

April 13, 2021

To the members of the New Westminster School Board.

I apologize for not being present to speak but unfortunately, I have a conflict with childcare.

I am a long time New Westminster resident, an NWSS alumni and a parent. I want to express my support to remove police from all schools in New Westminster.

School is supposed to be a safe space for students, but Canadian BIPOC students have been speaking across our country about their experiences of violence, intimidation, and profiling by police within our school systems. New Westminster is no exception and I urge the members of the school board to take the steps to protect current and future students, knowing that you have the support of our community to do so.

I have a few memories of watching student interactions with Child and Youth officers during my time at NWSS. None of these interactions were positive, but one stands out to me. A friend had been skateboarding down the hall and was caught by the Child and Youth officer. She confiscated his skateboard and restrained him. She attempted to kick his legs out to bring him to the ground, but whenever she swung her leg, he would jump. We cheered him on until she succeeded in forcefully bringing him to the ground and taking him away. As a student, this violence from a police officer was normalized. As an adult and a parent, I am shocked at both the presence of a police officer within a school setting and the gross use of aggressive tactics on a student. Until police are removed from our schools, we will be unable to ensure a school environment safe from intimidation, harassment and violence towards students.

After understanding the roles and responsibilities of New Westminster's Child and Youth Resource Officers, it is clear that there are a variety of non-violent, trained professionals that can replace the roles played by police officers within the school. For example:

A lawyer or trained legal expert would be better suited towards:

- Providing legal information to students and staff who might need it
- Delivering crime prevention or other lessons, such as supporting a lesson in Law 12

A social worker or other mental health professional would be better suited towards:

- Creating relationships with kids who may be vulnerable in some way and needing additional support
- Delivering a workshop on the importance of not sharing revealing photos online at middle school wellness fairs
- Supporting students and staff in the case of a critical incident in the community (e.g., a sudden death in the community)
- Enhancing students' sense of safety and security on campus

The only role listed by the school board as consistent with police training is investigating possible criminal offenses related to the school or affecting people connected to it. Officers do not need to reside on the school campus to fulfill this role. Please remove police from our schools.

Thank you for your time,

Brigit King