

Friends of the School Library (March 2020)

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Friends of the School Library (FOSL). I'm pleased to speak to you this evening about the wonderful learning taking place in school libraries across the VSB, thanks to teacher-librarians who are passionate about guiding students through the overwhelming and unprecedented amounts of information they face daily in our modern world.

The VSB budgeting process is all about determining where to allocate resources, and by supporting school libraries, the VSB is supporting key goals from the Strategic Plan. Firstly, school libraries *increase opportunities to connect students to their learning* and secondly, they *support the implementation of the curriculum*. Teacher-librarians are instrumental in helping students and teachers find resources, both print and on-line, for personalized learning. They are experts in teaching students to find, evaluate and use on-line resources effectively and ethically, at both the elementary and secondary level. They teach students to go beyond Google. They teach students to evaluate the reliability of sources. The school library is the ideal place to put those resources because school libraries do so much to help schools meet the VSB's stated goals, and because the library is used by everyone in the school, all types of students and teachers alike.

So what do we mean by "supporting the school library"? It is not just a matter of book budgets, although that is part of the equation. It is really about staffing levels, and here we need to distinguish between Library Flex time and Library Prep time. Flex time refers to time that is available for research units that a classroom teacher and teacher-librarian co-plan and teach together, combining the expertise of both teachers, and giving the class of 30 students 2 teachers to enable each child to receive individualized help. This is the type of meaningful library time that supports the new curriculum with its emphasis on personalized learning in a deeper way. Library prep time, on the other hand, is regularly scheduled periods where the teacher-librarian has the whole class without the classroom teacher's involvement. The exposure to the library is good, but the learning is not the deep learning intended by the provincial ration.

FOSL has concerns about the lack of equity among schools in regards to these valuable Library Flex time hours. While the ratio of 1-702 students district wide is a provincial standard, it seems in Vancouver standards for Library Flex time are not being applied fairly from school to school. Some schools have almost 100% of their "library time" as Prep Time, while at other schools students enjoy Library Flex time where they can work on in-depth projects with the help of an expert TL. The allocation of Library Flex Times does not seem to correlate with the school's enrollment and once again FOSL is asking for clarity on this point. What formula, if any, is being used to allocate Library Flex Time school by school? Our fear is that with the increased amount of "Prep Time" required this year, that Library Flex time is being eroded as TLs are asked to take on more Prep time at the expense of Flex time. All students need good access to a school library with personalized instruction, and studies have shown that this is especially true for marginalized learners.

Many studies showing the measurable impacts school libraries have can be found here:

<http://www.ala.org/tools/research/librariesmatter/node/141>

FOSL is also asking for the return of the Library Mentor position. A mentor would provide much needed support for all teacher librarians, especially new ones. The mentor works to connect the Board with the schools and deepen board initiated in curriculum and in such areas as Indigenous education.

Tonight FOSL is also asking for the budgets for library materials be increased. While the cost of quality books goes up, library budgets have not kept pace. FOSL has concerns about equity on this issue. Some schools can rely on well-organized and well-funded PACs to cover the shortfall in library materials budgets while others cannot. Inequity creeps in and becomes entrenched with some school libraries falling behind. This week, the school my children attend, Van Horne Elementary, is hosting a book fair, the second this school year. While students and teachers at Van Horne look forward to an influx of new, high-quality books that will support their learning, literacy and curriculum implementation goals, what about other schools who won't receive these new materials?

As the board proceeds through this budgeting process, we ask that equity among schools in regards to *access to quality time in their school library* be a top priority. The library is the cornerstone of the school, benefits students universally and is the foundation of literacy and other core curriculum goals. A well-funded and well staffed school library is an efficient and equitable way of allocating funds that benefits all students in the VSB.

"The library is the heart of a school, and without a librarian, it is but an empty shell."

Jarrett J. Krosoczka (b. 1977. American author and illustrator)

Thank you for your time.

OneCity Education Committee Budget Presentation - Vancouver School Board

The OneCity Education Committee appreciates the opportunity to present our budget advice to the VSB trustees (albeit in the absence of any financial information). OneCity has heard from many parents, students and staff in the VSB community and these conversations inform our points.

Food Services and Programs

1. The Board should make sure that all cafeteria equipment is maintained, upgraded and replaced in a timely manner, as Trustee Jennifer Reddy requested in the 2019-20.
2. The Board should begin serious, creative and active teacher recruitment to guarantee staffing for the vital and important Culinary Arts program at Templeton Secondary.
3. The Board should reinstate the catering services at those secondary schools that previously offered them, and thus recognized their value, as affirmed by the Pontsart Report (2016). Rather than take this advice, the Board cancelled catering.

Student Services

1. It is clear that the VSB has challenges keeping Indigenous students in school and in achieving the desired graduation rates. The VSB rate is below the provincial rate. Of particular concern is the difficult transition for Indigenous students from elementary to secondary school. Both personnel and curricular resources need to be increased in the VSB budget and specifically directed toward the goals of retaining Indigenous students and enhancing their school experience and satisfaction.
2. Discussions with site-based staff at secondary schools indicate that an increasing number of youth now face disturbing levels of anxiety, depression and worry both about their achievement and their social lives. This mental health crisis will need well-planned intervention by teaching staff and other professionals and should be a line item in the VSB budget.
3. The impact of anti-Racism and specifically anti-Black Racism initiatives on school practice, curriculum and school culture over the past two years is not clear. Anecdotal information indicates that more needs to be done and that more district-based personnel as well as more material resources are required to address this issue.

Staffing

1. We have serious concerns about the use of Resource Teachers to replace absent classroom teachers. The Board needs to examine all of its resources and particularly needs to examine the wisdom and the educational value of giving Administrative Officers a 1.8% salary increase while Resource Teachers, who are themselves stretched to the limit, are not being replaced until their third day of absence.

Dear VSB Trustee,

The Lord Roberts PAC is asking that you please read this email at your meeting.

Our children attend an amazing school of about 600 students where over 30 languages are spoken. We have students from across all socio-economic bands and a large variety of cultures and back grounds. This diversity is part of what makes Lord Roberts Elementary such a fantastic place for our children to go to school. This diversity is also likely to lead, at times, to incidents of racism and other forms of hate speech and intolerance.

Currently, VSB administrators are not supported in dealing with racism through mandatory bias or anti-racism training, or (as far as we know) detailed, transparent processes to support lessons learned in such training.

Because they lead the vast diversity within our schools, district level training of all VSB Principals and Vice-Principals is key in better supporting our administrators, and through them, our students and families.

Our parents asking that appropriate funds be budgeted for to deliver inservice training for all administrators at VSB to acknowledge unconscious bias and privilege, learn practical ways to promote awareness and empathy, and develop the skills necessary to respond to racism in schools. Training should include concrete steps to ensure lessons learned are brought into day to day operations, and processes.

Leading by example will assist teachers and students to become active, engaged, and critically-thinking citizens.

Please see the letter below that was sent to Ms. Hoffman and Ms. Fraser for details about the Lord Roberts' PAC's concerns and the necessity of mandatory training.

Thank you for your consideration. We will have a parent, Denis Agar, attend the meeting to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Ian Rowe

March 8th, 2020

To Vancouver School Trustees and VSD staff,

My name is Eleanor Reardon, and I write on behalf of the Tillicum Community Annex Elementary Parent Advisory Council. We are proud of our small school and its big community, and fully support the social good that is public education.

We wish to express our deep concern about the ever-increasing reliance on parents to shoulder the burden of paying for essential learning tools. Over the years music, art, and library programming and staffing have been cut from the budget, and exist only if they are paid for through the fundraising efforts of parents and administration. These elements of education are critical in the work of creating and developing the minds of engaged, enthusiastic life-long learners. Worse still, in more recent years school budgets are often not enough to cover copy paper and furniture.

Our PAC purchased a computer lab for our school this year to replace one that dated back to 2006; we give each teacher an annual sum for necessary classroom expenses that they would otherwise go without; we fund visiting athletics, dance, and music instructors, an annual camping trip, and many other opportunities for our kids throughout the year. Staff at our school spend valuable time writing grants to create similar opportunities.

Fundraising by Parent Advisory Councils is intended to enhance the school experience for our kids, and we are glad of the opportunity to help shape our kids' education. However, funding the basic tools of a learning environment results in far too much of our energy going to fundraising, which is a terrible loss. We have so much more to offer as a link between our kids and their teachers, so much more to contribute to the life and community of our school, as PACs should do. And staff at our school should have every moment of their day available to spend with our kids.

Further, when parents at individual schools are relied upon to fund directly any part of the public education system, inequities are inevitable between schools, neighbourhoods, districts, and regions. When music is cut province-wide, parents who can afford to will pay to replace the program. Children whose parents can't do that will go without. These inequities mean that those children who need the most support and opportunity will receive the least. That is antithetical to the core values of our public school system.

We are not alone in this feeling: two from our Council recently attended a gathering of PAC representatives, at which frustration about fundraising for basics and the resulting inequality was expressed by many, without dissent.

Education in the year 2000 accounted for 20% of total government spending in BC. This year that figure is less than 12%. Between the year 2000 and now we have integrated children of all learning styles and abilities, which means more need for classroom support; there is also greater call for more expensive technologies. We ask that some of that spending is reinstated, so that our efforts can be put toward making our schools the vital collaborative communities that they can and should be.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Reardon

Vice Chair

Tillicum Community Annex Elementary School PAC