

Presentation to the Board of Education, Maple-Ridge – Pitt Meadows School District No. 42
by SD42 Work Experience Teachers/Career Program Coordinators, on Wednesday, 16 April 2014.

Maynard Embree

Re: Item 12: Secondary Career Planning Assistants (“...to eliminate the Career Planning Assistant positions in all secondary schools...”) p.24, Proposed Preliminary Operating Budget 2014/15, Maple-Ridge – Pitt Meadows School District No. 42, April 9,2014.

My name is Maynard Embree and I teach at Westview Secondary. I have been a part of the Career Education Programs in this district for the past 25 years, serving in several different roles. I am currently one of six Work Experience Teachers/Career Program Coordinators, assigned 0.375 FTE at each of the six secondary schools. This evening I’m speaking on behalf of my fellow Work Experience Teachers, as well as other career program teachers, counsellors and staff, who will be affected directly by this proposal. We are here to advocate for our Career Planning Assistants (CPAs) and the secondary Career Centres that will be closed, in every secondary school, if the CPA positions are terminated. Many of us are in attendance today and we thank you for this opportunity to share our deep concerns and to ask you to reconsider your plans and to keep the current positions of the Career Planning Assistants.

Mrs. Marnie McGrath and our Career Planning Assistants have already presented an excellent review of the work they do in the Career Centres and classrooms of our schools with their limited assignment of just over 0.5 FTE. They currently work 20 hours per week, down from the 30 hours per week they worked just a few years ago. I would remind you that many cuts have been made to the district’s Career Programs over the past few years. Even we, as Work Experience Teachers have seen our own cuts from full-time 1.0 FTE in each school, down to less than half time currently. When the positions of CPAs were last being considered for cuts, Work Experience Teachers took a reduction in their time, to ensure the assigned time of our Career Planning Assistants would not be touched further. So why are the CPA so important and valuable to the secondary schools?

First, Career Planning Assistants are the initial “Face”; they are the front line contacts for all Career Program activities, events, and courses offered in our schools, from Grade 8 through 12. The CPAs in their presentation today, have already given you an excellent grasp of the range and extent of activities that they are involved in. Students seek the advice and help of CPAs as they become aware of the activities, resources and services available to them. Counsellors, Teachers and support staff routinely ask CPAs for assistance and advice on behalf of their students.

For example, just two days ago, a counselor brought a student needing volunteer hours to graduate, down to see me. Since I was teaching in a classroom and unavailable, the CPA spoke with the student, suggested some options and began the process on my behalf.

Parents phone the Career Centre with questions and concerns about course selections, concerns over their child’s lack of a clear career direction. Parents ask for career interest or personality testing, requirements for SD42 Partnership programs, and questions about Post-Secondary options. Public and Private Post-Secondary Institutions phone, email and mail information they want shared with students and parents. Community groups and organizations, including our own Elementary Schools, call asking for

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student volunteers and helpers with special events. SD42 offers its own Skills and Trades based Partnerships Programs, Academies and Continuing Education courses and programs, which they want posted and promoted. CPAs are on the front line, each day, assisting and working on behalf of all these groups. What a wonderful and necessary resource they are!

Second, Career Planning Assistants are the “Glue”, the Organizers that hold all this multitude of activities, events, and resources together. For example: Statistical data on career programs in the schools is required by both the Board and Ministry. It is initially collated and arranged by the CPA’s before being forwarded to Records Clerks. The number of hours of paid and/or volunteer work, done by students from Grade 9 through 12, are collected and entered into a database. The database is then accessed and used by Work Experience and Graduation Transition Teachers. Enrollment data on Career Preparation Programs is submitted twice a year on Ministry Form 1701s, which in turn generates additional funding for the school district. CPAs in conversation with students regularly find “hidden apprentices.” When these students sign up for Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA) courses, it again generates additional funding for the district. A continuous stream of information and resources arrive daily in the mail and by email. These individual items need to be perused, sorted, forwarded or filed for future reference. Historical documentation is filed and stored for future district and ministry use, such as during audits; when a lack of correct documentation can result in the Ministry clawing back funding from the district. During the past couple years, CPAs have developed unique school based websites which provide generic and school specific information for students, parents, the community and general public. It is not uncommon for CPAs to receive emails that start out: “I saw on your website that ...” and CPAs then go on to provide the requested information or re-direct the inquiry.

While Counsellors and Teachers are busy in their classrooms, Career Planning Assistants are also planning and organizing special events, some of which you, as trustees, have attended and participated in. I refer to: Grade 10 and 12 mock interview days, career fairs, post-secondary days, graduation transitions evaluations, District Dogwood Authority Award competitions, Partnership Program information nights and various fieldtrips organized for both specific courses and special events. Most recently CPAs assisted with two fieldtrips: one for Women in Trades, and the other for Skills Canada Competitions. CPA also attend information days and conferences hosted by local Post-secondary Institutions, where they gather current information and bring back resource materials for both the Career Centres, and Counsellors or Teachers, who are busy and cannot attend themselves.

Finally, The Board must not be under any false assumption that the work, currently done by Career Planning Assistants, will somehow be able to be picked up and completed by someone else. Time previously given to our Counsellors and Work Experience Teachers have already been cut drastically. To terminate the Career Planning Assistants, will signal the end of Career Centres, and a long and rich history of support for Career Programs in SD42. It will have a direct and negative impact on future enrolments in several career and partnership programs, some of which generate additional funds for the district. This is not cost savings for the school district. – This is a lose/lose situation. It begs the question: “How can this in any way, benefit the students of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows?”

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Therefore, on behalf of your district Work Experience Teachers/Career Program Coordinators and other staff and teachers who deliver Career courses and programs, I ask you to find another option to meet the needs of the budget. Do not terminate the positions of Career Planning Assistants in any of the six secondary schools. Thank you.

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I have attached the following personal comments about how I see secondary students benefitting from working with Career Planning Assistants and the work they do in running the district Career Centres:

Even as early as Grade 8, students explore the Career Centres, and ask questions about their future, whether it be careers and jobs, the courses they should take to prepare for a career, or even asking when they can sign-up and volunteer for an event they have heard about. Grade 9 students are involved in Take Our Kids To Work, spending a day with a parent/guardian at their workplace. When they turn 15 years of age, many begin to volunteer. The Career Planning Assistants initiate daily PA announcements and visit classrooms to explain details about volunteer events, including special requirements such as; dress codes, past experience, times and dates.

The Graduation Program begins in Grade 10, and during their Planning 10 course, students begin the multi-faceted process of learning about the Graduation Program, their interests and personality types, available careers and jobs, applying for and keeping a job, working safely, and the necessary Post-Secondary education and training options available to them. Although the course curriculum offers them generic information and instruction, it is in the career centre where they receive personal advice, assistance and find application of this new knowledge. Mock Interviews are given to Grade 10 students later in the year, and CPAs participate as both organizers and as interviewers at other schools.

As students begin to participate in volunteer and work experience placements, it is the CPAs who enter data and track the student's progress and completion of requirements. In Grade 11, course selection and Post-Secondary pre-requisites become more important for that final next year. CPAs spend time explaining SD42 Partnership Programs, their requirements and helping with the completion of the application packages. Students also receive assistance with finding entrance requirements for post-secondary institutions. Although much information is provided online, there is a lack of consistency in the way Post-Secondary Institutions present their material online. CPAs, some of whom look after school based career centre websites, are very knowledgeable and skilled at finding this information, whether it be online or in print form. [As an aside to the reference made to "...making sense of a university calendar...students can capably do this.", my personal experience is that very few post-secondary institutions even provide printed "calendars" for students or secondary schools. Advertising and Promotional view books are more likely to be made available to prospective students.] When it comes to exploring and finding information on post-secondary websites, not all students have the same ability. Some students become frustrated easily and give up, if help is not readily available. The CPAs are available to assist them.

Grade 11 and 12 is the beginning of organizing Post-Secondary Day and Career Fair visits. It is also the start of Scholarship, Bursary and Awards package preparation. CPAs are actively involved in helping students find the financial awards they are qualified for, and they assist in the preparation of application packages. Later in the year they may be assisting in the preparation for Graduation Transition presentation and District Dogwood Authority Awards presentations. Grade 12 is also the year Work Experience Teachers formally register senior students in Work Experience 12 courses. Each of the two Work Experience 12 courses require 90+ hours of unpaid work experience. CPAs have already been

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tracking student's hours since Grade 9 and now a number of Grade 12 students are close to, or now meet the 90+ hour requirement. Those who don't, are identified and will usually complete the requirements by the end of their Grade 12 year. Graduation Transitions 12 also requires a minimum of 30 hours of either paid or volunteer hours. Again, the CPAs have been tracking these hours since Grade 9, so that it is readily available for either Work Experience or Graduation Transition Teachers. At the end of the year, CPAs prepare completion certificates for Career Preparation Programs and other career programs, and may be actively involved in preparations for Graduation Ceremonies in June. CPAs also help students prepare documents for their first part-time job, a summer job, or even full time work after graduation.

Students often drop by in their final two years to confirm that they have all the necessary course requirements to graduate. On many occasions, CPA's timely review and recommendations have assisted Counsellors in identifying students who may be at risk either in their course work or in personal difficulties they are facing. CPAs work closely with Special Education Teachers and with Mr. Dennis Lacroix, the District Special Needs Work Experience Facilitator. (See his attached letter.) This allows at-risk and special needs students to graduate on-time successfully. CPAs even respond to requests from students who have previously graduated and now need to confirm their past work experience hours for a post-secondary program, such as: Nursing and other healthcare careers.

The Career Centres have been a wonderful place to meet and work with students. As a Work Experience Teacher and Career Programs Coordinator, I have found the work of the Career Planning Assistants to be priceless. They love the students and the work that they do. We simply cannot deliver the current services to students, without them. The school environment will be a much less supportive and functional place without the Secondary School Career Centres and the Career Planning Assistants that run them.

Sincerely,

Maynard E.W. Embree, B.A.
Work Experience Teacher/Career Programs Coordinator
Westview Secondary School

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Re: Proposed Cuts to District CPA positions

I am writing in hopes that the Board will reconsider their plan to cut the Career Assistant positions in SD42.

I have worked with the CPA's for many years and have seen firsthand the many critical things they do to support students, including the Special Needs Students that I work with. The Career Planning Assistants support students with accessing information and delivering documentation, that the students would find very difficult and labor some to find on their own. This information can be career information, post-secondary information, scholarship information, work experience opportunities, SD42 partnership and trades apprenticeship opportunities. The district CPA's work tirelessly to ensure the students get the best opportunities for their life after high school as well as supporting the Work Experience Coordinators and Counsellors in the district.

Please reconsider cutting these critically important positions, as it will be the students who will suffer the consequences of this erroneous decision.

Thank You,
Dennis Lacroix
District Special Needs/Work Experience Facilitator
SD42