



VICTORIA
CONFEDERATION
OF
PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS
556 BOLESKINE ROAD, VICTORIA, BC V8W 2R1
TELEPHONE (250) 475 4193
WWW.VCPAC.CA

April 13, 2021

Dear Community Members,

RE: PROPOSED CUTS TO MUSIC PROGRAMMING AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Many individuals and groups have contacted VCPAC for our thoughts on how to communicate opposition to the proposed cuts to music education and cuts to supports for non-typical learners in our District.

We encourage you to write to the trustees as a group Trustees@sd61.bc.ca to about the impact of these cuts on your children, students, school, and community. Written submissions should be **short, direct, and to the point**. We understand that this issue is extremely important and that the proposed changes have significant negative impact on our kids and our community, but please **keep the communication respectful**. Insults do not change minds.

We have attached a letter template prepared by Julia Albano-Crockford and made available through the Facebook group Save SD61 Music Programs (including Elementary Strings).

We also believe that the SD61 Board of Trustees must be reminded that there will be **political consequences** associated with voting in favour of the proposed cuts to elementary & middle school music and educational supports. We urge you to write to them to make it clear that you will not forget their votes on this budget proposal and will work to hold Trustees accountable at election time, regardless of where they may put their names forward (whether at a municipal, provincial, or federal level).

We also recommend you write to local MLAs, the Premier and the Minister of Education:

- Grace Lore - grace.lore.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- Rob Fleming - rob.fleming.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- Murray Rankin - murray.rankin.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- Lana Popham - lane.popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- Mitzie Dean – mitzie.dean.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- the Premier - premier@gov.bc.ca
- the Minister of Education - educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

and/or copy them on your correspondence to the Trustees to ensure that they understand the political consequences of SD61 cutting educational supports for students and decimating music programs in School District 61 under an NDP government.

We also encourage PACS to speak directly to the Board at any of the April 26th, May 3rd, May 10th and May 17th Board meetings. A speaker spot can be reserved for the April 26th and May 17th Board meeting by emailing Vicki Hanley at vhanley@sd61.bc.ca and for the May 3rd and May 10th meeting by emailing Kelly Gorman at kgorman@sd61.bc.ca.

Finally, we encourage PACS to request that the District host consultation events at your school, so that your community has the opportunity to ask questions and fully discuss the impacts of the proposed cuts with District representatives. Such requests should be from your PACs, through your Principals, to the Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer.

Below is a list of points you might consider when drafting your letters:

- Parents were expecting increased levels of educational assistant support in this year's budget, not less, and we encourage all parents in the District to speak against cuts in support of non-neuro typical learners. The government and the District are obligated to provide all learners with education at their learning level and this education is legislated to not be pitted against other services and programming. It has to be added that within the inclusive learning model that the district has developed over the last few years, any cut to EA services affects any class that relies on EAs to assist the class students. Cuts to EA services therefore are not just felt by special needs learners, they are felt by all students.
- The District is proposing cuts to important & foundational programming in the middle of a pandemic when students are already struggling with the effects of social and physical isolation over the past year.
- How have the music programs benefited your child? How inclusive have the music programs been? Personal stories can have great impact.
- How has the Reading Recovery program, supports for gifted students and/or educational assistants benefitted your child?
- How do the programs slated for cuts benefit your community?
- Would your family have been able to afford private music lessons for your child? Is it equitable for only families with money to provide this opportunity to their children?
- While budget deficits are a District wide concern, the District has not asked us to equitably share in the cost of addressing such deficits because there are no cuts proposed to other programs of choice such as the Sports Academies and/or early French Immersion.

- Why does 7 million dollars have to be cut from one year's budget? Are cuts to the budget being mandated by the Province?
- The Board Chair stated in an interview with CBC that the cuts are as a result of lost international student tuition resulting from the pandemic and a change in the District's budgeting process. Why is the District changing its budgeting process in the middle of a pandemic? Is the Province requiring the changes to the budgeting process?

Time is short. Thank you for your advocacy.

Yours truly,

The Executive
Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Council

Executive@vcpac.ca

To Shelley Green, associates, and the School Board of Trustees for the Greater Victoria School District 61,

My name is [redacted], and I am a [teacher, community member, parent, student, past student] in Victoria, BC. I am writing to you regarding the upcoming vote regarding funding for Music and Inclusive Education in School District 61.

I feel that it is important for me to state that the benefits of Music Education in schools cannot be disputed. Music Education is crucial for the social, emotional, intellectual, and overall cognitive development in children and young people. Restricting access to these benefits and supports at any level in a modern education system is a step backwards not just for the children affected, but also for an entire community.

Cutting student centered curriculum in the midst of a serious global event demonstrates that the board is not putting students first, but instead is more interested in serving themselves and funding positions that do little to impact the everyday lives of students in their schools.

The areas put forward for reduced funding (Middle Band, Middle Band 8, Middle Strings/Choir, Elementary Strings, Education Assistants and more) will impact the district's most vulnerable students, robbing them of opportunities to express themselves, make new connections and learn in new and exciting ways. Students entering their teen years face so many changes every day and they need all the help and support we can give them to grow into happy and healthy members of our communities.

These cuts will take incredible teachers and role models away from students who would only benefit from their empathetic, encouraging and enthusiastic approaches to education. Fine Arts Educators and Education Assistants enter those professions with a passion for people and their craft, knowing full well the road ahead is bumpy and challenging. What else proves that point if not this very proposed cut, that would result in job losses all over the district in so many schools? These are the areas that face situations like this over and over and over again.

I implore you to vote against this proposed budget cut. The impact would be felt province-wide. Fight for arts in schools. Please do not disadvantage students in this way.

I would like my letter to be included in the board meeting agenda package.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

Board of Trustees - trustees@sd61.bc.ca

Jordan Watters - jwatters@sd61.bc.ca
Diane McNally - dmcnally@sd61.bc.ca
Nicole Duncan - nduncan@sd61.bc.ca
Tom Ferris - tferris@sd61.bc.ca
Angie Hentze - ahentze@sd61.bc.ca
Elaine Leonard - eleonard@sd61.bc.ca
Ryan Painter - rpainter@sd61.bc.ca
Rob Paynter - rpaynter@sd61.bc.ca
Ann Whiteaker - awhiteaker@sd61.bc.ca
Superintendent of Schools: Shelley Green - sgreen@sd61.bc.ca
Deputy Superintendent of Schools: Deb Whitten - dwhitten@sd61.bc.ca
Associate Superintendent: Harold Caldwell - hcaldwell@sd61.bc.ca
Premier John Horgan - premier@gov.bc.ca
Minister of Education Jennifer Whiteside - educ.minister@gov.bc.ca
Grace Lore - grace.lore.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Rob Fleming - rob.fleming.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Murray Rankin - murray.rankin.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Lana Popham – ana.popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Mitzie Dean – mitzie.dean.MLA@leg.bc.ca

*****FEEL FREE TO MAKE WHATEVER CHANGES YOU FEEL APPLY TO YOU!!**

***Template by Julia Albano-Crockford**