

October 26, 2017

Dear Parents,

Every year, the Great BC Shake Out raises the question whether schools in our district are prepared, and have the adequate emergency supplies and resources for staff to respond to an emergency, or catastrophic disaster.

Common practise is for a school's PAC to help acquire and organize the school's emergency supplies by fundraising. While most PACs are making some sort of effort to address the deficiencies for their school, they are experiencing similar challenges stemming from a lack of clear direction, or a quantified list of specific items for a PAC to purchase. This has created an ad hoc system with each PAC buying supplies in isolation and without oversight. This has resulted in: schools with insufficient emergency equipment in type or quantity, wide variances in equipment utility (some of which requires highly specialized training to operate safely), and in some cases, emergency equipment that is incompatible with the school emergency plans and procedures. Further compounding this problem, is the fact that not all PACs choose to fundraise. A PAC would need to budget approx. \$500-\$1000 per year (depending on the school's population) to replenish the food and water supplies. Based on these figures, many PACs will continue to struggle to have enough money to purchase basic supplies let alone high dollar value items such as a storage container, or properly equipped classroom emergency backpacks.

Currently, there is no mandate, or clear direction as to who needs to provide schools with these much-needed resources. Parents have a responsibility and want to support their school's emergency plan; however, parents should not be asked to take on the financial burden of acquiring all of the supplies for their school.

The opinion of parents varies on many issues; however, emergency preparedness is everyone's responsibility, and it's time for parents to have one voice and stand united. The best way for a PAC to support their school emergency plan is to budget for the replacement of perishable stores. These supplies will directly impact their children and can be rotated through PAC events while the family is part of the school community. Parents are not asked to pay for the school's fire extinguishers, nor should they be asked to pay for the school's emergency supplies.

To move this forward, the VCPAC Executive needs feedback from your PAC about this initiative, and whether the PACs in SD61 agree to budget for and replace only the perishable emergency supplies, and advocate for adequate new district funding for the basic essentials .

I would be happy to answer any of your questions,

Sincerely,

Marketa Lund

VCPAC Emergency Preparedness Rep