

Date March 9, 2021

ITEM 1.2

TO: Facilities Planning Committee

FROM: J. David Green, Secretary Treasurer
John Dawson, Director of Educational Planning

RE: 2021-2022 Enrolment Update

Reference to Strategic Plan:

Goal 4: Provide effective leadership, governance and stewardship

Objectives:

- *Effectively utilize school district resources and facilities.*

INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide further insight into the impact of COVID-19 on VSB enrolment. The report contains an analysis of student in-migration and out-migration based on Ministry of Education Personal Education Number (PEN) data. PEN data is the gold standard for this type of analysis as the movement of every student enrolled in the BC school system can be accurately and reliably tracked. Net migration data, based on Canada Revenue Agency Universal Childcare Benefit payment data, is also examined and finally recent population and demographic trends are provided to support a broader understanding of VSB enrolment trends and the context for forecasting.

This report is for information only and does not contain a recommendation.

BACKGROUND

As reported at the [November 17, 2021 meeting of the Finance Committee Item 1.3](#), in 2019 elementary enrolment was forecast to decline by 644 students by 2021. The actual decline has been 934 students – 290 more than the forecast decline which may be accounted for by the effect of COVID on demographic trends. Similarly, secondary enrolment in 2021 is 373 students lower than the level forecast in 2019. In the past two years COVID has contributed to an accelerated enrolment decline in the District – there are now 663 fewer students enrolled in K-12 standard schools than 2019 forecasts indicated. A lower number of registrations at the New Welcome Center (NWC) was the primary cause of unanticipated enrolment decline in the 2020 school year [November 23, 2020 meeting of the Finance Committee Item 2.4](#). The most likely cause of accelerated enrolment decline in 2021 was increased out-migration from the District. The level of out-migration can be reliably investigated in two ways:

- Analysis of admission and withdrawal tracked by student PEN
- Analysis of net-migration trends

STAFF ANALYSIS

PEN Data Analysis

In collaboration with Ministry of Education staff, VSB staff undertook a PEN tracking study to analyze student migration trends for the past five school years. The student data analyzed is for BC residents only.

Definitions

New Students - all students including Kindergarten students and students registered through the NWC, who have entered the BC school system for the first time with a new PEN. This category also includes students returning to the BC school system after previously withdrawing.

Withdrawn Students – all students leaving the BC school system. This category does not include graduating students.

Methodology

The PEN data set analyzed included any student who attended a VSB school during a six-year period from 2015-16 to 2020-21. The four-year period between 2015-16 and 2018-19 establishes a pre-COVID baseline for comparison with the school years impacted by COVID. The analysis compared student enrolment data in September of subsequent school years.

New VSB Students is the difference between students entering the BC system in the VSB (inflow) and those leaving the BC system from the VSB (outflow) as shown below in Figure 1:

$$\text{Net New VSB Students} = \text{New Students (inflow)} - \text{Withdrawn Students (outflow)}$$

Net VSB Migration (in/out) is the difference between the number of students migrating into the VSB (inflow) and the number of students migrating out of the VSB (outflow) in the following enrolment categories:

- Public schools in another school district
- Independent schools located outside the Vancouver School District
- Independent schools located inside the Vancouver School District

Net New Student Enrolment is the sum of Net New VSB Students and Net VSB Migration

Figure 1 – Pre-COVID Inflow/Outflow vs COVID Inflow/Outflow

| School Year | Pre-COVID Baseline 2015-2018 | Sep 2020 | Sep 2021 |
|---|------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Net Migration (in/out) to independent schools in VSB | -95 | -14 | -133 |
| Net Migration (in/out) to independent schools outside VSB | -29 | -49 | -58 |
| Net Migration (in/out) to public schools outside VSB | -510 | -474 | -806 |
| Net Migration (in/out) | -634 | -537 | -997 |
| Net New (New Students minus Withdrawn Students) | 4,455 | 3,886 | 4,118 |
| Net New Student Enrolment | 3,821 | 3,349 | 3,121 |
| Variance from Pre-COVID Baseline (numerical) | | -472 | -700 |
| Variance from Pre-COVID Baseline (percent) | | -13.2% | -20.2% |

Negative net migration is a loss of VSB students, positive net migration is a gain. Net new student enrolment is offset by graduating students.

VSB enrolment was declining steadily prior to COVID. The purpose of this analysis as set out in the Key Findings below was to identify COVID related enrolment trends that support understanding of the detrimental impact of COVID on enrolment

Net Migration to Public Schools Outside the VSB

In the 2020-2021 school year, 1,798 students left the VSB to attend public school in another BC school district, while 992 students, moved to the VSB from public schools outside the district (see Appendix A). The net outflow in the 2020-2021 school year was 806 students, which is 296 more than the pre-COVID baseline net outflow for 2015-2018 of 510 students.

Key Findings

- In 2020, **lower enrolment through NWC** was the principle unanticipated factor lowering enrolment below the forecast level in September 2020.
- **Net New Student Enrolment** in September 2020 was 472 lower than the average of the previous four years (pre-COVID baseline). As reported at the [November 23, 2020 meeting of the Finance Committee Item 2.4](#), 479 fewer students registered through the NWC between January 2020 and August 2020 than the average for the previous three years.
- In 2021, **higher-than-pre-COVID baseline level of out-migration** from the VSB to public schools in other school districts was the principle unanticipated factor lowering enrolment below the forecast level in September 2021.
- **Net New Student Enrolment** in September 2021 was 337 lower than the pre-COVID baseline. As reported at the [November 17, 2021 meeting of the Finance Committee Item 1.3](#), anecdotal evidence suggested that out-migration from the VSB to public schools in surrounding districts

was a plausible explanation for lower than forecast enrolment. The PEN data analysis supports this explanation as between September 2020 and September 2021 there was a net migration of 806 students from the VSB to public schools in other school districts which is 296 more than pre-COVID average. It seems unlikely that these students will return as COVID eases.

Housing Affordability

VSB enrolment is sensitive to rising housing costs, particularly rapid rises. Enrolment forecasts and leading demographic indicators have become more negative as housing prices in Vancouver have risen in recent years. Out-migration data supports the anecdotal narrative that the combined impact of the recent surge in housing costs and a large-scale re-think of the necessity of working at the office every day has stimulated out-migration from Vancouver.

PEN data shows that during the past five years the five Districts receiving the most students from Vancouver are Burnaby, Surrey, Richmond, Coquitlam, and North Vancouver. Between September 2020 and September 2021, the number of students leaving Vancouver for these Districts was notably higher than the pre-COVID baseline.

2022-23 ENROLMENT FORECAST

The COVID pandemic has resulted in unanticipated changes to historical in and out migration patterns in the VSB that impacted the accuracy of 2020 and 2021 enrolment forecasts. Similarly, as the impact of COVID continues to influence demographics, there is a higher degree of uncertainty in the 2022 District enrolment forecast for 2022-2023 than was the case in pre-COVID years.

A decline of 480 students (about 1% of total enrolment) is forecast for 2022. There are currently 74 fewer students registered in MyEd for next year than the September 2021 enrolment count – see Figure 2. The 2022 forecast is likely the lower limit for next year’s enrolment, while the number of students currently enrolled in MyEd is likely the upper limit for next year’s enrolment.

As next year’s enrolment continues to settle through the spring, the number of students registered in MyEd for next year will become a more reliable indicator of September 2022 enrolment.

Figure 2 – 2022-23 Enrolment Forecast

| Grade Level | September 2021 Actual | 2022 Forecast | 2022 students in MyEd as of February 28, 2022 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---|
| Kindergarten | 3,462 | 3,276 | 3,532 |
| Grade 1 - 7 | 24,384 | 24,101 | 24,597 |
| Grade 8 - 12 | 19,530 | 19,519 | 19,173 |
| Total K - 12 | 47,376 | 46,896 | 47,302 |

CONCLUSION

This report is provided for information only.

APPENDIX A – PEN INFLOW/OUTFLOW DATA

Figure 3 – Student Inflow

| Comparison Year | Sep 2015 vs Sep 2016 | Sep 2016 vs Sep 2017 | Sep 2017 vs Sep 2018 | Sep 2018 vs Sep 2019 | Sep 2019 vs Sep 2020 | Sep 2020 vs Sep 2021 |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| IN migration to independent schools in VSB | 366 | 393 | 386 | 354 | 422 | 279 |
| IN migration to independent schools outside VSB | 114 | 94 | 138 | 114 | 103 | 113 |
| IN migration to public schools outside VSB | 896 | 906 | 829 | 816 | 777 | 992 |
| New Students | 7,202 | 6,868 | 7,082 | 6,953 | 6,237 | 6,770 |

Figure 4 – Student Outflow

| Comparison Year | Sep 2015 vs Sep 2016 | Sep 2016 vs Sep 2017 | Sep 2017 vs Sep 2018 | Sep 2018 vs Sep 2019 | Sep 2019 vs Sep 2020 | Sep 2020 vs Sep 2021 |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| OUT migration to independent schools in VSB | 474 | 455 | 507 | 443 | 436 | 412 |
| OUT migration to independent schools outside VSB | 172 | 154 | 143 | 107 | 152 | 171 |
| OUT migration to public schools outside VSB | 1,521 | 1,524 | 1,265 | 1,177 | 1,251 | 1,798 |
| Withdrawn Students | 2,780 | 2,557 | 2,273 | 2,675 | 2,351 | 2,652 |

Figure 5 – VSB Student Inflow vs Outflow

| Comparison Years | Sep 2015 vs Sep 2016 | Sep 2016 vs Sep 2017 | Sep 2017 vs Sep 2018 | Sep 2018 vs Sep 2019 | Sep 2019 vs Sep 2020 | Sep 2020 vs Sep 2021 |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| NET migration (in/out) to independent schools in VSB | -108 | -62 | -121 | -89 | -14 | -133 |
| NET migration (in/out) to independent schools outside VSB | -58 | -60 | -5 | 7 | -49 | -58 |
| NET migration (in/out) to public schools outside VSB | -625 | -618 | -436 | -361 | -474 | -806 |
| NET migration (in/out) | -791 | -740 | -562 | -443 | -537 | -997 |
| New Students minus Withdrawn Students | 4,422 | 4,311 | 4,809 | 4,278 | 3,886 | 4,118 |
| NET New Student Enrolment | 3,631 | 3,571 | 4,247 | 3,835 | 3,349 | 3,121 |

APPENDIX B - SUPPORTING DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

The PEN data analysis indicated a higher-than-average net out-migration of VSB students to public schools outside the District between September 2020 and September 2021. The evidence from the demographic data below supports the PEN data analysis.

Youth Population Migration Data

The net impact of youth aged 1-16 years moving out of the District has been consistently negative over the last 10 years although the magnitude of net migration has fluctuated from year to year.

Figure 6 – Net Migration of youth population

| Time Period | Net Migration |
|----------------|---------------|
| 3-year average | -1.2% |
| 2-year average | -1.1% |
| 2020 | -0.6% |
| 2021 | -1.5% |

The net migration data aligns with the PEN data analysis:

- In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, people tended to remain where they were living, as illustrated by the lowest out migration rate in the past 10 years of -0.6%.
- In 2021, the out-migration rate rose to -1.5%, which is at the high end of the annual range for out-migration.

City of Vancouver Population Data

In February, Statistics Canada reported that the population of the City of Vancouver had declined by 6,780 people from 2020 to 2021.

Forecasting Youth Population

Future Population = Current Population + Births + Net Migration

Declining Birth Rate

Historical changes in the number of births are an important factor impacting past, present, and future enrolment.

The number of births per year in the District reached a maximum of 6,323 in 2014 for the period of 2002 to 2020. Since 2014, the number of births has been trending lower, with an average of 96 fewer births per year resulting in only 5,749 births in 2020.

The average of the annual birth rate for the last three 3 years is 5857. This is birth rate used to forecast population.

Declining Percentage of Youth Population

The population of Vancouver is ageing. Despite ongoing growth in the overall population of the City of Vancouver, both the total youth population and the percentage of the population aged 1-17 years is declining steadily. Based on administrative data from the CRA, between 2010 and 2021 the estimated population of children aged 1-17 years declined from 82,376 to 75,665. As a percentage of the total estimated population of Vancouver the percentage of children aged 1-17 years declined from 13% in 2010 to 10.5% in 2021.