

NoVA envisions a future where a culture of trust, respect and collaboration fosters excellence in educational leadership. NoVA will achieve this vision by working collaboratively to support and develop our members, and provide leadership within the School District. We value Inclusivity, Leadership, Relationships, and Responsibility



North Vancouver Administrators

March 29, 2016

To: 2015/16 Finance and Facilities Standing Committee:

Re: NoVA Priority Identification for 2016/17 Budget Development Process

The North Vancouver Administrators' Association (NoVA) would like to begin by thanking the Finance and Facilities Standing Committee chair and committee members, the Board of Education and Executive Committee for the opportunity to provide our input to the 2016/17 Budget.

As District and School based Principals and Vice Principals we have a unique position within the organization. Our day-to-day leadership work gives us clear insight into the needs at the school and classroom levels. In our role as agents of the Board of Education, we maintain alignment between the classroom and the larger district vision. Our actions are, and continue to be grounded within the context of the School District's vision, values and goals. The values of trust, responsibility, respect and collaboration that were identified in the strategic planning process are at the core of work and the basis of our relationships with all partner groups and especially with the students we feel responsible for.

NoVA recognizes that the Board of Education needs to make difficult financial decisions within a balanced budget. While it would be difficult to say that the current budget is able to meet all of the needs in our district, we can confidently say that the Schools in North Vancouver continue to provide excellent programs and services for students due to the dedication of teachers and support staff, as well as our Principals and Vice Principals.

In identifying priorities as a combined administrative group, we carefully considered our role in the District and how we as educational leaders can positively influence the quality of education within our schools and across the district. While teacher quality remains the number one factor for student success, the Principal leadership ranks a close second in its impact on student achievement and ranks first in terms of school success

It is the moral imperative of Principals and Vice Principals to ensure the School District's vision and goals are realized in every school, and to this end the leadership at school sites and at the district offices is of paramount importance. Meaningful change and the implementation of District directions often involve cultural change as well as procedural change; and cultural change is grounded in leading changes in attitudes, behaviours and values. We recognize that both managerial and lead teacher aspects of leadership exist as our responsibility but are finding that reaching a reasonable balance of the two is becoming increasingly difficult.

As stated in Perspective: The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning, January 2012,

Education research shows that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal.

This Wallace Perspective is a culling of our lessons to describe what it is that effective principals do. In short, we believe they perform five key functions well:

- f. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students.
- f. Creating a climate hospitable to education.
- f. Cultivating leadership in others.
- f. Improving instruction.
- f. Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

These five Key functions shape our days. The unfortunate truth is that there are not enough hours in our existing days to perform these functions to a level that stimulates growth in capacity within our schools. In the current structure of the role an inordinate amount of time seems tied to operational tasks related to managing people, data, and process.

NoVA strongly feels that by sustaining and supporting our Principals and Vice Principals, more focus and attention could be given to the other four functions; functions that we believe would greatly build the capacity of our teachers, our support staff, and improve our schools. How would this look? What actions could we engage in that would greatly impact our school success?

Shaping a vision of academic success for all students

We all have high expectations for student success. The Principal has the unique ability to view the standard of engagement throughout the school as a whole, to have open discussions about expectations, to share insights with the faculty and have teachers share a school-wide expectation of improvement focused on goals for student progress. District Principals support their school based colleagues through the development of learning opportunities for teachers, support staff and students.

Creating a climate hospitable to education.

The culture of a school is heavily influenced by the actions of the Principal. The morale of staff is a key factor and even though our current political climate is much improved, teachers continue to harbor feelings of being undervalued and overworked. With low morale, teachers cannot be as engaged or involved as they would be when feeling fully appreciated. To do this, Principals need to build community, get into classrooms, be visible in hallways, share the responsibility of the supervision of students at the ground level. We need to be upbeat, available, open and welcoming.

Cultivating leadership in others.

No one leader can do it alone. Principals have the ability to nurture and develop leadership skills in those around them. The key to a strong school district is this shared leadership and building capacity in others is a key function of the principal. Opportunities to coach and mentor require a great deal of energy and time, for communication and follow up. Collaboration time has begun to provide such opportunities to develop leadership in the teaching ranks. Research shows that schools where leadership is shared enjoy higher levels of student achievement. These new leaders may in turn become your agents and what better investment in the future than to support their growth.

Improving instruction

Principals can only influence instruction through regularly observing learning and instruction in action. Getting out of the office away from management tasks related to data and the processing of paperwork allows the Principal to see teachers regularly in their own territory teaching. They can influence best when a good relationship is built and feedback can be regularly given to support improved learning in the classroom. This is also an opportunity to bring to light the best practice teaching that occurs daily in classrooms and is rarely shared. In situ observations lend themselves to encouraging teachers to work with one another as the principal can observe areas of overlap. Principals push teachers to continue to develop their own instructional practice even though many teachers would prefer the autonomy of a closed door classroom.

Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

For the school to run smoothly, the Principal must also be a competent manager. With the limited resources available, Principals must make the difficult decisions about distribution of human resources and budgets. Given the constraints and the politics of unions, often the hiring process does not render the best candidate for the job. Principals need to make that work regardless. They work with the staff to mentor and guide towards success and when necessary evaluate for competence.

They gather and analyze data to support district and school plans that make sense and assist the staff in moving towards improvements. They are tasked with planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating and monitoring on a daily basis.

Principals and vice Principals can do these things, given the time and support to do so. We are all champions of the public system and believe that the districts success depends on the success of every school. To make every school successful, the Board of education must support their agents; the Principals and Vice Principals. Effective school leadership depends on a realization at the Board of Education level that Principals and Vice Principals are your most valuable asset in overall district achievement.

NoVA strongly believes that the combined leadership capacity of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and students is essential to building and sustaining a professional learning community. As administrators we value a distributed leadership model because all of us are accountable to continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence. Principals and Vice Principals have encouraged the move from a district to a family of schools model as we see students who greatly benefit from having resources readily accessible at the school level. However, with this change there is an increase in the demands for administrators. Consequently, if we are going to best serve the needs of all educational partners and most importantly students, we would like to see reasonable adjustments that support school level administration.

In Summary, NoVA would endorse a budget that meets the goals of the 3 Year Operating Plan. We feel these goals are best achieved through an investment in our most valuable asset; the people who drive this district. Our priorities would include:

1. Additional Administrative time for Vice Principals.
2. Continued investment in people through funding directed towards building capacity in our administrators, teachers and support staff through mentorship, professional development and professional growth plans.
3. Funding to support collaboration, innovation and sustainability in the leadership of the district.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present and identify our priorities on behalf of the North Vancouver Administrators.

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