

DPAC Urges Trustees to Reject Budget

DPAC is the *elected* parent body for Vancouver's public schools. We are a diverse group of 11 parents; our executive includes new immigrants, people for whom English is not a mother tongue, several racialized groups, LGBTQ and so forth. We work with PACs to solve problems, represent the parent voice at VSB Committees and advisory groups and more.

DPAC executive members are extremely concerned about this latest round of budget cuts and urge trustees to reject it because

- quality of education is declining
- the cuts create a less safe environment
- vulnerable students are disproportionately impacted
 - students with disabilities, LGBTQ, Indigenous, racialized, gifted, mini schools

Our system is becoming 2 tiered! We do not support a better education for the rich and a worse one for the poor!

DPAC sees it a trustee responsibility to ensure a quality standard. The province is responsible for funding and has not delivered on its obligations to fund existing services for about 13 years. The trustees are the ones who took the responsibility for upholding and delivering a standard of quality of education in Vancouver.

Many parents have been lobbying their MLAs and Trustees. What do they hear? The Trustees blame the province and the MLAs blame the VSB. This blaming game hurts our students. A Ghanaian proverb states "When 2 elephants fight, it is the ground that gets hurt." So these 2 elephants, the VSB Trustees and Provincial MLAs, must find a way to get \$24M back to our students now!

DPAC demands that trustees do whatever it takes to uphold a quality standard, consistent with the expectations of the Vancouver citizens who elected them.

Trustees, here's an idea:

Make a delegation to the Premier, demanding \$24 M be infused immediately into the Vancouver school system. You can do it! All 9 of you can camp on the premier's doorstep. Don't take NO for an answer!

DPAC is opposed to the shell game that the parents of Vancouver are forced to play every year. Because of the broken financing mechanism, year after year we wait to find out how much money will come from the provincial government to the VSB. It's been too little every year for about 13 years. VSB senior staff takes the lesser amount of funds and make difficult decisions of what to cut. They release a preliminary budget cut list. Then, year after year, parents appear in front of Trustees to lobby for their program, asking for it to be protected from the cuts. Many parents lobby for funding for Vancouver public education, refusing to be pitted against each other in this shell game.

Then the trustees vote on the budget, deciding if they will trade one cut for another. If trustees vote yes to the budget, then more cuts are implemented every year. If a majority of trustees vote against the budget, the government will appoint an administrator who will not be as accountable to the parents of Vancouver. This administrator could close schools without due process and consultation or carry out orders from across the water. Clearly, this shell game is lose-lose for the parents and children of Vancouver. Urging the trustees to trade one cut for another is pitting us against each other and urging them to vote **no** is likely to subject the families of Vancouver to a less democratic governance structure for the VSB.

That is why we are urging trustees to reject the budget and demand \$24M from the Premier immediately.

Presented by Vice Chair, Dr Farah Shroff
vicechair@vancouverdpac.org