



#3 - 3800 72nd Street
Delta, BC V4K 3N2
Phone: 604.946.6622
Fax: 604.946.6223
www.reachdevelopment.org
info@reachdevelopment.org

"BELIEVING IN POTENTIAL"

Honorable Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC
V8W 9E2

June 12, 2009

Dear Honorable Margaret MacDiarmid:

Reach Child and Youth Development Society supports families who have children with special needs from birth to age eighteen. We are sending this letter to congratulate you on your appointment as the Minister of Education and to express our concern regarding the budgetary situation facing the Delta School District in the next (and future) school years, particularly as it pertains to the potential impact on children with special needs.

In order to project a balanced budget the Delta School District plans to make deep cuts to programs including those that support the broad at-risk *gray area* population of special needs students. In doing so Reach Society is concerned that the District is coming dangerously close to crossing the line in meeting its obligations to the students in the public education system. The Delta School District has historically protected the integrity of its special program's budgets and supports. However it is no longer able to do this.

As you are no doubt aware our District is facing an enormous deficit influenced by shrinking enrollment, under-funded class size reductions and under-funded employee wage increases. As a result the planned budgetary reductions for the Delta School District include not only administrative cuts and controversial school closures but also encompass the slashing of integral supports for students with special needs.

The approved reductions to special programs will leave many of our most vulnerable students with increasingly bleak prospects. Without the supports we know they need, these children are at a much higher risk for failure within the school system and in life. The long term cost of that failure, both for these students, for the education system, and for our society as a whole, is enormous, and flies in the face of our School District's stated priorities to provide a "*learning environment for all students and ensuring an inclusive system, which provides equality and equity for ALL learners*".



Formerly known as the
Delta Association for
Child Development

The drastic removal of over \$1,000,000 in supports to these vulnerable children will have drastic results on the learning environment for all children in our educational system. We know from research that without adequate supports we will lose the opportunity for these students to grow and become contributing community members. Drug and alcohol use and high school dropout rates will increase proportionately to these cuts and in the long term our society will pay a far greater price within our social security and penal systems.

We believe that our school district has done everything within its control to avoid this situation. It has demonstrated a responsible approach to managing the financial challenges it has faced in past years through sound fiscal management practices that always ensured balanced budgets. The District created partnerships with community organizations like Reach Society, the Delta Richmond Boys and Girls Club, the Canadian Mental Health Association and others to strengthen its service delivery and increase our community's overall capacity to support the education of children in Delta.

The District has demonstrated innovation in developing alternate funding sources through student exchange programs and in creating successful academies and specialty programs to help retain and draw in new students to Delta.

Our Board of Trustees has also forged ahead and made tough, unpopular decisions regarding the closure of two highly valued neighborhood schools and the District is looking ahead to initiating a comprehensive planning process to help re-shape the future of schools in Delta for years to come.

We believe our District has done all that it can and slashing supports to children with needs is a last resort effort to address its immediate projected shortfall. With this in mind Reach Child and Youth Development Society respectfully request that the Province review its funding formulas and consider supporting mechanisms that will ensure that the Delta School District has the resources it needs to adequately support the learning needs of *ALL Learners* and in particular those who are currently most at risk, our vulnerable *grey area* special needs children.

**On behalf of the Reach Child and Youth
Development Society's Board of Directors:**

Marcia McCafferty
President

cc Delta School District, Chair
BCACL
BCACDI
MLA Guy Gentner
MLA, Vikki Huntington



