

VEAES WEEKLY

TOPICS WORTH TALKING ABOUT! PLEASE READ AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES



Colleagues,

We are writing to you today in a special issue of the VEAES weekly because it's district budget time and it's essential that members are aware of the factors at play and the actions and inactions of the Trustees, and the overall direction of staff and district management.

Those of you who have been around for a few years will recognize a disturbing pattern that has emerged in how the district proceed with budget setting, some of these patterns have been accelerating and increasing over time. Each year, we receive news that there is a significant and insurmountable deficit, one which sparks the district to start using their austerity lens to close schools, cancel programs, reduce funding, find "efficiencies".

Over the weeks of the budget process, that deficit dwindles and unsurprisingly, there are always surpluses on the books once the school year starts, even if we are successful in pushing back those cuts. VEAES always takes the position that budgets need to be transparent, accessible, and accurate, and we advocate for improvements such as replacement of non-enrolling teachers from Day 1 of absence, Adult Ed programming, additional counsellors and teacher psychologists, and improved workload for all teachers.

This year, unions and parents together identified and pressed on the issue of enrollment, and the fact that last year 1500 students arrived in September that the district wasn't prepared for. Many of those students had extremely high needs, and very few situations resulted in additional staff provided to address those needs. After a month of advocacy, the budget reflects an accurate estimate of enrolment, an increase of 34 teacher FTE, and a significant decrease in the projected deficit, given the revenue generated by those students.

VEAES members have always been supporters of meaningful, well supported inclusion. Our students reflect a staggering diversity of strengths, vulnerabilities, learning and behaviour needs, challenges, and exceptionalities. It's well documented that the funding provided to districts from government does not cover the costs of providing accessible education for all learners, and districts have been covering those costs for years.

However, it is VEAES' position that within the funding that is provided, there are choices to be made which can value and prioritize students and front-line staff. The Board of Trustees can choose to continue to increase the size of district senior and middle management, as well as their unfunded raises, or they can allocate funding to providing needs-based support for students with disabilities and their teachers. They can continue to pay millions of dollars to contract "consultants" or they can listen to the expertise and knowledge of teachers and parents through their established Advisory and Standing Committees. They can continue to dedicate resources, time, and funds into 'reimagining' the SLO program, or they can fund school-based counsellors, community and school support workers, and address the unmet needs of students and families in proactive, non-violent, informed and integrated ways.

Any budget is necessarily about funding and money, but at its heart, it's about values and priorities.

Trustees are elected to steward the district and its employees through the complex work of public education, and are accountable to the public. We know that the structure and spending choices of the current budget have resulted in harm to students and teachers, and we call on the Board to do better.

Teachers have been subsidizing political decisions to deprioritize students and front-line staff, and the impact is visible in our bodies and minds every day.

There is a simple step that the district can immediately undertake, that would signal a significant change for all – and that is to begin replacing resource, district, and itinerant teachers from Day 1 of any absences. This small step – 1.5 million over a year – in a budget with an overall revenue of over \$600 million dollars, would ensure continuity of programming for vulnerable students, the ability to make good the promise of inclusion, and a stronger commitment to meeting the needs of students.

Colleagues, there are many factors that are outside the control of the VSB – inflation, collective bargaining, student enrolment to name a few. However, the funding and structures of schools is well known, and the choices are obvious to those of us on the front line. Student need must be the driver of staffing along with reasonable working and learning conditions.

In a recent survey from the BCTF, teachers around the province identified the three biggest impact on their work as: Not being able to get necessary support for their students, lost preparation time, and significantly increased workload. Just over 64% said that their overall workload was higher than last year, and over 66% indicated that their level of stress was also higher. Teachers indicated that inadequate working conditions, mental health concerns, and lack of support for students with disabilities / disabled students were the three main issues impacting teacher attrition from the profession, with only 20.9% reporting that their students' academic needs are being met.

These findings point to the urgency of districts receiving – and budgeting – funding to meet all student needs. As a part of our advocacy efforts, VEAES has launched the Go Public! Campaign for members of the community to have their voices heard in identifying priorities for the VSB's 2023-2024 budget. Follow the links below to have an email sent on your behalf to both VSB School Trustees and members of the Provincial government, with the possibility of personalizing your message. The more emails sent, the greater the pressure exerted on key decision makers, with the hopes that they can be held accountable towards funding a robust public education system. Please consider sharing these links with anyone who might also be interested in signing the letter.

[Email VSB School Trustees | Go Public! Fund Public Education in the VSB's 2023-2024 Budget](#)

[Email the Premier and Vancouver's MLA's | Go Public! Fund Public Education in the VSB's 2023-2024 Budget](#)

Information, sources, and reports:

[BCTF Education funding brief for 2023](#)

[BC shortchanging schools](#)

[A missed opportunity – BC Budget 2023](#)

[School Trustees – an endangered species?](#)

Upcoming Deadline for Part-time Teachers to Relinquish a Continuing Contract (LOU)

If you are a TTOC and also have a part-time continuing contract and you wish to relinquish the contract, you need to inform Employee Services **before April 30th** in order for the part-time continuing position to be considered vacant for staffing purposes. This would mean that the following September, you would be back on the TTOC list and would not hold that FTE with the district.

If you are currently in a temporary contract and believe you may convert to a continuing contract after April 30th and wish to relinquish, please send an email to employeeservices@vsb.bc.ca before April 30th to find out your date of conversion and make the request. If you need support on this matter, please contact karine@veaes.ca or vanessa@veaes.ca.

The LOU regarding relinquishing contracts is found on [page 200 of the CA](#). We are currently working with the Employer to improve communications with TTOCs around converting into continuing contracts to prevent the involuntary conversions that can happen. The information on how you convert into a continuing contract is found in [Article C.20.2.f](#) of our Collective Agreement.

VEAES Adult Educator Sublocal Annual General Meeting

All Adult Educators are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting on May 6th, 2023 at 4 pm. This meeting reviews the work of the sub local for the proceeding year and elects the Executive Committee for the year ahead.

Adult Ed Annual General Meeting

Time: Saturday, May 6th at 4:00pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81523462258>

Meeting ID: 815 2346 2258

Passcode: 381990

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

All Adult Educators are also invited to the VEAES AGM on May 16 to hear about the budget and by-law changes for the organization.

We look forward to your participation!





Jody Polukoshko
President
jody@veaes.ca

Marjorie Dumont
Vice President
marjorie@veaes.ca

Darren Tereposky
Vice President
darren@veaes.ca

Karine Ng
Vice President
karine@veaes.ca

Vanessa Lefebvre
Vice President
vanessa@veaes.ca

Eric Proulx
Vice President
eric@veaes.ca

Rob McGowan
AE President
rob@veaes.ca

Office:
604-873-8378

veaes.ca



Dates to Remember

**Social Justice & Solidarity
Committee Meeting**
May 2nd, 2023
4 pm @ the VEAES Office

**Working & Learning Conditions/Bargaining
Committee Meeting**
May 2nd, 2023
4 pm @ the VEAES Office

**Adult Educator's
Annual General Meeting**
May 6th, 2023 @ 4 pm
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81523462258>
Meeting ID: 815 2346 2258
Passcode: 381990
Dial by your location
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VEAES

The Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society is the union representing elementary teachers and adult educators working in public schools in Vancouver.