

March 10, 2021

ITEM 4.2

TO: Facilities Planning Committee

FROM: J. David Green, Secretary Treasurer
John Dawson, Director of Educational Planning and Student Information**RE: Preferred School Size Working Group (PSSWG) Final Report and Recommended Guidelines***Reference to Strategic Plan:**Goal 4: Provide effective leadership, governance and stewardship;**Objective 2 – Implement the recommendations of the Long Range Facilities Plan***INTRODUCTION:**

A Preferred School Size Working Group (PSSWG) was convened between February 2020 and January 2021 to implement a Vancouver School Board recommendation in the 2019 *Draft Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP)*:

That the District establish guidelines on preferred student population size with the goal of determining appropriate ranges of school size to inform planning decisions.

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview of the attached Preferred School Size Working Group Final Report and Recommended Guidelines.

This report contains a recommendation.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

The purpose of the PSSWG was to review, consider and discuss educational and fiscal criteria, examine current practices and ultimately draft guidelines for preferred school size for elementary and secondary schools. The specific objectives and anticipated outcomes from the work of the PSSWG are noted below.

Objectives

- Review relevant research and current practices in other Canadian school districts.
- Examine a variety of considerations and factors related to school size.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Draft guidelines for preferred student enrolment in VSB elementary and secondary schools.
- Recommendation(s) for consideration by VSB Senior management and VSB Facilities Planning Committee.

For the purposes of the PSSWG's work, **school size is defined as "the number of students attending a school based on the school enrolment."** The term 'preferred' was chosen deliberately, to signal that the guidelines speak to a range of school sizes to support future planning decisions and a preferred future

direction for schools in the District. Schools will continue to operate in the District that are smaller and larger than the guidelines, and students will continue to have excellent education experiences at schools of all sizes in the District.

The Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) describes an educational vision for planning that supports student learning and wellbeing. The educational vision sets out a number of interconnected supports and actions for Long Range Facilities Planning. When the LRFP was approved, the work of the PSSWG had not yet concluded. As noted in the 2020 LRFP, 'The preferred school size stakeholder working group is reviewing educational programming and financial information in relation to the number of students attending a school. This work is still in progress and will be incorporated into planning as it becomes available.'

SUMMARY OF PROCESS:

At the Facilities Planning Committee meeting on October 9, 2019 staff reviewed the planned preferred school size stakeholder engagement process. Information about stakeholder representation, the tentative timeline for working group meetings and reporting back to FPC was provided.

The PSSWG process was supported by two external management consultants engaged by the VSB. Both consultants have extensive relevant expertise in multi-stakeholder engagement, planning and facilitation through their work in the public, non-profit, and private sectors. For some discussions, the working group was divided into separate groups with an elementary school and secondary school focus. This engagement design was supported by the availability of two facilitators.

Working and Focus Group Representation

The Working Group was comprised of representatives from:

- Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA)
- Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association (VESTA)
- Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators (VASSA)
- Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice Principals' Association (VEPVPA)
- District Parents' Advisory Council (DPAC)
- Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC)
- International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) – focus group only
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) – focus group only

Working Group members were asked to keep their constituencies informed regarding discussions and progress. PSSWG members provided feedback from their respective stakeholder group during the Working Group meetings.

District staff from the following divisions attended working group sessions and presented information to the group:

- Educational Planning and Student Information
- Educational Services
- Employee Services

- Facilities Planning
- Finance

Working Group Meetings

The working group process began in February 2020 and concluded in January 2021. Table 1 describes the working group process in further detail.

Table 1 – Working Group Process and Timeline

Meeting # & Date	Focus
#1 – February 10, 2020	PSSWG reviewed the context for its work and approved a Terms of Reference
#2 – March 9, 2020	PSSWG reviewed relevant research and discussed the impact of student enrolment on school organization and staffing, and student programming and services
#3 – October 8, 2020 Virtual Zoom meeting	PSSWG considered financial data based on cost per student and the impacts of school enrolment
#4 – November 16, 2020 Virtual Zoom meeting	PSSWG discussed the Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP) and its relationship to student enrolment Reviewed/discussed preliminary draft guidelines for preferred elementary and secondary school sizes Confirmed Focus Group process and preliminary findings for discussion
Focus Groups – November 19-25, 2020 Virtual Zoom meetings	Five focus group sessions were held to review and provide feedback on Preliminary PSSWG School Size Guidelines DPAC, IUOE and CUPE, VSTA, VEPVPA, VASSA
#5 – December 10, 2020 Virtual Zoom meeting	Reviewed and considered feedback from stakeholder focus groups Confirmed recommendations for preferred school size guidelines
#6 – January 21, 2021 Virtual Zoom meeting	Reviewed and confirmed PSSWG Final Report, including confirmation of recommendations for preferred school size guidelines

Transparency and Accountability

Several strategies were incorporated into the PSSWG process to support a transparent and accountable process:

- All documents, presentations and meeting summaries are [available online](#).
- The Facilities Planning committee was updated periodically on the progress of the PSSWG.
- Stakeholder focus groups were convened to review and provide feedback on the preliminary findings of the PSSWG.
- An additional meeting was scheduled in January to review the final draft report and confirm the findings of the working group.
- At the end of each session feedback was sought from the group, this information was used to guide the design of the next working group session.
- An overall process evaluation was conducted as part of the January 2021 meeting.
- Feedback from focus groups is documented in the final consultant's report.

- The final report from the consultants was reviewed by the working group and provides detailed documentation of the working group process and its findings.

CONCLUSION:

The preferred school size stakeholder engagement process was initiated to implement a Board recommendation from the 2019 draft LRFP. The multi-stakeholder working group convened on six occasions over the period of eleven months. In response to COVID-19 face to face PSSWG scheduled meetings after March 2020 were suspended. The working group re-convened remotely beginning in October 2020 and completed its work in January 2021. The final consultants' report with recommended guidelines is attached to this staff report. Table 2 describes the next steps and timeline for the PSSWG process.

Table 2 – Next Steps and Timeline

Date	Event	Notes
March 10	Facilities Planning Committee	Staff report, consultant report, recommendation
April 26	Consideration by Board	
May	Update LRFP	If recommendation approved

RECOMMENDATION(S):

It is recommended that:

The Vancouver Board of Education approve the following preferred school size guidelines for planning purposes:

- *An elementary school size range of 300 to 550 students*
- *A secondary school size range of 1200 to 1750 students*

Attachment: VSB Preferred School Size Working Group – Final Report and Recommended Guidelines



VSB PREFERRED SCHOOL SIZE WORKING GROUP

Final Report and Recommended Guidelines

January 26, 2021

Prepared by Consultants Dorli Duffy and Susan Rhodes

Acknowledgements

The Vancouver School Board wishes to acknowledge with gratitude and thanks the commitment of time, energy and expertise from the many individuals who participated in and supported the Preferred School Size Working Group process.

Working Group Stakeholder Representatives

- Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA) – Treena Goolieff and Terry Stanway
- Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association (VESTA) – Anne Miller
- Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators (VASSA) – Angie Haveman, Bernie Soong, and Nick Despotakis
- Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals Association (VEPVPA) – Megan Davies, Matt Carruthers, and Nancy Bourque
- District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC) – Amanda Hillis, Skye Richards, Karen Tseng, and Maggie Martens
- Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC) – Ricky Huang

VSB District Staff

Carmen Batista – Associate Superintendent Employee Services
Shehzad Somji – Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Rosie Finch – Director of Instruction
Aaron David – Director of Instruction
Adrian Keough – Director of Instruction
Mette Hamaguchi – Director of Instruction
Chris Stanger – Director of Instruction
Jim Meschino – Director of Facilities
Michael Rossi – District Principal Educational Planning
Chris Wong – District Principal Educational Planning
Dameun Kim – Educational Planning
Anne Lee – Educational Planning

Focus Group Participants

Additional thanks are due for the 42 stakeholder representatives from DPAC, IUOE, CUPE 15, VSTA, VEPVPA, and VASSA who contributed their feedback to the working group through participation in focus group sessions.

Finally, thank you to the Project Consultants and Facilitators Dorli Duffy and Susan Rhodes for their expert guidance throughout the process.

1	<i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i>	<i>2</i>
2	<i>PREFERRED SCHOOL SIZE WORKING GROUP – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT</i>	<i>3</i>
3	<i>SUMMARY OF PSSWG PROCESS</i>	<i>5</i>
4	<i>FEBRUARY 10, 2020 MEETING</i>	<i>6</i>
5	<i>MARCH 9, 2020 MEETING</i>	<i>8</i>
5.1	Research and Literature Review.....	8
5.2	Student Programming and Services, School Organization and Staffing	9
5.2.1	Staff Presentation – Elementary School: Impact of School Size on Student Programming and Services, Organization and Staffing	10
5.2.2	Staff Presentation – Secondary School: Impact of School Size on Student Programming and Services, Organization and Staffing	11
5.2.3	Staff Presentation – Impact of School Size on Specific VSB Programs.....	11
5.3	PSSWG Elementary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications	13
5.4	PSSWG Secondary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications.....	14
6	<i>OCTOBER 8, 2020 MEETING.....</i>	<i>15</i>
6.1	Staff Presentation – Elementary School: Impact of School Size and Financial Considerations	15
6.2	Staff Presentation – Secondary School: Impact of School Size and Financial Considerations.....	17
6.3	PSSWG Elementary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications	18
6.4	PSSWG Secondary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications.....	19
7	<i>NOVEMBER 16, 2020 MEETING</i>	<i>19</i>
8	<i>FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUPS ON PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES</i>	<i>20</i>
8.1	Stakeholder Feedback – General Themes	20
8.2	Feedback Specific to Preliminary Secondary School Guidelines	22
8.3	Feedback Specific to Preliminary Elementary School Guidelines	23
9	<i>DECEMBER 10, 2020 MEETING</i>	<i>24</i>
9.1	Secondary Discussion Group – Final Implications for Guidelines	24
9.2	Elementary Discussion Group – Final Implications for Guidelines	24
9.3	Recommended Guidelines for Preferred School Size.....	25
	<i>Appendix 1. VSB Preferred School Size Working Group – Terms of Reference</i>	<i>26</i>
	<i>Appendix 2. VSB Preferred School Size Working Group – Glossary of Terms and Considerations</i>	<i>29</i>

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Preferred School Size Working Group (PSSWG) was convened between February 2020 and January 2021 to implement a Vancouver School Board recommendation in the May 2019 Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP):

That the District establish guidelines on preferred student population size with the goal of determining appropriate ranges of school size to inform planning decisions.

The purpose of the PSSWG was to review, consider and discuss educational and fiscal criteria, examine current practices and ultimately draft guidelines for preferred school size for elementary and secondary schools.

The Working Group was convened to guide the development of preferred school size guidelines with representation from key stakeholder groups including the Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association, Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association, Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators, Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals Association, the District Parents Advisory Council, the District Student Council, and with District staff providing key information from the Education Planning and Student Information, Education Services, Employee Services, Facilities Planning and Finance areas.

Four meetings were held covering key areas of consideration including relevant research, and the impact of student enrolment on student services and programming, school organization and staffing, and average cost per student. At the end of this process, draft guidelines were developed. While there was a pause in the planning process in March due to the COVID pandemic, planning resumed in October 2020. During each meeting, staff provided information to support discussions regarding the impact of key areas on the development of preferred school size guidelines. Working group members participated in breakout group discussions specific to elementary and secondary school guidelines during each meeting. Following each PSSWG meeting, a meeting summary and session materials were posted to a public website to ensure transparency for all interested parties. Evaluations were held following each meeting to ensure that any issues or concerns were heard and addressed. Evaluations were consistently positive regarding the process and approach.

Following the development of draft preferred school size guidelines, focus group sessions were held with more representatives from each of the stakeholder groups. While feedback fell into a number of themes, the primary theme that is important to note is the concern expressed by various focus groups regarding the intended use of these guidelines. There is concern that the guidelines will be used in isolation as a rationale for closing an existing school which does not fall within the guidelines. While it was reiterated many times during the process that a) preferred school size guidelines would be only one planning consideration amongst others, b) there are excellent schools that do not fall within the guidelines, and c) schools outside of the guidelines will continue to offer excellent educational opportunities, this concern persists. The VSB needs to be aware of this sensitivity and ensure that planning processes emphasize the many planning considerations that are involved in educational planning processes.

Focus group feedback was provided to the PSSWG for consideration and discussed at a final meeting to review the guidelines in December 2020. The PSSWG reviewed, revised and signed off on preferred school size guidelines at the conclusion of the December meeting.

In January 2021, the PSSWG reviewed the draft Final Report for accuracy and to ensure no information was missing. This Final Report incorporates feedback from the January meeting and has been signed off by the PSSWG.

The following are the recommended preferred school size guidelines stemming from the PSSWG planning process:

Elementary School Size Guidelines = a range of 300 – 550 enrolled students

Secondary School Size Guidelines = a range of 1200 – 1750 enrolled students

Important notes when using these guidelines:

1. *Guidelines are not intended to be used in isolation, but in context with other planning considerations. See the LRFP strategy document.*
2. *Schools may ultimately be smaller or larger than the guidelines due to other planning considerations.*

2 PREFERRED SCHOOL SIZE WORKING GROUP – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

A Preferred School Size Working Group (PSSWG) was convened between February 2020 and January 2021 to implement a Vancouver School Board recommendation in the May 2019 Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP):

That the District establish guidelines on preferred student population size with the goal of determining appropriate ranges of school size to inform planning decisions.

Work of the PSSWG also aligned with the VSB Strategic Plan 2016-2021:

Goal 4: Provide effective leadership, governance and stewardship;

Objective 2 – Implement the recommendations of the Long Range Facilities Plan.

The purpose of the PSSWG was to review, consider and discuss educational and fiscal criteria, examine current practices and ultimately draft guidelines for preferred school size for elementary and secondary schools. The specific objectives and anticipated outcomes from the work of the PSSWG are noted below:

Objectives

- Review relevant research and current practices in other Canadian school districts
- Examine a variety of considerations and factors related to school size

Anticipated Outcomes

- Draft guidelines for preferred student enrolment in VSB elementary and secondary schools.
- Recommendation(s) for consideration by VSB Senior management and VSB Facilities Planning Committee.

The PSSWG Terms of Reference noted that the guidelines will “facilitate effective future, evidence-informed and transparent planning decisions including: adjusting school catchment areas, location of district programs, prioritization of capital requests for seismic projects, new schools, school additions and balancing capacity with enrolment which could involve school consolidation.” Please see Appendix 1 for the PSSWG Terms of Reference and Appendix 2 for a Glossary of Terms and Conditions.

For the purposes of the PSSWG’s work, **school size is defined as “the number of students attending a school based on the school enrolment.”** The term 'preferred' was chosen deliberately, to signal that the guidelines speak to a range of preferred school sizes to support future planning decisions and a preferred future direction for schools in the District. Schools will continue to operate in the District that are smaller and larger than the guidelines, and students will continue to have excellent education experiences at schools of all sizes in the District. In future planning processes, preferred school size guidelines will be one planning consideration to include in school sizing deliberations.

The PSSWG’s work was interrupted by COVID-19 in March of 2020. At the end of 2020, it is acknowledged that while there may be implications of COVID on facilities design and operation, this continues to be a very dynamic situation and the implications of the pandemic are not fully understood. Therefore, this report does not include COVID or other infectious disease as a factor for consideration due to a lack of evidence-based information related to potential future school organizations in response to COVID. The Board may wish to consider the impact of COVID on operational goals for facilities at a later date when the evidence is available to support discussions.

The Working Group was comprised of representatives from:

- Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA)
- Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association (VESTA)
- Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators (VASSA)
- Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals Association (VEPVPA)
- District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC)
- Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC) – only attended first 2 meetings
- District staff from the following divisions:
 - Educational Planning and Student Information
 - Educational Services
 - Employee Services
 - Facilities Planning
 - Finance

Working Group members were asked to keep their constituencies informed regarding discussions and progress. PSSWG members provided feedback from their respective stakeholder group during the Working Group meetings.

A dedicated PSSWG webpage was established at [Preferred School Size Working Group](#) at the start of the process to ensure accuracy, transparency, and ease of access to meeting information for all Working

Group participants. Agendas, presentations, reference documents, focus group feedback and meeting summaries were posted on the webpage in a timely manner.

3 SUMMARY OF PSSWG PROCESS

The Working Group engaged in six facilitated planning sessions between February 10, 2020 and January 21, 2021. The following tables summarizes the focus of each session:

Meeting # & Date	Focus
#1 – February 10, 2020	PSSWG reviewed the context for its work and approved a Terms of Reference
#2 – March 9, 2020	PSSWG reviewed relevant research and discussed the impact of student enrolment on school organization and staffing, and student programming and services
#3 – October 8, 2020 Virtual Zoom meeting	PSSWG considered financial data based on cost per student and the impacts of school enrolment
#4 – November 16, 2020 Virtual Zoom meeting	PSSWG discussed the Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP) and its relationship to student enrolment Reviewed/discussed preliminary draft guidelines for preferred elementary and secondary school sizes Confirmed Focus Group process and preliminary findings for discussion
Focus Groups – November 19-25, 2020 Virtual Zoom meetings	Five focus group sessions were held to review and provide feedback on Preliminary PSSWG School Size Guidelines DPAC, IUOE and CUPE, VSTA, VEPVPA, VASSA
#5 – December 10, 2020 Virtual Zoom meeting	Reviewed and considered feedback from stakeholder focus groups Confirmed recommendations for preferred school size guidelines
#6 – January 21, 2021 Virtual Zoom meeting	Reviewed and confirmed PSSWG Final Report, including confirmation of recommendations for preferred school size guidelines

The PSSWG discussed a number of considerations which would inform school size guidelines including:

- Relevant research
- Student services and programming
- School organization and staffing
- Average cost per student
- Capital planning

The focus of staff, PSSWG members, and focus group discussions was ensuring that the greatest emphasis was placed on the impact of school size on the student learning experience, however all factors were discussed.

Within each meeting, presentations by staff were designed to enable the working group to develop a common understanding of the current status and existing practices as a foundation for discussion of future guidelines. Breakout sub-groups allowed participants to hold elementary and secondary school

discussions, reflecting on presentations and identifying implications for school sizes. Preferred school size ranges were developed from the group's feedback.

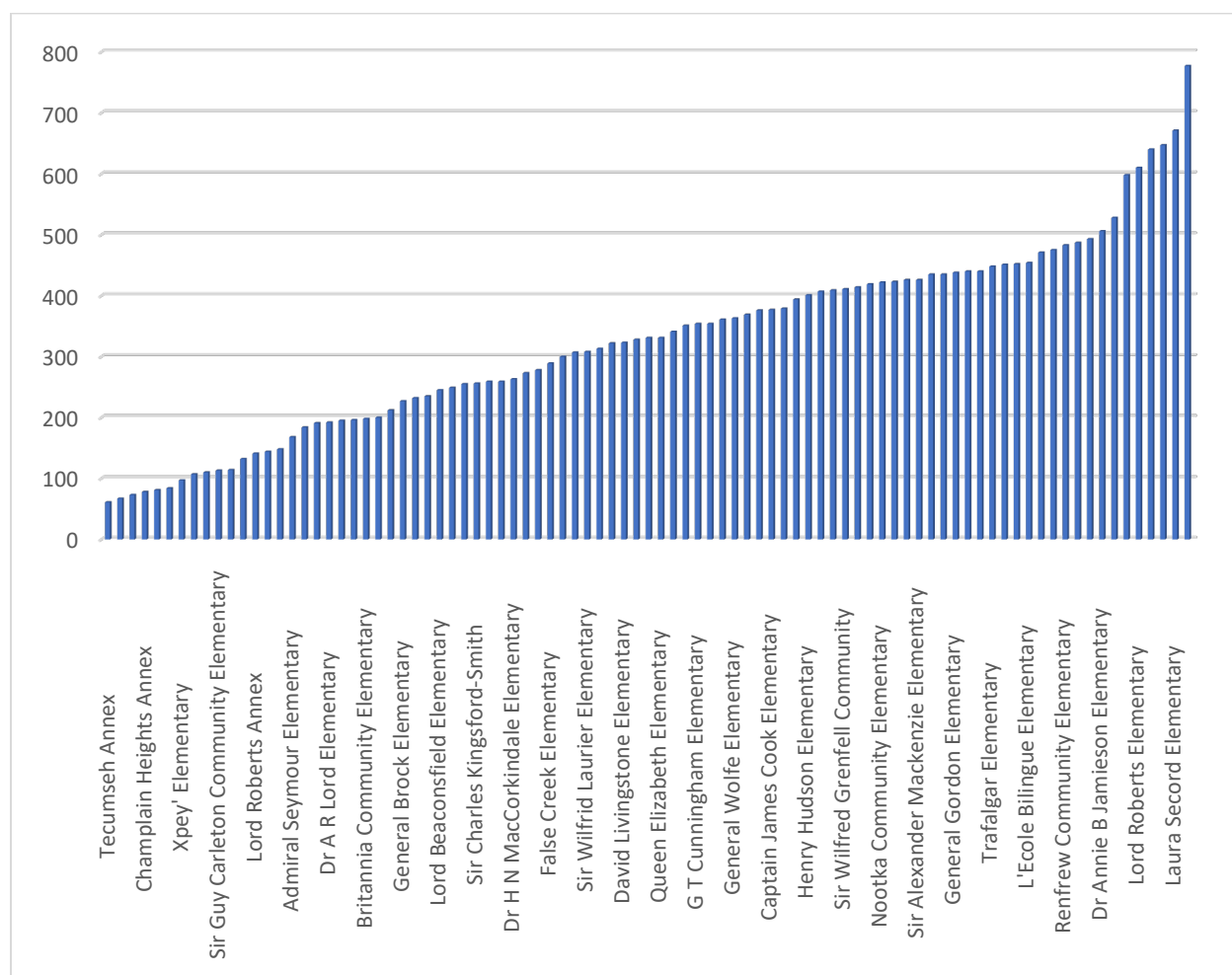
A post-meeting evaluation was conducted at the end of each meeting. Participant feedback was largely very positive and constructive feedback was incorporated into subsequent meetings.

4 FEBRUARY 10, 2020 MEETING

The Preferred School Size Working Group (PSSWG) held their first meeting on February 10, 2020. The Terms of Reference and proposed planning approach and timeline were reviewed. In addition, staff provided information regarding the context for the PSSWG's work and the current status of school sizes in the District.

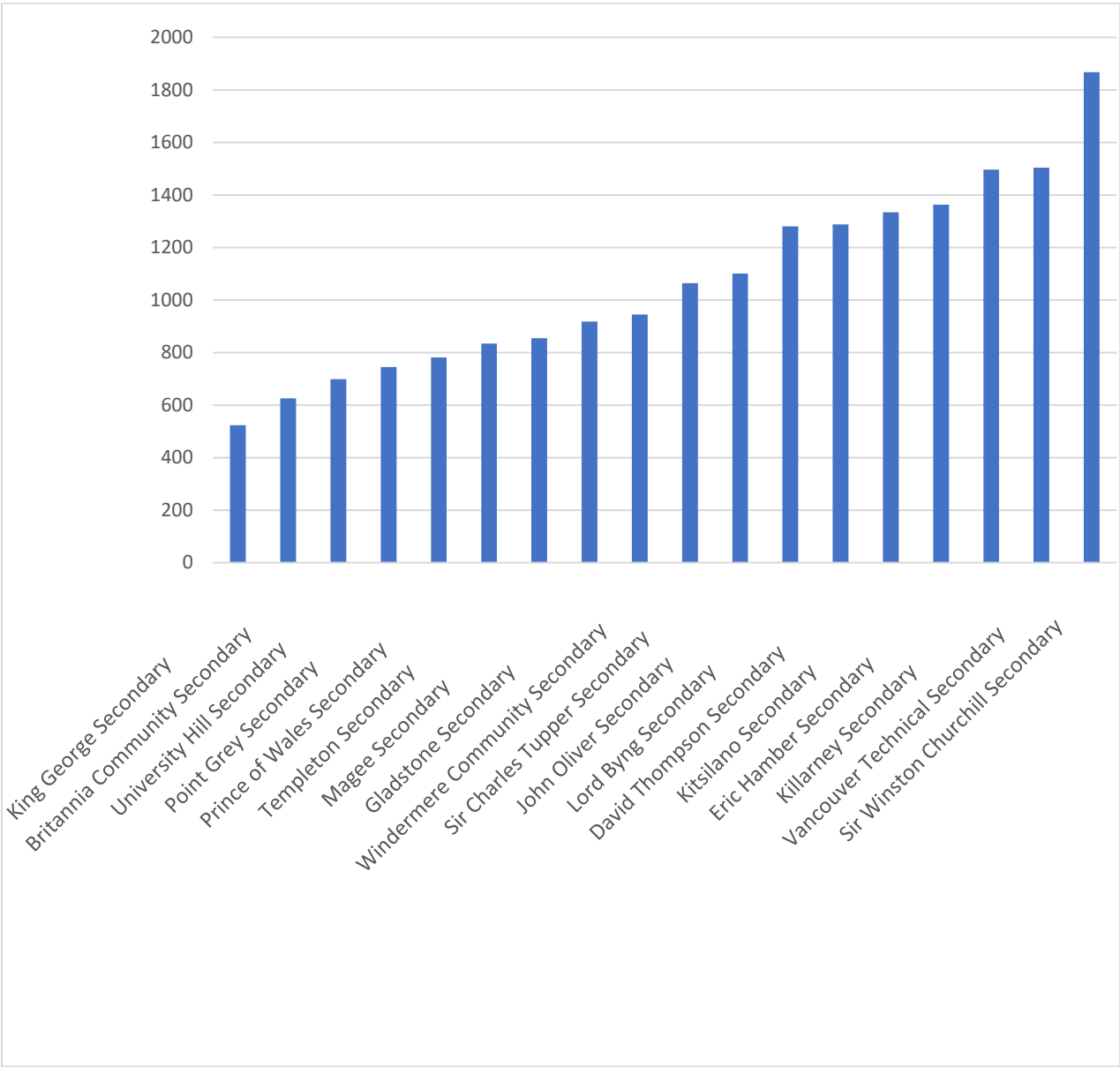
Figures 1-3 summarize key school enrolment data and indicate the range of sizes for existing elementary (including annexes) and secondary schools in the Vancouver School District.

Figure 1: VSB Elementary Schools Distributed by Enrollment Size*



* 2019 Sept 1701 Headcount

Figure 2: VSB Secondary Schools Distributed by Enrollment Size*



*2019 Sept 1701 Headcount

Table 1: Frequency Charts for Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Vancouver School District by Enrollment Size

Elementary Size Frequency	Size Range	Frequency	Secondary School Size – Including International	Number of Students	Number of Schools
	<100	7		Less than 800	2
	100 to 199	15		800 to 899	7
	200 to 299	15		1000 to 1199	2
	300 to 399	20		1200 to 1399	2
	400 to 499	24		1400 to 1599	3
	500 to 599	3		More than 1600	2
	600 to 699	4			
	700 to 799	1			

The Elementary and Secondary Breakout groups provided feedback regarding considerations to be explored through the working group guidelines development process, and identified questions to be explored at the March 9 meeting.

Outcomes of the February 10 session included: an approved Terms of Reference and a glossary of terms and considerations. A literature review and research by staff related to school size with emphasis on local and Canadian experience was confirmed for the March 9 meeting.

5 MARCH 9, 2020 MEETING

On March 9, information regarding school size research was provided to the PSSWG. In addition, staff provided information regarding the impact of school size on student programs and services, school organization and school staffing. The Elementary and Secondary Discussion Groups considered the information provided during their breakout groups, and developed preliminary guidelines for preferred school size based on this information.

5.1 Research and Literature Review

Staff conducted a research and literature review in relation to school size. This review explored the relationship between school size and school connectedness, student outcomes, and economic efficiency. Findings from this research and literature review were presented during the March 9, 2020 PSSWG meeting.

The research and literature review identified a number of limitations and challenges associated with research on the impact of school size:

- Results of research are context dependent – critical limitation is transferability of results to other local contexts.
- Inconsistent research methodologies prevent comparison of results.
- Literature review found ... ‘it is difficult to isolate the impact of school size and consolidation policies on other impacts frequently associated with local contexts...’

- The review of research related to consolidation focused exclusively on rural consolidation and much of the research was dated (e.g., >20 years old).

The research and literature review determined that school size research is not approached in a consistent manner, therefore meaningful interpretation and comparison of results is very limited and controversial.

Staff contacted Dr. Martin Guhn at the School of Population and Public Health at UBC for this review. Dr. Guhn was not aware of any local research on school size. Dr. Guhn was contacted again to clarify the applicability of school size research and he noted that school size needs to be considered in relation to other factors (e.g., poverty; community context; access to resources; resources and support available for school staff/teachers) that create healthy relational learning environments, and that group size (e.g., class size) within schools may be more important than overall school size.

Given the lack of consistent and applicable research findings, the PSSWG determined that the research did not inform the development of school size guidelines.

In addition to the traditional research findings, staff presented information gathered through their inquiries into guidelines developed and utilized in other school districts in Canada. Table 2 provides a summary of this information (note: this was not an exhaustive search and other guidelines may exist in other locations in Canada).

Table 2: Findings From Inquiries on School Size Guidelines Across Canada

OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS	School District	Elementary	Secondary
	North Vancouver	Target 200-450	Goal: cap at 1500
	Richmond		Goal: 1100-1200 (200 students per grade)
	Surrey	Capt at 600	
	Toronto	Target of 500 (minimum of 2 classes per grade)	Target: Minimum 1000
	Edmonton	Target: 350-500 Minimum: 225-250	Target: 1000-1200 Minimum: 800-900

5.2 Student Programming and Services, School Organization and Staffing

During the March 9, 2020 PSSWG meeting, staff presentations highlighted the impact of school size on student programming and services, school organization and staffing. The following definitions were offered for these terms:

- **Student Programs and Services**
 - Programming and Choice – programming describes the courses available for a student to choose for their educational program

- Inclusion – all students are fully participating members of the school community, which includes ensuring that all students are supported to participate in regular classes with their same-age peers where appropriate.
- **School Organization** – the process of determining which students will be placed in which divisions (elementary) or timetabling/scheduled into courses (secondary)
- **School Staffing** – the process of determining staff allocation for schools

In addition to discussing the impact of school size on the availability of curricular choice and student program options, discussions were also focussed on the impact of school size on co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students.

For each topic, staff presented a summary of impacts when a school is “too big” or “too small” to focus attention on either end of the spectrum.

In addition to providing an overview of impacts of school size in elementary and secondary schools, staff summarized the impact of school size on the organization and delivery of District Choice programs and Learning Services Student programs. Separate presentations were provided for each of these topics.

5.2.1 Staff Presentation – Elementary School: Impact of School Size on Student Programming and Services, Organization and Staffing

Staff outlined the impact of school size for elementary schools in terms of student programming, school organization and staffing. Staff noted that current enrolment in VSB elementary schools range from 60 in a K-Grade 3 Annex to 777 students in the largest K-Grade 7 elementary school. The staff presentations on elementary programs, services, staffing and organization addressed the impact of the variation in student enrolment on base staffing of administrators, office support, supervision aides, custodial staff, and teaching staff. Staff acknowledged excellent teaching in schools of all sizes.

In response to the question: “What are the impacts when elementary schools are TOO big or TOO small?” the summary table below was provided by staff.

Table 3: Impacts when elementary schools are too big or too small*

TOO Small Elementary School	TOO Large Elementary School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Very limited opportunity for organizational options ● Class casting process is restricted** ● Few or no specialty staff ● Administrative and office staffing*** ● Administration mainly focused on operations**** ● OOSC and after school programs limited at annexes (school is closed at 4 pm)***** ● Extracurricular – very limited opportunities due to low number of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimal grade group cohesiveness – function as separate classes rather than a group ● Staff collaboration is challenging with large staff ● Access to CST programs is limited ● Fewer students able to participate in competitive sports teams*****

**Staff revised this table for clarity during the final review of this report. The PSSWG approved these changes.*

***Class casting is restricted limiting options for student placement*

****Administrative and office staffing challenges*

***** Administration mainly focused on operations – no full time VP in schools under 400 students (i.e., larger school for only one administrator)*

****** OOSC – Out of School Care*

****** Fewer students able to participate in competitive sports teams; larger schools offer more extra curriculums (sports, mad science, junior chef, clubs) resulting in fewer students per sport resulting in some sports not having enough students to field a team.*

5.2.2 Staff Presentation – Secondary School: Impact of School Size on Student Programming and Services, Organization and Staffing

Staff noted that current enrolment in VSB secondary schools ranged from under 550 to over 2000. The staff presentation on secondary school staffing and organization addressed base staffing allocation including teachers, teaching support staff, itinerant staff, office support, building services and custodial staff. It also addressed the limitations for student programming and services that are in place for students in schools when they are too large or too small – impacting curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular secondary programming, and space use.

The following table provides the summary from staff regarding student programming and services, staffing and organization in response to the question: “What are the impacts when secondary schools are TOO big or TOO small?”

Table 4: Impacts when secondary schools are too big or too small

TOO Small Secondary School	TOO Large Secondary School
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrative and office staffing challenges• Reduced co/extra-curricular opportunities*• Reduced programming opportunities for students due to staffing**• Staff teaching in multiple departments• Complex teaching assignments• Limited facilities/resources• Depending on programming in schools, increased class composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact on sense of community• Highly bureaucratic organization• Limited participation in high demand co/extra-curricular opportunities• Staff collaboration impacted• Limited staff/student access to unique facilities/resources

**Reduced co/extra-curricular opportunities for students*

***Reduced programming opportunities for students due to staffing and student numbers in smaller schools (reduced academic choice)*

5.2.3 Staff Presentation – Impact of School Size on Specific VSB Programs

Staff provided key considerations for student programming and services on the following specific programs:

- District Choice Programs
- Learning Services and Student Programs

Staff noted there are a wide range of VSB choice programs for learners, with over 60 district choice programs at over 45 sites. Options include language immersion programs, Indigenous focus, IB programs, and mini schools.

Some program offerings are single track in a designated school and other choice programs are located in a school along with a regular program as a dual track or multitrack school.

Staff outlined the following key points answering the question: “What are the impacts on District Choice Program when schools are TOO big or TOO small?”

Table 5: Impacts on District Choice Programs when schools are too big or too small

TOO Small School	TOO Large School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited space for additional / optional / choice programs Smaller cohort of staff and families to engage in ‘dual- track’ programming Limited financial resources to support programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If too many, different opportunities can lead to program fatigue If too many options, can lead to pressure / demands on the capacity of community If too many programs, community can become fractured and less support for a common vision Choice programs can bring new student, parent and staff engagement and added strengths / expertise

VSB staff noted there are a wide range of VSB special education programs for learners and identified 73 district special education programs. Special Education Programs are offered in the context of the broader school community. School size is one factor that can influence the student learning experience and service delivery for students in a Special Education Program.

Additionally, when considering district-based staffing allocations to schools, it was noted that district-based staffing is allocated on the basis of student enrolment, with smaller schools receiving lower allocations of district-based FTE and larger schools receiving higher allocations.

District based school allocations:

- School based elementary Area Counsellors
- School based non-enrolling Resource Teachers and Teacher-Librarians
- School based teacher-librarians
- School based secondary counsellors
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Teacher Psychologists

The following table provides a summary of key considerations for learning services and student programs identified by staff in response to the question: “What are the impacts on Special Education Programs when schools are TOO big or TOO small?”

Table 6: Impacts on Special Education Programs when schools are too big or too small*

Small School**	Large School***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single administrator • Composition impact, greater • For Secondary, limited programming options • Fewer options for student placement • Calmer feel in some small schools (location specific) • Access to service providers limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple administrators • Composition impact, less • For Secondary, possibility for adapted classes • Greater options for student placement • Chaotic feel in some large schools (location specific)**** • Access to services providers greater

**Staff revised this table for clarity during the final review of this report. The PSSWG approved these changes.*

***The presentation by staff regarding special education programs highlighted challenges associated with small schools in the context of these programs*

****The presentation also identified advantages for these same programs in larger schools*

*****Chaotic feel in some large schools (location specific) – a challenge for special education programs*

5.3 PSSWG Elementary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications

The PSSWG Elementary Discussion Group reviewed the information provided by staff on March 9, and addressed the following focus questions:

- What are the implications for students and staff when elementary schools are too small or too big?
- When a school was too small or too big, how small/big was it (numbers of students)?

In general, participants agreed with the themes and findings presented by staff regarding elementary school staffing and organization. In addition, some participants expressed concern regarding the potential impacts of guidelines on elementary annexes given their positive experiences in these environments. However, the Elementary Discussion Group participants acknowledged the following potential impacts of schools that were too small:

- Tensions and dynamics when a small cohort is together for up to 8 years
- Stress on staff and parents related to time and involvement demands
- Competing demands (e.g., PAC efforts to raise money for a school vs. a program)
- Difficulty for dual track schools to overcome program silos and balance different program needs to build a whole school community
- Workload and pressures on capacity of staff and teachers (e.g., teachers needing to take on multiple roles)
- Absence or small size of gym (activity room) which may also need to double for other uses as well
- Challenges generating money in a small school
- Potential need to share/ loan SSAs and resource teachers

Participants also identified positive implications for schools with a range of 400-550 students including: optimizing building space use, utilization of all rooms, opportunity for 2 cohorts per grade, sufficient momentum for school and community initiatives, while also being small enough for staff and

administrators to know all students. Some participants noted that smaller schools in the range of 200-300 students offer more opportunities to know each other and are easier to navigate for those with special and other learning needs.

Elementary Discussion Group – Preliminary Implications for School Size Guidelines*

A lower range of 200-300 and upper range of 400-550 students

**Note: when considering student programming/services, school organization and staffing*

5.4 PSSWG Secondary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications

The PSSWG Secondary Discussion Group reviewed the information provided by staff on March 9, and addressed the following questions:

- What are the implications for students and staff when secondary schools are too small or too big?
- When a school was too small or too big, how small/big was it (numbers of students)?

In general, Secondary Discussion Group participants agreed with the themes and findings presented by staff regarding secondary school staffing and organization. The group added the following key insights:

- The importance of high school as a time of social and cognitive growth for youth
 - Smaller schools are limiting for students in terms of limiting their exposure to a broad range of course and programming choice, fellow students, experiences, and opportunities
 - Conversely, larger high schools offer a broader range course and programming choice, more opportunities for experiences and more students to meet and connect with to broaden their understanding of the world and of themselves
- Smaller schools can provide opportunities for stronger connections to students, including knowing more about them and potentially having a better sense of individual student activity
- Larger schools can be too bureaucratic with fewer opportunities to connect with students, including knowing whether they are attending
- School organization and providing a full range of courses and programming choice is very challenging and limiting in a smaller school (e.g., limited electives, limited ability to offer advanced placement or honours courses, and, in some cases, needing to combine grades to offer non-elective courses (e.g., combining French 11 and 12 as there aren't enough students to offer a single for each).

Secondary Discussion Group – Preliminary Implications for School Size Guidelines*

<1000 students is too small and a range of 1750-2100 students enrolled is too large. A grade cohort range of 280-350 was recommended.

** Note: when considering school organization, staffing and student programming/services:*

6 OCTOBER 8, 2020 MEETING

At the October 8, 2020 PSSWG meeting, staff provided a presentation on the relationship between school size and the average cost per student. The staff presentation provided an overview of the educational funding model, VSB's operating budget, provincial basic allocation of funding per student (\$7,468 in 2019), financial inputs used to determine the average cost per student (CPS)¹, and average cost per student by school type and by school size². To determine average cost per student, total operating costs for each school was divided by the school enrolment.

It was understood that the main operating cost for schools is staffing (salaries and benefits). However, the analysis of cost per student in relation to school size had not previously been undertaken. A key finding from this presentation was that there was a higher average cost per student at smaller elementary and secondary schools, but that this cost efficiency did not continue as school size continued to increase.

6.1 Staff Presentation – Elementary School: Impact of School Size and Financial Considerations

The staff presentation provided data related to average cost per student in elementary schools. The following tables illustrate key findings included in the presentation.

The table below shows the cost per student for elementary schools with varying school sizes. Figures 5 & 6 show that the average cost per student is significantly higher in elementary schools with fewer than 300 students, and that there are no significant efficiency gains beyond the size of 300-399 students.

¹ Cost Per Student = Total School Based Operating Expenditures divided by student headcount

² Cost per student data presented at the October 8 meeting was based on 2019 data from the VSB Finance Division.

Figure 3: Average Cost per Student and Elementary School Size

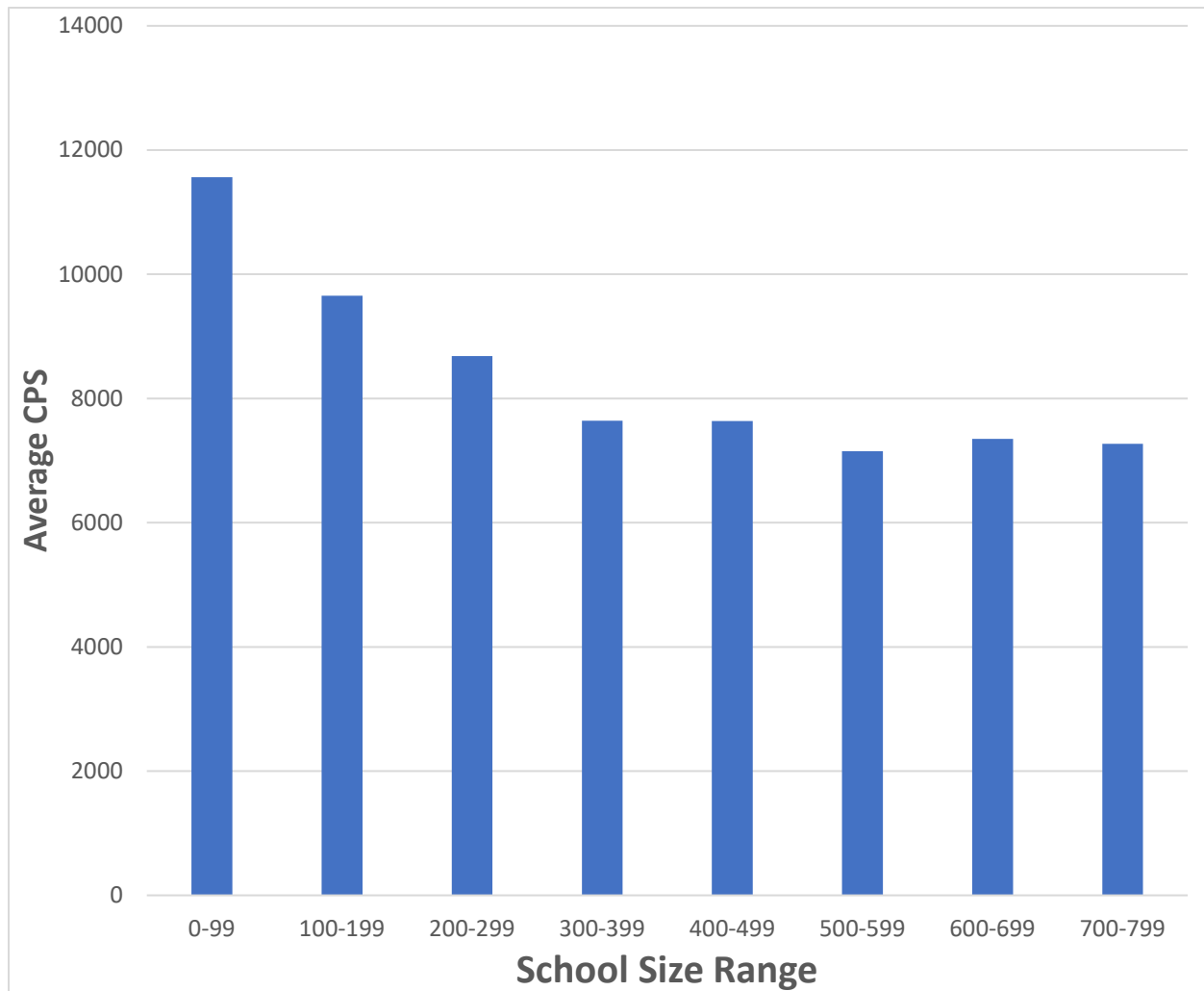


Table 7: Elementary Cost per Student (CPS) by school size range

Number of Schools	Size Range	Average CPS
7	0-99	\$ 11,565
15	100-199	\$ 9,655
17	200-299	\$ 8,682
19	300-399	\$ 7,644
23	400-499	\$ 7,638
3	500-599	\$ 7,153
4	600-699	\$ 7,352
1	700-799	\$ 7,268

Figure 7 shows aggregate data illustrating the 18% (\$1,517 per student) difference in average cost per student at elementary schools with fewer than 300 students in comparison with schools with more than 300 students.

Table 8: Aggregate Elementary School Data Comparing School Size and Cost/Student

School Enrolment	Number of Schools	Average CPS
Fewer than 300 students	39	\$ 9,074
300 or more students	50	\$ 7,557

6.2 Staff Presentation – Secondary School: Impact of School Size and Financial Considerations

The staff presentation provided data related to cost per student in secondary schools.

The District provided the following summary of the average cost per *secondary student* based on school size.

Figure 4: Average Cost/Student and Secondary School Size

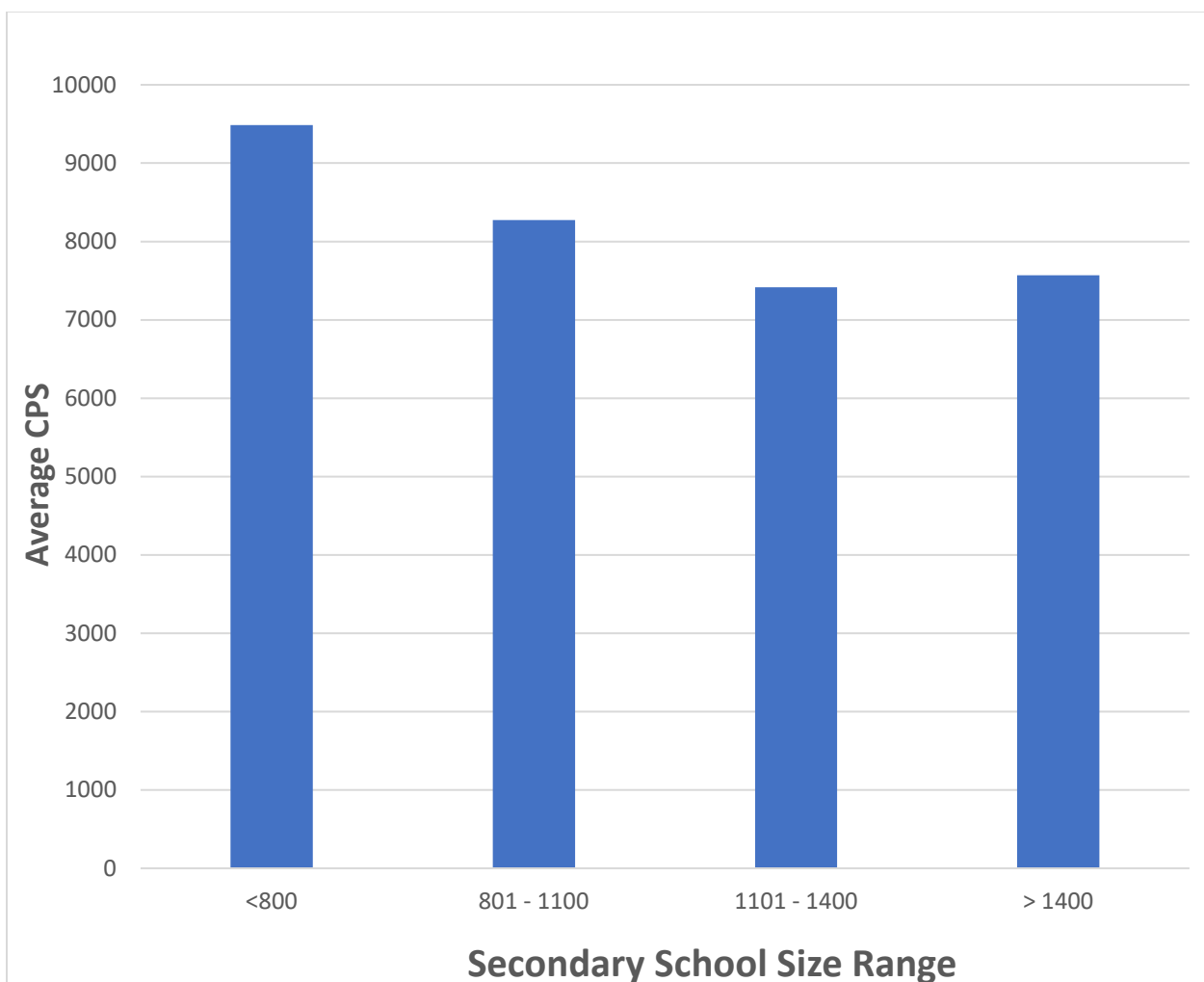


Table 9: Secondary Cost per Student (CPS) by school size range

Number of Schools	Size Range	Average CPS
5	<800	\$ 9,488
6	801-1100	\$ 8,273
4	1101-1400	\$ 7,415
3	>1400	\$ 7,570

The data in Figures 8 and 9 suggest that efficiency gains do not improve for schools larger than 1400 beyond those achieved in schools with 1101-1400 students. However, Figure 10 shows aggregate data illustrating the 16% (\$1,276 per student) difference in average CPS at secondary schools with fewer than 1100 students in comparison with schools with more than 1100 students.

Table 10: Aggregate Secondary School Data Comparing Cost/Student and School Size

School Enrolment	Number of Schools	Average CPS
Fewer than 1100 students	11	\$ 8,811
More than 1100 students	7	\$ 7,536

6.3 PSSWG Elementary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications

Elementary Discussion Group participants expressed surprise upon hearing the cost per student data, noting that they expected larger schools to be increasingly less expensive as the student enrolment increased. Participants observed that medium size schools are more cost-effective than smaller schools and that medium size schools are not much different in terms of cost-effectiveness than larger schools.

Given the lack of a change in cost per student at the higher student enrolment end of the spectrum, Elementary Discussion Group participants noted that the financial data suggests that schools with fewer than 300 students are less cost-effective than those with more than 300. Using the costing information, the group concluded that the range of 300-350 students made sense for the lower end of preferred school size.

Elementary Discussion Group – Preliminary Implications for School Size Guidelines*

Lower range at 300-350 students; no upper range could be determined through consideration of the financial data

** Note: when considering financial implications*

6.4 PSSWG Secondary School Discussion Group – Feedback and Guideline Implications

In reviewing the information provided by the staff, the Secondary Discussion Group participants noted the similarity between the elementary and secondary findings in that smaller schools are less cost effective than schools with enrolments above about 1100 students. Further, they noted that medium enrolment schools are as cost efficient as larger schools. While the cost per student analysis did not assist in determining an upper limit to the preferred school size in secondary schools, the data suggested that no additional cost efficiencies were gained in secondary schools with more than 1400 students.

Secondary Discussion Group – Preliminary Implications for School Size Guidelines*

Lower range at 1100 students; no upper range could be determined through consideration of the financial data

** Note: when considering financial implications*

7 NOVEMBER 16, 2020 MEETING

During the November 16, 2020 PSSWG meeting, staff provided an overview of preliminary guidelines for preferred schools sizes and a draft presentation to be shared with stakeholder focus groups. Draft preliminary guidelines for school sizes were discussed and finalized at this meeting.

Preliminary Guidelines for Preferred School Size (all factors considered)*

Elementary School Size Guidelines = a range of 300 – 550 enrolled students

Secondary School Size Guidelines = a range of 1100 – 1750 enrolled students

**Note: this includes consideration of the guideline implications developed on March 9 (school organization, staffing, student services/programs) and Oct 8 (financial considerations)*

In addition, staff provided a draft presentation on the Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP). The SMP is a provincially funded capital program with a mandate to ensure that there is sufficient seismically safe capacity to accommodate enrolment. The staff presentation illustrated how preferred school size guidelines could influence the SMP process.

8 FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUPS ON PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES

Five focus group sessions were held with stakeholder groups (DPAC, IUOE and CUPE, VSTA, VEPVPA, VASSA) between November 19 and 25, 2020, to review and provide feedback on Preliminary PSSWG School Size Guidelines. VESTA provided feedback through their working group representative.

Many of the issues and concerns raised during these focus group sessions relate to anxiety or uncertainty about the purpose, intended use and potential impact of applying proposed school size guidelines. Clarification was offered during the last four focus group sessions regarding the intended use of guidelines:

It is anticipated that preferred school size (student enrolment) guidelines will facilitate effective future, evidence-informed and transparent planning decisions including:

- Adjusting school catchment areas
- Location of district programs
- Prioritization of capital requests
- Balancing capacity with enrolment which could involve school consolidation

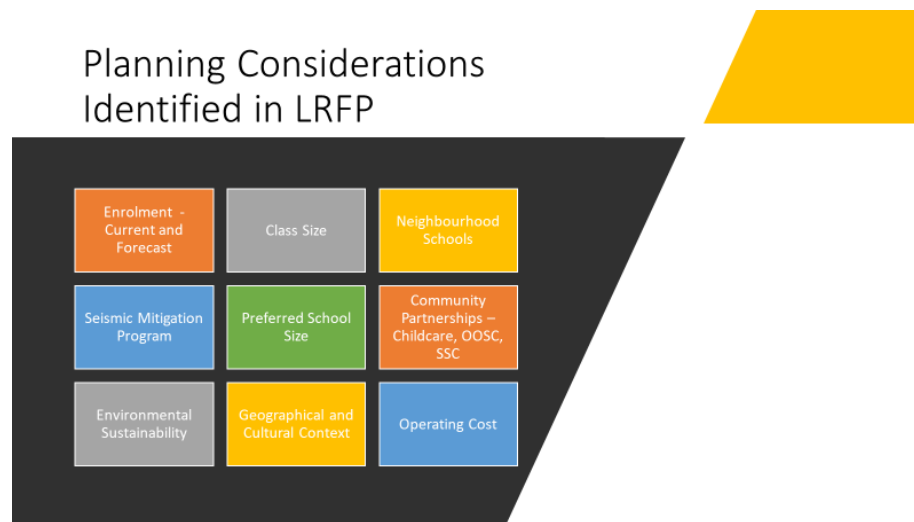
Within the focus groups, some overall themes emerged regarding the Elementary and Secondary guidelines, but some feedback was distinct to each sub-group.

8.1 Stakeholder Feedback – General Themes

The following themes were common to both Elementary and Secondary sub-groups (note – these are the strong themes, not all comments are included):

1. **Information provided was helpful to the conversation.** While questions were raised about the data as presented, it was noted in many of the focus groups that the information provided was helpful and necessary to inform the conversation
2. **Concern re: guidelines being used in isolation.** Although it was stated several times during focus groups that the guidelines would be one planning consideration amongst others, it was clear from feedback that concerns persist. Concerns included the guidelines being used in isolation, or that greater weight would be placed on the guidelines than other important considerations such as student travel distance to schools (walkability) and creating community hubs. Distance to schools was noted as a very important variable for all students, but in particular for those students at risk, as it is known that school attendance in this population is directly tied to proximity. The following visual represents the various planning factors, including school size, that would be included in a planning process. The VSB Long Range Facilities Plan Strategy 2020-2030 provides a structure for considering these planning considerations when making planning decisions.

Figure 5. Preferred school size and other planning considerations identified in the LRFP



3. **Concern re: guidelines being used to consolidate existing schools.** It was reiterated during focus groups that there will continue to be operating schools that are not within the size guidelines. Focus group comments indicated continued concerns over the VSB applying size guidelines as a rationale to close /amalgamate existing schools.
4. **Concern that schools not within the guidelines will be perceived as not providing the best educational environment.** While it was noted during focus groups that there are very good schools that fall outside of the guidelines, and that the guidelines are only one planning consideration, it was clear from the feedback that there are concerns about the potential impact of guidelines on a school’s reputation. It was noted that schools that do not currently fall within the guidelines are highly regarded by parents, students, teachers and administrators.
5. **Multiple track schools are different than single track schools.** The overall size of schools with dual/multiple program tracks may be within size guidelines. The program tracks may operate independently and experience concerns of student choice for courses and student distribution across classes that are associated with “too small” schools. In order to adequately address the needs of each stream, a dual or triple track school may need to exceed the guidelines.
6. **Guidelines are needed.** Given the planning that is occurring with respect to seismic upgrades, and given the variation of school sizes currently, school size guidelines are considered useful as one planning consideration in combination with many others (student travel to school, development plans, etc.) to support decision-making.
7. **Query re: accuracy of District enrolment projections.** Several groups queried whether the enrollment projections were accurate, especially in light of upcoming residential developments. It was noted that the guidelines are agnostic to growth (i.e., the guidelines speak to preferred school size, independent of whether overall District enrollment is going up or down). It was also noted that the District has collaborative relationships with the City of Vancouver, UBC/UEL and

local First Nations. The District is able to assess the impact of development on future enrolment trends.

8. **Need for sufficient space in new school builds.** While this concern is not directly on topic with feedback regarding preferred school size guidelines, it came up in every focus group. School size and seismic planning are linked in that the school size guidelines will be used in seismic upgrade planning. Stakeholders expressed concerns about the lack of space in new school builds for storage space, gymnasiums, libraries, sensory rooms, flex space to support extra projects/events, and the lack of ability to expand the school if needed. Information was shared to support conversations about the Seismic Mitigation Program, and groups were provided information about the Ministry processes and requirements.

Other feedback

1. **DPAC desire for additional parent input in the PSSWG process.** DPAC participants expressed a desire for more input into the PSSWG process beyond just the two Working Group representatives and the focus group session. This is not a “theme” across focus groups but is a request that DPAC wanted to ensure was brought forward. They also queried the level of input by students and Indigenous representatives
2. **IUOE and CUPE desire to be part of any future discussions re: school sizing.** There are perspectives within IUOE and CUPE that are relevant to the discussion; they would like to be at the table going forward. This is not a “theme” across focus groups but is a request this group wanted to ensure was brought forward.

8.2 Feedback Specific to Preliminary Secondary School Guidelines

Support was expressed for the guidelines in terms of impacts when secondary schools are “too small” related to a reduction in choices for students. It was stressed that school size is directly linked to equity for students. When secondary schools become “too small”, they may have a strong sense of community, but concerns were expressed about equity for students in the key areas of:

- Course and programming choice
- Co-curricular opportunities
- Extra-curricular offerings such as sports teams and clubs which impact both the sense of community pride and physical and mental well-being of students
- Supports for students

While there was support for the guidelines, some concerns were raised as follows:

- Many secondary schools currently outside of the preferred range are functioning well (great effort by teachers and administrators)
- Feedback on the lower end of the school size range varied
- VASSA participants expressed unanimous support for the proposed secondary school size guidelines
- Some teachers prefer smaller schools for the strong sense of community, even though there are more preps, splits, etc.

- Some participants noted they don't want financial considerations to be the main driver or heavily weighted in the guideline development process as there are often good reasons for higher costs (e.g., student needs)

Other Themes – not related to school size guidelines

- In addition to school size, concern regarding non-alignment between elementary and secondary school catchment boundaries was expressed. For example, having an elementary school feed into two different high schools is very disruptive/upsetting for some students and their friends and families. This is an important planning consideration.
- Access to public transit is a key consideration at the secondary school level.

8.3 Feedback Specific to Preliminary Elementary School Guidelines

Support was expressed for the preliminary guidelines, as follows:

- When elementary schools lie within the guideline range, there are more staff and resources to support each other and the students; there are also speciality teachers (e.g., librarians, music, etc.). With smaller schools there is a less specialized support and teachers must often take on multiple roles.
- Schools within the guideline range provide more options to organize classes to effectively address class composition.

Concerns were also expressed in relation to the preliminary guidelines, including:

- Some participants supported the lower end of range being at 300 and others favoured a lower range
- Strong parent support for smaller elementary schools/annexes providing a supportive learning environment and school experience. Statements in favour of smaller schools (smaller than 300) included:
 - Feeling that students with specific needs (learning/social) get the necessary support and there is inclusion
 - Split classes offer opportunities for broader social circles
 - The community aspect of smaller schools is valued
- Desire for elementary VP threshold to be lower than 400 students
 - Elementary schools are a "good size" at 350/370 students in terms of choice and programming, but with only one administrator there is a challenge in creating community building opportunities. A second administrator would make this school size work better (exception can be in tiered schools where there are already more adults)
- Don't want financial considerations to be the main driver for guidelines
- Within some smaller schools, teachers may all participate in extra-curricular activities as there is the need (e.g., a positive sense of community). In larger schools, teachers may choose to opt out, and the burden then rests unequally with those teachers willing to participate.

Other feedback – not related to school size guidelines

- The ability to walk/roll to school is very important to creating community. In tiered schools, proximity to school is one of the determinants of attendance.
- With COVID, learning hubs have been developed. Some feel that this model creates silos and diminishes the overall school community feel.

9 DECEMBER 10, 2020 MEETING

During the December 10, 2020 PSSWG meeting, an overview of findings from the focus group sessions was presented.

PSSWG participants engaged in Elementary and Secondary Sub-Group discussions to discuss feedback from the focus groups and to answer the question:

- What does focus group feedback mean for these preliminary guidelines for preferred school size?

9.1 Secondary Discussion Group – Final Implications for Guidelines

The Secondary Discussion Group discussed the focus group feedback. The Secondary Discussion Group unanimously agreed to the guidelines for secondary schools remaining as 1200-1750, but with additional wording to indicate that this should be considered as a range and that a particular secondary school may be planned to be higher or lower than this range if other planning factors suggest this is appropriate. A grade cohort of 240 results in a school size of about 1200. This grade cohort size is considered to be the lower end of the range to facilitate educational programming choice for students in the secondary student scheduling process. Examples of other factors include whether the school is single, dual or multiple track, walking distance/transportation distance, vulnerable student requirements, etc. The group also noted that secondary schools should not be planned below 1000 students, as this is a critical point at which student programming and services is impacted including academic choice, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

9.2 Elementary Discussion Group – Final Implications for Guidelines

While reflecting on focus group feedback, the Elementary Discussion Group reiterated a number of concerns raised throughout the PSSWG process including:

- Appreciation and support for annexes and concern about potential closures
- Acknowledgement of challenges in annexes (provision of service and options to organize schools to effectively address class composition)
- Desire for more administrative support at preferred school size (300 – 550)
- Acknowledgement that dual and triple track schools may be larger than the preferred elementary school size guideline range

Following a discussion of the above issues and concerns, no specific changes were proposed regarding the preliminary guidelines for preferred school sizes in elementary schools (a range of 300 to 550 enrolled students).

9.3 Recommended Guidelines for Preferred School Size

The following are the recommended preferred school size guidelines stemming from the PSSWG planning process:

Elementary School Size Guidelines = a range of 300 – 550 enrolled students

Secondary School Size Guidelines = a range of 1200 – 1750 enrolled students

Important notes when using these guidelines:

3. *Guidelines are not intended to be used in isolation, but in context with other planning considerations. See the LRFP strategy document.*
4. *Schools may ultimately be smaller or larger than the guidelines due to other planning considerations.*

Appendix 1. VSB Preferred School Size Working Group – Terms of Reference

VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD PREFERRED SCHOOL SIZE WORKING GROUP TERMS of REFERENCE

From the May 2019 Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP), the Vancouver Board of Education approved the following recommendation:

That the District establish guidelines on preferred student population size with the goal of determining appropriate ranges of school size to inform planning decisions.

This work also aligns with the VSB Strategic Plan 2016-2021, Goal 4: Provide effective leadership, governance and stewardship; Objective 2 – Implement the recommendations of the Long Range Facilities Plan.

VSB – Preferred School Size Working Group Terms of Reference	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The <i>Preferred School Size Working Group (PSSWG)</i> is an ad hoc stakeholder group convened to review, consider and discuss educational and fiscal criteria, examine current practices and draft guidelines for preferred school population sizes for VSB elementary and secondary schools. (Please see attachment for a glossary of terms and draft list of considerations.)• The identification of guidelines for preferred school population sizes will enable future planning decisions including determining school catchment areas, location of district programs, prioritization of capital plan requests for seismic projects, new schools, school additions and closures.
Guiding Principles The PSSWG's work will be guided by a student-centred approach and will follow the 2018 Long Range Facilities Plan Guiding Principles:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the overall safety and quality of facilities.• Plan for innovative learning environments that promote student engagement, student inclusion, and the delivery of diverse high-quality programs.• Effectively use school District resources and facilities in alignment with long-term financial and sustainability goals.• Work towards a future where all students wishing to attend their catchment school have the option to do so.• Sustain and strengthen our relationships with the City of Vancouver, and community partners to facilitate the delivery of services to the broader community
PSSWG Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review relevant research and current practices in other Canadian school districts• Examine a variety of considerations and factors related to school enrolment school size

PSSWG Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft guidelines for determining preferred school population sizes for VSB elementary and secondary schools. • Incorporate Working Group findings and draft guidelines in a report and present to VSB Senior Management and to VBE Facilities Planning Committee in October 2020.
Membership	<p>The Working Group will be comprised of representatives (two plus an alternate) from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA) - 2 • Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association (VESTA) -2 • Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators (VASSA) -2 • Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals Association (VEPVPA) -2 • District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC) -2 • Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC)- 2 • VSB District staff from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educational Planning and Student Information ○ Employee Services ○ Facilities ○ Learning Services ○ Student Services
Working Group Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend all meetings (or by alternate) • Represent your organization, inform your organization of the work and discussions of this Working Group, and solicit feedback throughout the process.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Working Group will work together through a consultative process as defined in the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation and will seek consensus through an informed, inclusive and transparent process that considers stakeholder needs and concerns. Stakeholder feedback will be incorporated in the draft and final reports. Working Group members will have an opportunity to review the draft report and any dissenting opinions will be documented. • The Chair of the Working Group will be John Dawson, VSB Director of Educational Planning and Student Information.
Meetings and Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of meetings proposed to be a maximum of 5. Dates and number to be finalized at the first meeting on February 10, 2020. • Meetings proposed to be on a monthly schedule and held at Education Centre, 1580 West Broadway, Vancouver. • Meeting time proposed to be 3:45 pm to 7:15 pm. Meetings may conclude earlier subject to agenda. • It is anticipated that findings and recommendations will be reported at the Facilities Planning Committee meeting in October 2020. • Meetings will follow International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) practices and may include opportunities for break out group

	discussions and development of additional input through survey, interview or focus group work.
Resource Materials and Notifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting Agendas, Meeting Minutes and relevant materials for Working Group members to review will be posted on Preferred School Size Working Group. Membership will be notified in advance of meetings when new materials have been added. Notification date to be confirmed at conclusion of each meeting.

Appendix 2. VSB Preferred School Size Working Group – Glossary of Terms and Considerations

VSB – Preferred School Size Working Group

Glossary of terms and considerations

This document provides working definitions of key terms and considerations to be included in PSSWG conversations. Additional terms will be included as the need arises.

School Size – the number of students attending a school based on the school enrolment

Relevant research – BC and Canadian context, guidelines and considerations from other school districts

Current VSB Schools and Enrolment – range of school sizes, number of schools ~~of~~ within size ranges

Seismic Mitigation Program – provincially funded program, mandate is to ensure that there are sufficient seismically safe seats to accommodate enrolment (assume about 50,000)

Programs and Services

- District Choice Programs – are programs to which students apply for enrolment
- Learning Services Student Programs – include Special Education Programs, Alternative Programs, and Alternate Inter-Agency Programs
- Student Services – are provided by many school based and District based itinerant staff including, resource teachers, counsellors, administrators, speech language pathologists, and school psychologists.

Student Programs and Services

- Programming and Choice – programming describes the courses available for a student to choose for their educational program
- Inclusion – all students are fully participating members of the school community, which includes ensuring that all students are supported to participate in regular classes with their same-age peers where appropriate.

School Organization and Staffing Considerations

- School organization – the process of determining which students will be placed in which divisions (elementary) or which students will be scheduled into which courses (secondary)
- Staff allocation – the process of allocating enrolling and non- enrolling teaching staff to schools
- Terms of the Collective Agreement – the Collective Agreement between the teachers and the employer sets out details regarding class size and composition
- Staff collaboration, program development, professional development – formal and informal opportunities for staff to learn together with the goal of improving the student learning experience
- Administrative allocation and Administrative support – the process of allocating Principal/Vice Principal (PVP) to schools, the capacity of PVP to support the school community with the goal of improving the student learning experience

Financial Considerations

- Cost per student – a financial analysis of the cost per student in each school in the District