



Staff Report to the Board of Education

April 10, 2024

2024-25 BUDGET – SUPERINTENDENT’S RECOMMENDATIONS

Adrian Johnson, Secretary Treasurer

BACKGROUND

At the March 13, 2024, Regular Board meeting, the Trustees discussed information collected through consultation on the School District’s budget. Comments from Trustees reflect the following priorities for the budget.

Increase in supports	Increase in reserves
↑Increase Education Assistant support ↑Increase SBRT support ↑Reduce wait times in psychological assessments ↑More counsellors	↓Reduce professional development expenses (eg attending conferences virtually) ↓Balance the budget ↓Rebuild reserves

The 2023-24 amended budget required the use of \$468,000 of unrestricted reserves on an ongoing basis. After that budget was prepared, staff informed the Board of substantial cost pressures related to extended health and dental benefits.

Ongoing cost pressures and the need to rebuild reserves limits opportunities to increase supports and make cost reductions necessary. The Superintendent has therefore focussed on preserving the supports prioritized by the Board. The recommendations reflect reductions in other costs to balance the budget.

The budget assumes no profit from the District’s International program. This balanced budget allows reserves to be rebuilt using International program profit.

PROPOSED BUDGET CHANGES

The table below shows the Superintendent’s recommended operating budget changes from the 2023-2024 Amended Budget to the proposed 2024-2025 Original Budget. A detailed breakdown of the 2023-2024 amended budget can be found on the School District’s website, [here](#).

The 2023-24 amended budget required the use of \$468,000 of unrestricted reserves on an ongoing basis. Therefore, to balance the 2024/25 budget, \$468,000 more in revenue than expenses is required.

The table uses the following abbreviations to link the proposed changes to the strategic plan, with the number referencing the specific goal:

- LE – Leadership Excellence
- CC – Community Connections
- SS – Student Success

Change \$	Description	Strat. Plan
REVENUE		
\$602,000	Forecast increase enrolment of about 70 students	
\$1,063,000	Additional revenue for students with funded designations. The number of students with funded designations increased from September 2023 to February 2024. This forecast assumes the number of designated students remains the same as currently enrolled.	
\$173,000	Forecast increase in number of students with funded English Language Learner (ELL) needs	
\$171,000	Increase in targeted Indigenous Education funding, including \$60,000 to support Indigenous Education Council meetings.	
\$1,742,000	General wage increase funding (2%) for unionized staff	
-\$195,000	Eliminate reliance on International Profit	
\$25,000	Increase in transportation fees and facility rental fees	
\$3,581,000	Projected increase in revenue	
EXPENSES		
Cost pressures		
\$1,742,000	General wage increases (2%) for unionized staff	LE5
\$1,000,000	Increase in employee benefit costs	LE5
\$100,000	Increase in average teacher wage due to higher average placement on scale	LE5
\$200,000	Allocate specific salaries previously attributed to targeted funding in anticipation of Indigenous Education Council requirements	CC2
\$410,000	Impact of inflation and enrolment on service and supply costs	LE1
\$100,000	Increase in substitute costs for sick leave	LE5
Service level changes		
\$173,000	Additional 1.4 ELL teacher FTE to support additional ELL students	SS1
\$25,000	Additional 0.2 FTE Psychologist position	SS1
\$50,000	Enhance technology security	LE4
\$50,000	Additional Vice-Principal, inclusion position	SS1
\$100,000	Additional education assistants to support inclusion (about two positions)	SS1
-\$440,000	Adjust elementary divisions allocations to reflect forecast enrolment and composition at schools. This reduction is possible despite forecast increased enrollment as: • This current school year, actual enrolment was less than forecast, resulting in more divisions or blocks in some schools than was necessary. • Primary grades typically have smaller classes than average, and intermediate grades larger than average. In 2024/25, the number of students in primary grades is forecast to decrease by 32 students, and the number in intermediate grades increase by 55 students. Overall class sizes are forecast to remain below the Provincial average.	
-\$153,000	Secondary schools are allocated blocks on per-student ratio, plus several additional blocks for specific purposes, such as outside the timetable programs or online learning support blocks. This reduction reflects a reduction of nine of these additional blocks allocated to secondary schools.	LE1

Change \$	Description	Strat. Plan
-\$120,000	Reduction of itinerant teacher staff	LE1
-\$60,000	Reduce advertising expenses	LE1
-\$90,000	Reduce Principal, Vice-Principal and teacher pro-d expenses	LE1
-\$50,000	Forecast fuel savings from use of electric busses	LE6
-\$60,000	Reduce maintenance department service and supplies allocations	LE3
\$171,000	Increase in targeted Indigenous Education allocation, to offset additional targeted funding received.	CC1
\$3,148,000	Projected increase in expenditures	
\$433,000	Overall change, consistent with the \$468,000 more in revenue and expenses required for a balanced budget.	

In addition, the 2023-24 amended budget assumed \$703,000 of expenditures associated with the consumption of restricted reserves. The 2024/25 original budget will assume no use or increase of restricted reserves.

These recommendations address Trustee priorities as follows:

Trustee priority	Response
Increase Education Assistant Support	Add two Education Assistant positions
Increase SBRT support	Preserve current SBRT allocations, assuming no increase in designated students from February 2024 to September 2024.
Reduce wait times in psychological assessments	Increase psychologist FTE by 0.2 FTE
More counsellors	Preserve current counselling allocations
Reduce professional development expenses	Reduce budgets for professional development
Balance the budget	The recommended changes result in total budgeted revenues being close to expenditure
Rebuild reserves	International profit is not budgeted for and will provide an opportunity for rebuilding reserves.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC) has not yet announced funding for the following cost pressures:

- On March 19, 2024, the MECC confirmed that unionized staff members will be entitled to a further 1% wage increase next school year, in addition to the 2% reflected in the table above; and
- PSEC has yet to confirm allowable salary increases for non-unionized staff, and MECC has yet to confirm associated funding.

MECC staff have indicated that funding for these cost pressures will be announced in the coming months. Actual funding is not yet known though. Accordingly, the table above does not reflect the anticipated additional funding and does not reflect the associated cost pressures. This information will be included in the budget when it is known.

CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDERS

STUDENT VOICE

Student Voice representatives presented budget input at the February 21, 2024, Regular Board Meeting.

Request	Action
Allocate an amount of Indigenous course funding to field trips, and ensure that Indigenous ways of learning are being used in the courses	The Superintendent has provided this feedback to Principals to action within existing budgets.
Create more school supported clubs and other spaces for students to foster a community and build relationships.	The Superintendent has provided this feedback to Principals to action.
Staff workshop on student engagement to create more entertaining or hands-on activities	Staff will consider this within existing professional development budgets.
Create equal opportunities for students regardless of their school	Staff will strive to achieve this within existing budgets.

CUPE 5523

Gray Boisvert, President of CUPE 5523, presented budget input at the February 21, 2024, Regular Board Meeting.

Request	Action
Priority 1 – Increase Inclusive Education Discretionary Budget and create a posted District position for mentorship of Education Assistants	An inflationary increase will be applied to the Inclusive Education Discretionary Budget. Staff will discuss with CUPE the possibility of mentorship for Education Assistants utilising existing professional development funds.
Priority 2 – creation of a District Indigenous Support Worker (ISW) position to temporarily support ISWs in positions with significant workloads, fill vacant positions while the posting process is completed or be used for mentorship of new ISWs.	The recommendations allocate additional targeted funding. Staff will consider the creation of a position as described within existing funding. A key challenge for ISW support is recruitment, not budget.
Priority 3 – retaining and increasing the present level of support staff.	The recommendations retain the present level of support staff.

VERNON TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Dave Mackenzie, President, Vernon Teachers' Association, presented budget input at the February 21, 2024, Regular Board Meeting.

Request	Action
Increase SBRT staffing by 4 FTE	SBRT staffing is preserved at current levels.
Increase school counselling by 1.5 FTE	Counselling staffing is preserved at current levels.
Increase SLP staffing by 1.5 FTE	SLP staffing is preserved at current levels.
Increase staffing at vLearn by 1 FTE	vLearn staffing is preserved, and student / teacher ratios for online learning remain low.
Return to 2018-19 budget allocations for District Administration and Principals/VPs budgeted from Special Education	Current district administration allocations are preserved and remain in line with similar school districts and the Province as a whole. 2018/19 budget allocations assumed that Principals/VPs would not provide SBRT support. The increased demand for SBRT support over the years has led to the utilisation of PVPs as SBRTs in their teaching time allocation to provide that support. The VTA's request to cut this budget would reduce SBRT support substantially.

DISTRICT PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Nicky Dunlop, President, District Parent Advisory Council, presented budget input at the March 13, 2024, Regular Board Meeting.

Request	Action
Advocacy – financial support for parents appealing under section 11 of the school act.	Board policy 230, Resolving Concerns and Complaints, is generally consistent with the goals expressed by the DPAC budget recommendations. The Superintendent recommends that parent concerns are addressed through the mechanisms outlined in that policy, rather than the School Act appeals process.
Support for students	The Superintendent's recommendations prioritize support for students within the funds available.
Full time sexual health position	The previous year's budget changes increased Sexual Health teacher time by 0.2 FTE to 0.4 FTE. A key objective of this position is to increase the capacity of teachers to deliver effective sexual health education and so reduce the reliance on specialised staff.
Prioritizing funding in the schools vs the Board Office	Current district administration allocations remain in line with similar school districts and the Province as a whole.
Childcare	The District continues to increase child care opportunities paid for by a combination of targeted grants and child care fees to families.

Request	Action
Bussing – impact of increasing transportation costs	The District continues to seek to utilise electric busses where operationally achievable. Next school year, about one third of the bus fleet will be electric. Staff expect this to lead to a reduction in transportation costs.
Building facades and grounds	The facilities budget will continue to be assigned based on maintenance priorities. \$2.1 million will be invested in the building exterior of Lavington Elementary School and Community Centre this year.

OTHER FEEDBACK

GENERAL COMMUNITY INPUT

A public budget presentation was held on January 31. Limited feedback was received at that presentation. The feedback received was captured through an online form. This online form has been available from January 31 to March 7.

About eighty-eight submissions were received in total, which covered many themes. The March 13, 2024, Regular Board Meeting agenda package contains the responses in full.

Broadly, themes were consistent with topics noted in this staff report.

OKIB

Staff presented on the budget to OKIB families on February 21, 2024. There was general discussion about the funding gap related to the cost of education of OKIB nominal roll students versus funding provided by the Provincial Government.

OKIB staff distributed the online form to the OKIB community. The form included the means to indicate if you are an OKIB band member. No feedback was received through the form from people identifying as OKIB band members.

PRINCIPALS

The Principal and Vice-Principal group provided feedback that is consistent with the items prioritised by the Trustees. In addition, the following two items were noted.

- Student mental health supports.
- Increasing costs of transportation for field trips for students.

RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent recommends the following motion:

That the proposed budget changes for 2024-2025 be distributed for comments and further input as presented.