



# Delta Teachers' Association

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## **Delta Teachers' Association Presentation to Delta School Board February 13, 2006 2006 – 2007 Budget Planning**

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The Delta Teachers' Association welcomes the opportunity of making this presentation to the board. In preparation for tonight, the DTA has studied and reflected upon its recommendations to the Board made in budget presentations since February of 2001. In doing so, we acknowledge the challenges faced by trustees in setting its budgetary priorities. The experience of this past year – a year of uncertainty and turmoil both provincially and locally – have emphasized the need for stability and the restoration of local educational services. There has never been a time when the financial and political decisions of the Delta School Board have been more closely watched. This evening, the DTA will be encouraging you to first bring stability to schools in Delta by supporting the full scope of educational programs and course offerings in this district. Second, the DTA will encourage you to restore adequate funding to all district programs and facilities.

During the month of October, 2005, teachers engaged in an unprecedented two week job action. What began as a legal strike of teachers meant to achieve restoration and improvements to contract language quickly became a two-week long political protest that emphasized the increasingly intolerable circumstances faced by teachers in their classrooms. Class size and composition, a major concern of teachers, was acknowledged and supported by the public as an issue of compelling importance. In accepting the recommendations of Vince Ready in bringing the protest to an end, the government realized that the public will not tolerate the high-handed and dismissive treatment of teachers by government. Tonight's DTA presentation reflects our expectation that teachers' priorities shall inform Board policy and influence budgetary decision-making.

### **Recommendation #1: Class Size and Class Composition**

***Provide support for teachers by lobbying government to see class size and composition language guarantees placed within the School Act.***

The numbers of students assigned to classes, and the unique characteristics of those students must be acknowledged with enforceable limits imposed. While few would disagree with the notion that most students learn more in classes that are smaller, in actuality, the composition of those classes is at least as important as the number of student in the class and in some cases, even more important than class size.

**Recommendation #2: Students with Special Needs and “Grey-area” Students**

*Provide increased support for students with special needs and so-called "Grey-Area Students" by providing more non-enrolling instructional time.*

"Grey-area students" may include up to 20% of students in a typical classroom. Unlike so-called "special needs students" who comprise up to 10% of the student population, "Grey area students" experience difficulties in school, most of which can be remedied through relatively short-term interventions. What better use of time and money than to invest it in support of a student who is struggling at school?

**Recommendation #3: Curriculum Support**

*Reject Ministry of Education curriculum mandates that arrive without stable funding, in-service training, or other Ministry support.*

The Ministry mandated Graduation Portfolio may well be a good example of "authentic assessment", but it represents an excellent example of "mandated curriculum" which has been handed down from above, without adequate implementation funding, time in the curriculum, or in-service support for the teachers who must implement it.

**Recommendation #4: Discontinue High Stakes Testing**

*Discontinue the use of inauthentic measures that use unreliable statistical information generated through "high-stakes testing" and rank schools at the expense of time, money, and quality instruction.*

The current Ministry emphasis on "accountability", involves the widespread use of FSA and provincial exam results to draw questionable conclusions about the relative success of the entire educational system. It's time to move away from these toward more authentic means of evaluating schools. Teachers' time is better spent in assessment, planning and evaluation of curricular learning – not cramming for the FSA or other high-stakes tests that deprive students of many learning opportunities.

**Recommendation #5: Reconfiguration Review**

*This school board is faced with making a decision about the ultimate configuration of four secondary schools in the North Delta area. The DTA has taken no position in support of or opposition to this issue. We do, however, believe that no matter what the final configuration of the four North Delta secondary schools, the following should be considered:*

*That reconfigured schools should . . .*

- *employ qualified teachers*
- *be supported with adequate funding and resources*
- *provide a wide variety of educational opportunities for every student*
- *be properly maintained, and be safe and clean*
- *offer smaller classes as needed to provide students with more program choices and flexibility*
- *offer classes that are a reasonable size*
- *benefit from a fair and equitable distribution of resources.*

You will notice that the recommendations for these schools are no different from what every parent in this district wants for their child. Every student in the district has the right to an educational program that meets their needs.

### **Recommendation #6: Teacher Mentorship Program**

*Continue to provide support to new teachers through the Mentorship program and consider expanding the program.*

Delta's experienced teaching force is reaching retirement age and the district will soon reinvent itself with much younger teachers in classrooms. The mentoring program has provided invaluable support to teachers new to Delta and to the profession. What support these teachers receive is passed on to students. Given the number of teachers able to retire, the Board should look carefully at expanding the time of teachers performing this valuable service to teachers and students in the district. This is money very well spent!

### **Recommendation #7: International Student Program**

- a) *Place a decreasing cap on the number of International Students recruited to Delta schools.*
- b) *Ensure that class size and composition are first among the factors being considered when determining the placement of International Students.*
- c) *Lobby government to restore funding for public education in Delta to lessen the Board's dependence upon this source of revenue.*

The International Student Program has been a lucrative response of successive School Boards to the problem of chronic Government under funding. Like many districts, Delta has been successful in finding creative ways to generate compensatory funding for its school programs. Among these, the largest external source of non-traditional income has been the International Student Program. The Delta School District actively recruits student from Asia, Central and South America. While the Board has been active in recruiting International Students and derived income as a result, it has been far less vocal in lobbying government for restoration of the public funds, the removal of which created the financial necessity the International Student Program attempts to redress.

At the same time, the placement of International Students in Delta classrooms has raised numerous concerns among Delta teachers receiving these students into their classrooms.

Last week, several teachers met with Superintendent John Anderson and Director of International Students, Marsha Boyle, to discuss this topic. While teachers felt their concerns were heard, they are nevertheless looking forward to having their concerns addressed in the future.

**Recommendation #8: Fee Paying Academies**

- a) *Restrict the number of fee-paying academies to those already in existence, and open up enrollment to students in all Delta schools, regardless of their financial status.*
- b) *Provide bursaries to students who would benefit from the program offered by a Delta Sports Academy.*

Fee-paying academies promote a two-tier system within public education. Students whose parents are able to afford the tuition receive extra and focused support that is unavailable to students whose parents cannot afford the tuition. Those students can only observe from the sidelines. It is a matter of concern for the DTA that this district promotes such programs knowing that not all students will benefit because the fee is a barrier.

**DTA Recommendation #9: Student Support Services**

- a) *When custodians, teaching assistants and other school support staff workers are absent from work, replacement workers should work the same number of hours as the absent employee.*
- b) *When custodians, teaching assistants and other school support staff workers are absent from their jobs, there should be no delay of 1 or more days before replacement support staff workers are deployed.*
- c) *Restore custodial time to ensure the cleanliness of school facilities.*

Our CUPE colleagues provide service to students in this district in many ways. Teachers cannot do their jobs in isolation. We depend on the services of teaching assistants, custodians, clerical staff, and other support workers to assist us in our work and to ensure that schools are clean, safe and healthy environments for every worker.

**Recommendation #10: Stabilize Programs and Restore Funding to Public Education**

*Advocate for stability of programs and restoration of funding to the public system in Delta.*

Although an altered mandate for public schools and school boards is not yet a budgetary concern, the DTA believes the provincial government is contemplating such change. This should be of concern not only to this Board of trustees, but to every resident of Delta. The possibility exists that in the near future, Delta school district may possibly no longer exist to represent the views of the residents of Delta. If local governance of

public education is a matter that concerns trustees, now is the time for this Board to stand up and let its voice be heard.

### **Role of the Delta School Board**

The most important role of any school board is to advocate for the education of all students within the public education system. For years, school boards have been reluctant to speak aloud of their budgetary concerns for fear of alienating the government or not wanting to be seen as “trouble makers” in government circles. **If you believe your role includes advocating for Delta students, then the DTA believes you have a moral obligation to submit a needs budget to Victoria this year. Such a budget would reflect the needs of this district to maintain a quality public education for Delta students.** The DTA understands the legal obligation to submit a balanced budget to Victoria but citizens of Delta deserve to know what money is needed to truly meet the need of its school-aged children.

As long as Delta School Board and other boards throughout the province continue to supplement the provincial shortfall through revenue generating initiatives, the government will continue to download even more costs on school districts. Delta students deserve a school system that meets their needs!