

# Office of the Secretary-Treasurer

*Katrina Stride – Secretary-Treasurer*

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**TO:** The Board of Education

**FROM:** Katrina Stride, Secretary-Treasurer

**DATE:** April 29, 2025

**RE:** **2025-2026 Budget Development Process Survey Results**

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## Background

Following the approval of the 2025-2026 Annual Budget on April 8, 2025, the link to an online survey to obtain feedback on the 2025-2026 Budget Development Process was emailed to the following recipients:

- Representatives of the Four Houses: Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, Métis Nation of Greater Victoria, and Urban Peoples' House Indigenous Advisory
- Partner Groups – CUPE 382, CUPE 947, GVTA, and VCPAC
- Principals and Vice Principals
- Parents/Guardians/Caregivers
- District Leadership Team
- Attendees at Internal Budget Working Sessions
- Attendees at Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Budget Session

The link to the survey was also included in a media release sent to local media and posted on the school district website and social media sites.

Survey participants had until 4pm on April 23, 2025 to respond. There were 40 responses received.

## Survey Results

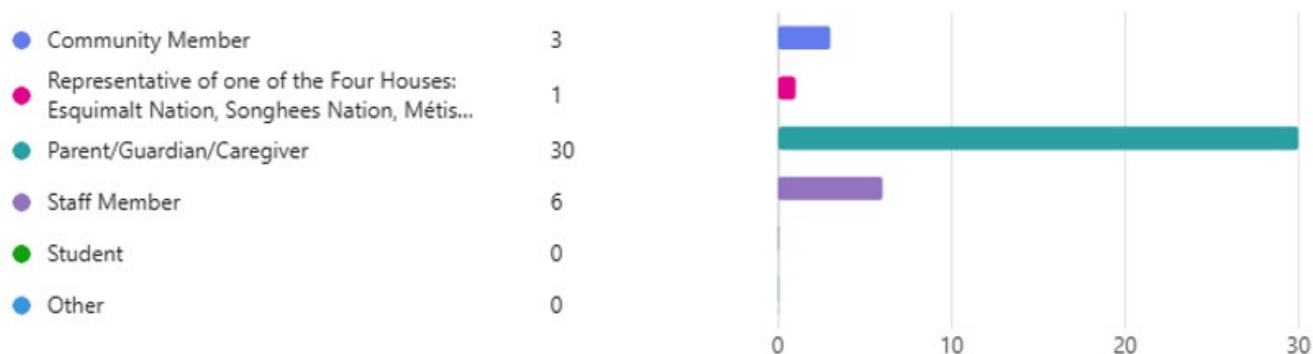
### 1. Which of the below best describes your connection to the Greater Victoria School District?

- a. Community Member
- b. Representative of one of the Four Houses: Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, Métis Nation of Greater Victoria, or Urban Peoples' House Indigenous Advisory
- c. Parent/Guardian/Caregiver
- d. Staff Member
- e. Student
- f. Other

*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.*

**Responses:**

1. Which of the below best describes your connection to the Greater Victoria School District?

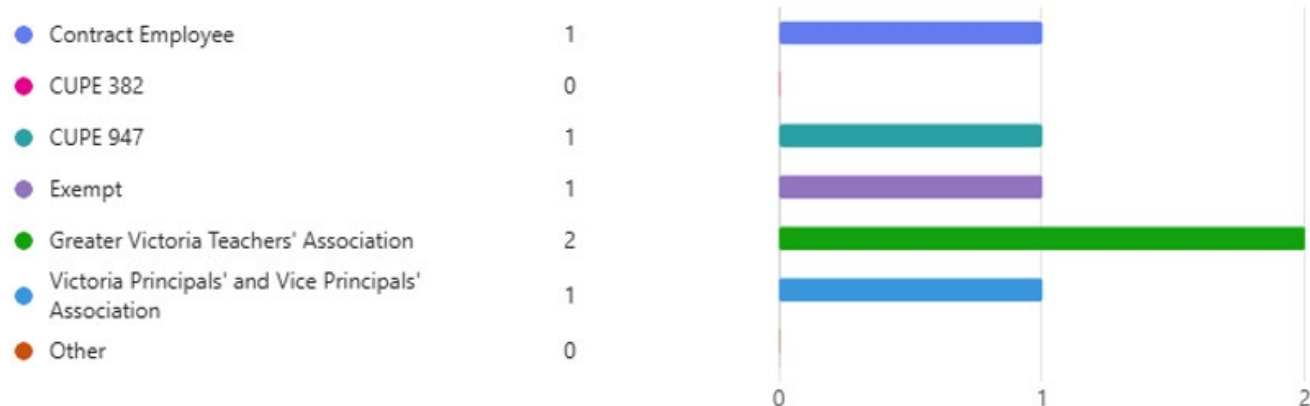


2. For Staff Members, to which Employee Group do you belong?

- Contract Employee
- CUPE 382
- CUPE 947
- Exempt
- Greater Victoria Teachers' Association
- Victoria Principals' and Vice Principals' Association
- Other

**Responses:**

2. To which Employee Group do you belong?



### 3. From your perspective, what worked in the current year's budget development process?

#### Responses:

- Communication
- Transparency
- Fewer meetings, more collaboration. It didn't feel like we were catering to one employee group; rather, we heard all voices.
- Continue soliciting information from students, staff, parents about what resources are needed in our schools & work together to foster a safe, inclusive & engaging learning environment. Continue to question programming that does not add value to our learning communities & remove these areas from our budget.
- There was a small amount of consultation, but honestly, the times chosen for meetings are difficult for parents to attend. If there is another way to gather feedback from parents (online surveys, after school discussions with babysitting provided) that might enable more participation. I'm glad that the budget was balanced, but what are we going to do when we don't have a surplus to pull from?
- There was engagement opportunities provided.
- As an international parent, I really appreciated the transparency throughout this year's budget process. It was clear, accessible, and thoughtfully communicated. I felt that the District made a genuine effort to keep families informed and involved. Being able to access the documents online and seeing regular updates helped build trust, especially for families like mine who are still getting familiar with how things work here.
- Collaborative process respecting input from all sides
- Straight forward. Did not touch middle and elementary school strings.
- I appreciated the effort made to connect with stakeholders.
- Having in-person presentations
- Listening to parents. School lunch program.
- Lots of consultation; straightforward facts about where we spend money as a district and where there are shortfalls.
- The process was calm this year. All stakeholders were given the opportunity for feedback and to be heard. Nice to see the board not being disrespectful and debating moving funds around at the last minute. The decisions that were made were made with thought and awareness.
- Including a link to this feedback form in print media articles.

### 4. Do you have any suggestions for next year's budget development process?

#### Responses:

- Focus more on outcomes (i.e. what is the target and plan to improve academic performance) and less on process. Remember that bureaucrats only care about the perfect process but what really matters is good results - which I have not seen great academic results in victoria public schools.
- More opportunities for the public to engage in the process in an accessible way. For example, online, in person, written etc. Also, find ways to ensure that all aspects of our childrens' education is guaranteed funding, to avoid regrettable and short sighted decisions for example to remove funding for a music curriculum.
- More meaningful, authentic, thoughtful participation from stakeholders. Requires advance distribution of materials for thoughtful consideration and more than one meeting to engage in discussion.
- Directly involve parents and Four House representatives right from the start.
- Continue with less meetings, start the process to look at reductions earlier in the process.
- More consultation, more ad-hoc groups (they were all cancelled after the board was fired) and more options for ELL and low income parents who may not be able to access participation options.
- Consider sending a survey to determine what the local budget priorities are from the perspective of parent / caregivers to help inform budget development.

- First, consider breaking down the public budget meetings into shorter sessions focused on specific topics like student supports, facilities, or technology. This would allow parents to attend the sessions that matter most to them and make participation more manageable. Second, after each key stage of the process—such as the public survey or consultation meetings—it would be helpful to share a short summary of the feedback received and how it was used. This would make the process feel more transparent and responsive to community input.
- Make considerable use of parent advisory councils, involving them in depth at their school level. Also rely on teacher input at the school level, possibly through their GVTA reps. The principle being: those most directly involved with the education of students are in the best position to offer constructive suggestions.
- Come into schools to see what “numbers” look like in reality.
- More marketing and transparency.
- Yes: don’t schedule the parent/caregiver input session during spring break when many families are away. It felt like you didn’t actually want feedback.
- Offering more than one session for parents and/or not doing it on spring break when so many families are away.
- I would like to see a parent engagement night with a focus on what the parents value and not asking the parents to prioritize the values of a small handful of student responses.
- I would not change much as this year’s process was thoughtful and fulsome
- Blend of online and in person feedback opportunities. Providing QR codes to print media outlets for ease of access, and announcing locations of in person events well in advance. Childcare provided at the feedback sessions.

## Other Comments

While the survey questions were specific to the budget development process, several respondents provided comments related to the budget. Responses that did not directly answer the survey questions have been included in the list below. References to specific individuals or responses that were unrelated to the budget or budget development process have not been included.

- Lots of money to feed hungry students
- There was insufficient opportunity for meaningful participation with stakeholders due to 3 readings in one night with one Trustee. This year’s process was performative (at best).
- I have had no involvement with the budget development process. This is the first invitation to participate that I have received, ever.
- Nothing works for your budget. You keep taking from our kids, and making parents donate money. I had to pay for my child who brings on extra funding due to autism for them to do Math Pre Cal in grade 12 workbook. It was not covered.
- Hiring enough EAs to fill absent employees
- Providing funding for learning support worked well.
- Can’t say as I don’t have a positive experience or trust with SD61
- Don’t know. Didn’t hear anything about it until today.
- We’ve already felt the impact of previous cutbacks—reduced student support, increased incidents of student violence, and not enough resources to address these issues. Staff are stretched to the limit, and there simply isn’t enough support to meet our students’ growing needs.
- Not much! We have been running on bare minimum with regards to counselling and learning support. Due to the current lack of supports in elementary, violent incidents towards students and staffs are almost daily!
- Increasing some helps for a student’s academic development.
- The fact that a budget was able to be created based on the circumstances is remarkable.
- Nothing. We have no representation.
- Based on the wording of these questions I doubt the genuine interest in receiving honest feedback

- We need more money to go into support staff. There are not enough support staff in any school out there and children are suffering. Instead of cutting EA's counselors and support, we should be adding twice as what we have. People are being burnt out and students time at school is becoming unsafe.
- Since they'rey is a surplus please reinstate the strings music program.
- a STEM specific school - let's have an academy that is actually ACADEMIC and make a high school for kids who want to learn can feel like part of a community. No Challenge program, no more sports academies - an actual school curriculum for critical thinking in math, science and engineering fields.
- Make more training accessible for teachers and EA for children who are neurodiverse.
- More funds allocated to special education students. Schools need more trained staff on site and available ie: EA's dedicated to one child not the entire classroom. School psychologist or psychiatrist, more educational support staff, in general. Every child is entitled to an education, but if your child has special needs and the school doesn't have staffing or funding available to provide education to every child, they get sent home and aren't gaining the education they are entitled to.
- Stop cutting programs that are desperately needed for students - music, councillors and EA's. Taking these things away (or cutting them to the point of making them unattainable for those that are vulnerable or financially struggling) is the laziest and cruelest way of "finding money" in the budget of an organization that has been traditionally bloated by administrators salaries.
- Reduce employees at board office instead of schools to save money. Allow schools to buy supplies wherever is cheapest instead of Monks.
- Spend more on Learning Support Teachers and hire more Educational Assistants. Don't spend so much on the music program.
- Students inclusive learning needs and more support. More support for High School students IEP support and assistance navigating with more communication to parents. School based arts programming and funding. Mandatory school fees. Safety in our schools keeping drugs, gangs and bullying out.
- Please refrain from making further cuts directly impacting our students' learning needs and social-emotional development. If we fail to support them during their elementary years, we risk seeing a rise in mental health challenges as they grow. Instead, cost-saving measures should be considered at the board level, particularly in areas where roles can be consolidated. For instance, do we truly require the current number of district principals?
- Begin the business of streamlining and downsizing administration early, both at the district level and at the school level. Investigate the ramifications of ALL certified staff at every school teaching at least one class per semester - a cost saving as well as having school administrators keep "in touch" with teacher loads and classroom issues. I believe they lose touch after about 3 years of being an administrator. Investigate cost savings which might result from any possible amalgamation opportunities with other boards, looking early to the future of municipality amalgamations. Engage the BC government to pick up costs of mental health issues which have been downloaded to the public education system. Keep all school property, but investigate renting parts of some buildings, which have capacity, to community health services offices on three-year contracts - I believe there is advantage and benefit to both schools and health services to be working from the same building(s). Negotiate with all unions to develop a process whereby the public school system is not burdened with people on long-term leave and are still getting paid - on this point, I am uncertain how long-term stress (and other) leave is handled, but there should be a process to transition long-term stress leave out of the education field, and unburdening education budgets. Thank you.
- Make cuts at the top district level by amalgamation with other districts. Our future society depends on education and supports starting in elementary.
- Cutting back on Learning Support and Counsellors in Elementary school is appalling. Presently the Learning Support teacher and ELL teacher in our school are putting out fires by replacing EA's on their breaks - for students who need full support- and dealing with violent situations. This has meant that students with learning needs are not getting the same service they used to get. The part-time counsellor is also unable to get to all the students they should due to the rise in violence and anxiety in students. To decrease the funding that is already not enough is not allowing students to have access to a full education. There will only be an increase in already challenging situations if this happens.

Surely, there can be some cuts at the district level rather than preventing students from getting support and an age when it is so vital.

- There needs to be a study of the aging schools within the district and what replacement or upgrades will look like.
- Schools need more funding. Period. Supplies are constantly cut, sports, music, ... the list goes on and on. Education dictates the future success of our country and Democracy; it should never EVER be nicked and dined.
- I didn't feel like the consultation process made an effort to reach out to parents at all. I attended the budget meeting on March 27. That meeting was supposed to be for parent input, and I came to give my input, yet we were only asked to rank what was deemed important to a handful of teens. I thought we would be asked for our input later but we were not. I didn't feel like we had time to give our input. Parents want to speak up for our elementary school children. There needs to be better consultation with families. Too many responses came from members of the teachers union and they were given too much floor time at the meeting. Also, way too much weight was put on a survey sample of 20 teenagers. This is something I will bring up to VCPAC and we will be monitoring carefully going forward.
- Stick with core skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, arts and music, basic science and geography, with sports for team building values. Add STEM as an extra for fast track learners once core skills are mastered.
- Cutting learning support teachers is a devastating blow to already marginalized children and youth.