



Vancouver School Board
School District #39
1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6J 5K8

April 22, 2024

Dear Chairperson Jung, Vice Chair Zhang, and Trustees,

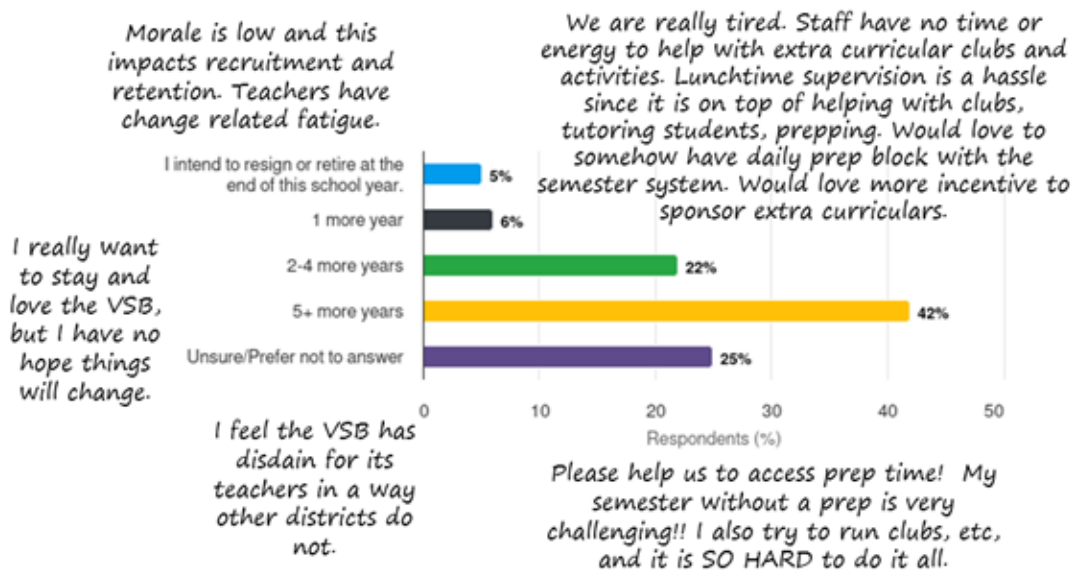
Following on our presentation at the Board Committee of the Whole meeting on April 17th, and on behalf of the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association, we would like to thank Trustees and Senior Management for providing employee groups and members of the public with opportunities to provide advice regarding the final decisions which will determine the District's 2024-2025 operating budget.

We have two specific requests for funding which, in our view, are necessary and could be responsibly allocated given the District's budgeted financial position. We would like to begin, however, by presenting responses we received to a retention-oriented question included on a recent member survey.

Membership Survey Results

As we mentioned on Wednesday evening, we recently surveyed our members on a range of matters related to their teaching practice and their views regarding the District. From our membership of about 1400, we received over 500 completed responses and just over 100 partially completed responses. Several themes emerged. Relevant to budget development, the survey indicates that approximately one-third of secondary teachers are contemplating leaving the District within four years; approximately 140 by the end of next year. Furthermore, only 42% of respondents stated definitively that they intend to be with the District for more than 5 years. Common reasons cited are workload, stress, and lack of support.

How many years do you believe you have left with the VSB?

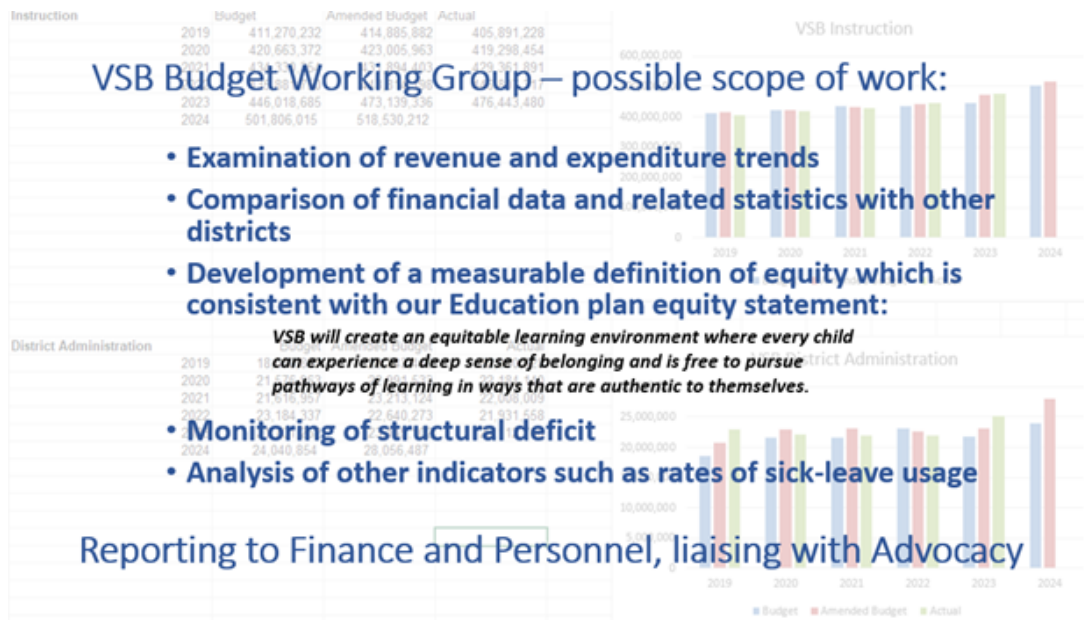




Evident from the comments is a prevailing view that Vancouver secondary teachers are not finding their jobs sustainable, and that they are less supported and appreciated than teachers in other metro districts. Of the teachers who expressed that they plan to leave within four years, more than half indicated that they would continue teaching but would move to another metro district.

VSB Budget Working Group

On this basis, we echo our stakeholder colleagues' calls for a focus on retention. Taken as a whole, the responses suggest that a significant number of teachers do not feel that the district is suitably supporting them in their profession nor, by extension, suitably supporting Vancouver secondary school students.



To address this question and the related concerns raised by our union stakeholder colleagues and others, we propose that the questions be addressed directly by a working group which would report to the Finance and Personnel Committee.

The working group could compare our financial data and related statistics with corresponding data from other metro districts. It could test a measurable version of our district equity statement; it could track our structural deficit at intervals throughout the year. The work may dispel the view that the situation is more dire in Vancouver relative to other metro districts or, if aspects of that perspective bear out, we would have information to inform decisions regarding where resources and advocacy need to be directed.



Support for Diverse Learners and At-Risk Students

Maintaining or increasing FTE support levels for our diverse learners and at-risk students:

From our Equity Statement:

... The VSB will create an equitable learning environment where every child can experience a deep sense of belonging and is free to pursue pathways of learning in ways that are authentic to themselves. The VSB will achieve this by:

- prioritizing student needs by ... engaging in open communication with stakeholders

VSB Education Plan - Goal 2:

The Vancouver School Board will increase equity by ...

...

- Improving stewardship of the District's resources by focusing on effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.



A concern expressed by teachers in the survey's written responses is that of providing our diverse learners and at-risk students with the support they require. While we are not seeing explicit reductions in FTE in this budget report, as we move towards increased levels of inclusion, the VSTA would like to reiterate that, while staffing may be creatively repurposed within an altered support model, it is essential that the FTE provided in support of these students be maintained and augmented as necessary.

In the VSB Education Plan, in Goal #2 on increasing equity, the board commits to 'improving stewardship of the district's resources by focusing on effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability'. Referencing the information from the member survey shared at the start, we would like to further reiterate that the district should not sacrifice sustainability in the pursuit of efficiency.



Funding Requests


Increasing Program Support Budgets: \$425,000

Using Science as an example, a basket of standard supplies including:

- 12-pack 250 mL Beaker, 250 mL
- 10 mL Graduated cylinder
- 72-pack Test tubes (16mm x 150 mm)
- 500g Copper (II) sulphate
- 500g Sodium hydroxide
- 12 vials Litmus paper
- 2.5 L 12M Hydrochloric acid
- 1-pack (150) Scalpel blades
- 1 bucket (100) Sheep eyes for dissection
- 1 bucket (50) Frogs for dissection.

"I am extremely disappointed with the VSB. I love what I do and that's what keeps me teaching. I largely pay for my own supplies."

	2010	2013	2023	2024
TOTAL COST (if purchasing one of each)	\$558.17	\$620.83	\$1332.75	\$1544.85
Program Support Budget, per student.	\$10.38	\$5	\$4.14	\$4.14



"Just to maintain the same buying power as we had in 2009/2010, the Science Program Support budget should have been nearly tripled to about \$30 per student. Instead it has decreased to about \$4 per student."

Our first specific budget proposal concerns secondary Program Support funding. These are the funds used by teachers of courses which depend on consumables or regular community fieldtrips. This funding is currently at pre-2010 levels. The low funding level has led to teachers abandoning standard labs and class activities. Teachers who have access to other sources of revenue, such as funds provided as a remedy for class size and composition violations, are accessing that funding which leads to a higher degree of inequity between classes and across the district. We estimate that the current budget for course-targeted Secondary Program Support funding is approximately \$850,000.

We request that course-targeted secondary program support funding be increased by 50% to \$425,000 with the funds being reallocated from the Local Capital Contingency Reserve



Capital Equipment Replacement program Tech Studies Shops: \$75,000

Meghan Ridley, Eric Hamber woodwork teacher stands beside a lathe in the new shop. The lathe dates from the post-war period.



The budget would allow for the installation of modern table saws with advanced safety features.

Our second proposal concerns our aging Technical Studies shop equipment. Throughout the District, we have well-maintained but for the most part, very old equipment in our Tech Studies shops. This proposal calls for the start of a replacement program for this equipment. We have an opportunity to start this program with the outfitting of the shops in the new Hamber secondary. Currently, very old equipment, drawn out of District stores, has been positioned in the new shops. Some of this equipment requires safety modifications which may be as costly as purchasing new equipment.

We request that the \$75,000 be reallocated from the Local Capital Contingency Reserve to commence this replacement program at Eric Hamber.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and requests.

On behalf of the VSTA,

Terry Stanway,
President

Carmen Schaedeli
1st Vice-President

Carl Janze,
2nd Vice-President

CC:

Helen McGregor (Superintendent)

Flavia Coughlin (Secretary-Treasurer)

Dan Blue (Executive Director of Finance)