daily in schools by both students and school staff (Singleton, 2006).

Anti-racism and Diversity education offers in-depth analysis of issues such as power, privilege and equity and cannot be seen as a mere 'add-on' to the curricula, but must permeate all school subjects and practices. In order to prepare our staff to address prejudice, discrimination and racism at every grade level, professional learning opportunities must be offered to provide practical supports, access to training, resources, models of integration, time to learn and implement strategies as well as opportunities to reflect and dialogue with colleagues. Such knowledge and skills are not generally a major part of teacher reparation programs and therefore, a range of in-house, professional growth activities is essential.

All of the foregoing represents the kinds of initiatives that the Multicultural & Anti-Racism Advisory Committee supports, and forms the bulk of the Anti-racism & Diversity Mentor's work. The work of the Mentor (the position as reduced from a full time Consultant due to the budget shortfall of 2010-2011) since her inception in the role in December, has included training and facilitation of Restorative Justice circles, modeling anti-racist and anti-bullying lessons in the classroom, review, selection and presentation of resources for staff, writing and reviewing curriculum, advising staff around responses to racist incidents, visiting schools to build relationships, community liaison with partner groups, training of all district Anti-Racism Contacts and ongoing support and responses to incidents and situations as they emerge.

Research indicates that in times of economic hardship, hate crimes increase and marginalized groups are more likely to be victims of verbal, emotional and physical racist attacks (Singleton 2006). Naturally these incidents play out in our schools. Even in this difficult economic climate in our province and district we must continue to see as paramount the needs of these most vulnerable learners.

The Multicultural & Anti-Racism Advisory Committee would like to stress that this work is preventative and therefore cost-efficient. Working to change school climate and create safe, inclusive and equitable schools for all students, staff and communities has long term impacts on productivity, satisfaction, health and well being. While we understand that difficult decisions must be made and appreciate that a .4 Anti-racism and Diversity Mentor position was created, the committee must stress that in a district serving over 56,000 diverse students and families, and over 110 schools, it is an enormous challenge and struggle to implement the proactive and preventative programs that are so essential to this work with this limited allocation of staff time.

The Multicultural & Anti-Racism Advisory Committee understands the constraints of the current financial climate, but hopes the Board of Trustees will recognize the significant short and long term cost benefits to the this work by restoring the position of full time Anti-Racism and Diversity Consultant and continuing to fund activities of Multicultural, Anti-racism and Diversity education.

PAC Presentation to Trustees re 2011 Preliminary Budget Proposal

	Student FTE	Provincial Funding per FTE
Regular and Continuing Education (School age)	52, 764	\$6,784
ESL	11, 598 (22%)	+ \$1,340
Late Refugee Students	30	+\$4062 (50% of regular and ESL funding)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- ESL parents appreciate the attempt of the Board to keep cuts away from the classroom in this budget; and that no recommended cuts were made to MCLWs who provide essential home/school communication and services

However, we would like to remind the Trustees that previous budget reductions have significantly eroded ESL services in the district. For example,

- Elimination of the Elementary ESL Consultant (2009)
- Elimination of the DRPC Manager (2010)
- Decreased # of ESL Department Heads (2010)
- .5 FTE reduction of ESL Assessment teacher (2010)
- Increased student/teacher ratio
- Loss of designated resource funding

In order to provide essential effective services for our ESL learners, our students need the following DIRECT SUPPORT:

- Smaller, more reasonable class sizes given the complexity, composition and needs of our ESL students
- Specific funding for ESL resources at the school level – currently schools use resource funding for implementing curriculum change, leaving ESL teachers with little or no money for resources
- Decreased ratio of student per resource teacher at the elementary level
- EOC coverage for resource teachers from first day of absence, so ESL students will continue to receive service
- Given the commitment to 21st Century learning, we need continued support for classroom on-line ESL resources

In addition, our students require the following INDIRECT SUPPORT:

- **Department Heads** – They are essential at all secondary schools to give voice for students, to liaise with staff and parents, to provide mentorship and training for new ESL teachers, and to ensure full audit compliance (exemplified by this year’s successful ESL audit which required hundreds of hours of work by ESL specialists at each of the audited schools).
- **Consultants** – We need to reinstate two full time (elementary and secondary) Consultants/Coordinators to meet the needs of the teachers who support ESL students. Consultants must continue to provide teacher Pro D, resource teacher training, audit compliance support, resource assessment and recommendation, development of curricular adaptations, and advice and information to ESL parent groups, district and inter-district staff. The current preliminary budget calls for a further reduction of our ESL Consultant from 1.0 FTE to .8 FTE mentor positions (0.4 FTE Elementary and 0.4 FTE Secondary).
- **Bus passes/food program** – This is crucial for refugee and other needy ESL learners who would otherwise find it extremely challenging to get to school ready to learn.
- **MCLWs** – We need to maintain the current level of support to ensure essential home-school communication and cross-cultural education.
- **ESL Assessment Teacher** – We request an increase in funding from .5 FTE to .6 FTE to allow 3 days per week of ESL assessments. This will decrease the amount of time it would take for new students to be assessed for admission to schools.

Please keep in mind when making budget decisions, more than 55% of our students do not speak English at home, and 22% receive direct ESL service. We also receive 15.5 million dollars in additional funds from the Ministry of Education to meet the needs of ESL learners; this money goes into general revenue at the board.

As parents, we believe that our ESL learners are still far from being well-supported. We urge this Board to do its utmost to ensure additional funding for our ESL learners. Thank you for your serious consideration.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that the budget cuts that the Vancouver School Board is proposing are made under duress rather than out of a conviction of their educational merit.

I am here to urge you not to cut the position of the District Resource Teacher for Preschool from 5 days a week to 2. This teacher, currently Maureen Docharty, oversees the transition of children with disabilities and complex medical needs from daycares, preschools and home into the school system each year.

Ms Docharty serves as an ambassador for the school board, a guide and information broker for parents, a translator between the extensive therapy service community and the schools, and as an informed, capable advocate for this vulnerable population of children.

Early in the school year, as one cohort of students settles into their new kindergarten classrooms, Ms. Docharty begins the process of reaching out to families whose children are due to begin kindergarten the following year. These families are grappling with questions about holding our children back, finding wheelchair accessible schools and/ or schools that have more experience than others dealing with complex medical or behavioural needs. This is insider information that is not and can not be available on any website.

In the workshops for parents that she holds across the city, Ms Docharty serves as an important ambassador for VSB. She is the first "face" we, as parents, see of a system we are very cautious and suspicious of. She works hard to win families' trust and to make it seem safe and reasonable to disclose fully all of our children's complex needs. Ms. Docharty provides parents with a crash course in the structures, responsibilities and resources of the VSB; information that we urgently need in order to advocate for our children and to help facilitate a successful transfer into kindergarten. The trust capital she builds for VSB in the months of transition planning that she engages in with each family is capital that is quickly spent in the first chaotic weeks of school when problems invariably arise. Because of the groundwork she has laid, we are not left to feel that we are dealing with a faceless, uncaring bureaucracy. I can assure you that the teacher and administrator hours that are saved by this preparation are significant.

Ms. Docharty provides families with detailed timelines and instructions on how to get their children registered and what documentation needs to be provided to whom and by when. She gathers together and interprets for the receiving schools hundreds of pages of reports on individual children from their

physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, supported child development workers, doctors, day care supervisors, behavioural interventionists and parents. She visits children's daycares and preschools to observe their skills and to evaluate their needs based on her knowledge of and experience in classroom teaching. She meets jointly with all of the child's extended support and intervention workers and their prospective school team to plan for the child's school transition and to ensure their needs are properly anticipated and provided for. This is intensive, detailed, time-consuming, highly skilled work.

These are children with disabilities that have been identified in pre-school years. Their parents have a high level of investment in their education and support, and they have valuable knowledge that needs to be passed on effectively. We currently have access to a responsive, efficient and effective liason whom we can trust to build on the extensive work we have done to prepare our children for school. This allows us to send our children with confidence into the classroom. A first impression can only be made once and for children with disabilities, investing upfront in creating a strong collaborative relationship between the parents and the school makes it possible for their first impression of school to be a positive one and lays the groundwork for meaningful inclusion of children with disabilities in the classroom.

Currently, VSB does a good job of supporting these children's successful transition into kindergarten classes across the city. Please don't turn a success story into a nightmarish failure. The children who will lose out if this position is cut back will never recover what they have lost.

Hilary Mason
Parent of a VSB student
604-683-6575

Good evening respected trustees, parents and school staff,

A few Multicultural Liaison Worker positions were initially proposed to be cut last year. It was a great relief to our ESL students and parents that this finally did not become true. I am glad that I have the opportunity to speak out what I was wishing to—the important role of Multicultural Liaison Workers to our immigrant families in Vancouver. I am also glad to have this opportunity to express my gratefulness to Multicultural liaison workers for their hard work and dedicated help. I sincerely hope this year this kind of proposal to Multicultural Liaison Workers won't come out again.

My families came to Canada on August, 2009.

One of the reasons we choose Canada as our immigrant country is that Canada has an advanced education system, especially the School Board of Vancouver has Multicultural liaison workers to help us accustomed to the new education system and take care of our on-going requirements.

Multicultural liaison workers provided their effort focusing on the difference between Canadian and Chinese education system. Until now, I frequently looked at the notes which I took at the Multicultural liaison workers' seminar. At the seminar, Multicultural liaison workers analyzed our immigrant children's strength and weakness, they gave us the suggestions—encourage students to have

more social responsibilities , to share with others and be active in school and community. I valued these advice because I and other immigrant parents had the direction and guidance to help our children to fuse into Canadian education system easily.

Multicultural liaison workers built a bridge between immigrant parents and school. You can't imagine the difficulties for us parents to connect with school for the reason of language and cultural difference. I know so many parents around me are struggling in their children's academic and routine life. With the Multicultural liaison workers' interpretation and up-to-date individual guidance, not only at the school parents' meeting, the school's selective course information meeting, but also at some emergency situations, we could come into contact with school teachers, principal and other social resources. What the Multicultural liaison workers have done is so crucial for us to keep the relationship between us and our children's school.

I appreciate Canadian society's respect and devotion to immigrants , Particularly, I appreciate Multicultural liaison workers' professional and helpful work. In Vancouver, Multicultural liaison workers are such an indispensable part of Canadian education system. I sincerely hope that every Multicultural liaison worker can continue to help us in his or her position, just as before. Thank you!

ANECDOTAL INFORMATION FOR VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD AND SCHOOL TRUSTEES REGARDING SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE LEARNING DISABLED/EMOTIONALLY FRAGILE AND GIFTED.

APRIL 20, 2010

The precise services offered for students who are learning disabled/emotionally fragile and gifted within the Vancouver School Board are the following:

Elementary: Consultant 80%

Secondary: The GOLD programs: two programs, one at Prince of Wales and one at David Thompson specifically for this population. Both teachers of the GOLD programs also teach other courses. The GOLD program at Prince of Wales has an SSW 80% of the time.

We are very grateful for the continued support for the staff of these programs.

Of course, there are children in this group who have attended MAC classes in elementary school, and benefited from mentoring and challenge center courses. There are many other personnel within the Vancouver School Board who provide support for this population.

Following are a list of comments from parents of "GOLD" students which will help you realize how important support for these students is. *Do not forget that all of these students have been assessed by educational psychologists as "gifted" but for these students their gifts have been masked by their learning/and or emotional problems.*

- GOLD is important for our son and we are grateful because in the GOLD program he is achieving self-sufficiency and independence. Gold is the solid footing that connects him socially; it is the secure foundation he builds upon to succeed in all his classes, improve his grades, and help others. We are seeing how Gold links his *potential* with his success. We always knew our son could do it; Gold allows him to. Robin and Martin Ferries parents of current grade 8 GOLD student.
- The GOLD program at Prince of Wales has been the best thing we could imagine for our son's introduction to secondary school. His attendance has improved dramatically compared to the whopping 33 days absent in grade 6 and 49 days in grade 7. His grades are a more normal mix of A's to C+'s rather than the straight C's in his later elementary years. There is now a lovely atmosphere of calmness at home for all of us regarding school...
- "The difficulty presented to this student by his weakness will become greater with progression through the grades as the work becomes more oriented towards written work, and in his teen years could lead to behaviour problems through frustration"(quoted from psychological education report). His parent's comments: in grade 6 and 7 he was late 90% of the time but since passing into the GOLD Program in grade 8 last year he has seldom been late and has become part of a social group of other GOLD students at school. Home life became much less stressful.
- My son, now 15 and in grade 10 at David Thompson, has attended the GOLD program there since grade 8. He is challenged by organizational problems, completing assignments with written output difficulties. The GOLD teacher at David Thompson has worked closely with his many teachers so they have been able to amend his work to accommodate his particular learning requirements. I don't believe that such a level of concerted and coordinated accommodation of our son's LD needs could be possible without the central organization and advocacy offered by a GOLD program. This program has been a lifesaver for my child.

2011 / 2012 Budget Presentation to the Vancouver Board of Education in Support of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Implementation and Monitoring Committee

I would like to acknowledge the traditional shared territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

Good evening Trustees, and Staff of the Vancouver Board of Education.

I am here to speak from a youth's perspective and as a member of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements Implementation and Monitoring Committee.

The recommendation in this presentation, reflect my voice and I am sure reflecting similar concerns other Aboriginal students have.

I want to thank the Trustees and staff for their past support of the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement and ensuring that the district works towards increasing the success of Aboriginal learners.

I sat before you last year and expressed my concerns regarding the budget shortfalls and the negative impact this would have on all students. But again, we are faced with more cuts and some will directly affect specific communities more than others.

When we talk about the success of Aboriginal student, we must consider many aspects of their lives. Many of our families live away from their reserves and family members, live in poverty and face racial discrimination within our schools.

When I read the Proposed Budget for 2011 / 2012, it makes me wonder how things will improve. As a district, we have an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement but Aboriginal students still have to fight for their rights.

With the proposed cut to the transportation fund, many Aboriginal students will not be able to get to school. How does that support success? They do not meet the VSB criteria for transportation but due to poverty need the ride to school.

But of course there is a note about access for funding in 'extreme hardship' cases. But I ask, who is making up the rules, what does 'hardship' mean and who can access the funds? This is not clear and leaves students and families fighting or advocating for their own needs.

As I stated last year many Aboriginal families have financial challenges and rely on the schools to provide academic support, engaging learning opportunities and cultural experiences.

This year the music program has the possibility of running with a \$25.00 fee. But if you don't have the money do you fall within the 'hardship fund' criteria? Can you take the music class? What about school fees for books or trips or grad? Why are students left feeling like they have to beg for the support? Isn't there a hardship waver already? But who is in control of who gets support? This is not clear and leaves families in a difficult spot.

As an Aboriginal student who works very hard in class, support the district, I personally have been denied financial support, I have often heard 'no' as the answer to my request. When I have no money, I can not take advantage of all the good things that happen or the extra things in the district. It becomes hard to watch other able to go on trips or join team sports because they have money. I know the district says they provide equal opportunities for everyone, but that is just not true. Many of us are denied access to support or left with nothing to do after school.

Last year we also ask that we see more library books that focus on Aboriginal authors, cultural content or literature. This would not cost the district any more money but would provide from library funds, the books that we are interested in and make sure all students have the opportunity to learn about our communities and our leaders.

As a student in Vancouver I have had to deal with racism and I think all students should learn more about who we are as people and what we have contributed to this country.

In Conclusion:

I would again like to thank the current and previous School Board members for their ongoing work in supporting Aboriginal youth. I hope that you consider my thoughts and how budget shortfalls will have an impact on the Aboriginal learners and their families. But most of my thoughts are about making sure what is already supposed to be happen does happen. I ask that you make sure that all families know how to access the 'hardship' funds and that they are not made to feel bad when they need them. And I ask that you ensure that materials that meet our interest are in the libraries and used in classroom experiences.

And again, I ask that you ensure that the district does everything they can to support the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

Thank you

Friends of the School Library (FOSL) brief to VSB April 19 2011

Friends of the School Library greatly appreciate this opportunity to appear before the Vancouver School Board. We represent over 500 parents, educators, and library advocates from schools across Vancouver.

We acknowledge all of the hard work and commitment that each of you Trustees gives to the community. Thanks to your hard work and vision, although cuts to teacher-librarians have occurred, Vancouver is still in a position of leadership in Canada.

We recognize that, due to provincial underfunding, the Board has been under incredible pressure to balance the budget, and that some very difficult decisions have already been made and will continue to be made. FOSL has reviewed a copy of the VSB's preliminary budget and were thrilled to find that there were no cuts proposed for non-enrolling teachers. However, there were no cuts to non-enrolling teachers last year either, yet teacher-librarians were still cut by 8%. (There has been, incidentally, a 20% loss of staffing since 2002)

For many children in Vancouver, their only experience with books, libraries, and applied digital technology occurs within their elementary and secondary school libraries. **Not only do we believe, but, increasing evidence confirms, that access to school libraries and teacher-librarians contributes significantly to a child's learning outcomes.** Research indicates that the single greatest predictor for student success (after the absence of severe poverty) is a well-stocked, well-staffed school library.

Teacher-librarians work hard to foster a love of reading and increase literacy and it shows: the circulation of books in libraries throughout the District spirals upwards every year. Last year, Vancouver circulated over 1.7 million items, making us in 10 months the 10th largest circulating library in the province, including public libraries!

Our full-time library and teacher-librarian have made it possible for my son to acquire a skill that is the foundation for all future learning. Its accessibility has also shown him there are options other than television and video gaming that involve having fun on your own or with friends and family. Children actually do love books but without proper access, they might not make that discovery. *****

Teacher-librarians also make possible the informed use of the vast array of online resources; there's never been a greater need to teach students how to choose trustworthy online information. They also often mentor beginning teachers and educate staff about the rapidly changing array of information technologies and online learning resources.

My two children, aged 9 and 12, visit our school library to not only regularly access print and online resources, but to access a teacher librarian who is trained to teach children to be effective, critical and safe surfers of the Internet. I firmly believe that school libraries, staffed with full time teacher librarians, are essential to developing our children's information smarts so that they can participate ethically and effectively in our, and their, future economies and technologically rich worlds.

How many people in this room are aware that **the library is the only educational service in a school that is meant for every single student and adult in that school?** The one place in a school that should serve as a hub for students gathering to read, to undertake research projects, to hold meetings; the one place that provides a safe haven for those children who don't fare as well in the busy cafeterias, hallways and on the sports fields, **is under siege**. Everyone in the school community suffers from the continuing erosion of the school library and the role of the teacher-librarian.

Good libraries -- well-stocked, comfortable, welcoming, and always open with someone on hand to help -- send a message to school kids and that message is this: *This school values reading, learning and literacy; it values initiative, it values you and your future.* The inequity of staffing across the district is unjust, and sends a very different message to the students in each school.

There is a yawning gap from school-to-school across the district with regard to resources like computers in libraries, with clear haves and have-nots. And let's face it: You can't teach digital literacy without the technology!

Specifically, what FOSL hopes you will consider is:

That the District set minimum staffing levels for school libraries that will guarantee reasonable access to collections, student interaction with and instruction from the teacher-librarians, and a welcoming physical space. The inequity of service from school to school is simply 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. (If we're at all serious about 21st Century Learning goals, teacher-librarians need access to technological tools in order to be able to teach information technology.)

That the Teacher-Librarian Consultant position cut last year be reinstated in order to facilitate communication, training and support to understaffed school libraries.

FOSL would like to stress that if literacy – print, technological, and cultural – is truly a priority in this city and this province, school libraries must be kept open all day, adequately stocked with books and e-resources, equipped with the necessary technology, and, properly staffed with qualified teacher-librarians to support both students and staff.

Thank you all for your time and for all your hard work. Good luck in wrestling with the difficult dilemmas facing you.

VSB Teacher-Librarian Consultant Year-End Report, June 2010

This annual year-end report derives its form and content from the recommendations or strategic directions as outlined in "*A Review of the Role of the Teacher-Librarian and School Library Resource Centre in School District #39 – Vancouver*" (Ken Haycock, 2002)

Challenges in School Libraries: Are we “broke” now?

- Budget cuts resulted in further erosion of staffing (see Appendix II, p.9):
 - 6.71 FTEs (of 85.77, or nearly 8% FTEs) lost in school libraries, 1.8 of 27 in secondary and nearly 5 of 59 in elementary.
 - Two-thirds of our schools decreased TL staffing, from .01 FTE to .66 FTE.
 - Twenty elementary schools provide limited school library services at a ratio over 1:702 (the language of the stripped agreement), five over 1:1000, to 1:1500 in one of our smallest annexes.
 - French Immersion schools provide a wide range of service to students, from 1:404 to 1:1196; the latter delivers one-third the services of the lowest ratio.
 - Annexes have wide-ranging staffing equivalent to ratios from 1:245 to 1:1200. Some annexes provide six times more reading and research services than others.
 - The district average ratio for elementary staffing is 1:574; for secondary, 1:1188.
 - Of the 10 schools offering lowest ratios of services to students, 5 are elementary.
 - A number of secondary schools were able to put back staffing to keep school libraries open; there are three still experiencing closure of one or more blocks for the first time in memory due to loss of staffing.
 - Compared to September 2006, a period of just 4 years, there are fully 10 fewer FTEs! There are under 80 FTEs left.
 - 1 FTE TL Consultant, a position created at the recommendation of *The Haycock Report*, was declared surplus, and a half-time TL Mentor created to provide mentoring services to the field. This erosion of school library services and of capacity to provide district leadership, as well as direct and indirect support to Vancouver educators and students, comes at a time when the program and its services to teachers and students have never been needed more. [SD #1, 2: roles and responsibilities; Pro D Plan for TLs, including a district position to support TLs and teachers].

Dear Board/Committee members,

My name is Gagandeep. I thank you for providing me with an opportunity to talk about the invaluable support me and my family have had from the language and cultural services of South Asian Multicultural Worker at my daughters' schools.

We are originally from India and Punjabi is our main language at home.

South-Asian community in Vancouver mainly hails from traditional and religious society. Joint family system exists and grandparents play an important part in bringing up the children. My parents also live with me and my mother spends a lot of time with daughters. For immigrants like us, there is a big issue of adaptation in the new industrialized society such as Canada. Families take a very long time to adapt and understand the system. I also had to deal with lots of adjustment issues when I arrived here.

I am very happy with the professionalism of the staff at my daughters' schools. I met the Multicultural Liaison Worker (MCLW) when my eldest daughter started attending Sexsmith School. I'd specially like to emphasize how the services of Multicultural Liaison Worker in my children's schools have helped me and my family.

Here are a few examples:

Being a parent is very challenging and we have had a lot of help from MCLW to deal with those challenges effectively and we have learned a lot during the process.

Communication with the school staff is much easier and thus we are able to meet the educational needs of our children in a better way.

The school system is very different here from India. We have a much better understanding of the system now and understand the responsibilities of a parent better.

The schools have a better understanding of our culture.

She has acted as a strong link between home and school and is a very rich linguistic and cultural resource for the school and our community.

My mother and my wife mainly speak Punjabi and they feel very comfortable approaching the MCLW at any time. They have been well supported all the time. They are able to communicate with the school staff with the help of Multicultural Liaison Worker.

I and my family have attended many parenting sessions and workshops at school organized by the Multicultural Worker and which have helped us immensely.

MCLW has provided us with constant feedback about our daughters' progress and various other issues as they develop as children grow and mature.

After consulting with the school staff, she has made appropriate referrals to other agencies to support the educational program for my children. We had no idea that we had an access to these services before.

I work full time but I make sure that I take an active part in my children's education and MCLW provides me with all the necessary information.

In the end, I'd like to say that the services of Multicultural Liaison Workers at Vancouver schools are very essential and be maintained so that all the parents can have equal access to the information. It is very comforting to know that these services are available to all the parents whenever there is a need.

Thank you.

1. Special education by the numbers

Despite continuing cuts, we applaud VSB efforts to keep the worst impacts away from most students.

- Since 2005/06, the student/teacher ratio rose slightly from 17.7 to 18.1 students per teacher. The student/principal ratio declined slightly from 298 to 292 students per administrator.

It's been an entirely different story for students with special needs.

Since 2005/06 the number of "low-incidence" special needs students in Vancouver has risen by 29%. But looking further back to 2001, we have 67% more low incidence students (Cat. A to H) than a decade ago. Overall, we now have 34% more special needs students in all categories since 2001. (See attached table)

While educator staffing ratios remained fairly level for other students, we've had dramatic losses in special education. We have lost 24% of our special education teachers since 2001, leading to a 77% increase in special education teachers' caseloads.

VSB has hired more education assistants, but those have lagged the growing number of students who need aide support to access schooling. For every aide, we now have 3 – 4 students with autism, Down Syndrome or other severe challenges.

VSB's Special Education Advisory Committee has been compiling and reporting these stats, based on VSB and Ministry reports, for four years now. It is positive to finally see some – if not all – of these disturbing trends finally documented in the draft budget documents.

2. Budget transparency

After years of trying, we finally received copies last week of Form 1530, which the district submits annually to the Ministry, documenting the breakdown of staffing by program, so that we could confirm these trends. Data for previous years came from an Access to Information request and from the same reports which VSB could not produce, but which we found posted on the Education Ministry Website.

The data clearly document a decade of cuts that has disproportionately targeted students with special needs. Among other things, this opens the Board to legal action based on a discrimination suit.

And while we applaud the board's efforts to improve transparency in this year's budget documents, there's still a ways to go. We urge that next year's budget documents include analysis of past cuts by program area, like special education. Another key piece missing is an explicit statement of risks. Without risk analysis, the Board, senior management, stakeholders and the public cannot offer informed advice on what to cut/ not cut?

3. Changes for 2011/12

More students with special needs: While general enrolment is projected to drop slightly, the VSB expects another net increase in students with special needs for next year (notably, another 59 more low incidence students). The budget proposes hiring an additional 17 aides but no more special education teachers or professionals to meet those new needs. The new aides will each be trying to serve an

average of 3.5 new students with severe disabilities. Special education teachers already have time for little besides filing annual IEPs to satisfy Ministry auditors, but they will be assigned more students whom they have no time to serve. Classroom teachers will face more IEP students in their classes but no professional support.

The VSB cannot continue to ignore the consistent and disproportionate erosion of special education services of the past decade. The Board has a duty to those children, to their families and to the wider public to spell out what has occurred and why, what are the impacts and what is needed to fix this.

More special education cuts: The draft budget proposes new special education cuts with severe repercussions:

A. Pre-school teacher: The preschool liaison teacher plays a critical role supporting the successful integration of low-incidence students. She transfers accumulated knowledge and experience with these complex students from preschool professionals to their kindergarten teachers. Cutting this role to a half-time mentor while the number of incoming students with complex needs grows each year means critical knowledge will be lost in the transition, and elementary teachers will have to figure it all out again on their own by trial and error, with less professional support than they've ever had. The VSB already tried this cut years ago and was forced to reverse it. We urge you not to repeat this costly mistake.

B. SSW B aides: The draft budget proposes to cut three support B aides. These are highly trained paraprofessionals who specialize in positive behaviour intervention. More students with complex needs and higher special-needs student ratios than ever mean that the role of trained behaviour intervention workers is more critical than ever. The draft budget does not identify the risks of this reduction, but this clearly poses a safety risk to staff and students and we urge you to reverse it.

We applaud district management for keeping further cuts away from special education, but given disproportionate impacts to date, we urge you to continue looking for opportunities to restore the most critical roles that have been lost.

Strategic planning for special education

Clearly, the approach to date cannot continue. We need to halt the special education losses. VSB faces a growing crisis unless we can convince the public and the Province to invest in restoring reasonable staffing ratios in special education. Children with special needs are being denied equitable access to learning that will allow them to achieve their potential; if we can't make the case for fixing that, the courts will do it for us.

VSB is not alone. Organizations across the board face similar funding challenges. Many have stopped pretending that they can do more with less each year. VSB needs a strategic approach that considers different delivery models and then spells out what you can deliver with the allotted budget, what you will no longer be able to do, and what are the associated risks. For special education, we are long past the point of maintaining the pretence that we can responsibly serve over 5,000 students with special needs under current models and staffing, given current budgets.

A strategic approach must identify what needs VSB is required to meet, which ones VSB is failing to meet and then use this to develop a vision that will guide the future strategic allocation of available resources. Exploring these questions for students with special needs may fit neatly into a broader and more holistic approach that reconfigures existing resources to support all vulnerable students, that supports more personalized learning for all students and that ensures all classrooms are manageable.

The VSB is already taking some steps in that direction. The program review is considering how to do early intervention and support for high-incidence students in the early years, for example. The Province has also expressed interest in this area. VSB needs to connect with the Ministry and other stakeholders to ensure the provincial response fits the gaps that we identify, offering solutions that work for our teachers and our students.

We've also begun a dialogue, at SEAC and with other partners, on the challenges of complying with inclusive education policies in secondary schools. This question has broader relevance, given the Province's interest in personalized learning and engagement. If, after two decades of inclusion policy, we don't have the resources, systems or knowledge to personalize learning for students with special needs, we can't hope to do this for all students. Conversely, if we can dissect this problem collectively and come up with solutions, that work may help address the broader challenges that undermine engagement and academic success for all students in our secondary schools.

To sum up briefly, VSB has no choice but to crisis manage another challenging budget. You need to further improve transparency and address risks. This includes deeper analysis of past cuts to identify students who are struggling or disproportionately impacted and explicit risk statements to support more informed choices.

Meanwhile, we all need to support you in efforts to start planning more strategically. We need to identify which students are being left behind or left out and how to focus resources and/or reconfigure services to better serve them. We need to coordinate with the Province and other stakeholders to develop strategic plans that clearly lay out roles and responsibilities for the VSB as well as the ministry.

Presented by: Dawn Steele, VPSI

19 April 2011, Vancouver

Vancouver Parents for Successful Inclusion: Brief to VSB Budget hearing • April 2011

VSB Special Education Staffing/Enrolment trends: 2001 - 2011

<i>Students w. Special Needs</i>	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	Percentage change
A - Physically Dependent				60	63	66	72	81	78	82	83		
B - Deafblind				4	4	3	3	3	6	4	4		
C - Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability				208	211	210	209	201	189	162	137		
D - Physically Disability/Chronic Health				381	448	509	561	627	711	768	839		Up 120% since 03/04
E - Visual Impairment				35	7	29	31	31	32	34	23		
F - Deaf or Hard of Hearing				155	151	158	154	131	125	125	126		
G - Autism Spectrum Disorder				296	346	391	426	452	509	574	593		Up 100% since 03/04
H - Intensive Behaviour /Serious Mental Illness				560	562	514	485	459	624	673	666		Up 19% since 03/04
K - Mild Intellectual Disability				242	201	175	166	148	130	126	101		
Q - Learning Disability				1,553	1,783	1,978	2,103	2,136	2,188	2,221	2,148		Up 38% since 03/04
R - Moderate Behaviour Support/Mental Illness				386	450	404	323	398	416	447	429		Up 11% since 03/04
Total Special Needs students	3,870	3,987	3,594	3,880	4,246	4,437	4,533	4,667	5,008	5,216	5,149	5,194	Up 34% since 00/01
Total Low incidence students (Categories A - H)			1,516	1,699	1,812	1,880	1,941	1,985	2,274	2,422	2,471	2,530	Up 67% since 02/03
Total VSB enrolment - headcount							59,457	59,087	59,181	59,978	58,659		
P - Gifted				2,529	2,255	1,695	1,518	1,334	1,050	981	852		Down 66% since 03/04
Total Special Ed + Gifted students				6,409	6,501	6,132	6,051	6,000	6,058	6,197	6,001		
<i>Change: # of Special Education students vs. previous year</i>		17	-400	286	366	191	96	134	341	208	-67	55	
<i>Change: # of Low incidence students vs. previous year</i>				183	113	68	61	44	289	148	49	59	
Special Education teachers:	451	443	345	348	322	330	332	333	334	369	341	341	Down 24% since 2000
Sp Ed student/teacher ratio	8.6	9.0	10.4	11.1	13.2	13.4	13.7	14.0	15.0	14.1	15.1	15.2	Caseloads up 77%
Special Education Aides			450	495	520	586	620	640	698	674	735	752	
Low incident student/aide			3.4	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.4	No change in ratios



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April 10, 2011

Vancouver School Board & Trustees
School District #39
1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC
V6J 5K8

2011-2012 will be LIFT's 5th year in operation and it's a pivotal one. Our first cohort, a group of students who attended the LIFT pilot at Tupper as grade 8s, will begin graduating. It's also a bridge year in terms of funding. PCRS, LIFT's parent organization, has signed an agreement with Pathways to Education with the goal of bringing Pathways to Vancouver starting in September 2012-2013. Pathways will bring considerable federal and foundation funding and it is likely a number of the current LIFT sites will become Pathways sites. To ensure LIFT's continuation and success through 2011-2012 PCRS would like to make three requests:

1) Restore partial or total funding to the LIFT Coordinator position

LIFT was launched and sustained through a VSB funded coordinator position that existed from 2006 until June 2010. This \$30,000 a year leveraged another \$90,000 in grants and close to \$200,000 in in-kind contributions from individual schools and community partners.

While LIFT has continued to partner closely with the Tupper and Vancouver Technical Community School Teams, the loss of that VSB position has weakened our partnership with the VSB and weakened the LIFT program financially. We reduced services at our Tupper and Mt. Pleasant Neighbourhood House sites this year. In 2011-2012, LIFT will time out of our Vancouver Foundation funding and we recently learned that the BC Gaming grant we were hoping would more than fill that gap was unsuccessful. We continue to write small grants for 5 and 10 thousand dollars, but will be unlikely to meet our overall fundraising target of \$150,000.

2) Designate a senior staff person to help shape the LIFT and Pathways programs.

The Pathways to Education program could bring as much as \$5 million in after school programming to East Vancouver and it is imperative that the VSB is an active partner in shaping the program. This person would be the direct contact at the VSB and also help shape the necessary MOUs, research and others agreements between PCRS, the VSB and Pathways.

A CARF accredited not-for-profit agency / www.pcrs.ca

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3) Staff support and access to information for the Pathways research and consultation process

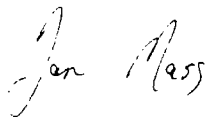
PCRS is currently working with the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at UBC to define the current graduation and poverty rates for the populations living in a dozen different east van elementary school catchment areas (the smallest coherent geographic area we could identify for families). This process will help us determine what schools meet the Pathways requirements and also provide the baseline data needed for program assessment.

However, HELP does not appear to have access to all of the necessary information so it is our hope to work more closely with the VSB. We actually went through a similar process with the VSB in 2006-2007 with the support of then Community Schools Coordinator, Dan Marriott.

Conclusion

Thank you for your ongoing support and interest in LIFT. With over 400 students having participated, the results that have been documented by parents, student, teachers and administrators LIFT continues to not only grow, but to exceed our expectations. It was founded as a VSB and PCRS partnership with support from many different community organizations. We look forward to re-establishing this working relationship with the VSB, and we look forward to hearing how you can once again more solidly support LIFT in its important 2011/12 school year, and the years to come.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ian Mass".

Ian Mass
Executive Director
Pacific Community Resources Society