

École Macaulay Elementary School PAC
 1010 Wychbury Road, Victoria, BC V9A 5K6

May 19, 2017

Dear Ms. Watters,

We are writing on behalf of the École Macaulay Elementary School parents regarding our collective concerns around class composition and the number of new divisions, given existing space constraints within the school. Both stand to have a negative impact on the well-being and safety of our children for the 2017/2018 school year.

We understand that Macaulay can expect changes due, in part, to the recent Supreme Court ruling to allow teachers to negotiate class size and composition and to the growing population in our catchment area. Macaulay expects to have roughly 450 students in 2017/18.

Although there will be numerous positive outcomes for many schools, teachers and students in BC, we felt it necessary to highlight how coming changes indicate to parents that the District does not have the well-being of our Macaulay students in mind. The District’s decisions will result in unintended consequences that run contrary to the District’s Mission, Vision and Values (notably: equity, integrity, innovation/positive change). Given time limitations, the District has not been able to consult us. We therefore come to you to with alternative solutions, or remedies, to counter the negative impacts likely to arise from the proposed solutions. The following highlights the major changes proposed for September 2017, the proposed work-arounds and the problems they will create, and the Macaulay parent expectation to address these problems.

Change: Class Composition

Not all intermediate grade class sizes will be small and will not meet Memorandum of Agreement on the number of children with designations (maximum two/class). These numbers are well outside the ideal/agreed to class size and composition.

Proposed Work-around	New Problems Created	Macaulay Parent Expectation
<p>Grade 4 and 5 English students will have a class size of 20 students several children needing extra help in each class.</p> <p>Our 36 Grade 4 French students will be divided into three classes – one class with 28. The remaining eight students will be divided and inserted into two Grade 3 classes.</p>	<p>Some children who attend Macaulay are vulnerable due to various forms of emotional trauma. They require greater time and attention from their teacher. Additionally, a large number of students are reading below grade-level. Larger class sizes with a higher than agreed to number of designated students does not support these vulnerable children. All children suffer when the needs of these students are not met.</p> <p>Placing four children of a single grade into a split classroom does not provide those four children with a fair chance at receiving a quality education at their grade level.</p>	<p>Additional Learning Support staff be added to the school on a proactive basis to accommodate classes with higher than agreed to number of children with designations.</p> <p>Classes for the 36 Grade 4 French students be divided into two, not three classrooms (one Grade 3-4 split or an additional division)</p> <p>If needs analysis (beyond purely financial considerations) indicates that new divisions are required that the District provide a second new portable that is functional prior to the 2017/18 school year.</p>

Change: New Divisions

Macaulay school currently accommodates 20 class divisions, a computer lab, a music room, a Learning Support room, an Aboriginal Education room and a StrongStart program. Increased student population and changes to class size will require Macaulay to accommodate three additional divisions.

Proposed Work-around	New Problems Created	Macaulay Parent Expectation
<p>Portables: StrongStart and Learning Support classrooms will likely be moved to the school’s two existing portables.</p> <p>Computer Lab: Macaulay’s computer lab will be dismantled to provide a third classroom. Lab will be “mobile” and incorporate iPads and Chromebooks.</p>	<p>Portables: Both portables are aging and under-serviced. The Learning Support portable will be shared with an existing on-site out of school care provider – an essential service to Macaulay’s working families in an environment of limited care-facilities.</p> <p>Computer Lab: The removal of the computer lab will have a huge impact on our children. They currently get 51 minutes of computer time a week, and are learning valuable technology skills. Many of the children in our school come from low-income families and computer lab time is the only opportunity they have to learn foundational computer skills necessary for educational success. Having a mobile lab will significantly cut down on instruction time due to the logistics of device management. As well, mobile devices do not allow the same kind of technical exposure and longitudinal learning that an account based lab provides.</p> <p>Teacher Preparation Time: The removal of the computer lab also affects the ability of teachers at Macaulay to prepare in a constructive manner. Currently they use the time their students are in the computer lab to prepare. Without this, teachers will not have a quiet space to work within access of their materials. If teachers must leave their classrooms to do prep work, they will be forced to prepare faster and less efficiently, and therefore will be less effective for students. This also puts more stress on the teachers in an already difficult situation.</p>	<p><u>At least</u> 1-2 additional portables be installed and prepared prior to the start of the 2017/2018 school year.</p> <p>Water and bathroom services to all portables.</p> <p>Do not dismantle the computer lab. Use the new portable as either a classroom or a music room.</p> <p><u>Future:</u> Consider changes to catchment areas, reinstating Lampson Street School and opening up space in our family of schools (e.g. Rockheights).</p>

During the 2017/2018 school year Macaulay, will be operating at more than maximum space capacity, reducing student access to music, gym, library, computers and other shared services, compromising the well-being of Macaulay’s children. Further, population growth from new, local developments will intensify these pressures in the future. We understand that capital funding has been provided to the school districts to address space needs for September 2017. Please truly consider Macaulay’s needs when allocating these capital funds.

In the future, we fully expect the District to address the overcrowding of Macaulay in the 2018/2019 school year through the reopening of schools and/or changing catchment boundaries. These changes must be considered through a transparent and inclusive process and any decision be supported by sound rationale.

The parents of École Macaulay Elementary School continue to feel as if the School District does not provide equitable support to our school as compared with other schools in the District and we ask that you hear our concerns and respond accordingly. Our children deserve the same quality in their education environment that children in other district schools are currently experiencing. The District must act in accordance with their Mission, Vision and Values.

Respectfully,

Macaulay PAC Executive

Lisa Hoskins, Co-chair

Krista Moffett, Co-chair

Sue Fox, Secretary/Treasurer

Erin Kinrade, Member at Large

Sarah Patterson, Member at Large

Beth Sobieszczyk, Member at Large

Megan Weston, Member at Large