

December 19, 2017

**Mr. Peter Evans, Principal**  
Maple Grove Elementary School  
6199 Cypress Street  
Vancouver, BC V6M 3S3

**Dear Mr. Evans,**

**Maple Grove PAC parents are writing this letter to express our keen interest in a School Stage being designed and built as an integral part of Maple Grove's new replacement school. We are asking that you will forward it this letter and the attached concept design for review to the copied VSB Project Team Members including Janet Fraser, VSB Chairperson and School Liaison.**

We request that time is taken to read and consider:

- the rationale for our proposal,
- the serious and negative impact the elimination of a stage area could have on our whole school community and culture
- affordable stage design options including the concept design (see attached) for a flexible joint use stage that has been put forward by a member of our PAC Seismic Committee.

We appreciate that the VSB and architectural team have expressed interest and invested time consulting with parents, students, staff and administrators to learn about and incorporate the specific needs of our school community into the new school design. While we are aware that building as 'efficiently and economically as possible' is high priority as is the teachers' requests for prioritizing classroom space, we also want to ensure that the design is reflective of our whole school community and student education needs.

As was previously stated in a submitted by PAC Executive members on November 17, 2017, we are seriously concerned that the space being provided for a multi-cultural Montessori/Traditional dual-track school is insufficient. Montessori classrooms fundamentally require more space for hands-on student learning and materials storage. Visual and performing arts education also requires space. Given the space allocation in the schematic design seems smaller than our current school, innovative design, flexibility and adaptability of space are key. Choices have to be made and in the new school plan the school stage has been eliminated.

This causes us concern as a school common area (e.g. auditorium, gym) and stage have traditionally been a focal point for whole school community gatherings and celebration of the arts. BC's new Draft Curriculum's core competencies also speaks clearly to the importance of art education - the integration of creative thinking and creative process throughout its K-12 curriculum.

The elimination of a staging area would mark another decline in supporting future art and music demands including potential cutbacks of the services our local artisans and performers provide to our school. Technology in the arts for example, learning animation and set design could also be restricted. In a world of tough budget decisions, it would become all too easy to continue to cut arts programs because there will be nowhere to facilitate them.

Please do not make this decision which will negatively impact many future generations of students at Maple Grove. With proper facilities at least, the school community can find ways to

provide arts education by bringing in for example, outside programs such as the Art Starts in Schools Program.

We ask that you consider the interests and benefits of a school stage listed below; also the repercussions of moving forward with the elimination of a staging area in the final school design.

#### **Our Interests In A Permanent Stage Structure:**

- to facilitate whole school community building and belonging (student, staff, parent and neighbourhood), foster the performing arts now and into the future, create a gathering space that supports honouring and celebrating important social and cultural events.
- to create a stage design that would be efficient, economical and easily accessible (ie. available when needed)
- to provide ease of access, seating and sightlines where performances can be viewed and seen by all – especially for the physically challenged, our senior community, younger learners
- be multi-functional and in regular use; also potentially as a facility rental space in the evenings and weekends

#### **Benefits Of A School Stage:**

- provides a respectful and more formal environment for whole school assemblies (500 students plus staff and parents) building community spirit and marking significant and statutory events, dates and times throughout the school year – e.g. Start of the School Year, Remembrance Day, Grade 7 Graduation, Award Ceremonies and End of School Year Assemblies.
- supports the endangered music, visual and performing art programs that have been significantly cutback and in some cases have become extinct over these past few years. Staging provides a dedicated space where students can rehearse and showcase their talents and creative art projects mentoring and inspiring others to do the same – e.g. band, choir, public speaking, gymnastics, dance, annual student talent showcase. This is where the arts can come alive within the school community.
- One of the primary goals of Maple Grove PAC over the past two years has been to create a more inclusive and engaged school community. We are making significant headway bringing together and celebrating our multi-cultural community through various school events such as our most successful Lunar New Year celebration and fundraiser. This is an evening where the community comes together outside school hours and stages a variety of multi-cultural entertainment, incorporating food and fundraising activities. An evening like this could not be possible without the presence of a proper stage.
- provides celebration space for other important holiday times – e.g. Halloween, Winter School Performance.
- can also encourage more ideas and creative use by our classroom teachers and students e.g. student art exhibition accompanied by a special event opening.
- promotes community building by providing a venue to host neighbourhood and local community events
- allows for the rental possibility of the Multi-Purpose Room and Stage as a revenue generator which could help fund theatre, art, music programming for our students.

## **VSB Staging Equipment Option**

In presenting the schematic design of the new school to our PAC community in October it was mentioned that the school stage was not frequently used. Elimination of the school stage would be a significant cost savings and in the future Maple Grove could easily access staging from the Material Services Department of the VSB as needed.

In researching the option of booking a portable VSB stage we have learned from Material Services there are limited staging materials available. Bookings are required no later than two weeks in advance. Also with many schools requesting staging equipment at popular times – e.g Remembrance Day, Winter School Performances, Awards and Graduation, bookings need to be made as far in advance as one year out. There is however no guarantee that a stage will be available if the request is not made in a timely fashion or if there are more schools requesting a stage than materials available.

Based on current usage, Maple Grove would need staging equipment 8-10 times a year. As more and more schools are built without a stage of their own, we are concerned about the ability to continue holding these events which include fundraising efforts to support our school.

The process of acquiring staging equipment requires paperwork, discussion with Material Services, VSB truck delivery to and from the school, set-up and take down time for each use. With increasing demand and the labour and time involved, this could be a costly expense for the VSB especially as schools become more dependent on the use of portable staging.

We also note that installing a temporary stage into an existing gym takes up additional space which could restrict seating capacity and attendance at our bigger events. Without the height of a stage, sightlines and the ability to see a performance are also compromised.

We believe given the factors we have identified relying on easily accessible VSB staging equipment going into the future will not be a realistic or dependable option.

## **Explore Options for Building A Permanent Stage**

We also asking that VSB and the Architects value and take into consideration the interests of our PAC community and explore innovative staging options. We respect the importance of being economical and are not advocating that other priorities and allocated space be taken away. We believe there is significant common ground and whole school benefit that justifies further examination of the possibility of creating a permanent school stage.

**While understanding and appreciating VSB's consultative process we are asking for a more collaborative approach, one that works together with the PAC community to examine:**

***“How a permanent stage can be designed and built into our new school in a manner that will be efficient, economical and support frequent multi-use without further compromising space limitations and the budget allocated to this project.”***

We are asking that the VSB and the Architect use this as an opportunity to invest some additional time (which we understand does come at a financial cost), in order to examine innovative and creative ways this goal could be achieved. If there is an additional cost factor to realizing an option, we ask that it not be eliminated but presented to both the Seismic Committee and Maple Grove PAC community for consideration and support.

We are also asking that the VSB and Architect **jointly evaluate the feasibility of a stage concept that has been put forward by one of our Seismic committee members. The flexibility of this concept appears to have the potential for creating a stage that does not take away from the existing design but rather incorporates joint use of the gym and multi-purpose room without either reducing space or significantly increasing cost.** The concept accommodates a split-level multi-purpose room and a retractable wall into the end of the gym. It allows the space to be used as a stage when the school needs and within the multi-purpose room for whatever use is needed and the stage is not. We request this and other economically viable stage concepts be considered and shared with us, the PAC community.

### **Summary**

We value and support VSB's goal to replace our existing school with a seismically safe, 'fully accessible state of the art school' and, are very excited.

At the same time we recognize building a new school is a legacy project that will reach far into the future. The design of a new school must therefore be viewed with a long term outlook towards all of the educational needs of our students and not just our government's current iteration of budgetary concerns.

Accessibility includes all aspects of education –the humanities, sciences, technology and the arts. It requires creating space that is inclusive of students, staff and parents. Building a stage alongside an open area space such as the gym and/or the multi-purpose room will serve multiple needs. It will create a focal point of belonging for our whole-school community, foster civic education, social development and celebration of the visual and performing arts. We believe these are key priorities and would demonstrate VSB's commitment and mission, *'to provide the highest quality learning experience for all students, helping them to reach their intellectual, social and physical potential in a safe and inclusive environment.'*

In requesting a permanent stage structure be included into the design of our replacement school, Douglas and myself, including other members of our PAC community are also asking for a meeting to further discuss and explore staging options with the VSB project team and architect in January 2018 and prior to final design. We look forward to a reply that acknowledges this letter has been sent to all parties listed.

With Sincere Regards,

**Paula Temrick**  
Maple Grove PAC Parent

**Douglas Guest**  
Maple Grove PAC Parent

**Cc**  
**Kathie O'Sullivan**  
VSB Acting District Principal – Field Services

**Monica Baillie**  
VSB Project Manager  
Maple Grove Replacement School

**Janet Fraser**  
Chair, Vancouver School Board