

**Response to Questions on Notice
from the
Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education
for the
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Hearing of September 19, 2016**

From the Hansard Script

G. Heyman: In that case, I'll make the question two parts.

1. One of them is....You talked about parents fundraising. I've certainly heard a lot of that when I attend Parent Advisory Committees in my constituency. So I'm wondering if you could provide a list of the kinds of things over the last decade that parents have been asked to fundraise for which were previously considered, or which you consider to be, part of the basic education system that should be provided.

While the Parent Advocacy Network has asked this question in the past of parents and PACs throughout our network, we used this opportunity to pose these questions to them again to bring forward more current responses. We received 110 responses to both questions asked by G Heyman, representing the experiences of 33 elementary and 5 high schools in Vancouver, SD 39, as well as responses from school districts across the province; these are SD 68, SD 85, SD 38, SD 61, SD 83, SD 67, SD 23, SD 57, SD43, and SD36. Given the broad spectrum of schools and districts represented, the responses compiled are further compelling evidence for the extent to which parents and PAC's are subsidizing public education.

Items marked with an ~ were high frequency items.

Items marked with a * were consistent across all responses.

PAC fundraising has been used to purchase the following resources that should be provided as part of the basic public education system:

- Technology for classrooms and whole school use * (ipads, laptops, printers, scanners, computers, charging cart, smart boards, specialized software, audio-visual equipment including projectors, LCD projector, sound system for assemblies, microphones, speakers, headphones, cords)
- General classrooms supplies *(i.e. paper, markers, crayons, books, notebooks, tissues, agendas, glue, dry erase markers, decorations, charts, craft supplies, organizational supplies such as baskets and containers)
- Supplies needed by Resource staff~
- Cleaning and custodial supplies
- Art Materials (i.e. paint, paper, brushes, clay)*
- Library books~
- French atlases and general atlases~
- Classroom books~ (including novel sets)
- graded/leveled readers for literacy support~

- primary home reading books~
- learning aids
- texts books in higher grades
- Musical instruments and music stands~
- Science supplies and kits
- Math programs, textbooks and workbooks*
- Math manipulatives
- Robotics kits
- Physical education equipment and supplies* (i.e. mats, sports jerseys/pinneys, balls, hula hoops, volley ball nets, cones etc. for recess and PE)
- Sensory aids and equipment for special education resource including Time Timers, wobble chairs etc.~
- Technology for special needs support
- Breakfast programs for children who can't afford it
- School Emergency Kits

PAC fundraising has been used to purchase the following furnishing and infrastructure items that should be provided as part of a basic public school education:

- Curtains~
- Carpets
- Air conditioner
- Student telephone
- Library and general furniture~
- Music space
- Drying rack
- Kiln
- Chairs for students and teachers~
- Bookshelves
- Risers for gym~
- Gym scoreboard for competitions (highschool)
- Cafeteria tables~
- Water fountain station~
- Bike racks
- Playground structures and equipment, new and replacement*
- New turf for outdoor track
- Outdoor benches~ (some for special needs students for waiting for buses)
- Landscaping and gardens/grounds~ (including trees and gardening equipment)
- Maintenance costs for playground and landscaping including mulching and resurfacing~
- Painting lines on playground for basketball courts and hopscotch
- Necessities for portable classrooms (i.e. shoe racks, boot trays, door mats, umbrellas)
- transportation - school buses- rural areas~
- Custodial support time for any afterschool activity~

PAC fundraising has paid for these core (not enriched) educational areas of instruction:

- Physical education~ (including swimming, gymnastics, ice skating)
- Music Instruction*
- Choral Instruction
- Art Instruction*
- Sexual education*
- Science Instruction
- Drama Instruction
- Dance Instruction
- Safeteen (avoiding violence and bullying) and internet safety courses

PAC volunteer time is also used to compensate for loss of teachers in the following areas:

- library staffing
- classroom support workers
- art, music, dance, drama, physical education instruction

PAC fundraising and parent funding has been used to provide the following enrichments that should be provided within the basic educational system:

- all curricular enhancements*
- all field trips*
- School performances* (music, drama, aboriginal to fulfill cultural curriculum)
- School buses for field trips~ to local galleries, museums etc.
- Graduation ceremonies
- Food and Nutrition Program (i.e. Project Chef)
- Clubs (chess etc.)~
- Sports teams

Parents are privately outsourcing the following educational services and supports due to the loss of these basic educational programs and supports within the public system:

- Tutoring - in basic literacy, reading and math (children who need support but are not of highest need do not qualify for resource time)*
- Tutoring to support high school students taking online courses because of reduced course offerings in school
- Art classes~
- Individual Music lessons - orchestra/band experiences are only possible within schools*
- Drama, Dance or Choir lessons~
- Testing for special needs and/or learning disabilities including Psych Ed Assessment, OT assessment, Speech/Language assessment (Average wait time for school based assessment 2-3 years)~
- Speech Language pathologist support
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy

- Speech Therapy
- Counseling support
- Math support i.e. Kumon ~
- Sports lessons/teams

The ability of parent communities to fundraise for their schools is not evenly distributed. In a 2015 report by the [Glove and Mail](#) based on [a 2014 VSB report](#), yearly parent fundraising (and charitable donations) within Vancouver schools ranged from \$501 per student to \$0. (Also see [Fundraising Totals at Every Vancouver School, The Globe and Mail](#)). The cumulative effect is an increasing inequity of access to basic educational resources, programs and amenities within schools across the province based on socio-economic status. It must be noted that these numbers are for funds where a receipt was issued by the VSB. Parents don't always demand receipts; the totals of PAC fundraising and parent funding at schools is many times higher across the province.

"Our PAC had to raise \$150,000 last year to replace the playground equipment at our elementary school. It seems to me that a playground is a pretty fundamental part of a schools' infrastructure and isn't really an optional extra or luxury item."
Christian Malcolm, Trafalgar Elementary, SD 39

"This (technology) is not necessarily equipment that would have been covered by the school in the past decade but they are items now deemed necessary by BC through the new curriculum but which are not adequately being funded. This is creating a greater divide between the haves and have-nots, not just within Public/Private education but within the Public system itself where poorer schools simply do not get reading recovery material or access to technology."
Katherine Morrison, Maple Grove Elementary, SD 39.

"I paid for my daughter to have a music education for 3 years. I was angry that it was not a part of the basic education but willing to pay for it in order not to lose that fundamental learning for my child. That paid opportunity was then taken away from us leaving my daughter with an unfinished experience and my son with no music learning whatsoever at the Elementary level. This is shocking to me. Music is an essential part of the human experience and a basic understanding of music as a language has been proven to be an exceptional way of aiding learning in many other subjects including math and language arts. I was angry, now I am furious and frustrated. As a single parent with active kids I am unable to budget for the high cost of individual music lessons. The loss of music programming at the elementary level has hit our family hard."
Lord Tennyson, SD 39

"Children from grade 7 taught PE in my son's class last year- there was no PE teacher for the entire year for his class."
Nootka Elementary, SD 39

"I'm gravely concerned at the offering of online courses for secondary students. The absence of the classroom forces parents to fill the teaching/ mentoring gap by paying for tutors to ensure comprehension and success in the online courses."

2. The other one is....Under the capacity utilization, you mentioned early childhood education. I know there are some other uses to which school space is put which are not factored by the Ministry of Education. Putting that on the record as well and their use in the community would be very helpful.

PAN collated the information provided by the parents from the 38 schools in Vancouver who responded to our survey and from public information on the VSB website to answer this second question. Our key findings were that in older schools with 'surplus capacity', rooms dedicated to core educational functions (such as music) or key support services (such as sensory rooms) were counted as empty space by the Ministry. PAN and parents find it reprehensible that the government would seek to eliminate these spaces throughout the district, particularly in light of the personalized learning focus of the new curriculum and the growing complexity of learning needs. In addition, many of the schools with lower capacity in Vancouver, serve populations with more complex educational needs due to socio-economic factors. In this respect, additional resource/community space is crucial for meeting the educational needs of these populations. Vancouver has been exemplary in maximizing surplus space for the benefit of communities in keeping with the government's own initiative to make schools Neighbourhood hubs of Learning. Early childhood education and care, before and after school care, English language education, adult education and immigrant programs remain key services that are essential to the wellbeing of communities in Vancouver and are threatened due to a LACK of available and affordable space. These programs, that are compatible with family needs, should be expanded into more schools with space rather than eliminated.

Core-curricular educational programs or support services are offered in the following non-enrolling classrooms in Vancouver schools that are deemed "empty" by the Ministry of Education. Schools that were at or over capacity were not able to offer these programs or services due to lack of space.

- Music room
- Art room
- Computer room
- Drama room
- Aboriginal Education room
- Parent room - crucial for inner city schools
- Special needs spaces such as Sensory rooms/decompression room/ extra resource space/ reading recovery room/safespace for schools with higher needs

In high school the following specialty spaces (that require fewer students) are counted as proportionally empty if they have an enrollment lower than 25 and if they are not used 100% of the time regardless of their unique space needs or prep requirements:

- Shop
- Art room
- Home Economics
- Science labs

In Elementary schools the following special needs programs (with reduced enrolment count towards surplus space). There are currently 25 such programs operating within Vancouver schools. Examples include:

- Social Emotional Academic Development program (cap of 10)
- Extended Learning Assistance Classes (cap of 15)
- TEIR reading program (cap of 8)
- Multi Aged Cluster Classes for gifted students (cap of 20)
- Life Skills (cap of 15 in 10 high schools and one elementary school using multiple rooms)

The Following essential District services are currently using space within elementary schools in Vancouver to better meet the needs of communities.

- DRPC (District Reception and Placement Centre)
- Learning Services Offices
- Literacy Services Office
- District Psych-Educational Centre
- Vancouver Learning Network - Distance Education
- Home Learners Program

Community Groups/Programs that use/rent space within schools to provide services to families:

- ELL classes
- Continuing/Adult Basic Education
- Before/after school care (63 elementary schools)
- Boys and Girls clubs
- Daycare
- Preschools (29 private preschools in Vancouver elementary schools- not Strong Start)
- Counseling/Social support services
- At-Risk Youth
- Cadets
- PIRS (Pacific Immigrant Resources Society)
- EYRP (Early Years Refugee Program)
- IPALS (Immigrant Parents as Literacy Support Program)
- Green Thumb Theatre
- Sarah McLaughlin Music Program & also St. James Academy Music Program

"As well, as I'm sure many parents will comment, the school offers extremely limited after school care options that are full and cannot accommodate the vast majority of incoming kindergarten students. Every parent I have spoken to has either shifted work hours or cobbled together expensive nanny sharing services or family pickups to get their children after school. Our daughter will be in a patchwork of after school care arrangements as we scramble to find someone to care for her well after school. This lack of aftercare seems a total oversight that should be covered by school budgets as virtually no parent in the modern world works from 9-3 as the school hours suggest, and no family can afford to be a single income family in today's economic environment, especially those of us in the financially squeezed millennial generation (no jobs or jobs being paid less money, yay)"

Lord Tennyson Elementary, SD 39