

Office of the Secretary-Treasurer

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
556 Boleskine Road, Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8
Phone (250) 475-4117 Fax (250) 475-4112

Katrina Stride – Secretary-Treasurer

TO: The Board of Education
FROM: Katrina Stride, Secretary-Treasurer
DATE: January 27, 2025
RE: **Student Connections**

Background

Student Connections meetings were scheduled as part of the 2025-2026 Budget Development Process.

Student Connections Meetings

Trustees and members of the Senior Leadership Team met with school administration/staff and/or students at each of the middle schools and high schools, including SJ Burnside Education Centre. The purpose of the meetings was to connect with students on site at their school and engage in conversation around priorities for the 2025-2026 Budget.

Notes taken during these meetings were provided to Trustees. A summary of the themes emerging from these meetings are noted below (in no particular order).

Themes from Student Connections Meetings

- **Mental Health**
 - More access to counsellors; should be one available full-time
 - More awareness that counselling services are available
 - Counsellor in classroom to talk about difficult topics, e.g. suicide, mental health
 - Counsellors could go into each classroom to build relationships with students and make them feel more comfortable to reach out when needed
 - Consider alternative ways for a student to indicate to a counsellor that they need help
 - Trusted adult(s) to check in with students (so students don't need to find someone)
 - Mental health club for students
 - More mental health fairs across the district
 - Build time into school day for mental health, e.g. flex block
 - More education about anxiety, eating disorders, and bullying
- **Sexual Health**
 - More sexual health education and resources after Grade 10
 - Split sex education class into genders; hard to learn when people not taking it seriously
 - More discussion and information about menstruation

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

- More education about impact of homophobic behaviour
- Youth clinic very helpful but limited access and not available at all schools
- More gender-neutral washrooms
- Personal safety awareness
- Substance Use
 - Students are vaping in the bathrooms
 - More proactive learning resources and education on substance use; risks and long-term effects
 - Preventative education for younger grades
 - Harm reduction programs
 - Naloxone training
 - Learn strategies and ways to help yourself without using substances
 - More community-based speakers
 - Remove stigma from substance use so students can get support
- Menstrual Products
 - Need better access to menstrual products
 - Products need to be of better quality, no cardboard applicators for tampons
 - Products and/or dispensers have been removed from bathrooms due to vandalism
 - Products need to be in all washrooms and stocked regularly
 - Uncomfortable to go to office and ask for products
- Nutrition Breaks and Access to Food
 - Not enough time to eat lunch
 - Lunch should be available on all school days
 - Potential for more variety and larger portions of food
 - No common space to sit and eat lunch
- Safety
 - Vandalism, vaping and safety concerns (especially in bathrooms)
 - More opportunities for training (First Aid, Naloxone, CPR, Lifeguarding)
 - More counsellors or trusted adults to help prevent racism
 - Need more education and celebration of culture and heritage
 - More anti-racism, anti-hate, and anti-bullying education
 - More supervision to help stop bullying and fighting
 - Need support from adults, not just students
- Network and Technology
 - Need access to more Chromebooks, not enough for the number of students
 - Equitable access to Chromebooks
 - Need Chromebooks for students with diverse abilities and ELL (translation services)
 - Don't need Chromebooks for every subject, e.g. language arts/social studies vs. math
 - Many Chromebooks need repairs or don't consistently connect to Wi-Fi
 - Structure of school building makes sharing Chromebooks challenging
 - Need technology that is better than Chromebooks
 - iPads don't work for all tasks, but can get more apps, has better camera and can record videos
 - Teacher usually won't allow BYOD in classroom
 - Consider number of hours of screen time, if also using screens at home
 - Wi-Fi not reliable for specialized equipment (visually impaired)
 - More headphones
 - Students need to know how to use technology for their future
 - Currently not a good balance between work on paper and work on technology
 - Not all students have access to technology outside of classroom
 - Some students and parents unable to access online report cards
 - Technology moving too quickly and not sustainable to keep updating
 - Eliminate student devices in classroom and use the budget for other items
 - Need better printers, if not using student devices
- Facilities
 - More garbage cans

- Most garbage cans are outside and garbage ending up on the ground, creating more work for the custodian
- Need compost and compost bins around school, and more time and resources dedicated to it
- Need brooms in classrooms
- More water fountains
- More bathrooms for convenience and to meet time constraints while out of classroom
- More frequent refills of soap dispensers and paper towel (some removed due to vandalism)
- Hand dryers not working; could be removed, as paper towel preferred
- Better quality toilet paper; very thin
- More frequent cleaning of gym floors, e.g. dusty and slippery, muddy
- Bathroom repairs and upgrades, e.g. holes in ceilings, stall doors and locks not working, sinks not draining, faucets shutting off, no hot water, fans not working, hand dryers not working
- Remove urinals or add privacy walls; not used and wasting water with auto-flush
- Better soundproofing in some areas of school
- Increase in graffiti and vandalism at school; need to address as public issue in schools
- Install chalkboard/whiteboard in washrooms for positive graffiti
- Put mirrors in classrooms to reduce number of students using the washrooms
- Breakers flipped in Home Economics and took 3 days for it to be flipped back; unable to use sewing machines
- Inconsistent heating and ventilation in buildings
- Low water pressure in sinks and water fountains
- Need outdoor shelter or covered areas for when it is raining
- More seating, e.g. benches, picnic tables
- Lockers need to be cleaned and repaired (not closing properly)
- Need new locks for lockers, as they are dented and getting stuck
- Reduce frequency of exterior/interior painting and use funds for other items
- Need sink in portable
- More custodians; improve cleanliness in classrooms
- New gym curtain (falling apart)
- Maintenance of playground
- Invest less in outdoor play space and put more towards technology
- Changeroom locks don't work
- Longer-handled garbage grabbers for student cleanup
- Fields need better drainage
- More trees for shade
- More fencing to restrict public access; increase student safety
- Pest control
- Shoe brushes to remove mud from outside and keep school cleaner
- PA system not working properly; either can't hear announcements or too loud
- More secure bike racks
- More classroom storage
- More quiet spaces to get work done
- Extra-curricular activities
 - Need professional coaches that have better sports skills and knowledge and not volunteers, similar to music
 - More field trips and more funding to support students facing financial hardship
 - More money for clubs
 - Sports teams need more money
 - Access to tutoring
 - More non-sports extracurricular activities, e.g. chess
- Supplies and Equipment
 - Shortage of school supplies, e.g. pencils, erasers, calculators (can't use phone anymore), etc.
 - Need pencil sharpeners that work
 - More fine arts and science lab supplies and equipment

- More money for exploratory classes, e.g. better wood for woodshop
- Families required to pay additional fees
- Creativity is limited by supply access or funding
- Teachers are spending their own money on classroom supplies
- More workbooks: having to do more work at home, but not always access to computer at home
- More sports equipment, e.g. dodgeballs; volleyballs; soccer balls; indoor hockey pucks, balls and sticks; badminton rackets, birdies and nets
- Repairs to outdoor basketball nets and soccer nets
- Repairs and/or replacement of indoor volleyball and badminton nets
- Less handheld whiteboards; not being used
- Better quality whiteboards and whiteboard pens
- Home Economics equipment is old and not functioning properly or completely broken, e.g. microwaves, ovens, and need more utensils
- More silent bikes for calming
- More boardgames
- Need bleachers and chairs in gym; floor is uncomfortable to sit on for assemblies
- Band instruments are old and need to be repaired and/or replaced
- New music stands
- New desks and chairs; current ones are old and falling apart
- Library books damaged and only some available
- Need new textbooks; very old and damaged
- Equity
 - Only the good sports teams get jerseys; other teams get pinnies; need more jerseys
 - Timing conflicts between groups and sports; unable to participate in everything that is of interest
 - Equitable access to sports facilities across the district
- Student Support, Curriculum and Reporting
 - Don't like the proficiency scale used on report cards
 - Implement a combination of proficiency and letter grade to get a defined % and feedback
 - More access to languages
 - Need support from other teachers or staff to get caught up when away; hard for main teacher to provide one-on-one support
 - School day to start and end later; lack of sleep, dark in mornings if walking, parents able to pick up after school
 - Substitutes for specialized teachers, such as music, do not have specialized training and can't teach the subject
 - More EAs in classroom
 - More learning supports
 - More resources and teachers for students with diverse learning abilities
 - Focus on needs vs. wants
 - Not enough adults in the classroom; EA time not consistent; have to wait for help
 - Support music programs
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
 - Has a place in education, part of future
 - Need to learn how to use appropriately as a tool, no cheating
 - Teachers don't allow students to use it
- Engagement and Access to Budget Information
 - Would like more meetings with Trustees and Staff to talk about these things
 - Share budget information through school emails, not on announcements
 - Small assembly at school
 - Principal can let students know if student ideas will happen
 - Class representatives could meet and then share back with their classes
 - Connect with younger students (not just grades 11 & 12), as these are the students who will see the outcomes of decisions

- Implement a Youth Board with elected students
- Trustees email, either directly by student or through Principal
- More student awareness of survey; allow for students to complete the survey in class with teacher support
- Use Google Form to collect ideas for student engagement
- Students could vote on budget options in each class and then combine for school; help to narrow down to what is important to students
- Student advocacy for more budget from Province
- Students who are not in Leadership would also like to have a voice; reduce bias
- In-person once per year for budget information
- Budget bulletin for students; bulletin board or email