



# Vancouver School Board 2019-2020 Budget Development

## Online Engagement Summary Report

### Welcome

Vancouver School Board: 2019-2020 Budget Development

Thank you for taking part in the District's 2019-2020 Budget development process.

By participating, you help ensure a wide variety of perspectives are shared with the Vancouver School Board. As the elected decision-making body, the Board of Education is responsible for the delivery of educational services for students.



## Introduction

Each year, Vancouver School District staff work to obtain input and feedback on the preparation of the next fiscal year's budget. This year, an online engagement tool was selected to obtain community input to help ensure a wide variety of perspectives are shared with the Vancouver School Board. The tool, Ethelo, provides a dynamic engagement experience where participants are able to frequently visit, record their level of support for resource allocation and sources as well as have an interactive exchange with others via open comments. With an eye to removing barriers to participation, no component was mandatory, enabling individuals to provide information as they wished. This practice is intended to be open, welcoming and low demand for participants.

In addition to a survey to obtain demographic information of participants, the online engagement gauged support for additional areas the Board may wish to consider funding along with possible funding sources. Participants were able to provide open-ended comments to each spending area as well as each funding source area provided. Participants were also asked to share their comments about what equity means to them, and, with that in mind, how they would like to see the District prioritize spending.

The online engagement was open from April 9 to April 30, 2019 and was heavily promoted via the District website, social media channels and two messages sent via email to families of students (approximately 75,000 email addresses).

## Feedback and Analysis Summary

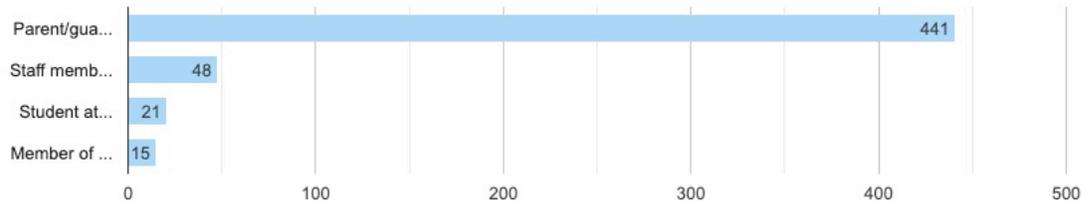
Throughout the online engagement period, there were nearly 2,600 unique visits to the tool with approximately 500 people electing to take part. Participants were free to complete any/all portions of the engagement (i.e. no mandatory fields). Participants, should they wish, were able to provide comments which were publicly visible for all visitors and participants. The intention of such a set up was to provide all those wishing to share input the ability to do so and have that input recognized and shared as the Board as it considers the 2019-2020 school year budget. Results from the engagement indicate this was indeed achieved with nearly 1,000 comments provided in total.

### **Survey Results:**

More than 500 participants completed the survey section which provided demographic information. The majority of respondents indicated their child/children are enrolled in the English K-12 stream.

Who are you? ^

**"Parent/guardian or relative of a child/children enrolled in the Vancouver School District":** chosen by 441 user(s) (84%)

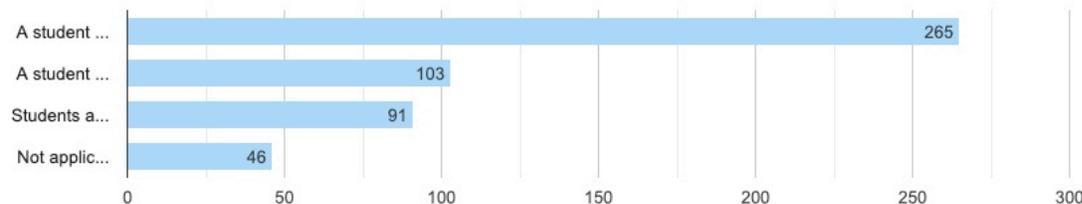


*(NOTE The left axis reads from top to bottom as: Parent/guardian or relative, staff member of the VSB, student and member of the broader community).*

Of those participants who indicated they are a parent/guardian or relative of a child or children who attend VSB school, the majority have one child or more attending an elementary school, as illustrated in the "School Level" chart below.

School Level ^

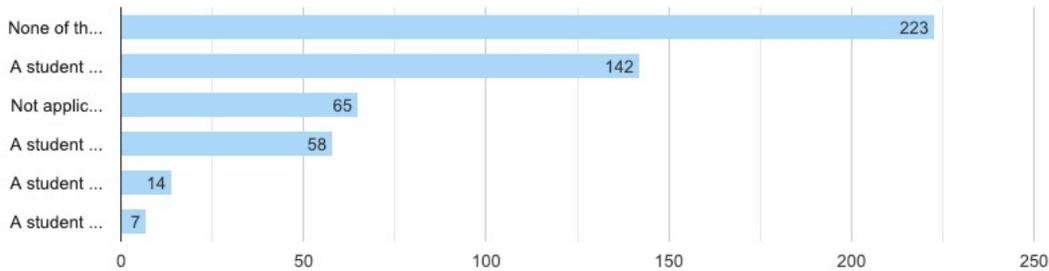
**"A student at an elementary school (includes school annexes)":** chosen by 265 user(s) (52%)



*(NOTE The left axis reads from top to bottom: a student of an elementary school, a student of a secondary school, students attending both an elementary and secondary school, not applicable)*

In addition, participants were asked about their child/children's enrolment in programs. The "Student Enrolment" chart below illustrates 46 per cent of respondents did not have their child/children in any of the specified categories of enrolment.

**"None of the above":** chosen by 223 user(s) (46%)



*(NOTE The left axis reads top to bottom: None of the above, a student enrolled in a choice program, not applicable, a student who receives special education supports, a student enrolled in the Vancouver Learning Network, a student is home-schooled).*

Based on the demographic information provided by participants, although there is not an equal representation compared to actual student enrolment throughout the District, each of the categories indicate there is a good cross-section of the Vancouver School Board's various school and learning communities. Elementary enrolment is the largest within the District and the largest identified participant group were parents/guardians and relatives of elementary families. Participants who identified as parents/guardians and relatives of student enrolled in District programs was significantly larger than the percentage of students enrolled in those programs. Therefore, this group can be viewed as highly engaged. There was a lower representation of participants who identified as parents/guardians and relatives of children receiving special needs support compared to the District's student information records. Interestingly, the percentage of people who identified as parents/guardians and relatives of students who are home-schooled is equal to the District's enrolment information for that group of students. Therefore, the input received from the online engagement participants represents a wide variety of perspectives that align with the District's school and learning communities.

### **Participants' Preferences to funding areas and funding sources**

Participants were provided with information outlining the annual budget development process, and the allocation of percentages of the annual budget spent (student instruction/direct support, operations/maintenance & transportation and District administration), noting that a small portion is discretionary. Participants were then asked to provide their level of support, should funding be available, for several potential budget proposals to help inform the Board's consideration. Of those people who participated, there is clear support for allocating funds to items that directly impact students in the classroom and their learning. Consistent with that expressed desire, is the preference that funding sources not be drawn from areas that would impact students.

**Funding Options**

Respondents indicated their preference to dedicate funding, should it be available, to areas that impact students directly. Based on participants’ responses, there are three levels of support with decreasing preference as follows (most to least supported):

- 1) Funds for direct student learning/support and classrooms (mental health & wellness, school supplies and equipment) were most preferred.
- 2) Funds for staffing (teacher mentors, diversity/anti-racism position) and replacement of aging furniture were secondary preferences.
- 3) Funding for staff to increase additional enrolment of international students was least preferred.



**Funding Sources**

Participants were then presented with information noting that the draft preliminary budget is an initial early version and there may be changes before it is adopted by the Board. Because a balanced budget must be passed by law, if costs are added to the 2019-2020 school year budget, funding must be found from other areas to offset those additional costs. Participants were then asked to indicate their level of support to find funds from specific areas, should items be added to the draft budget.

For the most part, participants supported using surplus funds from prior year(s). Although there was not great disapproval for any of the options presented, the option of generating additional funds through grants, donations and partnerships was the least supported option.

Funding Sources			
Use Prior Surplus		👍 83%	▼
Increase rental revenue		👍 71%	▼
Increase student supply fee by \$10		👍 70%	▼
Grants, donations and partnerships		👍 69%	▼

### Equity in Education and Prioritization of Spending

The concept of equity in education is often discussed at the Board of Education public meetings, during committee meetings, amongst the District’s stakeholder groups as well as by staff. In an effort to broaden the public discourse and provide the Board with support in applying an equity lens for budgetary decisions, the online engagement sought participants’ thoughts about equity in education, and, based on that how they would like to see spending prioritized.

### Equity in Education

This portion of the online engagement was presented within the context of the [VSB 2021 Strategic Plan](#) as well as two definitions of equity in education.

## Equity in Education

### OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES



The VSB Strategic Plan 2021 is based on a vision to “inspire student success by providing an innovative, caring and responsive learning environment.” To do so, the District works based on a concept of equity.

The Ministry of Education notes that equity in education is about ensuring all students – regardless of ability or background – benefit from a learning environment tailored to maximize their potential.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states equity in education includes:

- Fairness – making sure that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, social-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential.
- Inclusion – ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all.

#### Equity in Education

Thinking about the above, and considering the District’s vision statement, what does equity in education mean to you?

Add your thoughts



167 COMMENTS - [VIEW 2 MORE COMMENTS](#)

#### Equity applied to spending

The flexible portion of the District’s annual budget makes up about 8 per cent. Given this, and your ideas about what equity in education looks like, how do you think the District should prioritize spending?

Add your thoughts



123 COMMENTS - [VIEW 2 MORE COMMENTS](#)

Nearly 170 comments were provided to the question asking participants what “equity in education” means to them. Although there were many varying phrases within respondents’ responses, many common concepts, expectations and hopes were shared. These include that:





large cuts (negative budgeting scenarios typically receive greater engagement participation in all sectors).

The input received from the online engagement participants represents a wide variety of perspectives. Based on participants' indication of support for areas to allocate and source funds as well as their comments about equity and considering how the District should prioritize spending, the results should provide the Board of Education with ample context of the public's will when considering the 2019-2020 budget. Together with the input from delegations and stakeholder groups, the online engagement exercise provides another avenue to gauge the public's wishes, expectations and hopes with respect to the District's budget.