



April 4, 2016

Dear Parents:

As a long time school library advocate and volunteer I have watched both direct and indirect cuts chip away at library programs, teacher-librarians, and district library support positions for over a decade. However, this year we find ourselves in the **worst situation** yet because of the 2016/2017 proposed budget. **School library programs and teacher-librarians, are at risk of being eliminated.** There are other cuts as well – to budgets and to teacher-librarian support (such as the cut to the teacher-librarian mentor/consultant). However, the most important proposed cut is the following:

You can see a copy of the budget document here: <https://www.vsb.bc.ca/20162017-budget>

Page 82 E19 – Elementary Non-Enrolling Staffing

“Reductions to the non-enrolling staffing at the elementary level will impede the district’s ability to provide the same level of supports to our designated students in the area of ELL, special education, and aboriginal. **Another implication of reducing this non-enrolling staffing is that schools may not have the ability to have specialized school librarians.**” (Emphasis added)

This is a very alarming statement. Non-enrolling (staff not in a classroom) staffing is allocated to schools in one large amount. At the school level administration decides where the positions go depending on the number of staff they are given. Non-enrolling staff includes ELL, special education, aboriginal and library positions. Teacher-librarians are specialized teachers that have specific skills integral to student success. They cannot be replaced by parent volunteers or administrators doing book exchange, student volunteers shelving books, teachers bringing their classes down to the library on their own, or public libraries or librarians. Teacher-librarians purchase resources, maintain and update the collection, provide much of the cataloguing and organization of the collection, work directly with students to make book choices that are appropriate to reading level and interest, teach critical thinking skills, provide digital literacy skills to staff and students, collaborate with classroom teachers, teach research skills to students, and provide guidance in online research and safety. In fact, some of these jobs were formerly handled at the district level (cataloguing for example) but over the last decade have been downloaded onto teacher-librarians because of budget cuts.

We know that all parents in public schools highly value the school library and our teacher-librarians. We know that a school library well-staffed with a qualified teacher-librarian increases student achievement. We cannot stand quietly by and accept these cuts. Although the decisions around specific staffing allocations are done at the school level, the other decisions, including how many non-enrolling positions to give to schools, are up to the VSB. We need to make our voices heard! Here is how you can help:

1. Come to the public input meeting on April 12th.

FOSL is already on the agenda to speak. We need a large contingent of loud support in the audience. We are preparing signs and gathering forces because we need a large visible presence. You can bring students if you wish. You can make signs supporting your library and your teacher-librarian. Tuesday, April 12th 7 pm at Mount Pleasant School. If you are planning on attending this meeting already, please contact us to get a small handheld sign to take with you to the meeting to show your support for school libraries and teacher-librarians.

2. Join FOSL.

You can follow us on Facebook at [foslvancouver](#) or on Twitter at [@FOSLVancouver](#) or email us at fosl.vancouver@gmail.com. You can contact the chair of FOSL, Carrie Bercic at 778-708-1446 or carriebercic@gmail.com. If you are able to come to the meeting, please let me know as soon as possible. We need to organize.

3. Write to the trustees.

You can find their email contact info at vsb.bc.ca. Let them know how you feel about the proposed cuts and the impact to the library program. Advocate for your school library, teacher-librarian, and child. If you do not have time to write your own letter please contact FOSL and we will provide a form letter to you that can be forwarded to trustees. They need to see that no parent will stand for these cuts.

Sincerely,

Carrie Bercic
FOSL Chair