

Dear School District 42 Trustees:

Heading into the 2016/17 school year, we once again find ourselves underfunded in school district 42 despite increased enrollment.

Once again we are being forced to make due with the insufficient dollars forwarded to us from Victoria - dollars that never stretch quite far enough.

I don't envy the tough decisions our elected trustees have to make nor the recommendations senior team has to formulate but I do appreciate the opportunity to speak here today.

The draft district budget you are presenting is about as good an effort as is probably possible in your attempts to mitigate the obvious problems stemming from the decisions made across the Salish Sea in Victoria; decisions that are made at quite a distance from the children they affect.

It is so very sad that we have had to come to rely on the outcome of the supreme court case ruling in the fall on class size and composition being hopeful/fingers crossed that it might bring about changes to the funding for class size and composition; the affects of which are causing such demoralizing issues in so many of our classrooms. Students continue to miss out on valuable time with their teachers; time to build on those relationships we all know are so powerful. Teachers and support staff are burning the candle at both ends just to meet the basic needs of many of our students and becoming unhealthy in the process. But you know all this.

So what I really want to focus my energies on today is to express the simple necessity for this board to always remember that equity in and access to our public education system is paramount. It isn't a system built on the premise that it is free if you can afford it. **It is free full stop.** I know there are budgetary struggles with decisions around such things as BYOD and busing, but the fact remains that we still need to ensure that access is there for all our students regardless of their means. The families, your employees, and the public need to know what the district can do and is willing to do to make sure all students have equitable access to public school and the proper resources to ensure that learning occurs.

It is shameful that you are forced to make decisions that may go against everything you believe in.

I would like to thank all of the groups present for coming forward today to raise concerns with you about areas where they see problems in the budget and to advocate on behalf of students and for improvements to the system. I would especially like to congratulate and thank our counselors, and librarians.

I would also like to thank you for the recommendations being presented in the budget that look to developing succession plans for both school principals and senior team members knowing there are many retirements on the horizon. It is always important in any organization to build this capacity in our future leaders and for ensuring a smooth transition going forward.

I am also very pleased to see that there is a serious effort at forward thinking with your plans to expand mentoring to all employee groups and to help them become the best that they can be. Providing this support to teachers, support staff and administrators who are on the front lines with our students will go a long way in helping to ensure success for all.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak and I remind you of the importance of equity and access to public education for all.

Todd Patrick  
1<sup>st</sup> VP MRTA