

Local Boards already planning another round of cuts for 2011-12 and beyond

As the last BC school boards balanced their budgets this month, the pain was felt right across the province, with more school closures, calendar reductions and deep cuts to front-line services and programs in most districts.

The pain for students won't be felt until September. But as most head off for a welcome summer break, many boards are already starting to plan for even deeper cuts that will be needed for 2011-12 and the year after that, to offset structural deficits caused primarily by provincial underfunding.

Nanaimo Daily News: <http://wp.me/PNaWO-R>

Students will pay the price

The noisy feud between the Minister and the VSB may have subsided but parents and education partners around the province remain bitterly disappointed by the Provincial government's failure to honour promises to protect education.

BC's students will again sacrifice educational quality and access in order to bail out the province and local boards. The deepest cuts again focus largely on services critical to the success and participation of the province's most vulnerable students. School calendars were cut and more rural communities lost their last school, while many districts will find it more difficult to serve complex populations.

There is no question that many more BC children will be left behind, fail and drop out of school due to the cuts implemented this September. And it's alarming to know that even worse lies ahead.

What's the future for public education in BC?

The erosion of public education in BC has highlighted the need for a broad public dialogue about our province's vision for public education. What are the goals of public education? How should schools be governed? How can we improve student outcomes? What are core services and how do we start holding the province, which has the constitutional authority for delivering public education, accountable for funding and delivering those services? What does universal access mean? What about equity and inclusion? Are there more effective models? Is there a role for privatization?

These questions are all being asked. And public education advocates will have to move swiftly to get out in front of the debate by initiating a broad dialogue with British Columbians. If we fail to do so, there are increasing hints that those who may not have students' best interests at heart will commit us to dramatic changes that could be very difficult to reverse.

How do we start the discussion and build consensus around a vision compelling enough to demand action? These are questions I hope you will help answer.

Meanwhile, have a great summer, congrats on all the great work in support of our public schools, keep inviting friends & colleagues to expand our growing circle and visit our website to stay in touch: <http://stopeducationcuts.org/>

Dawn Steele, **Stop BC Education Cuts! - BC Education Coalition**

June 25, 2010: Message to all members of Stop BC Education Cuts!
