

Financial Plan Development Engagement Summary

April 14, 2025



With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

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Executive summary

Introduction

Under the *School Act*, by June 30, all school districts must approve a balanced budget for the upcoming school year. At the Vancouver School Board (VSB), all operating and financial decisions are informed by the [Education Plan](#) and priorities in the [Framework for Enhancing Student Learning report](#).

Budget development engagement

VSB encourages input and feedback as part of the budget development process. Guidance is sought with inherent rights holders through the Indigenous Education Council (IEC), input is gathered from the District's formal stakeholder groups: unions, associations, the District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC) and the Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC). Feedback is also gathered from students, their families, staff and the broader Vancouver public through an online survey.

Written submissions via electronic and traditional mail and presentations to the Board during dedicated public delegation meetings is also encouraged. These additional input opportunities remain open until April 25, 2025.

Engagement and analysis methodology

A mix of quantitative and qualitative activities were implemented and information gathered through each was analyzed to arrive at key takeaways. An inductive approach was utilized in the analysis to develop the engagement summary report.

Key findings

Input by representatives of VSB's formal stakeholder groups and feedback gathered via an online survey for public participation, reveal strong consensus on several key priorities. There is an emphasis on the importance of increasing direct support to students, addressing staff retention and recruitment as well as enhancing community and Indigenous engagement. Additionally, there was significant support for promoting student mental health and well-being, recognizing and celebrating diversity and improving accessibility within the education system. These insights provide valuable guidance for the Board in making informed decisions that align with the Education Plan and the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) report, ensuring that the educational experiences of all students are supported and enhanced.

Introduction

Under the *School Act*, all school districts must approve a balanced budget. At the Vancouver School Board (VSB) all operating and financial decisions are informed by the Education Plan and priorities in the FESL report.

Financial plan development process



VSB encourages input and feedback as part of the budget development process. Hearing priorities, seeking input and receiving feedback are key elements to the Board's budget considerations. To this end, guidance was sought from inherent rights holders, input by representatives of the formal stakeholder groups that include unions, associations, the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) and the Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC) as well as feedback from students, their families, staff and the broader Vancouver public. Public engagement for the 2025-2026 financial plan engagement therefore rested in the inform, consult and involve areas of the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#).

VSB is committed to transparent and accountable public engagement and stakeholder feedback processes to inform planning decisions. Engagement processes are designed and developed in accordance with Board policy and [District Administrative Procedure 100](#), aligned with the IAP2 spectrum.

This report summarizes the engagement activities and key takeaways.

Engagement activities and analysis

Engagement and analysis methodology

A mix of quantitative and qualitative activities were implemented and results were analyzed to arrive at key takeaways. An inductive approach was followed in assessing the information gathered as part of this engagement. This yields an objective presentation of data gathered across engagement activities and audience segments. To aid in the review, artificial intelligence assistance was utilized to limit manual input. All information gathered was first reviewed by qualified professionals and assessed for accuracy prior to interpretations and analysis.

Together with other considerations, the key takeaways provide valuable insights for the Board as it considers the 2025-2026 budget.

Guidance by inherent rights holders

VSB's Education Plan includes a goal to continue our reconciliation journey with First Nations, Métis and Inuit. One of the ways to do this is by aligning policies and practices in a manner consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the calls-to-action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. VSB is advised about priority areas of focus at gatherings and meetings with x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) and with the Indigenous Education Council (IEC). This guidance and input informs ongoing work to support Indigenous learners and VSB's reconciliation journey.

As part of the financial planning process, feedback from inherent rights holders, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation), includes:

Education and academic progress:

- Budget allocations to improve academic progress and graduation rates for Indigenous learners by providing support through Indigenous education teachers and Indigenous education workers.
- Ensure a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy development for Indigenous students, with culturally appropriate learning resources.
- There was a call to focus on supporting Indigenous students at the secondary school level to support students who are at risk of not graduating.

Cultural and experiential learning:

- Include budget support for robust cultural and experiential learning opportunities that prioritize the history, culture, teachings and languages of host nations.
- Increased land-based learning activities with a focus on host nations' teachings and priorities was also highlighted.

Language revitalization:

- Advocacy for increased funding in areas such as language revitalization, and financial support for language teacher training and curriculum development.
- Work with the host nations to ensure professional development opportunities supporting hənqəmiñəm and Skwxwú7mesh snichim ' language teachers.

Support for Indigenous families experiencing financial hardship:

- Assistance for Indigenous families with low income to access school supplies, cover school fees, participate in field trips, and ensure food security.

Indigenous teacher training:

- Separate funding to support Indigenous teacher training so that Indigenous staff can access grants or scholarships to continue their education and become teachers, principals and senior administrators.

Collaboration and sharing:

- Support Indigenous education enhancement teachers and workers by providing opportunities to collaborate and share ideas about instructional strategies and interventions that are working to support Indigenous student success.

Additionally of note for this year's financial planning process, in June 2024, the Ministry of Education and Child Care (Ministry) issued Ministerial Order No. M217, Indigenous Education

Council Order. IECs have approval authority for Indigenous education targeted funding plans, spending and reporting. The IEC also advises and makes recommendations to the school board about supports for Indigenous learners. As part of this ongoing collaboration, the IEC meeting scheduled for April 14 will include consideration of VSB's financial plans.

Input by formal stakeholder groups

Meetings with each of VSB's formal stakeholder groups (unions, associations, DPAC and the VDSC) were held in February. These meetings provided an opportunity for stakeholder group representatives to share their input about budget matters. Following, in early March, a workshop was held, bringing together representatives from all stakeholder groups. Trustees Chan-Pedley, Fraser, Jung and Richardson attended the workshop to hear stakeholders' perspectives directly. District staff facilitated small group discussions focusing on two questions:

- 1) How do we move forward with overall fewer resources from the provincial government in a way that supports shared priorities and the achievement of the Education Plan's goals?
- 2) Think three to five years into the future: what are the big redesign moves/ideas/initiatives that we should consider to advance our goals?
 - What will we see when the implementation is complete?
 - What steps do we need to take to get there?
 - Why is it important?

Following discussion of each question, participants' input was organized in like themes and posted for a gallery walk. Stakeholder representatives then reviewed input given by all small group discussion tables and shared what resonated with them in a final report out session. See Appendix A - Financial Plan Workshop Engagement for additional information.

Key takeaways:

1. **Prioritizing direct support:**
 - Increasing direct support to students and focusing on front-line workers was emphasized. This includes mechanisms like staffing reviews at both District and school levels.
2. **Addressing retention and recruitment:**
 - Retention and recruitment of staff, particularly teachers and support staff, is a key priority, as well as investing in professional development.

3. Community and Indigenous engagement:

- Continue to strengthen engagement with community partners and including Indigenous communities in the financial planning process is important. This also involves creating partnerships to enhance career pathways for students.

4. Transparency and trust:

- Ensuring transparency in communication and building trust among staff and stakeholders is crucial, especially in times of tight budgets. This includes respecting and recognizing staff ideas for improvement.

These themes and takeaways reflect the collective priorities and strategies discussed during the workshop to advance the goals of the Education Plan.

Online survey feedback

In addition, an online survey sought feedback from students, their families, staff and the broader community. These groups were also informed about other ways to share their input as part of the budget development process. Written submissions are open until April 25, 2025 (via electronic or traditional mail) as well as the opportunity to present to the Board at its public delegation meeting dedicated to budget input, scheduled for April 23, 2025.

Survey format and promotion

As one input to inform the Board's financial decisions, the survey sought to gauge support for several priority areas. Prior to seeking public input, development of the survey was aided by feedback from members of [VSB Voices](#) (community members who have volunteered to share feedback and guidance to help inform the District's strategic planning and initiatives). During a focus group session, participants provided feedback and suggestions about the survey's questions to improve accessibility, understanding and applicability to a wide audience.

The online survey opened with a brief overview of the budget development process and sought feedback about two general areas: advancing student learning and academic excellence as well as improving equity in our education system. Several questions under these two priority areas were presented. At the end of each of the two sections, participants were invited to share other suggestions to further these aims. Lastly, survey participants were asked to share some high level demographic information including their postal code, relationship to the school district and how they arrived at the survey itself.

The survey was available from March 5-16, 2025. Participation was promoted using VSB-owned channels. Direct email messages were distributed twice to all students' families and adult education students. Other promotion included social media posts, links in school newsletters, website postings (District and schools' sites), an email to staff and intranet posting as well as reminder messages posted in TEAMS channels. Survey participation was also encouraged by VSB chair Jung in her opening remarks at the Board meeting held March 10, 2025.

Survey participation

Based on an analysis of the postal codes submitted, participation generally reflects Vancouver's residential dispersion and generally aligns with VSB enrolment trends across the city. In addition, when asked how they were led to the survey, the majority of responding participants (85.5 per cent) indicated they arrived at the survey through emails from VSB Engage. This indicates that email campaigns are highly effective in reaching and engaging audiences. Links shared by schools was indicated by 9.5 per cent of those who responded to this query. Overall, participation is consistent as in previous years, while slightly lower this year.

The majority of respondents were family members of students enrolled in VSB schools, comprising a substantial 77.09 per cent (2,870 participants). This overwhelming participation from families underscores their deep investment and interest in VSB's decisions. Breaking down the family member respondents further reveals that 69.78 per cent (2,023 participants) were connected to elementary schools/programs, while 16.52 per cent (479 participants) were associated with secondary schools/programs. Additionally, 13.69 per cent (397 participants) had ties to both elementary and secondary schools/programs, indicating a broad spectrum of engagement of students' families.

Students also contributed to the survey, making up 7.84 per cent (292 participants). This engagement from the student body highlights the importance of incorporating student voices in decision-making processes, ensuring that their needs and perspectives are adequately represented.

VSB staff members, including teachers and administrators, formed another significant portion of the survey participants, accounting for 14.1 per cent (525 participants). Their firsthand experiences and professional insights are invaluable in identifying areas for improvement and implementing effective strategies.

Members of the broader Vancouver public also took part in the survey, albeit in smaller numbers, representing less than one per cent (36 participants).

Survey response analysis

Overall, the survey results indicate strong support to advance student learning and advance academic excellence as well as promote academic excellence as well as to improve equity within the education system.

These areas reflect the Education Plan as well as the FESL that, together, provide the strategic direction for VSB.

Analysis

Survey participants were presented with several options to advance student learning and academic excellence. There were four priorities presented:

- Build capacity of teachers and administrators to identify and adapt to students' learning needs.
- Ensure all students learn essential reading, writing, math skills and develop critical and creative thinking.
- Teach digital literacy so students can safely access and use the appropriate tools for their learning.
- Use our buildings more effectively to support student learning now and in the future.

Overall, there was strong support indicated for each.

Key Takeaways:

1. **High support for essential skills:** The highest level of strong support was for ensuring all students learn essential reading, writing, math skills, and develop critical and creative thinking (Q2), with 73.12 per cent strongly supporting this initiative.
2. **Moderate support for teacher capacity building:** Building capacity of teachers and administrators to identify and adapt to students' learning needs (Q1) received strong support from 50.23 per cent of respondents, indicating a moderate level of endorsement.
3. **Digital literacy:** Teaching digital literacy skills (Q3) had 45.91 per cent strong support, showing a significant but slightly lower endorsement compared to other initiatives.
4. **Effective use of buildings:** Using buildings more effectively to support student learning (Q4) also had a strong support rate of 45.02 per cent, indicating a positive reception but with a notable percentage of neutral responses (16.06 per cent).

This section concluded with an invitation to participants to submit additional comments with other suggestions to advance student learning and promote academic excellence. Comments submitted generally aligned with the above priority areas, and noted:

- A call for greater support for diverse learners (more dedicated direct funding, staffing supports, etc.).
- Enhanced digital literacy and technology in schools, while balancing concerns about screen time and device access (notably with respect to age appropriateness).
- Additional opportunities for financial literacy education.
- The desire for affordable school meal programs for students, with notable concerns raised about the cost of hot lunch programs.

- Better support for teachers and staff including pay¹, recruitment and retention as well as professional development needs.
- Optimizing the use of school buildings and addressing the maintenance of old schools and improving energy efficiency.
- Concerns about the current assessment and grading system² with calls for clearer criteria and a return to the traditional letter grades.
- Importance of extracurricular activities including more academic-focused after-school programs and activities that engage students outside of the classroom.

The second section of the survey asked participants to indicate their level of support for several ways to improve equity in our education system. Topics in this section included:

- Promotion of student mental health and well-being with more resources and a focus on social-emotional well-being.
- Continue recognition, celebration and learning about diverse cultural identities and lived experiences.
- Improve accessibility for students, staff and community members.

Commitment to reconciliation within VSB is deeply rooted in goal 3 of the Education Plan. In addition, the school district's FESL report includes dedicated measures to advance reconciliation, expand Indigenous ways of learning, knowing and being as well as to support students who identify as Indigenous in their learning journeys. However, a question related to this priority was pulled from the survey. This decision was made following feedback from District staff and members of the IEC. It was perceived that the approach used to measure support in the question could unintentionally cause harm. As such, it was removed from the survey. While some survey participants completed the survey prior to this question's removal, the analysis does not include those responses. Additionally, there were several comments about ways to improve equity within our education system by survey participants that emphasized the importance of teachings of and learning about Indigenous cultures, traditions, histories and languages.

Overall, the survey responses regarding improving equity in our education system indicate there is high support of measures to improve equity in the education system, particularly in the areas of mental health, diversity and accessibility.

¹ Teacher salaries are provincially bargained.

² The Ministry of Education and Child Care directs the Framework for Classroom Assessment for BC school districts.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Strong support for mental health and well-being initiatives:** A significant majority of participants (more than 80 per cent) either strongly support or support promoting student mental health and well-being with more resources and a focus on social-emotional learning. This indicates a high level of agreement on the importance of mental health initiatives in the education system.
2. **Recognition, learning about and celebration of diversity:** There is strong support (more than 70 per cent) for continuing recognition, celebration and learning about diverse cultures, identities and lived experiences. Participants believe that diversity and inclusion are crucial elements that should be integrated into the education system.
3. **Improving accessibility:** Improving accessibility for students, staff and community members also received strong support (more than 80 per cent). This suggests that participants recognize the importance of making educational environments more accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities.

This section concluded with an invitation for survey participants to include additional suggestions to improve equity within the education system. Comments submitted reveal a range of opinions and underscore the complexity of achieving equity in education. Comments indicate varying perspectives about what equity means and how it should be implemented. Comments submitted noted:

- Importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge, values and ways of being into the education system.
- A call to addressing systemic discrimination.
- The importance of mental health support for students.
- Equitable access to resources and implementing inclusive policies.
- Incorporating diverse cultural and lived experiences into the curriculum.
- Improving accessibility in schools, such as adding ramps and ensuring buildings are accessible.
- A call for providing teachers with training on multicultural education and fair teaching methods.
- The importance of involving parents/guardians and the community in promoting equity.

See Appendix B - Survey: VSB 2025-2026 Budget for additional response details

Conclusion

Guidance, input and feedback gathered through the engagement activities provide valuable insights into the community's priorities and concerns regarding VSB's 2025-2026 financial plan. The key takeaways highlight the importance of prioritizing direct support for students, addressing staff retention and recruitment, engaging with community and Indigenous partners, and ensuring transparency and trust in communication.

The survey results indicate strong support for advancing student learning and promoting academic excellence, particularly in ensuring essential skills. Additionally, there is significant support for initiatives to improve equity in the education system, with a focus on mental health, diversity and accessibility.

These insights are an important guide for the Board in making decisions that align with the Education Plan and the FESL. By addressing the identified priorities and incorporating the community's feedback, the Board can continue to support and enhance the educational experiences of all students.

Appendices

[Appendix A – Financial Planning Workshop Engagement Summary](#)

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Appendix A – Financial Planning Workshop Engagement Summary

March 5, 2025, 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

VSB Education Centre, Room 180

Small Group Discussions Summary

Attendees:

Flavia Coughlan (secretary-treasurer), Helen McGregor (superintendent), Patricia MacNeil (director, communications), Paul Rosberg (manager, financial planning and analysis), Amanda Poon (recorder), Cornelia Haack (recorder)

Table 1:

- Dan Blue (executive director, finance), Victoria Jung (trustee), Mike Logan (trades), Jason Lauzon (VASSA), Carl Janze (VSTA), Marjorie Dumont (VEAES), Hayden O'Connor (PASA)

Table 2:

- Pete Nuij (associate superintendent), Janet Fraser (trustee), Vanessa Lefebvre (VEAES), Benita Kwon (VASSA), Mackenzie Chung (VDSC)

Table 3:

- Pedro da Silva (associate superintendent), Suzie Mah (trustee), Christopher Richardson (trustee), Chris Brown (CUPE 15), Dana Aweida (VEPVPA), David Schaub (DPAC)

Table 4

- Michael Gray (executive director, employee services), Lois Chan-Pedley (trustee), Justin Chapman (BCVSBMTU), Stephen Leung (VEPVPA), Kai Nishimura (VDSC), John Silver (VSTA)

Reporting Out

Table 1:

- Trust and relationships are essential: pulling together; must be in position where we have relationships developed; believe people we are working with act in best interest for classroom.
- Ensure flow of feedback, efficiencies found by the person closest to those doing the work
- Direct services for students and classrooms: school and students are the focus.
- Core focus on what support is needed in the classroom.

Table 2:

- Increase direct support to students – as much support as possible into the classroom.
- Mechanism: staffing review at district and school level
- Service delivery to support students.
- Community partnerships; space usage and professional learning opportunity – doing it better with what we currently have.

Table 3:

- Less money in the system as inflation has gone up, transparency piece instills trust in staff
- Prioritizing staff retention and everything that is close to school and classrooms.
- E-Pro options to create efficiencies in the system.
- Working with the City of Vancouver to share resources and find financial benefits

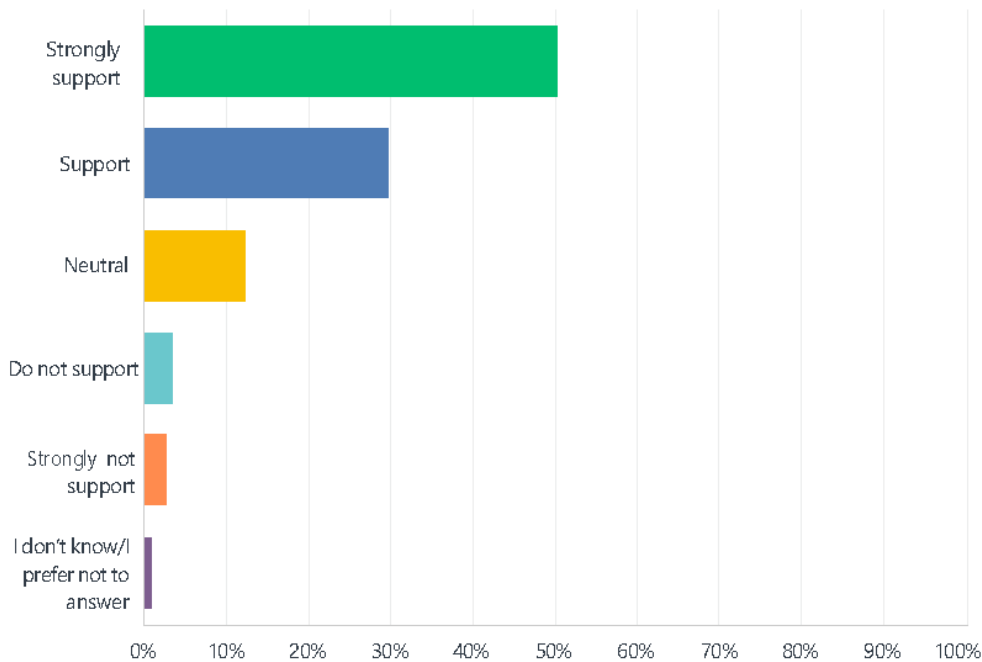
Table 4

- Student engagement and peer support; gathering feedback from students incorporating it into existing endeavors.
- Community partnerships: creating and accessing career paths forward for students; create efficiencies where students can get course credits through programs (ex. Medical, trades); need a funding mechanism to support them.
- Employee and student engagement
- Planning for the future (short and long term) around maintenance: planning proactively for the facilities to preserve the infrastructure of existing building and include technologies available in the building

Appendix B – Survey: VSB 2025-2026 Budget

Q1 Build capacity of teachers and administrators to identify and adapt to students' learning needs. This may include providing training to teachers to better meet the diverse learning needs of all students using universal design for learning (UDL) strategies. UDL involves presenting information in various formats like text, audio or video. Building capacity also means providing teachers time to plan lessons together and share effective teaching methods. **RATING:**

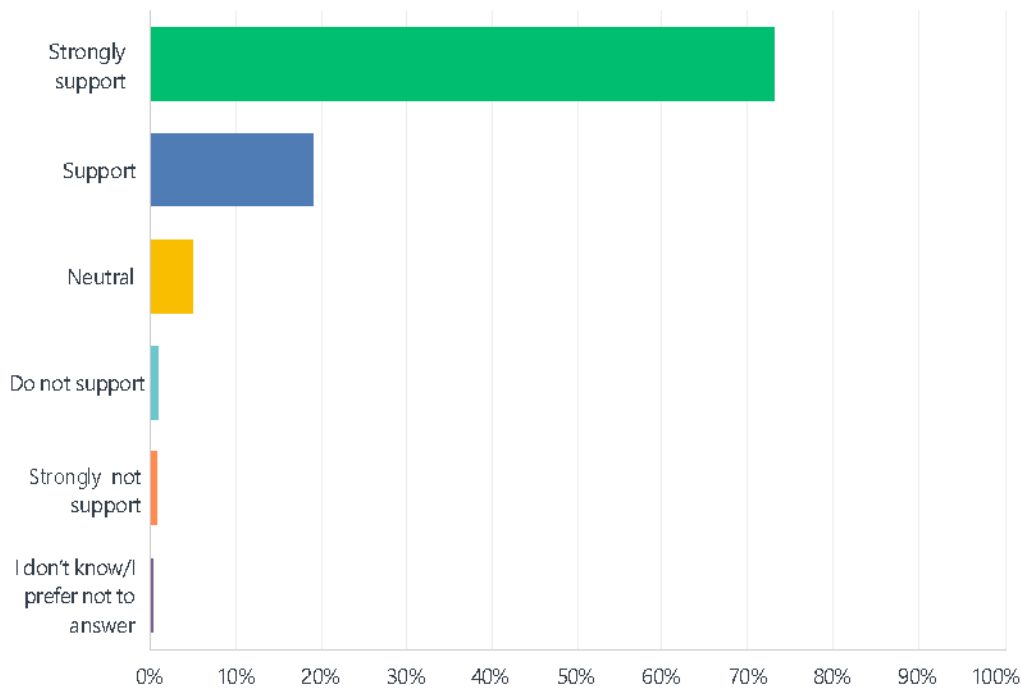
Answered: 4,139 Skipped: 32



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	50.23%	2,079
Support	29.86%	1,236
Neutral	12.42%	514
Do not support	3.62%	150
Strongly not support	2.75%	114
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	1.11%	46
TOTAL		4,139

Q2 Ensure all students learn essential reading, writing, math skills, and develop critical and creative thinking. This may include doing more early literacy screenings and helping staff use data to better inform the way they teach and assess students' learning. RATING:

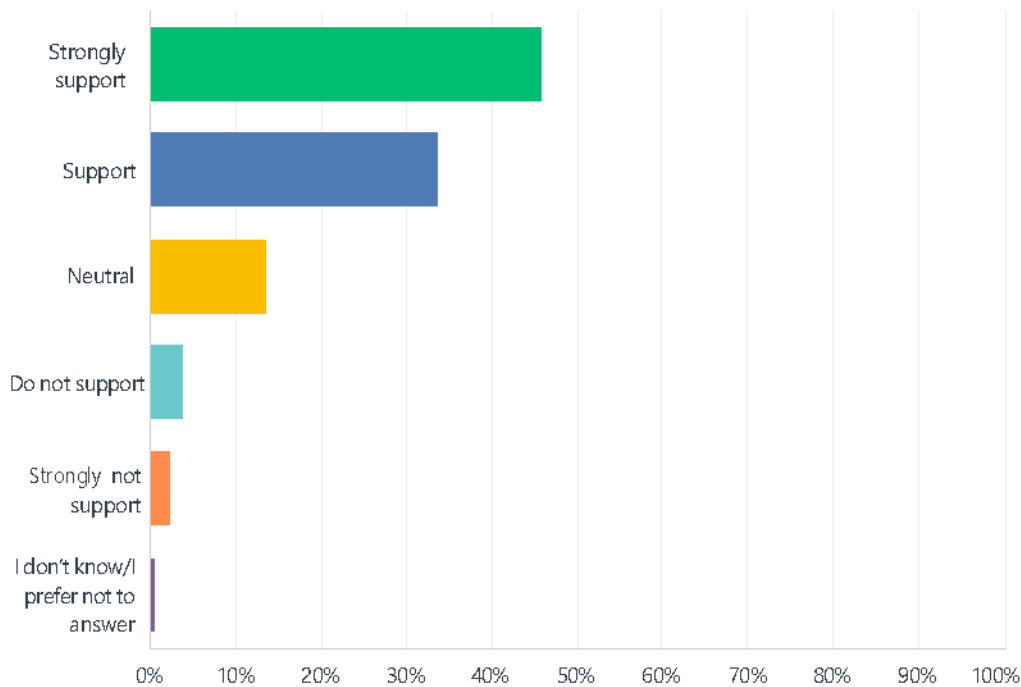
Answered: 4,148 Skipped: 23



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	73.12%	3,033
Support	19.29%	800
Neutral	5.16%	214
Do not support	1.13%	47
Strongly not support	0.77%	32
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	0.53%	22
TOTAL		4,148

Q3 Teach digital literacy skills so students can safely access and use the appropriate tools to support their learning. This means helping staff and students improve their digital literacy skills to use technology safely for learning. This includes using devices, finding and checking information online, creating digital content and learning about AI. RATING:

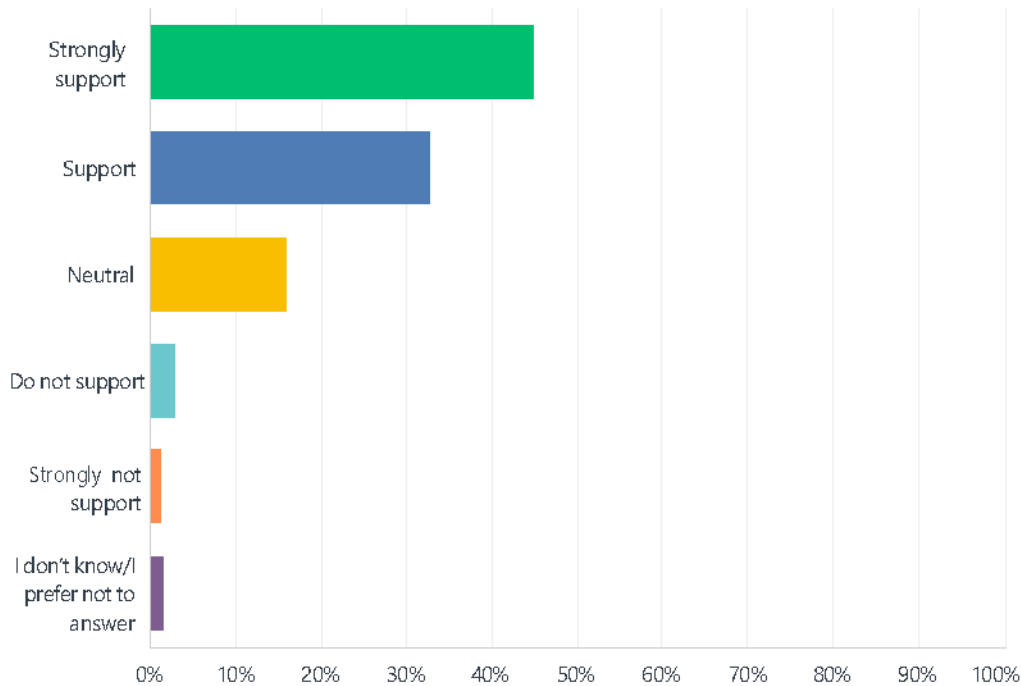
Answered: 4,147 Skipped: 24



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	45.91%	1,904
Support	33.64%	1,395
Neutral	13.67%	567
Do not support	3.79%	157
Strongly not support	2.39%	99
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	0.60%	25
TOTAL		4,147

Q4 Use our buildings more effectively to support student learning now and in the future. This may include having more students attend modern and seismically safe schools. It could also include finding ways to use less energy and save money on maintaining old schools.RATING:

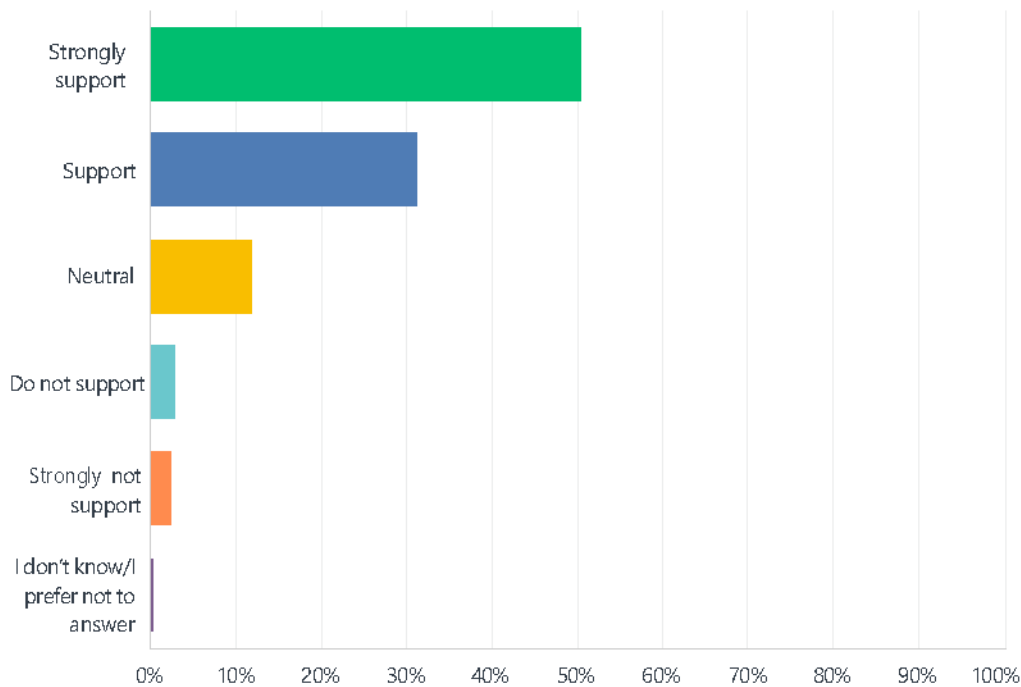
Answered: 4,140 Skipped: 31



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	45.02%	1,864
Support	32.78%	1,357
Neutral	16.06%	665
Do not support	3.00%	124
Strongly not support	1.33%	55
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	1.81%	75
TOTAL		4,140

Q6 Promote student mental health and well-being with more resources and a focus on social-emotional learning. This may include teaching students to understand and manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals and maintain positive relationships. It may also include materials that promote mental health. RATING:

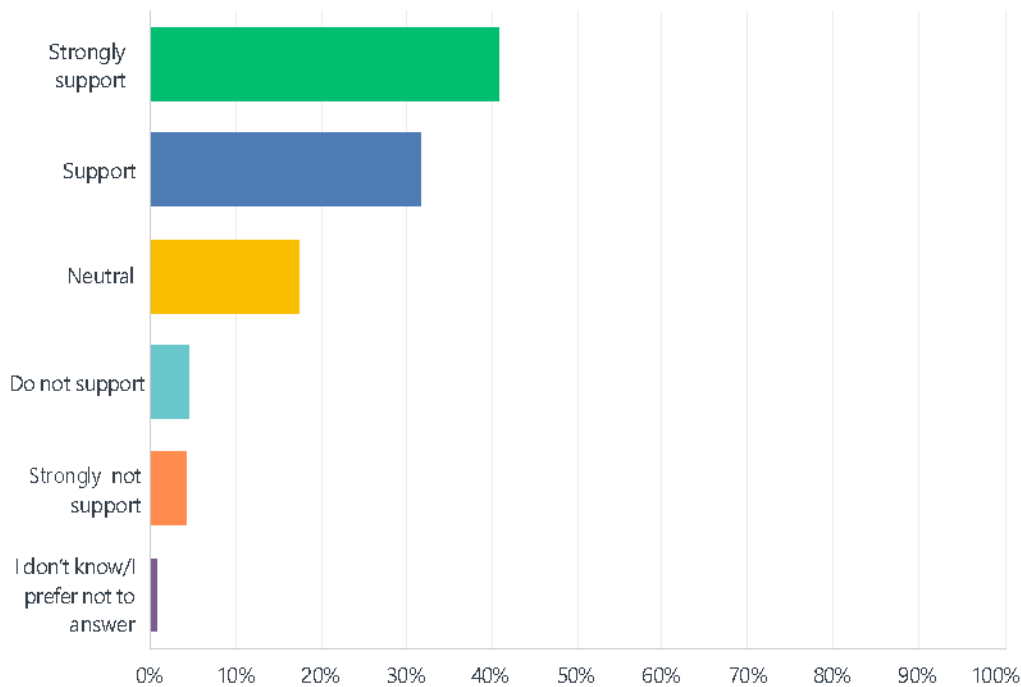
Answered: 3,922 Skipped: 249



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	50.61%	1,985
Support	31.34%	1,229
Neutral	12.03%	472
Do not support	2.96%	116
Strongly not support	2.58%	101
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	0.48%	19
TOTAL		3,922

Q7 Continue recognition, celebration and learning about diverse cultures, identities and lived experiences. This includes continuing to teach about, recognize and celebrate different cultures and identities. It also includes helping staff include principles of diversity and fairness in classrooms and school activities. RATING:

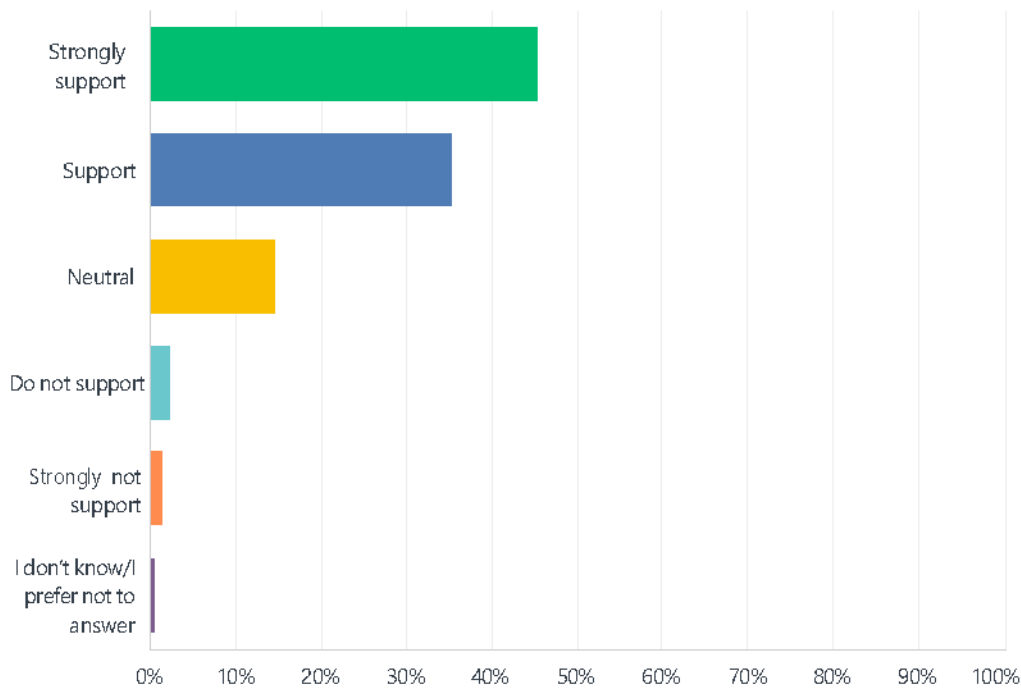
Answered: 3,921 Skipped: 250



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	40.98%	1,607
Support	31.73%	1,244
Neutral	17.39%	682
Do not support	4.74%	186
Strongly not support	4.31%	169
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	0.84%	33
TOTAL		3,921

Q8 Improve accessibility for students, staff and community members.
 Improving accessibility at schools and workplaces is a priority, including for those with disabilities that are not apparent. This includes considering attitudes, systems, technology and physical spaces. **RATING:**

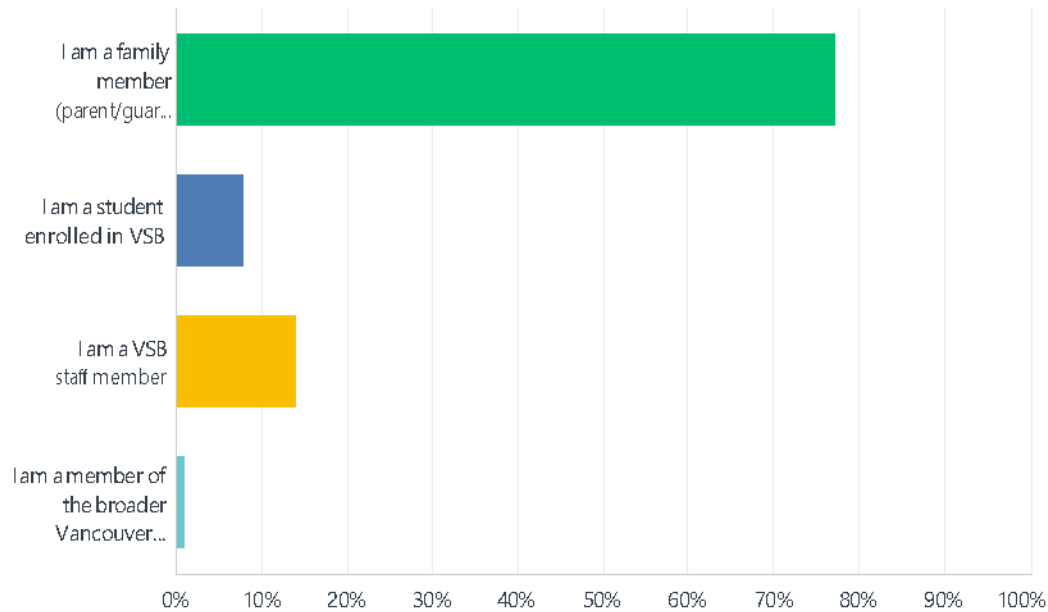
Answered: 3,910 Skipped: 261



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly support	45.47%	1,778
Support	35.45%	1,386
Neutral	14.63%	572
Do not support	2.35%	92
Strongly not support	1.46%	57
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	0.64%	25
TOTAL		3,910

Q11 What describes you best?

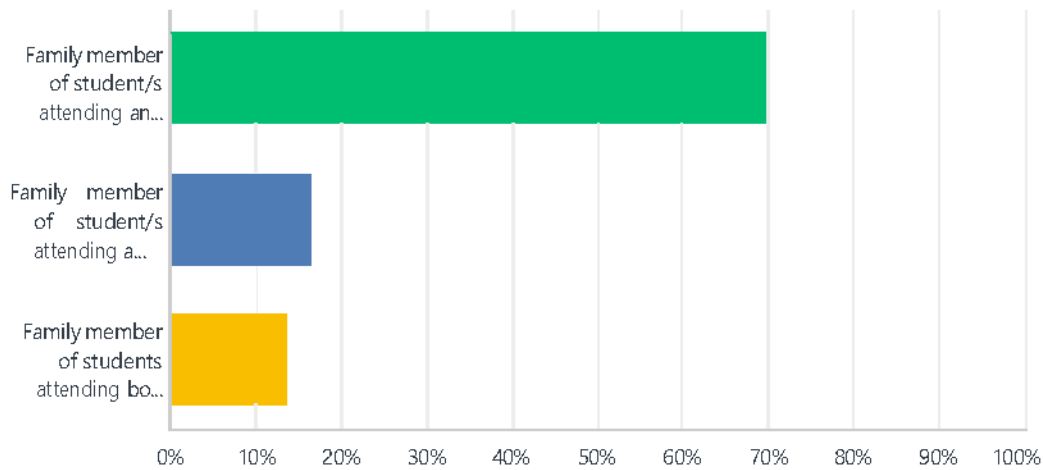
Answered: 3,723 Skipped: 448



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I am a family member (parent/guardian/other relative/caretaker) of a student/students enrolled in VSB	77.09%	2,870
I am a student enrolled in VSB	7.84%	292
I am a VSB staff member	14.10%	525
I am a member of the broader Vancouver public	0.97%	36
TOTAL		3,723

Q12 What describes you best?

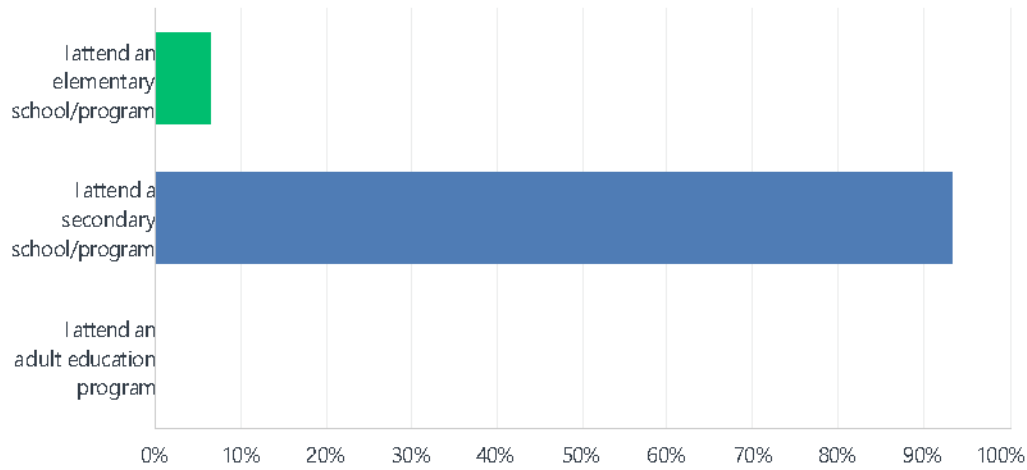
Answered: 2,899 Skipped: 1,272



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Family member of student/s attending an elementary school/program	69.78%	2,023
Family member of student/s attending a secondary school/program	16.52%	479
Family member of students attending both an elementary school/program and a secondary school/program	13.69%	397
TOTAL		2,899

Q13 What describes you best?

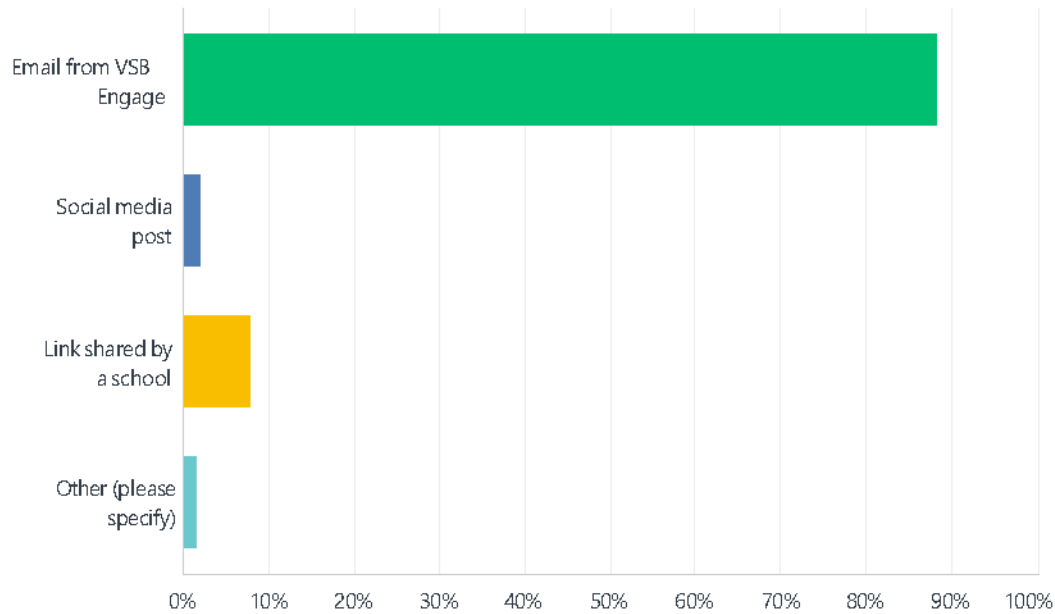
Answered: 299 Skipped: 3,872



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I attend an elementary school/program	6.69%	20
I attend a secondary school/program	93.31%	279
I attend an adult education program	0.00%	0
TOTAL		299

Q14 Which of the following led you to this survey?

Answered: 3,758 Skipped: 413



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Email from VSB Engage	88.27%	3,317
Social media post	2.10%	79
Link shared by a school	7.85%	295
Other (please specify)	1.78%	67
TOTAL		3,758