

Office of the Secretary-Treasurer

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Katrina Stride – Secretary-Treasurer

TO: The Board of Education
FROM: Katrina Stride, Secretary-Treasurer
DATE: September 23, 2024
RE: **2025-2026 Budget Development Process**

2024-2025 Budget Development Process

In preparation for discussion of the 2025-2026 Budget Development Process, the following documents have been provided for your review:

2024-2025 Budget Process / Timeline

Values and Guiding Principles

Budget Working Groups – Terms of Reference: 1) Department, 2) School-Based, (3) Special Purpose Fund

Budget Advisory Committee – Terms of Reference

Feedback on 2024-2025 Budget Development Process

Following the [2024-2025 Budget Development Process](#), a survey was sent to the following groups:

- Trustees
- Senior Leadership Team
- District Leadership Team
- Principals and Vice Principals
- Partner Groups – CUPE 382, CUPE 947, GVTA, and VCPAC
- Members of Budget Working Groups
- Attendees at Student Symposium
- Attendees at Talking Tables Event
- Attendees at Public Meeting

The survey results were presented at the Regular Board Meeting on April 29, 2024. Where applicable, feedback from the survey has been noted in the 2025-2026 Budget Development Process.

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.

2025-2026 Budget Development Process

Connections Meetings

Student Connections Meetings – Secondary Schools

During the 2024-2025 Budget Development Process, Trustees and members of the Senior Leadership Team met with school administration/staff and/or students at each of the 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.

Notes taken during these meetings were provided to Trustees. A summary of the themes emerging from these meetings was provided at the Regular Board meeting on January 29, 2024.

The following feedback specific to the Student Connections Meetings should be considered:

- Appreciated by students
- Did not see conversations reflected in budget decisions
- Need to follow up and communicate how student feedback was incorporated into the budget

Partner and VPVPA Connections Meetings

During the 2024-2025 Budget Development Process, Trustees and members of Financial Services and the Senior Leadership Team met with representatives from each of the partner groups (CUPE 382, CUPE 947, GVTA, VCPAC) and VPVPA. The purpose of the meetings was to connect in-person with partner groups and VPVPA and engage in conversation around priorities.

Notes taken during these meetings were provided to Trustees. A summary of the themes emerging from these meetings was provided at the Regular Board meeting on January 29, 2024.

Feedback from partner groups and VPVPA specific to the Connections Meetings is welcome.

Events

Student Symposium

During the 2024-2025 Budget Development Process, the Student Symposium was an opportunity to hear directly from students attending our middle and secondary schools. Topics presented and discussed included SOGI, Technology, Cultural Responsiveness, and Mental Health and Wellbeing. In addition, students participated in a budget simulation to determine spending prioritization under financial constraint.

A report on the Student Symposium Event was provided at the Regular Board meeting on January 29, 2024.

The following feedback specific to the Student Symposium should be considered:

- Appreciated opportunity to provide feedback
- Did not see conversations reflected in budget decisions
- Decisions were already made and voices were not heard
- Simulation felt repetitive; could be more realistic and not overly simplified
- Incorporate student presentations in future events

Talking Tables

During the 2024-2025 Budget Development Process, the Talking Tables Event was an event held for Rightsholders, partner groups, staff, and Trustees to enjoy dinner and engage in discussion on the topics of Culturally Responsive Learning Environments; Priority Students: Goals 1, 2 and 3; and Infrastructure (Facilities and Technology). The purpose of the event was to inform the Board by:

- Providing an opportunity to discuss important topics and obtain feedback directly from the Four Houses, partner groups, and leadership
- Facilitating communication within a large, diverse group
- Encouraging open, honest conversation and respectful dialogue
- Building relationship, understanding and trust

A report on the Talking Tables Event, including notes from table facilitators, was provided at the Special Open Budget meeting on April 9, 2024.

The following feedback specific to the Talking Tables Event should be considered:

- Important conversations
- Consider rotating attendees at tables to ensure voices are heard by broader audience
- Lack of participation by Trustees

Public Meeting

During the 2024-2025 Budget Development Process, a public meeting was held to engage with the public on budget priorities. The purpose of the public meeting was to inform the Board by:

- Providing the public with the current context around the 2024-2025 Budget
- Providing an opportunity to discuss important budget topics and obtain feedback from the public
- Providing an opportunity for the public to engage directly with Trustees and District staff

A report on the Public Meeting, including transcribed notes and comment cards, was provided at the Special Open Budget meeting on April 9, 2024.

The following feedback specific to the Public Meeting should be considered:

- Difficult format, required help to understand what was being asked

Advisory to the Board

Budget Working Groups

The 2024-2025 Budget Development Process included the creation of three Budget Working Groups. The Budget Working Groups were allocated the following areas of focus:

- Department Budgets
- School-Based Budgets
- Special Purpose Fund Budgets

A summary of the meetings and recommendations of the Budget Working Groups was provided at the Regular Board meeting on February 29, 2024.

The following feedback specific to Budget Working Groups should be considered:

- Not effective use of time; a lot of meetings and no substantial decisions or suggestions
- Not a collaborative process

- Decisions made were contrary to feedback provided
- Too much influence by individual Trustees, not open to receiving other opinions
- Did not allow for exploration of other ideas outside of what was presented
- Allowed for more open conversation versus the presentation of information
- Appreciated that information was narrowed and more manageable
- Limited access to information as participants only receiving information on one area of the budget
- Too much time spent by staff to prepare materials and respond to requests
- Could use groups to explore actual budget topics up for consideration, e.g. music, counselling, custodial
- Seek open feedback on what topics need to be discussed; ensure alignment with values and goals

Budget Advisory Committee

The 2024-2025 Budget Development Process did not include the use of the Budget Advisory Committee.

The following feedback specific to the Budget Advisory Committee should be considered:

- Prefer idea of reaching consensus (even if not reached)
- Provides opportunity to voice opinion on all matters

Indigenous Education Council

The 2025-2026 Budget Development Process will need to incorporate the Indigenous Education Council to advise on grants provided under the School Act in relation to Indigenous students, and to approve plans, spending and reporting of targeted grants related to Indigenous students.

General Feedback

The following general feedback on the 2024-2025 Budget Development Process should be considered:

- Need more financial details and information on where savings to potentially come from
- Need alternative options to explore in a genuine way; options should be presented earlier
- Compare our budget and budget process to those at other school districts
- Process didn't feel transparent; too much done behind the scenes and little public discussion or debate
- Ensure staff expertise is part of the budget process and informs budget deliberations and decisions
- Incorporate student engagement into budget process so that everyone can understand their priorities
- Communicate the opinions and perspective of students on each budget item up for consideration
- Fewer meetings and events; combine the Talking Tables Event and the Public Meeting
- More participation by Trustees
- Budget meetings should be in person to allow the public to participate
- Enhance communication on budget development process and accessible ways to participate and provide meaningful feedback
- More opportunities to provide honest and anonymous feedback without fear of push back due to differing opinion, philosophy or priority
- Finish process earlier to allow time for consultation about possible implications and discussion of implementation options prior to April staffing going out to schools

Next Steps

The Board is seeking feedback from Rightsholders and education partners, including students, parents, staff, and the public, on the 2025-2026 Budget Development Process.

Following the receipt of feedback, the Draft 2025-2026 Budget Process / Timelines will be presented as follows:

- October 21, 2024 Operations Policy and Planning Committee meeting for discussion
- October 28, 2024 Regular Board meeting for Board approval