



Vancouver Teacher-Librarians' Association

Vancouver School Board Trustees
CC: Helen McGregor, Superintendent
Vancouver School Board
1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC
V6J 5K8

February 17, 2022

Dear Trustees,

On behalf of the Vancouver Teacher-Librarians, we are writing this letter to address the budget announcement posted on the Vancouver School Board's Elementary Teacher Librarians Team on October 15, 2021.

"Three years ago school library budgets were adjusted to enable funding of the new Destiny Follett library system. As you probably expect, the school library budget diverted to Follett will not be restored to former levels."

While Teacher-Librarians were not surprised by this announcement, we were disappointed. The reduction in library budgets to cover the cost of Destiny Follett was %15, not an insignificant amount. Our budgets continue to decline, while inflation and cost of items continue to increase. Furthermore, having no explanation as to why the budget has not been restored lacks transparency and leads to several questions. Why haven't the budgets been restored to pre-Follett levels? Where are the funds going? What is the VSB's stance on school libraries in general?

According to the Canadian Association of School Libraries Achieving Information Literacy, "Appropriate funding for learning resources is necessary for school libraries to meet curriculum expectations and the individual learning and social needs of their students and teachers" (Asselin et al). In the same document, a table for School Library Collections Funding is presented. At an elementary school, acceptable funding per student is \$26-35. In Vancouver, most elementary schools are working with a budget from the VSB of \$5 per student. An overall analysis of the VSB's library collection reveals that collections are dated and in need of replacement, yet the inadequate funding prevents Teacher-Librarians from being able to provide updated resources. Teacher-Librarians appreciate the 2020-2021 investment in digital resources from the Federal COVID subsidy - an expenditure of roughly \$4 per student, but understand that no further funding will be forthcoming. In order for our collections to best serve our school communities, a sustainable, substantive funding model needs to be in place.

Our schools are made up of the diverse population that is Vancouver. In order for students to find themselves represented in reading and learning materials and learn about a variety of perspectives, the library collections of the Vancouver School Board need to be funded adequately. Several VSB Teacher-Librarians have been undertaking a Diversity Audit to analyse which voices are represented in our school libraries. Not surprisingly, the dominant voices are white, cis-gendered, heterosexuals. The results of the VSB's Anti-Racism and Non-Discrimination survey illustrate the school libraries' difficulty in acquiring diverse texts. Nearly half of the families that responded did not know if books by IBPOC authors were available in school libraries. "A school is the most democratic place for a child to have access to books and electronic resources-not only textbooks but to read for pleasure and resources for acquiring information and knowledge" (Asselin et al). An under-funded school library creates a knowledge vacuum and is a disservice to our school communities.

"The school library is essential to every long-term strategy for literacy, education, information provision and economic, social and cultural development...School libraries must have adequate and sustained funding for...materials [and] technologies..." (Asselin et al.) The VSB's own policies on diversifying and indigenizing the curriculum cannot be achieved without adequately funding school libraries. The Vancouver Teacher-Librarians Association respectfully requests that the school library budgets be restored to their Pre-Destiny levels in order to best serve the needs of our school communities.

Sincerely,



Leslie Hunt
VTLA Vice President and Advocacy Chair



Holly Broadland
VTLA President

Works Cited

Asselin, M., Branch, J. and Oberg, D., 2006. *Achieving Information Literacy*. [ebook] Ottawa: Canadian Association of School Libraries, pp.8, 25, 35. Available at:
<<https://accessola.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2003-AchievingInfoLiteracy.pdf>> [Accessed 2 December 2021].

"News From the District-Budgets, Purchasing, Standing Orders and PCards." Microsoft Teams Elementary Teacher Librarians General Channel, October 15, 2021.

"Stronger Together: Anti-Racism and Non-Discrimination Engagement: What We Heard Report." VSB 2021 Strategic Plan. Prepared by Urban Matters CCC Ltd. December 1, 2021.