



# New Westminister Teachers' Union

April 23, 2021

To: The Board of Education, New Westminister

Re: District Budget Priorities for the 2021/2022 School Year

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input into the 2021/2022 school district budget. The New Westminister Teachers' Union appreciates the collaborative processes with the New Westminister School Board that we have in place to improve the lives of students, teachers, and support staff within our district.

Earlier in the month, the NWTU surveyed our members to ask what they feel they need to provide the best service to the students of New Westminister. We divided the survey into classroom needs, school needs, and staffing concerns. The following is the top concerns of New Westminister teachers.

## **Classroom needs**

Teachers identified the following needs:

- Comprehensive list of standard classroom supplies
- Student laptops
- Assistive technology that students need to access the curriculum through speech to text applications e.g. headsets, iPads, laptops
- Textbooks (print and online)

We recognize that the school district has purchased many carts of Chromebooks in the past years, however, there is still a need to purchase more student devices and to replace those that are no longer working. Ideally, there should be one laptop cart for every two classrooms, but this is not the case in all schools. As the new curriculum emphasizes inquiry, students need access to devices help with the process. The ability to have one device per student/pair will help teachers facilitate the personalized inquiry process, using methods such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Additionally, with almost all teachers and students have experienced remote/hybrid learning there has been a large growth in this year. We would like to continue seeing further growth in the use of such technology to enhance student learning.

Students that need to use speech to text applications to access the curriculum also need the technology that will allow them to do so. The purchase of headsets with built-in microphones or separate microphones would assist these students in being able to use the text to speech technology they need to succeed. Further, these students need personal iPads or laptops to be

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carried with them throughout the day as they complete tasks in class. Some students also need noise-blocking headsets to assist in with their self-regulation.

Lastly, new teachers, as well as teachers new to a school, should not walk into an ‘empty’ classroom. Teachers should not have to pay out of their own pocket for such things as individual student whiteboards, markers, math manipulatives, visuals (e.g., alphabets, calendars, etc.), flip chart easels, carpets, resources for play-based learning, and leveled literacy materials within classroom libraries. In addition, all teachers, especially newer ones, should have access to current textbooks to help guide them through their planning of the ‘new’ curriculum. Textbooks contain far more than leveled reading material and reading response comprehension questions; they also contain excellent expert teacher ideas for lesson differentiation and suggested activities for critical thinking and student communication through social interaction with peers. Ideally, each student would also have access to their own copy of a textbook for each subject and not need to share with other students.

### **School needs**

Teachers identified the following needs:

- Laminator
- Art and science supplies
- Privacy coverings for NWSS

While the revised curriculum has been implemented from Kindergarten to Grade 12, it has been largely left up to the classroom teacher to source resources. For example, textbook publishers have not caught up to the revised curriculum and schools have not had the funds to replace textbooks that do meet the new curricular competencies and Big Ideas. Because of this, teachers are having to photocopy more materials for their students. Teachers are telling us that the photocopiers provided are not adequate to do the job, nor is the paper budget to do the actual photocopying.

Further, with the elimination of the district laminator, all teachers do not have equitable access to a laminator to preserve their classroom resources. Some schools have purchased smaller laminators, but not all have. These smaller laminators do not do the same quality job as the large district laminator, nor are they capable of laminating larger items such as posters, most of which teachers purchase out of their own money to decorate their classrooms.

Teachers have also identified the need for art and science supplies for their classes. For example, an art supply room needs to have paint and paper of all sizes, but it should also include art materials for teachers to introduce students to other types art media; more than just 2-D art activities. Our schools should also have the tools and technology needed to assist teachers in implementing the science curriculum with their students. We have been told that consistency in the amount and types resources available to teachers among schools varies. Every student’s teacher should have equal access to tools and technology which only help to engage students and enhance student learning.

Lastly, we have been told of the lack of privacy at NWSS, especially in teacher prep rooms, offices, and classrooms. While some offices have been given blinds, not all have. Further, the glass in the teacher prep rooms and classrooms should be frosted to allow for privacy. The lack of privacy in the classrooms disrupts student learning and as a result, makes it more difficult for teachers to engage the learners in a meaningful way, free from distraction.

### **Staffing concerns**

Teachers identified the following concerns:

- Education assistants
- Custodial
- Enrolling teachers to improve class size and composition
- Non-enrolling teachers such as Resource/Learning Support Teachers
- Counsellors

Over a third of the teachers who completed our survey saw a need for more education assistants for their schools. With increasingly complex learners in our classrooms, there is a need for more education assistants. Because of the chronic shortage of EAs, Resource and Learning Support Teachers are sometimes pulled from their own jobs to cover for an EA, which ultimately results in less support for other students needing it.

Teachers are also requesting the continuation of day custodians which have been in place for this school year. It is not good use of an administrator's time, nor should it be their job to have to clean up student vomit or clean a washroom because of the lack of a custodian. Day custodians provide another set of eyes and ears in a building and help us keep our schools safe and clean on a daily basis.

Lastly, teachers are asking for the hiring of more teachers, both enrolling, and non-enrolling. The hiring of more classroom teachers would help improve class size and composition issues (Article D.2 Class Size and Composition), and the hiring of more Resource/Learning Support Teachers would assist classroom teachers in ensuring their students with diverse needs are being supported in the best ways possible. Further, this year, the district has staffed over the requirement for counsellors, and teachers would like to see this continued, as we deal with the aftermath of a global pandemic and the trauma it has inflicted on society.

It should be noted that on an almost daily basis, non-enrolling teachers (i.e., Learning Support Teachers (Resource and ELL), Teacher-Librarians, and Counsellors) are regularly reassigned to cover absent classroom teachers. Our members tell us it adds to their overall workload, adds stress and workplace uncertainty, and lowers employee morale, as these changes typically happen at the last minute and the work they planned on completing must be put aside. Our members tell us this also adds a sense of guilt, as they feel responsible to the students and teachers they support, and feel personally responsible when they are unable to provide service to the students and teachers they support.

The NWTU feels this problem could be alleviated with the hiring of more contract (temporary and continuing) Teachers Teaching on Call (TTOC), as well as staffing non-enrolling teachers well beyond the minimum staffing requirements indicated in our Collective Agreement. Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide input into the budgeting process. We look forward to working together to provide the best learning environment for our students.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Wethered". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Sarah Wethered  
President, New Westminister Teachers' Union