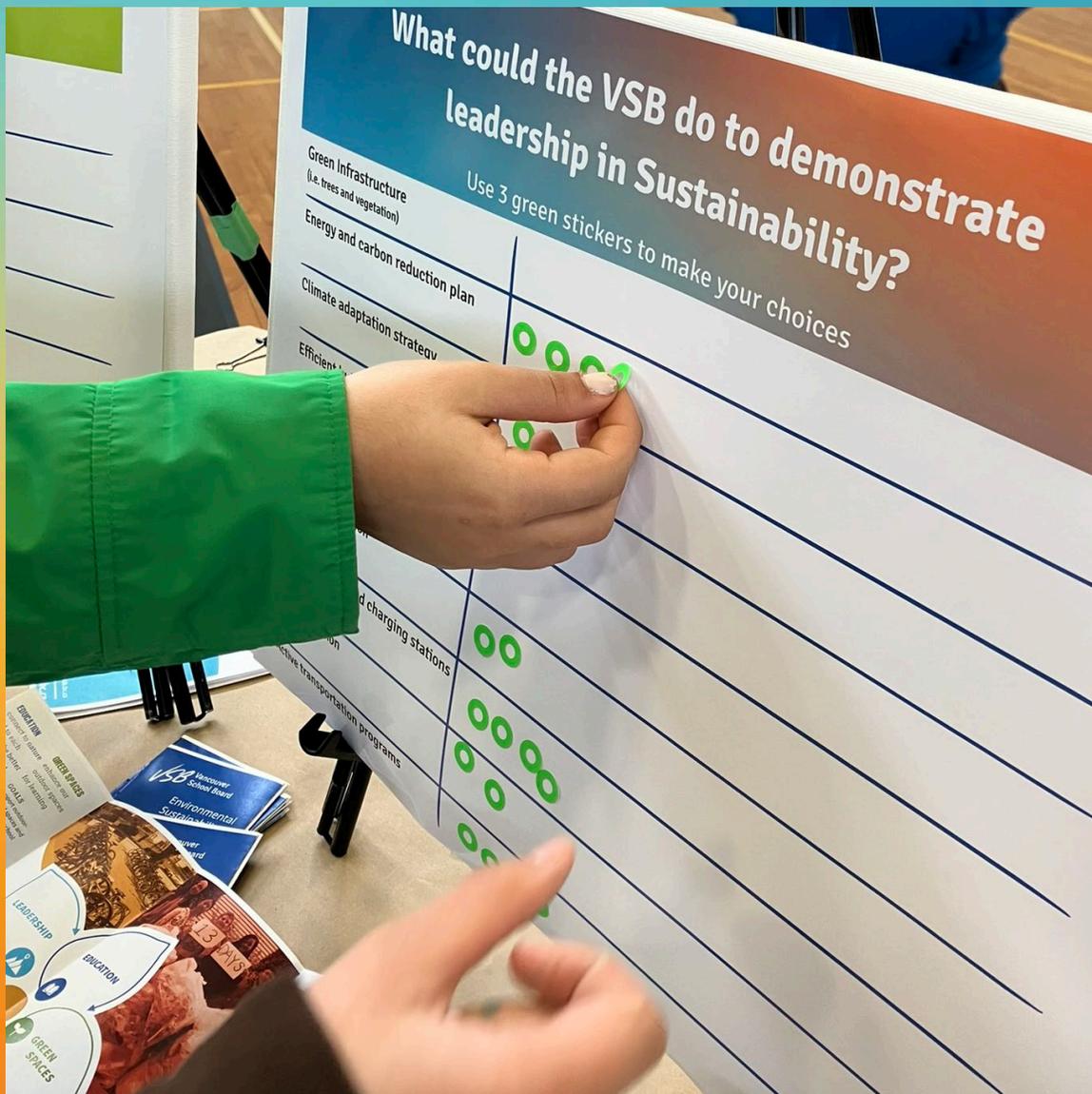


Engagement Summary for VSB Sustainability Plan



Executive Summary

Introduction

The 2018 Environmental Sustainability plan set the foundation for sustainability at the VSB. To understand the VSB's current sustainability priorities, an engagement process was undertaken to help shape updates to the plan.

Engagement Process

The engagement process ensured that priorities were heard from educators, students, families, inherent rights holders and formal stakeholder groups. Across all engagement activities, more than 2,700 individuals participated.

Engagement and Analysis

A mix of quantitative and qualitative engagement activities were conducted and information gathered through each was analyzed to arrive at key takeaways.

Key Takeaways

Feedback gathered through the various engagement activities, indicates strong support for the following priorities:

- Increase biodiversity and nature education at schools
- Foster sustainability into VSB's organizational culture
- Continue to offer more outdoor learning opportunities for students
- Improve awareness, communications and outreach about sustainability initiatives
- Invest in the expansion or enhancement of specific outdoor features to improve user experience and support broader goals like outdoor learning, community engagement, and climate resilience
- Increase professional development (Pro-D) offerings
- Participate in resource conservation initiatives
- Set greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets

1.0 Context

Background

The sustainability team has been gathering information and feedback for the purpose of updating the 2018 Sustainability Plan. The update to the plan will maintain existing core sustainability themes, and the original goals and actions will be updated and expanded to reflect VSB’s current and future sustainability priorities.

2.0 Purpose of Engagement

To guide the process of updating the 2018 Environmental Sustainability Plan, an engagement process was conducted to determine the VSB’s current sustainability and climate action priorities. Guidance and input were sought from educators, students and families, and representatives of inherent rights holders and representatives of formal stakeholder groups. This report summarizes the engagement activities and key takeaways.

Engagement Process

The goal of this engagement was to seek input from key interest groups, ensuring appropriate representation of the VSB community has been considered. The following groups were engaged:

- Inherent rights holders representatives
- Educators, Principals and Vice Principals
- Facilities Planning Committee members
- Formal stakeholder representatives
- Students and their families

The engagement activities included online surveys and in-person activities as shown below.

Participants	Engagement Method	Communications Method	Timing
Facilities Planning Committee	In-person	Facilities Planning Committee meeting	January 15, 2025
Educators	Online Survey	AMC Teams channel & distributed through administrators at each school	April 22 - May 13, 2025
Students, including the District Student Sustainability Club (“VSB Sustainability Connection”)	Dotmocracy activity	Students were invited to participate in the activity at the VSB booth at the Student Sustainability Conference	April 28, 2025
Families	Online Survey	MyEd email distribution	May 14 – 21, 2025
Inherent rights holders representatives and formal stakeholder representatives	In-person workshop	Representatives were invited to attend via email	May 28, 2025

3.0 What We Heard

This section summarizes the engagement activities and insights shared by participants through the engagement process. This report presents highlighted feedback from the engagement activities. The complete survey results are provided in the Appendices.

3.1 Facilities Planning Committee

At the Facilities Planning Committee on January 15, 2025, staff presented a report titled Sustainability Plan Update. The report provided information on sustainability initiatives including energy management during the history of the Vancouver Board of Education. The report provided a proposal to update the 2018 Sustainability Plan to further advance activity on addressing climate adaptation, mitigation and sustainability within the District.

Three key areas of focus were outlined to the committee that would be brought back as part of the updated plan:

- Review and report on all 17 actions from the 2018 Sustainability Plan to determine which goals have been completed, which are no longer relevant, and which need to be continued or modified.
- Conduct a detailed review of all future energy retrofit projects and requirements for the District. This will include a building-by-building assessment of GHG reduction potential, planning-level costs, and recommended steps to improve progress towards provincial targets.
- Advance planning for low-carbon transport and transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs) and equipment.

Committee members, trustees and stakeholder representatives provided feedback and staff answered questions and provided clarification on various points.

3.2 Educator Survey

This online survey was open from April 22, 2025 to May 13, 2025. The survey sought feedback from teachers, principals and vice principals to gain insight into their sustainability-related teaching practices, and to help identify sustainability priorities across five sustainability themes. Periodic reminders were sent to encourage participation in the voluntary survey and improve response rates. The responses were recorded anonymously, and all questions were required to complete the survey.

The survey questions were designed to better understand how aspects of existing infrastructure influence and support sustainability education and activities at the VSB. The survey included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scale questions, Likert scale questions and open-ended questions.

There were 198 respondents to the educator survey:

Demographic	Share	Sample
Elementary teachers	55%	109
Secondary teachers	26%	51
Principals & vice principals	15%	30
Other	4%	8
Total	100%	198

What We Heard

Key insights are included below, with a full summary of each sustainability topic following.

- Educators prioritized highly visible and tangible sustainability themes connected to community and nature, to showcase VSB’s leadership in sustainability, while technical and infrastructure-focused initiatives were rated as less important.
- Outdoor infrastructure gaps (covered areas, outdoor classrooms, seating) limit outdoor learning; investments towards these will likely be well received and see increase usage.
- Amongst the majority of educators, there is a perceived lack of adequate bike/scooter parking infrastructure at schools, and a significant majority who do not use bike parking infrastructure. This highlights an opportunity to promote active transportation and enhance bike rack infrastructure.
- When considering the impacts of climate change on education delivery, educators indicated a clear preference for climate adaptation measures that protect both the indoor and outdoor environments against rising temperatures, increased rainfall and drought.

A) Sustainability in Education

Educators were asked to share all the sustainability themes they incorporate into their teaching practices. All themes were represented to some extent.

Topic	Most Frequently	Moderately	Least Frequently
Sustainability themes incorporated in teaching	Learning outdoors Land-based learning Nature connection Waste reduction Gardening	Active transportation Climate change Water conservation Energy conservation	Environmental justice/activism Climate adaptation

B) Green Spaces

Educators shared opinions on various outdoor infrastructure at schools and their frequency of use.

Topic	Good	Fair	Poor
Infrastructure quality/conditions that support educational needs	School gardens Sports fields Shade trees Accessibility/inclusivity	Picnic tables Benches Outdoor classrooms	Covered areas Exploration areas

Topic	Most used	Moderately used	Least used
Infrastructure utilization for outdoor learning	School gardens Shade trees Picnic tables and benches	Outdoor classrooms Neighbourhood gardens	Compost systems Portable planters Pollinator habitats

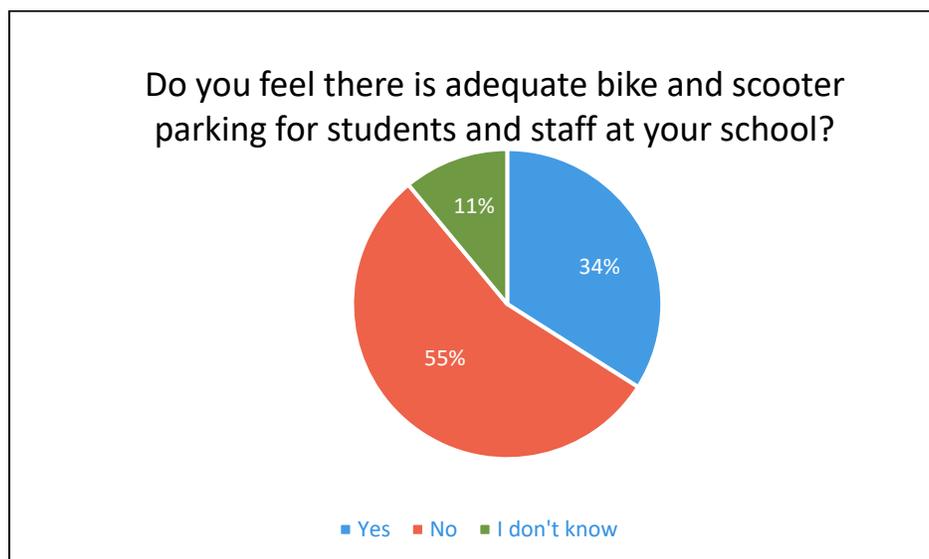
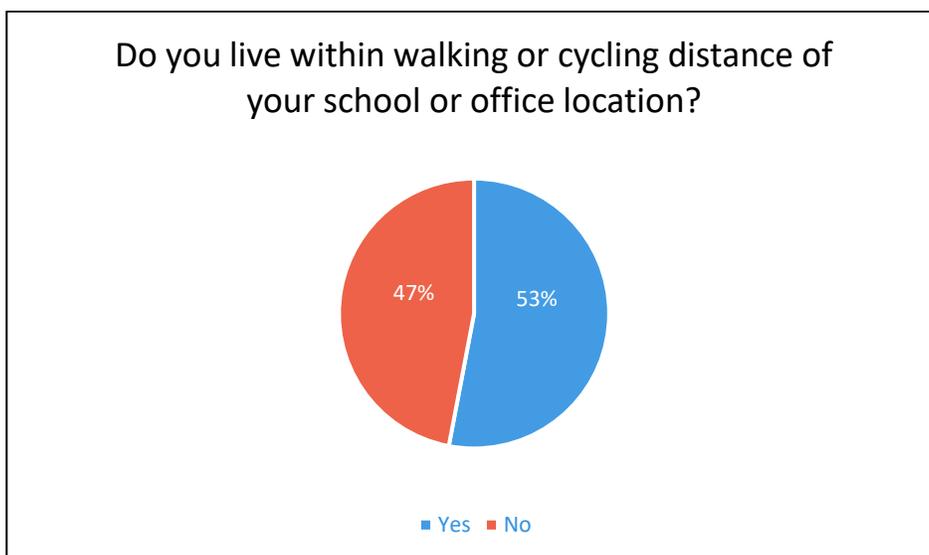
C) Leadership in Sustainability

When the survey shifted to leadership in sustainability, educators shared their opinions on what demonstrates VSB’s leadership in sustainability.

Topic	High Impact	Medium Impact	Low Impact
Initiatives that best demonstrate VSB’s leadership in sustainability	Outdoor classrooms Green infrastructure Waste reduction	Climate adaptation strategy Active transportation programs Efficient building and HVAC systems	Water conservation Energy and carbon reduction plans Electric vehicles

D) Active Transportation

Educators shared opinions about their participation in active transportation and existing bike infrastructure at their places of work.



E) Resource Conservation & Climate Change

When the survey shifted to the topic of resource conservation and climate change, educators were asked to indicate how the VSB can best prepare for climate change.

Topic	High Priority	Medium Priority	Lower Priority
VSB actions to address the impacts of climate change	Enhancing outdoor spaces to mitigate extreme heat and drought events and improving those same spaces to manage rain and storm events	Adjusting HVAC systems to better handle warmer temperatures in spring and fall	Implementing backup power and emergency procedures and building improvements to address extreme cold events.

3.3 Survey for Families

The online survey for families was distributed to all VSB families via MyEd BC and was open May 14 to May 21, 2025. The survey sought feedback from families to help gain insight into their sustainability-related priority areas. Families had no obligation or incentive to participate in the survey. Their responses were recorded anonymously, and questions were designed for flexibility (questions could be skipped). The survey included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scale questions, Likert scale questions and open-ended questions.

There were 2,537 responses.

Demographic	Share	Sample
Elementary families	58%	1,488
Secondary families	26%	662
Both elementary & secondary	16%	387
Total	100%	2,537

What We Heard

Key insights are included below, with a full summary of each sustainability topic following.

- A significant majority of families strongly support resource conservation and climate action.
- Outdoor learning opportunities exist but need expansion and infrastructure upgrades.
- Active transportation programs have low visibility and participation.

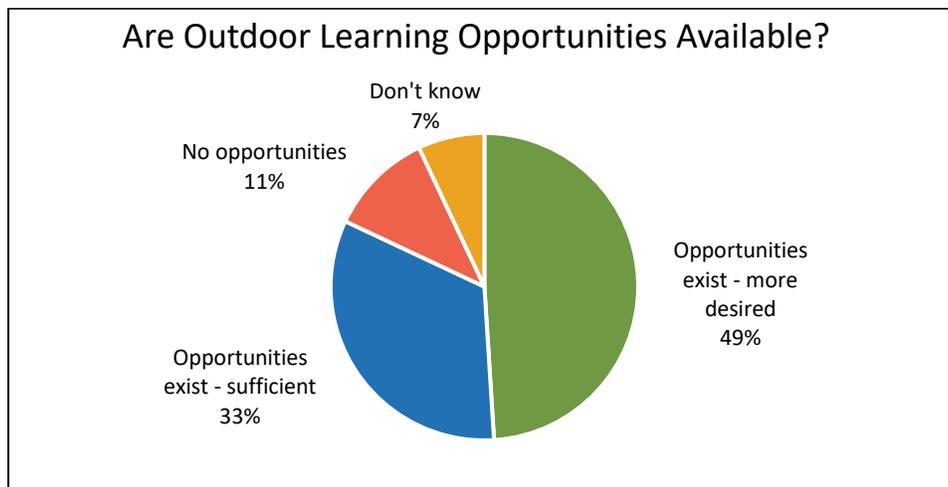
A) Sustainability in Education

Most families expressed strong support for all themes, indicating a broad interest in sustainability.

Topic	Most Important	Important	Somewhat important but still valued
Sustainability themes	Resource Conservation	Climate change and adaptation Active Transportation	Land-based learning Environmental justice

B) Green Spaces

Most families (82%) recognize that there are opportunities for outdoor learning at schools, and nearly half of respondents (49%) want even more opportunities to be provided.

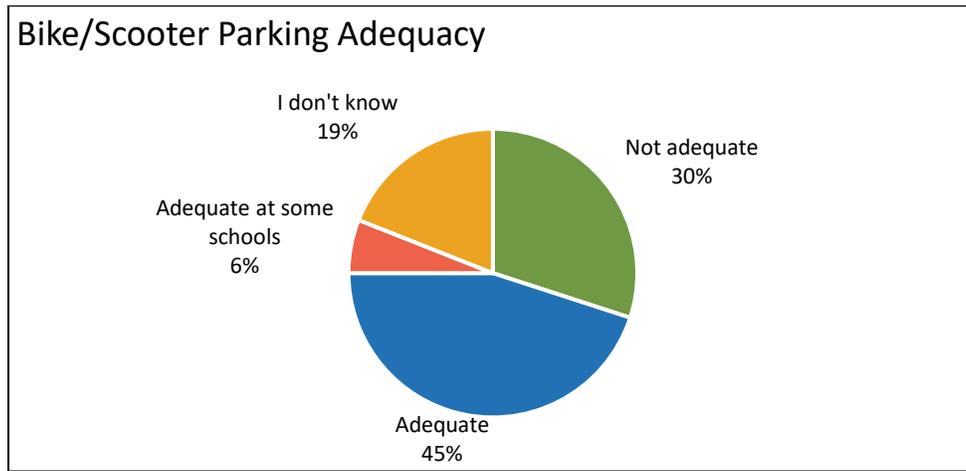


When asked to rate various outdoor infrastructure in terms of how well they support outdoor learning, families shared their opinions from school gardens to covered areas.

Topic	Good	Fair	Poor
Outdoor infrastructure and how well they support outdoor learning	Sports fields School gardens Shade trees Accessibility Exploration areas	Outdoor classrooms Picnic tables	Covered areas

C) Active Transportation

Families were asked about the adequacy of bike and scooter parking at schools:



15% of respondents reported that their school participates in an active transportation program such as Bike to School Week, Schools Streets, Walking School Bus, Bike Bus, and general encouragement from school staff and PAC.

D) Resource Conservation and Climate Change

Families strongly support resource conservation and climate action. Waste reduction was a particularly prominent topic, with strong calls to expand recycling systems and improve student awareness and waste sorting compliance.

The majority of families feel that reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at the VSB is a priority.

Topic	Very Important or Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Reducing GHG emissions	71%	19%	10%

3.4 Workshop

On May 28, 2025, inherent rights holders representatives and formal stakeholder group representatives were invited to attend a facilitated workshop. Staff presented an overview of the 2018 Environmental Sustainability Plan, including the summary results from the family survey, educator survey, and student engagement. Following the presentation, a participatory activity focused on five sustainability themes. Representatives were invited to provide their feedback and perspectives through discussions and a post it note activity.

The representatives of the following inherent rights holders were in attendance:

- xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam)
- Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation)

The representatives of the following formal stakeholder groups were in attendance:

- Professional & Administrative Staff Association (PASA)
- Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators (VASSA)
- Vancouver District Students’ Council (VDSC)
- Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice-Principals Association (VEPVPA)
- Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators’ Society (VEAES)

What We Heard

Feedback from the workshop was insightful and the following themes emerged:

Themes	What we heard
Connection to land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to integrate Indigenous principles of learning into land-based learning at schools • Increase biodiversity at school sites • Refine definition and design of outdoor classrooms to include more vegetation • Increase covered areas at schools
Facilities maintenance and enhancements Climate adaptation and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve bike and scooter parking infrastructure to encourage active travel choices and mitigate theft issues • Implement climate adaptation strategies to protect both indoor and outdoor environments
Recycling and waste reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand recycling systems and waste diversion programs

Staff also received written input from the District Parent Advisory Committee (DPAC), providing additional considerations. These include:

- Opportunities for expanding the tree canopy on school sites in alignment with the City of Vancouver’s broader green infrastructure goals.
- Desire for greener school yards (i.e. preference for grass fields instead of gravel) to improve stormwater absorption, heat mitigation, and more comfortable outdoor play time.
- Suggestions to invest in HVAC improvements as a climate adaptation strategy.

3.5 Student Engagement

On April 28, 2025, the Annual Student Sustainability Conference was held at David Thompson Secondary where approximately 100 students attended. The theme of the conference ('Oasis'), highlighted biodiversity and natural systems. VSB staff hosted a booth at the exhibition fair where a dotmocracy activity was presented. Students were given a set number of dots they could use to provide their preference. The dotmocracy activity queried student preferences in the areas of sustainability education, climate change preparedness, and leadership in sustainability. Approximately 42 of the 100 students participated in the activity. Most participants were secondary students from various schools within the VSB.

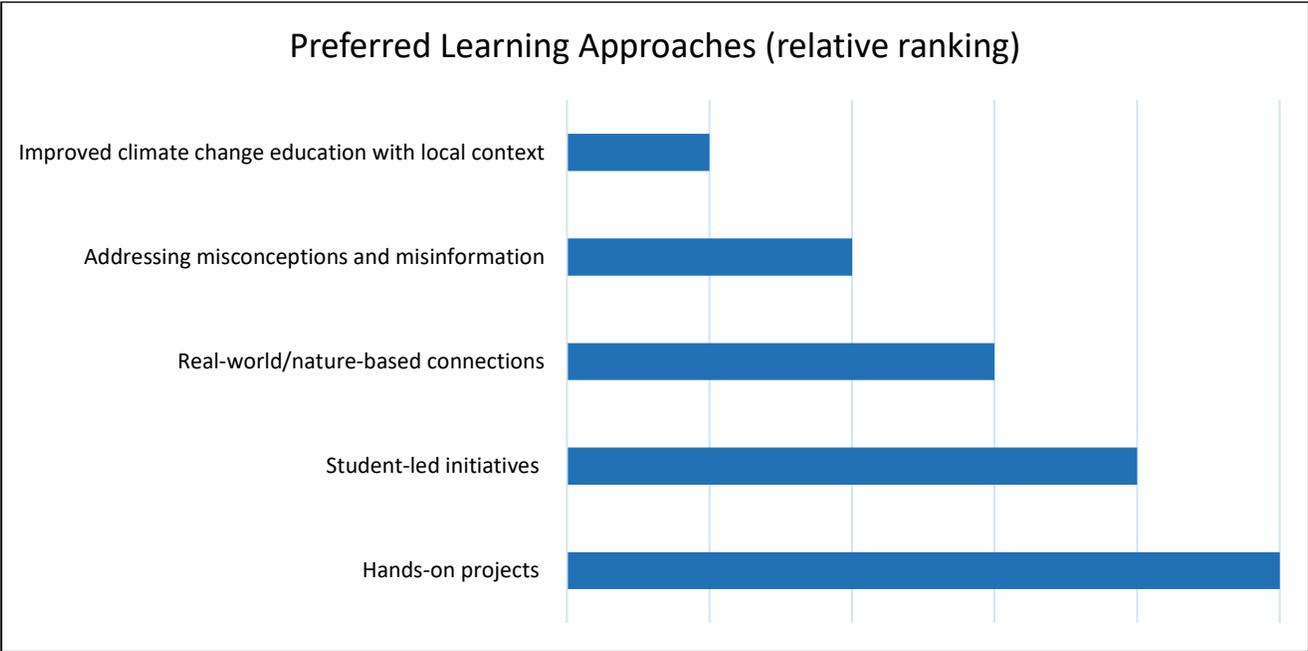
What We Heard

Key Insights from Student Engagement:

- Students indicated a clear preference for hands-on, student-led, experiential learning methods.
- Students viewed visible and nature-based initiatives that directly engage them as key indicators of VSB's leadership in sustainability.
- There is a contrast between students' learning interests and their views on active transportation. Although it was the least selected learning theme, it was ranked among the top indicators of leadership.

A) Preferred Learning Approach

Students were asked to identify their most preferred learning approach that would best prepare them for the impacts of climate change.



B) Sustainability Themes of Interest

Students expressed interest in all themes presented and were asked to choose their top 3. Aggregated results showed:

Topic	Top ranked themes overall	Moderately ranked themes	Lowest ranked themes
Sustainability themes of interest	Environmental justice/activism Climate adaptation Waste reduction	Water conservation Energy conservation Land-based learning	Active transportation

C) Leadership Priorities

Students were asked to choose the 3 most important actions VSB could do to demonstrate leadership in sustainability.

Topic	Top ranked actions overall	Moderately ranked actions	Lowest ranked actions
Actions that demonstrate leadership	Active transportation Outdoor classrooms Green infrastructure Energy and carbon reduction plans	Efficient building and HVAC systems Waste reduction Water conservation	Climate adaptation strategy Electric vehicles and charging stations

Conclusion

In consideration of the engagement results across all activities and groups, and the assessments presented in this report, the following key takeaways are presented for consideration.

Key Takeaways by Theme

Education

- Strong support for outdoor and nature-based learning – educators, families, students, inherent rightsholders, and formal stakeholders all highly value hands-on, experiential, land-based learning.
- Students prefer getting the chance to take a leadership role in their learning.
- Students benefit from hands-on, solution-oriented learning that fosters leadership and agency.
- Students recognize visible everyday actions (like active transportation) as meaningful, even if they don't want to study them in depth.

Resource Conservation and Climate Change

- Families and educators support practical sustainability actions like energy and water conservation.
- Climate-resilient infrastructure (e.g., heat pumps, insulation, solar panels) are seen as important.
- Waste reduction, especially through expanded recycling and composting, is a strong priority.

Active Transportation

- Many staff and families live within walking or cycling distance, but bike infrastructure is lacking, not secure, and underutilized.
- There is low awareness and participation in active transportation programs happening at schools.

Green Spaces

- Strong call for more green spaces and covered areas to support outdoor learning.
- Existing outdoor infrastructure is valued and utilized but could benefit from enhancements.
- Equity concerns were raised by families about uneven access to green spaces and differences in school upgrades across neighborhoods.

Leadership

- Families want more communication and involvement opportunities in school sustainability efforts.
- There is a call for demonstrable leadership in sustainability, including clearer sustainability directives, and equitable investment in infrastructure improvements.
- High engagement with Indigenous education resources shows strong alignment with sustainability goals.
- Intrinsic motivation and peer collaboration are key enablers of sustainability education.
 - Administrative support is helpful but secondary to educator initiative.
 - Sustainability efforts vary widely between schools, often depending on individual staff.