

Partner Group Budget Input 2018-2019
Responses to November 22, 2017 Input Request
From Parent Advisory Councils and Education Partner Groups

1. What areas should be given priority in order to support success for all learners?

- Taking the pressure off of PACs to fundraise for expensive yet necessary things like emergency preparedness supplies, playground equipment and technology such as a sound system for the gym.
- Earthquake preparedness: The District PAC has put forward a proposal to get all of the schools in the district a standard container of earthquake supplies. As I understand it, this would be a onetime expense for the District of approximately \$500,000... the equivalent of adding 3 or 4 portables to the district. This would set the PACs up to only replace the perishables in the earthquake containers each year – water, food, batteries, and the like. This would be much more feasible for PACs. We believe that this is an issue of equity, which has been a cornerstone of Mr. Langstraat's time in the District. Can you imagine the state of the schools if the fire equipment depended on how successful each PAC was in fundraising? Willows and Oak Bay would have state of the art equipment; Lansdowne and Reynolds would be OKish, but probably vulnerable; George Jay and Esquimalt High would probably be sharing a fire extinguisher. It would be intolerable, but that is the situation that we face in disaster preparations.
- Inclusion: Lansdowne does not have any horror stories about lack of support for students with special needs, but we certainly hear stories of students being sent home because there is no suitable teacher or EA available to stand in when the regular staff member calls in sick. We would strongly support having more emphasis placed (that is, money) on making sure that this situation does not happen. We need to get to a place where schools are never in a position of having to send a student home for lack of staff and we need to do it without burning out our current staff or compromising the safety of students and staff.
- More staff training and support for the new curriculum. Two areas seem to jump out – math and group work. The change in the math approach is such that we have hosted two parent education nights with a math teacher who can explain the new approach. It still leaves most parents unable to offer any real help to their student with homework – we just have not learned the approaches that our students do. Awkward as this can be for parents, it must be very much more difficult for teachers. I am personally impressed with the understanding that my children have of math and am particularly happy that my daughter has never been trained to be “bad at math because she is a girl”. I'd like to see that success reinforced.
- The other area of concern that we hear from parents is group work – there is such a heavy emphasis on it and it leads to very unequal workloads. At the middle school level, far too many of the group work situations seem to devolve into 2 girls in the group carrying most of the work, typically for the boys. Unfortunately, this is also a widespread situation in the work world. We feel that the new curriculum is indeed preparing students for the work world... but one that has an entrenched gender inequity. (Note: this is not just a gender issue... it is also the classic free rider conundrum in economics. It makes good economic sense for some to ride on the coattails of more diligent or stronger students and end up with a B, instead of a C. Unfortunately, it also means that the students who carry the group end up with a B instead of an A.) It seems to us that there are marking and work assignment strategies that could address this imbalance, but that it will take some research and support/training to allow teachers to transition.
- Safe and sustainable transportation to school: We have seen some success over the last year in working with HasteBC and would like to see the momentum continued. The single biggest contribution that the District could make would be installing more bike racks. Though we are well equipped, the current racks are used to capacity and we would dearly love to install two more. We understand the CRD will provide one and we would be willing to pay for a second (at roughly \$350). The biggest cost is installation, done through the district; we were told the cost would likely be about \$800 for each rack. The other area that we would dearly love District support would be in convincing BC Transit to make student bus passes available to our schools, not just colleges and universities. This would make a profound positive impact on many of the families that we represent.
- We are concerned about whether there has been sufficient consideration about privacy issues related to the use of Google tools. This may be a fairly straightforward thing for staff or a hired consultant to review. It is the old saw about "if you can't tell what the product is, you are the product". We feel like our students are ending up as part of Google's ongoing research and that there may be consequences that we just don't know enough about.
- It would be nice to know what areas of funding the School District currently supports! I would like to see the School District improve communication with parents to more than emergency notices during strikes and controversies. Coming to a PAC meeting and having a newsletter or Facebook group would be good. An annual online survey would be good too. A school district rep for each school.
- I would like to see more funding for everything, but hard to say what to prioritize when I don't know all the components!
- Offhand, I hear that janitors, facilities maintenance and office admin are under staffed and stressed out.
- In the big picture, I would like to see the school district be visionary, positive, communicative and student focused.

- I would like the school district to have a mandate to be make our schools healthy and sustainable, and champion the school environment to be fun and progressive.
- I would like to see efforts made to have classrooms support what boys need... more movement, more outdoors, more inclusion/acceptance of topics that interest boys.
- Library, more books for students.
- More homework because it helps to remember what they learned in school during the day.
- There is currently very little funding for field trips, and PACs find themselves in the position of paying for bussing, lessons, field trips, speakers, and performing arts, especially in schools with many low-income families but who do not meet Community Link funding requirements. It would be delightful to offer all children the opportunity to take swimming lessons, skating lessons, or play horseshoes, etcetera, without the burden being on the parents in the community who have a little bit of money to help support PAC initiatives.
- Our school struggles with literacy and actively seeks out volunteers in parents and church groups to do one-on-one reading with the children who struggle. This is a basic need in education, and it would be lovely to see it met with programs and staff properly versed in literacy initiatives.
- I recently read in the paper that funding may be provided under the NDP government for playground apparatus. This is spectacular news. Parents should NOT have to fundraise for a playground for their children. The minimal funds we are able to raise should go toward things such as birthday pencils, extra bussing for field trips, inflatables for fun days, lunches for children who can't afford them, and so many other things.
- Provide classroom funds for teachers. I don't personally know what they have in this regard, but I know our PAC gives each teacher \$140 per year so they can enhance learning in their classrooms. These educators go to university to learn what they need to do their jobs; let's let them choose what kind of extras they would like by providing each teacher a bit of a slush fund per year to buy extras as they see fit.
- New class size and composition -- smaller class size means the teacher's attention isn't stretched too thin among the students.
- Technology for learning -- it's great the students have access and can learn what these tools can do.
- Having gym (or outdoor walking time) as part of the daily schedule to get the kids moving.
- Clean classrooms/schools -- students aren't successful with just the curriculum and technology; they also need clean classrooms (ie: desk or table tops, floors, carpets, etc) so they are not absent from school due to illness. There was an article in the Saanich News on Oct 27, 2017 - Teachers concerned over carpet cleaning cutbacks. As a parent, I am also concerned about this.
- Ongoing additional support to teachers (i.e.: pro-d, collaborative time, additional EA support.
- Food programs for all students (i.e.: healthy breakfast)
- Additional counselling/YFC support within schools
- Bigger gym/second gym for big schools
- My only request is that the surplus is put towards cleaning the schools.
- We feel that emergency preparedness is of utmost importance within the district due to the inequalities we feel are present district wide. A standardized model of earthquake preparedness kit and equal access to resources is a key component in ensuring that all students have what they need in the case of an emergency.
- Library resources should also be looked at as a key location where access to success can be ensured. The health of the school's library should not depend solely on the wealth of the school and the parents of the children who go to the school.
- Addressing of infrastructure inequalities should also be given priority. Including accessibility inequalities throughout the district. This should include a central inventory of all schools accessibility needs and requirements
- Proper EAG support in classrooms.
- More Librarian time.
- More learning support time.
- Providing home ec supplies/class resources.
- Continuity of staff and teachers: since my children entered SD61 in 2007 there seems to be an upward trend of moving staff and administration. Although some transition is expected (retirements, health issues, general moves, etc) in the past 3 years there seems to be less continuity in staffing of administration and teachers.
- Supplies and access: students should have equitable access to learning materials and resources both within schools and across the district. In conjunction with this, teachers need to know that they will be able to access the resources and supplies in order to facilitate their planning and therefore deliver excellent education.
- Access to extra-curricular activities: for many students it is access to extracurricular activities that keeps them engaged in school. Research shows this becomes increasingly relevant in later school years, ie secondary grades and has a direct positive impact on graduation rates, civic engagement, and college completion. Conflicts between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Unions has had a negative impact on teacher engagement in extra-curricular activities. One impact has been the increased reliance on volunteers to provide and support these activities which has resulted in disengagement between teachers, administration, and students participating in these activities. Teachers need to be encouraged to reengage with the school and students outside of the classroom.

- Play space: school grounds should have play spaces, equipment that gets students playing with one another. SD61 should work closely with the government to obtain funds for play grounds in both elementary and middle schools.
- Counselling time.
- Learning support.
- Educational assistants.
- Secondary students need to talk to a counsellor for many reasons. They need guidance on course selection, career path support, post-secondary requirements as well as mental and emotional support. The waitlist to see someone is always too long.
- Educational assistants who can help when a student cannot get in to see their teacher or someone else would increase achievement and feeling of a supportive environment.
- More educational assistants. Each class should have at least one regardless of designations.
- Full time librarian, PE teacher, speech therapy
- Making enough space for those who need learning support outside the classroom.
- Better forecasting of community needs. Pay to fix rather than close schools; redraw catchment boundaries; possibly reopen Lampson as an SD61 elementary school.
- Later years, focus on career, real life skills (how to do taxes, what is an RRSP, how to use a credit card responsibly)
- Learning support / Assessments / Psychologists
- Counselling supports
- Technology
- Esquimalt Family of Schools needs to be prioritized = Equity
- Invest in recruitment of new employees and retention of current employees.
- Provide appropriate classrooms and spaces for individual or small-group support.
- Address facilities maintenance needs in a timely manner and increase custodial time in schools.
- Increased funding for teachers' autonomous professional development.
- Increased specialist teachers including counsellors, librarians, psychologists, learning support and ELL.
- Increased French language resources.

2. What areas do you feel progress is being made and should be continued?

- Music program; tech packages in classrooms; iPads
- We feel that the District and our school are making strides in many areas, including the ones above. We applaud the training that the principals and vice principals just had on disaster preparedness. They were certainly impressed with it. We are hoping that our school will be one of the ones having a reunification drill in the spring, but are strongly supportive even if you don't get to us until later. It was great to have a district staff member come out to our PAC meeting to discuss the District's efforts.
- The new curriculum is clearly taking hold and there is much discussion amongst teachers and administration on Pro-D days in particular.
- We've been impressed with the progress on equitable digital equipment for the schools. That has been a shining example of progress and we are pleased that District funding has meant that the PAC is no longer on the hook for supplying what is really basic equipment (and thereby creating a hard to maintain patchwork of gear and standards).
- We have been impressed with Lansdowne's commitment to reconciliation with First Nations and assume that that is driven at least in part by the District. There is a lot of Indigenous content being used and special events often have an Indigenous focus.
- We have been supportive of our school program of Positive Digital Culture, rather than banning cellphones and devices. This may be an area that deserves more support or at least research. Devices are not going away.
- Lastly, we are not sure of the level of District involvement in the safe and sustainable transportation initiative, but a year into the program we have results that show real progress. HasteBC says that programs of this sort are successful if they move even 1 or 2% of students to more sustainable and active transportation options. We have had a 6% decrease in the number of students being driven to school in a car and a 9% increase in the use of public transit, which is truly stellar.
- I am not aware of anything positive regarding the school district, they need to tell us about the good things they are doing!
- Learning outside is great.
- Creating more classrooms for students.
- Obviously, as there is a surplus, your fiscal planning is an area of progress.
- The Aboriginal content in the new curriculum is a stellar addition. It fosters community and removes old stigma. I do know that some teachers have trouble incorporating it into their lesson plans, however, as they feel they may

offend the Nations. Follow Alberta's lead and create lesson plans to pass along to teachers, if you haven't already, so that there is no confusion.

- I was delighted to see a PAC President and Principals meeting this year. What a great way to connect the volunteers in the community and help them feel supported. That should be a yearly occurrence. PACs often operate in a vacuum.
- I am delighted by the class sizes and class composition this year.
- Technology for learning.
- Technology within schools.
- Integration of Indigenous Learning within the district/Province.
- Vocabulary/professional learning/awareness within inclusion and tolerance that is well appreciated.
- Within the district we feel there has been a progressive movement towards including all students within the classroom and the disruption of programs that sought to separate those with different learning needs and instead work towards including them in the classrooms.
- Continuing to encourage schools to encompass fluid learning spaces to facilitate positive learning for all students.
- Technology for kids to an appropriate level for all levels.
- Student teacher ratios: The smaller teacher/student ratios enhance learning opportunities.
- Leadership teams: special learning projects and identified teacher leaders contribute immensely to the school environment and reward teachers and administrators that look at progressive methods for teaching students and keeping the school environment vibrant.
- Digital communication with families: the standardization of school websites allows for better ease of access to information and continuity of information.
- Technology equity.
- Equity for schools in need across the district.
- The technology spending has been effective.
- In light of smaller class size, supporting additional blocks to allow all interested students to take courses is appreciated.
- Smaller class sizes are great, just need to iron out some kinks.
- Doing pretty good at keeping up with technology and incorporating it into learning.
- Technology

3. How do you feel the budget process could be improved for greater public participation and ease of understanding?

- Liked the info-graphic they prepared this year
- Distribute the budget to parents, with reasons as to the suggested priorities, then ask for feedback.
- The public should have access to information related to the budget.
- As I have no knowledge of this process, I can't make an informed comment.
- Each parent to receive an email (less paper) so they have the opportunity to complete questionnaires like this one. I find it easier to receive an email (with ample time to respond), follow a link and participate then to go looking for information (ie: school district website). I don't get to read a newspaper in a timely manner.
- Providing the budget information graphic is a good start.
- More input/awareness via social media. However, recognizing the need for context and understanding to provide informative input.
- The budget process could be more transparent.
- Communication.
- Graphics are better than long explanations. People are busy and read in 'sound-bytes'.
- School trustees or SD61 administration could visit schools and engage students in feedback sessions about spending priorities.
- Improve financial literacy at the younger age groups so it is less intimidating as they age.
- Engage high school students, across all streams, in the budget planning process.
- Budget on website - easy access.
- Communicate more clearly to all school community members with sufficient time to provide participation on our calendars.
- Clear communication to PACs what the district is providing funding to cover what costs.
- The budget process has not been communicated. Email the process meeting dates, etc. so we can properly participate.

4. Do you have any general comments you would like to add?

- I am concerned that the rent increase being considered for preschools and after school care will result in the closure of those programs which, while not directly part of the school system, are very closely connected. The benefits of these community programs are too great to risk jeopardizing their financial viability.
- As a general comment, we have repeatedly heard from VCPAC reps about how good the relationship with District has become in the last year or two. Kudos to you! Parents can be a demanding lot, we know. (But we don't intend to stop.) And on a personal note, I am very pleased with how good school is -- my kid's love to go to school and are clearly learning. That makes me very happy.
- We are all frustrated with how underfunded our education system is, but there seems to be such a divide between the district, staff, our school, teachers, parents.
- I would like to think of the district as being a friendly, approachable, helpful place. This needs great visionary leadership, and great communication.
- We would achieve so much more if we all felt like we were on the same team and united for our kids. Mutual respect and understanding... but first communication!!!
- Thank you for taking the public's opinion.
- I am all for inclusive learning and building empathy and community by incorporating all learners into classrooms. However, I am concerned by the way things are handled when our IEP students run off the rails. Instead of taking them out of the situation that is distressing in the classroom, I have heard from my child that all the other children must leave the classroom to allow space for said child to calm down. I find this to be ridiculous and disruptive. One solution may be to have someone available on staff to remove the child that is having the issue, presumably an EA, and do not interrupt the learning of the other students.
- Full-time librarians -- librarians engage with each classroom in the school and have numerous other tasks to attend to (keeping up-to-date on new books, arranging guest speakers, etc), which take time.
- Wifi (with a strong signal) in all rooms (ie: library, gym) as not all teaching is done in a classroom
- I found the attachment with this email (Snapshot 2017 - 18) helpful!!
- Playground structures are a necessary component of a student's school experience
- Public Education Rocks!
- Generally, we feel there are real inequalities and under-representation throughout the district. Some schools do not even have a PAC – how are those schools to be prepared for an emergency? It is hard as a parent to go into another school and see a lot of resources that are not available at your own school because a) our school is small b) our community is not able to raise the funds that can be raised by schools in wealthier districts. Overall, we feel a move towards meeting some of these inequalities would be money well spent.
- Schools are crowded and we are missing pull-out spaces for kids.
- School buses/transportation a big concern.
- I have been involved with PAC activities since 2007. I believe we are on an upswing in terms of workplace moral. From 2010-2016 there was increasing animosity between the Ministry, the School District, and teachers. Unfortunately students, families and administration were caught in the mess. This past 2 years this seems to be improving however work needs to be done on improving relationships and enhancing communication.
- I believe the new transfer process guidelines will have an unexpected outcome of exclusion and actually are in contradiction to the new policies of inclusion and acceptance. For many students, natural transitions allowed them to move to different schools so they weren't following others that may have bullied or harassed them, or forced them to stay in a particular social stream now these opportunities are gone and the added stress is awful for both students and families. Even to identify your student as needing a special consideration is breaching confidentiality and making students unnecessarily vulnerable.
- School equity is much appreciated and acknowledged at Rockheights.
- There are costs required for competitive groups in our schools. If they are not paid they cannot participate. Things like LVISSA and BCSSA as well as insurance. These should be covered by consistent predictable funding. PAC funds are unpredictable.
- Projecting ahead to keep up with demand for new teachers, TTOCs
- Consider making educational assistants a salaried position. 25hr/week is not very desirable.
- I appreciate all of the district talk re: equity. I would like to see it reflected in staffing and vice principal FTEs in the Esquimalt Family of Schools.