

Friday, April 12, 2024

Greater Victoria School Board Approves 2024-25 School Year Budget

VICTORIA, BC – The Greater Victoria School Board gave the second and third (final) reading of the Board’s 2024-2025 Annual Budget Bylaw last night, approving the \$318 million budget for the upcoming school year.

The Board is utilizing a projected \$1.9 million surplus from the current year and implementing one-time and permanent budget adjustments of \$4.1 million to offset the \$6 million structural deficit and balance the budget.

“It is progressively more and more difficult for school districts to address escalating inflationary cost pressures, and aging infrastructure alongside the increasingly complex needs of our students without reducing essential services,” said Board Chair Nicole Duncan. “Again this year, in the face of a structural budget shortfall we looked to permanent cuts to supply and travel budgets in an effort to minimize staff reductions while meeting our legal obligation to submit a balanced budget to the Ministry of Education and Child Care. We join our educational partners in calling on the Province to provide school districts with adequate resources to deliver necessary wrap around services to all children and youth.”

Key budget balancing decisions include the following:

Budget Savings

- The Board is allocating \$1.9 million surplus from the current school year
- The student to device ratio is being changed from 2:1 to 3:1 at Middle and Secondary Schools and 2:1 to 4:1 at Elementary Schools for a savings of \$600,644 (closer to the pre-COVID student device ratios)
- There is a reduction of 1.6 FTE non-enrolling teachers across the District (excluding the 10 schools identified as priority schools) to move staffing levels closer to the contractual ratio
- KEV SchoolCash Online is being moved to a value-based pricing model which will reduce software and payment processing fees of \$215,935 (a transaction fee is being added that is built into the price of items purchased by parents)
- Counselling is being reduced by 1.0 FTE District Counsellor (currently vacant) and .10 FTE at 4 Elementary Schools (all Elementary Schools will be staffed at a minimum of .50 FTE counsellor, which is more than the contractual ratio)

- Administration at the Board Office is being downsized by a 1.0 FTE position of Manager, Labour Relations (currently vacant) and will see permanent reductions in supplies and travel budgets
- There is a permanent reduction of \$552,942 in the allocation of supplies to schools, as well as a temporary reduction in the amount of surplus that schools can carryforward to the next school year
- International Education supplies budgets are being reduced by \$115,184
- The Aviation Program will be paused for one school year (teacher position currently vacant)
- Maintenance painters at 2.0 FTE will not be filled for one year (currently vacant) and the source of funding for two other positions and expenses in Facilities Services will shift to capital for one year
- Elementary Strings program is moving to a hub model with 14 locations each offering two 45-minute sessions per week for a savings of \$137,173
- The Board is budgeting for 100% of the potential grant revenue for crossing guard services provided at all schools located in the municipality of the District of Saanich. The District of Saanich is currently the only municipality that does not fully fund crossing guard services.

Budget Spending

- Addition of \$35,000 for a guaranteed EA relief position at one priority school for half a year pilot
- Additional EA Mentorship FTE to assist EA skills development and support for EAs in Middle School at a cost of \$35,000

In addition to these changes in the budget, the Board approved 8 motions related to collaboration time at priority schools using the District K-12 Literacy Grant, a hiring freeze for non-school based staff to the end of June 2024, advocacy for crossing guard grant revenue from the District of Saanich, planning for equitable delivery of the Elementary Strings hub model, the creation of a Music Equity Ad Hoc Committee, exploring options for additional collaboration time for Elementary Schools, the approval process for future Ministry funding allocations, and Board advocacy to the Ministry of Education and Child Care for additional K-12 funding.

For more background information on the 2024-2025 Annual Budget Development Process, visit: <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/our-district/financial/>

About the Greater Victoria School District

The Greater Victoria School District is comprised of 48 schools that serve the communities of Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Victoria, View Royal, portions of Saanich and the Highlands. In addition, it serves Four Houses: Esquimalt Nations, Songhees Nations, the Urban Indigenous Peoples' House Advisory (UPHIA) and the Métis Nations of Greater Victoria. It is proud to provide quality education for more than 20,000 students – including 1,000 International students from across the globe and over 650 adult learners.

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