

Greater Victoria School District

BRIEFING NOTE: Esquimalt High school Town Hall

On Wednesday, November 23, 2016, the students at Esquimalt High School organized a town hall session with Superintendent Piet Langstraat. Approximately 150 students participated. The first student Esquimalt Town Hall was held last school year.

This year's session was also interactive using Google Slides. Students were able to text questions onto the screen and vote questions up and down in terms of importance. This reduced barriers for those who didn't want to speak, but also allowed the students determine what questions were most important. There were more questions than there was time.

Prior to the session the Superintendent posed three questions to students through a questionnaire. The questions and results are noted below. All students who completed a questionnaire were eligible to win a Chromebook donated by a local technology supplier. More town halls are being planned for future.

Questionnaire:

101 questionnaires were completed by Esquimalt High students. The three questions posed were:

1. *Is the District preparing you for success after graduation? What is working? What more could be done?*
2. *What more would you like to learn about the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations?*
3. *What more could the District be doing to support the mental health needs and well-being of the students?*

A number of themes emerged from the questions posed in the questionnaire:

1. ***Is the District preparing you for success after graduation? What is working? What more could be done?***

About half the respondents noted they felt they were being prepared or nothing more could be done, and the other half felt more could be done. In terms of specific examples of how the District could prepare them more, the main themes were to teach life skills and things like financial planning, as well as increased post-secondary focus. There was mixed commentary about the value and relevance of the Planning 10 course.

2. ***What more would you like to learn about the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations?***

Approximately half of the respondents felt they learn enough about the Songhees and First Nations. The other half of respondents felt more in general would be helpful and there were multiple mentions of history and culture, as well as language and residential schools.

1/2

3. ***What more could the District be doing to support the mental health needs and well-being of the students?***

This question highlighted two themes, specifically too much homework and a desire for increased counselling support. Multiple respondents noted a later school day start time would help. A quarter of respondents felt enough was being done.

Questions posed to Superintendent at Town Hall

1. Not enough time for homework. Sleep deprivation etc. Can school days be more flexible/consider a fifth block or flex block like Oak Bay?
2. How can students be heard outside of meetings?
3. BC Transit youth pass - can we advocate for lower transit fares?
4. Why is Arts funding being cut e.g. Australia band trip cut at Esquimalt this year
5. What is the purpose of Planning 10? Seems irrelevant/invasive. Not relevant to our generation
6. How can we get academic teachers to work closely so we don't get five assignments at once?
7. Why do the "richer" areas get seismic upgrading funding first?
8. It costs \$450-500 for kids to get to and from school each year if they take the bus under the current model. Shouldn't the school district help pay if no one else is going to?
9. Appreciate that you came to our school - with the growing tech era, how are we adapting as a district? How do we ensure we have jobs when technology is automating many jobs?
10. Could we consider a school day that starts earlier and ends later to allow for more sleep?
11. Pro-D days vs class time, teachers seem strapped to get everything done within the school year and we fall behind from pro-d days. Can it be changed?
12. With so much info at our fingertips, what makes kids come to school?
13. Why don't they teach self-defense in school?
14. How are we getting prepared for university? Are we learning the right things? Universities don't count a lot of the courses that we take
15. Will we be getting new textbooks this year? Ours are falling apart.
16. A friend's sister had to move school because she had ADHD and couldn't get the needed support from teachers. Is there more can be done ?
17. Planning 10 and some other classes are irrelevant. Well-intentioned I'm sure but the content is ridiculous. Why isn't it like civics, and why isn't meaningful info (eg. taxes and politics and budgeting for a household, how to make a positive first impression)
18. What do you think about free tuition like other countries have done in Europe?
19. Can teachers do professional development during spring break and summer etc. Why does it occur during the class time?