

Dear School Trustee,

I am writing to you as the Coordinator of the Center for Community Outreach and Care and Faculty member through the Child and Youth Care program at Vancouver Island University. Over the past 7 years I have worked very closely with the Community School Coordinators in providing services to some of our most marginalized children and youth. I have worked alongside these professionals and they have been an amazing resource to helping ensure children and youth in this district have access to basic human rights. It can be very challenging navigating the school system, and this position was integral to on-going community work. It strengthened community school connections and they were all key players in highlighting community needs and creating plans to address these needs. I am in full support of keeping all five and in fact the role should be increased, of the Community School Coordinator's (CSC's) positions and it would be devastating to see a reduction. I specialize in childhood trauma and Nanaimo has some of the most challenging statistics around child poverty, witnessing domestic violence, children in care etc. It is in my professional opinion that reducing these positions will further marginalize the very children and youth who fall within these traumatic statistics. I am happy to provide this data if this would be helpful in understanding the challenging environment in which youth in Nanaimo are navigating.

As we all know, this year has been a struggle to provide for our vulnerable youth and given these struggles it does not seem like the appropriate or safe time to reduce services. The CSC's have been invaluable resources to me and more importantly our community in gathering information in what is needed and desired in the schools, access to the schools, and coordinating our program(s) in the schools. With five positions, I have the ability to talk to a coordinator at each of the catchment areas. Each catchment has its own special needs and qualities, which the coordinators are familiar with.

The coordinators are our point person for each school that we service, which saves us time and effort. They have the knowledge and expertise which allows them to quickly and effectively process the many steps needed to run our many programs.

I trust every consideration will be given to my request.

Thank-you,

Ashleigh Martinflatt, MSW, RSW, Ph.D. candidate

Vancouver Island University