



Summary Report of the Vancouver School Board Budget 2017 Consultation Survey

INTRODUCTION:

The Vancouver School Board (VSB) consulted stakeholders on the 2017 Budget. Over the last several years, the Vancouver School Board (VSB) has been facing financial pressures as a result of a number of factors, including declining student enrolment and excess school facility capacity, which have impacted revenue, expenditures and operations. In 2016, VSB adopted a five-year Strategic Plan, developed in consultation with students, families, staff, and stakeholders. To ensure the budgeting process aligns with the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan, VSB updated its budget development process.

Starting this year, VSB prepared a five-year business plan to align with the Strategic Plan. Adopting a five-year planning process will allow the district to be forward looking in tackling its long-term financial pressures and will create more stability for VSB. It will also provide a framework for future budget planning and discussions.

This year the VSB introduced an online survey to gather feedback on the five-year business plan, community awareness, and operating priorities. This allowed VSB to hear from the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time, ensuring a diverse range of voices were heard. This also facilitated input from those who were uncomfortable speaking in front of crowds in more traditional formats, such as public meetings, thereby encouraging a wide range of feedback.

Overall, 778 surveys were completed between April 6 and April 18. VSB heard from parents/guardians, students, community members and VSB staff. The majority of respondents who completed the survey were parent/guardians, followed by VSB students.

The following report summarizes the online feedback received. Respondents completed a series of closed-ended questions. However, VSB provided an open-ended question for respondents to provide additional feedback. Responses to this question were analyzed, coded, and grouped into themes. A chart summarizing the themes identified follows later in this report.

BACKGROUND:

The Budget 2017 survey asked questions about budget planning and implementation, as well as operating priorities. Respondents were asked about their awareness of VSB's new five-year planning process as well as the allocation of district resources. These questions will help VSB understand the extent to which its various stakeholders share an understanding of the district's budget.

Respondents were also asked to identify instruction-related, facilities and maintenance, and administrative priorities. These questions will help VSB balance future budget considerations and planning with community priorities.

DISCUSSION:

Introduction

The survey explored three topic areas: the five-year budgeting process, budget expenditures and budget priorities.

The survey first explored the five-year Strategic Plan and its accompanying five-year budgeting process. This portion of the survey sought to determine the level of awareness of the transition to a five-year process, and the community-led priorities that the VSB is working toward.

The survey then provided information on its operating, maintenance and administrative expenditures. Respondents were asked about their level of awareness of each, which will help guide future VSB communications about budget operations.

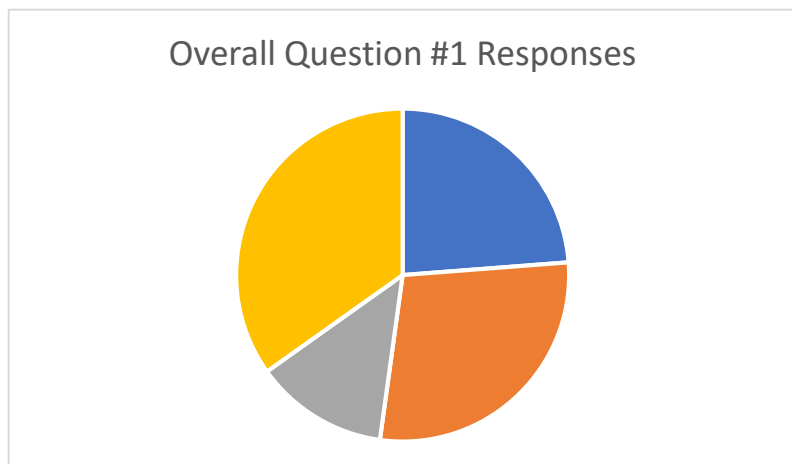
Finally, the survey asked respondents to indicate their priorities for funding.

5-Year Budgeting Process Questions

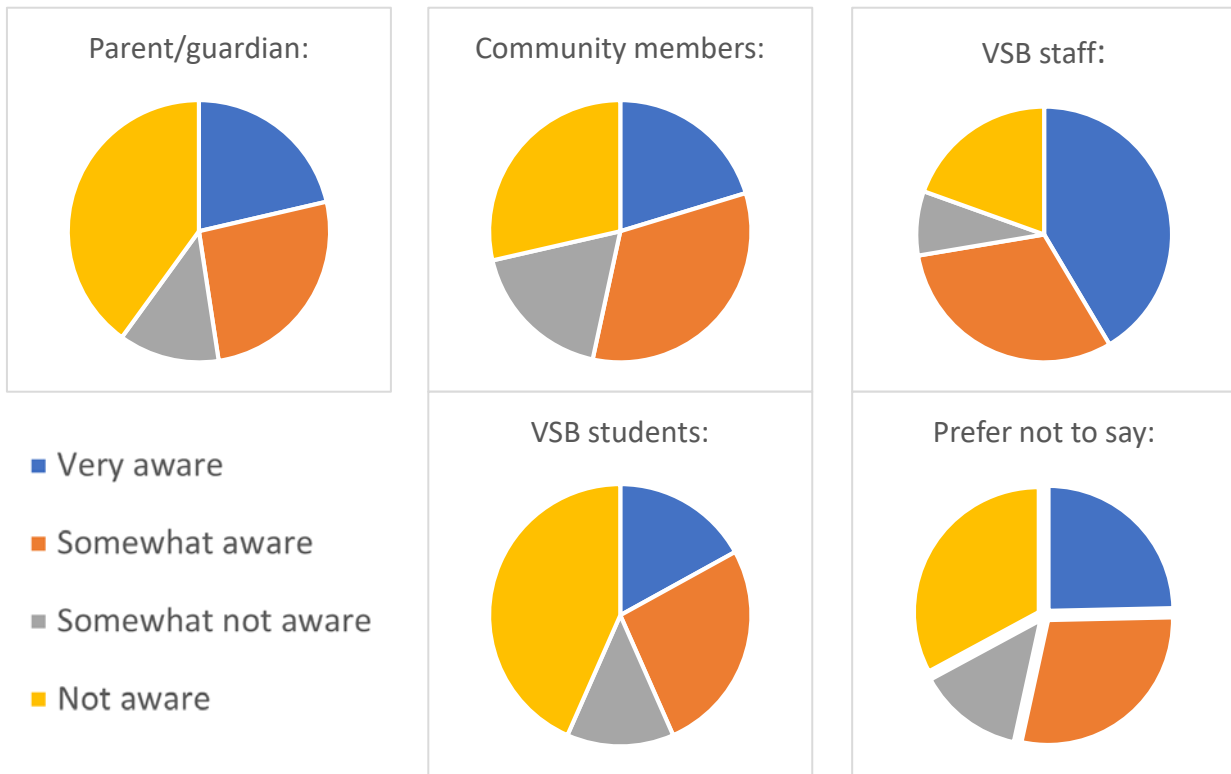
Question 1: "How aware are you that VSB has transitioned to a five-year budgeting process?"

Overall, the level of awareness that VSB had transitioned to a five-year budgeting process was split almost evenly between an awareness of the transition and a lack of awareness of the transition. However, a higher number of survey respondents indicated they were either strongly or somewhat aware of the transition compared to being somewhat unaware or not aware at all. The largest response category was "Not Aware" followed by "Somewhat Aware," "Strongly Aware," and lastly "Somewhat Aware."

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Somewhat not aware
- Not aware

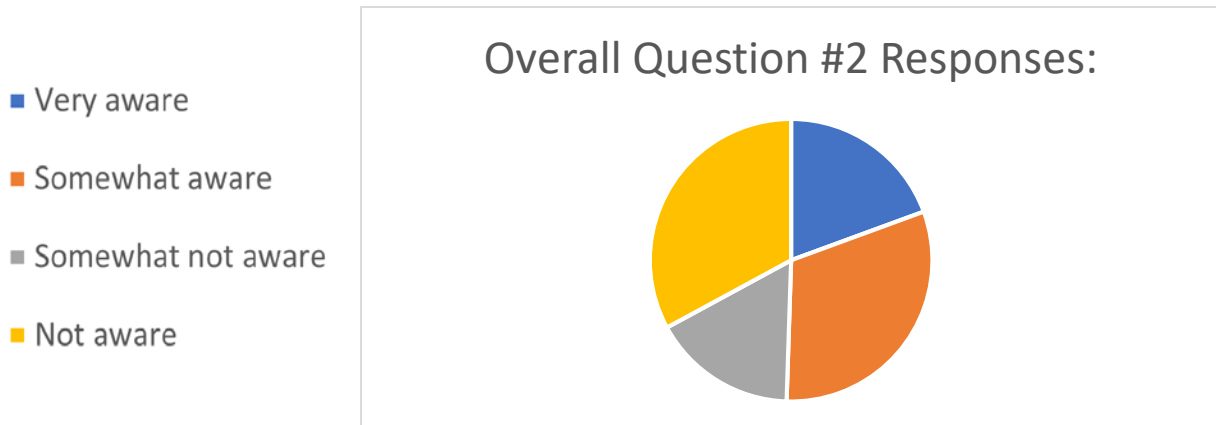


Segmented audiences responded as follows:

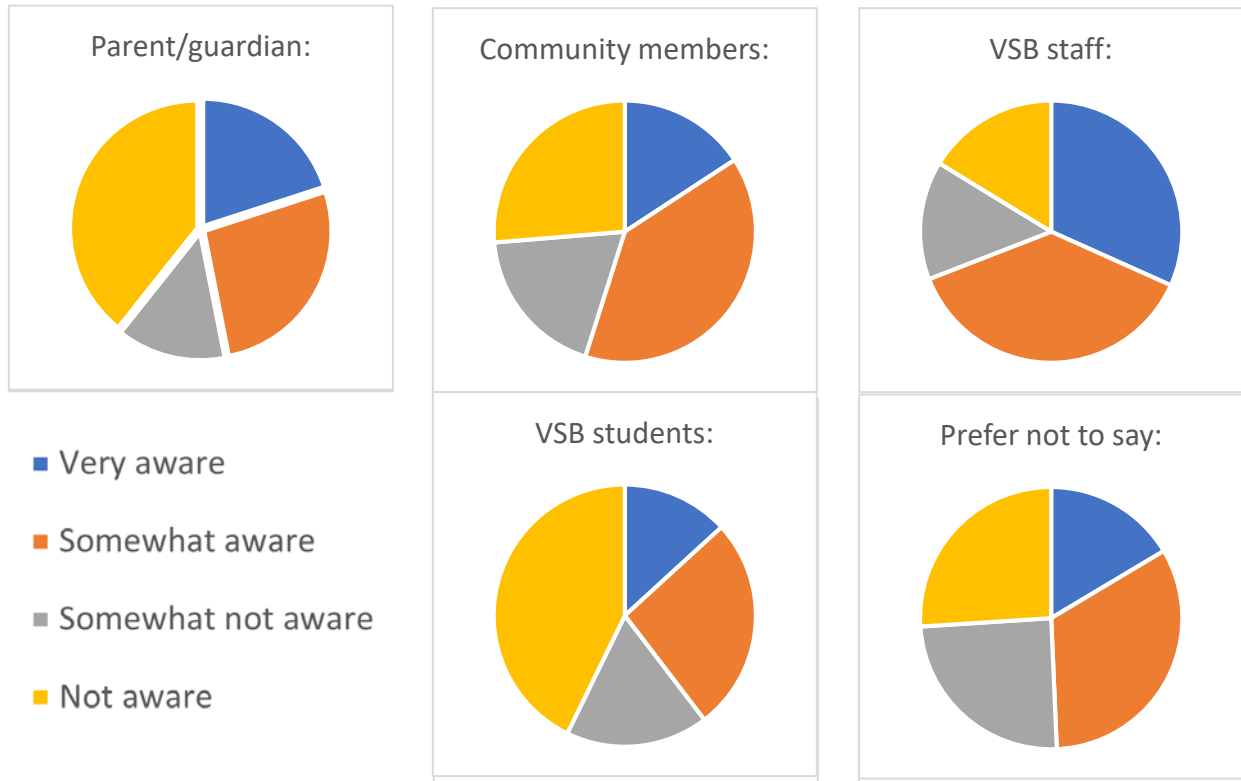


Question #2: “How aware are you VSB has structured its 2017 budget to meet the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan?”

Overall, the level of awareness that VSB had restructured its 2017 budget was split almost evenly between the levels of awareness and lack of awareness. Most survey respondents identified with “Not aware” followed by “Somewhat aware,” “Very aware,” and lastly “Somewhat not aware.”

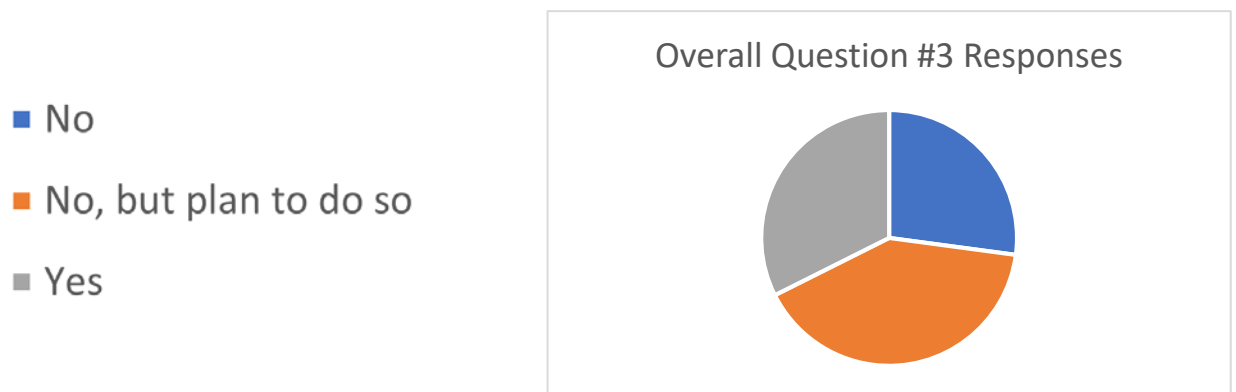


Segmented audiences responded as follows:

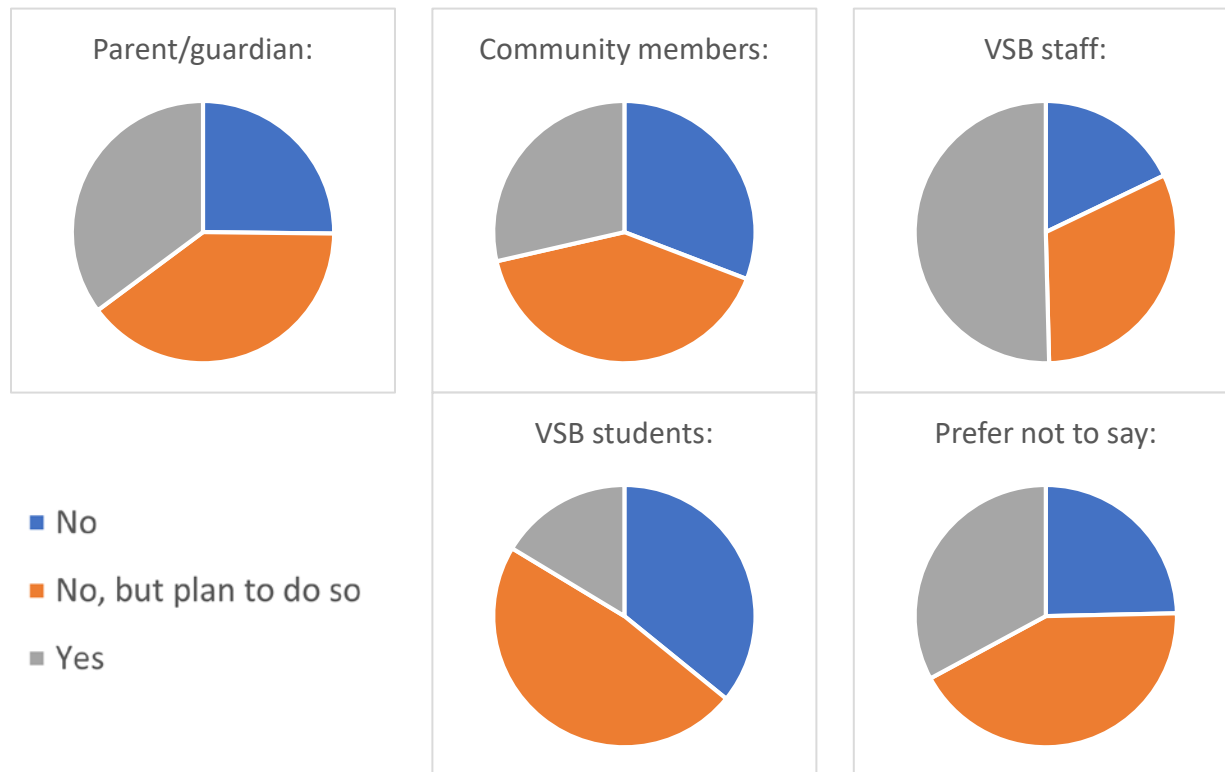


Question #3: “Have you had a chance to review the VSB 2021 Strategic Plan?”

Most respondents had not reviewed the 2021 Strategic Plan but indicated that they planned to do so. A significant portion of respondents had not reviewed the plan without an intention to do so. The remaining respondents had reviewed the plan.



Segmented audiences responded as follows:

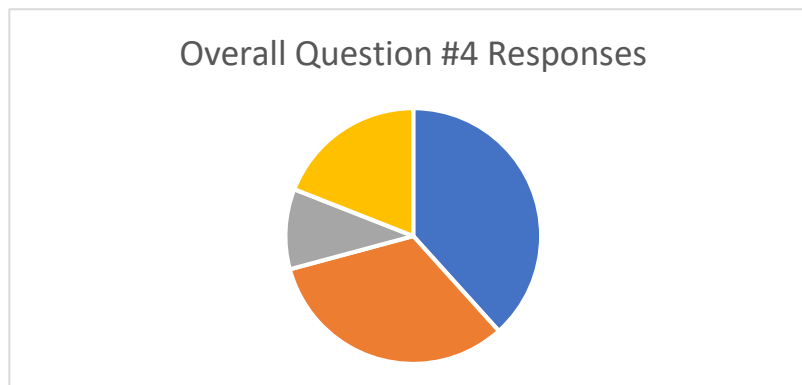


Budget Expenditure Questions

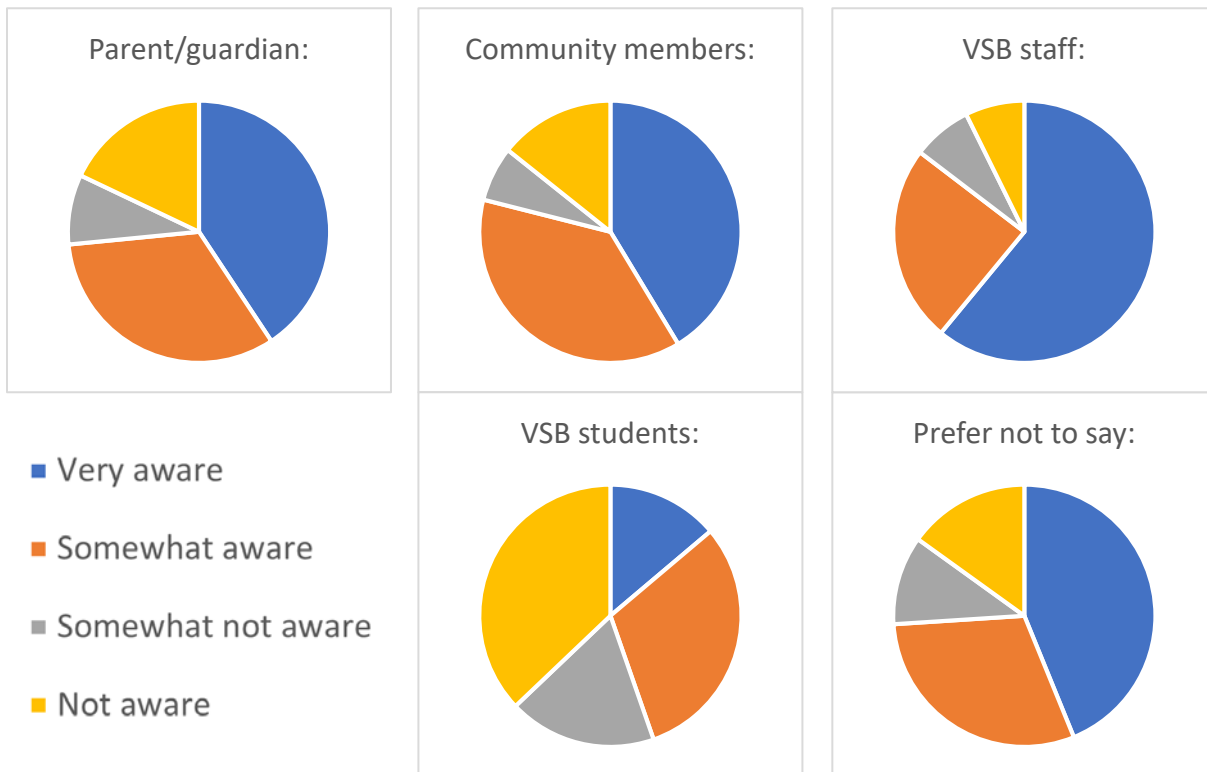
Question #4: “VSB allocates 84.3% of its operating budget to instruction-related costs (including costs funded through the Classroom Enhancement Fund to meet the reinstated contract language as a result of the Supreme Court of Canada decision). Were you aware that the majority of funding was allocated in this way?”

The overall level of awareness about VSB’s funding allocation for instruction-related costs was high. The largest response category was "Strongly aware" followed by "Somewhat aware," "Unaware," and lastly "Somewhat unaware."

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Somewhat not aware
- Not aware



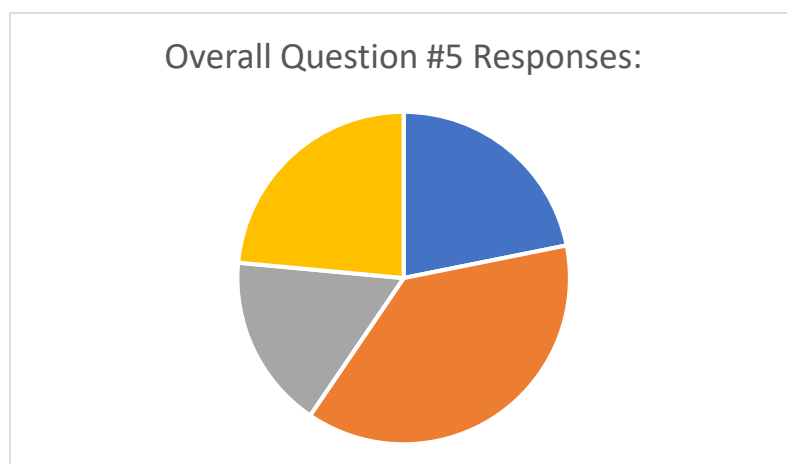
Segmented audiences responded as follows:



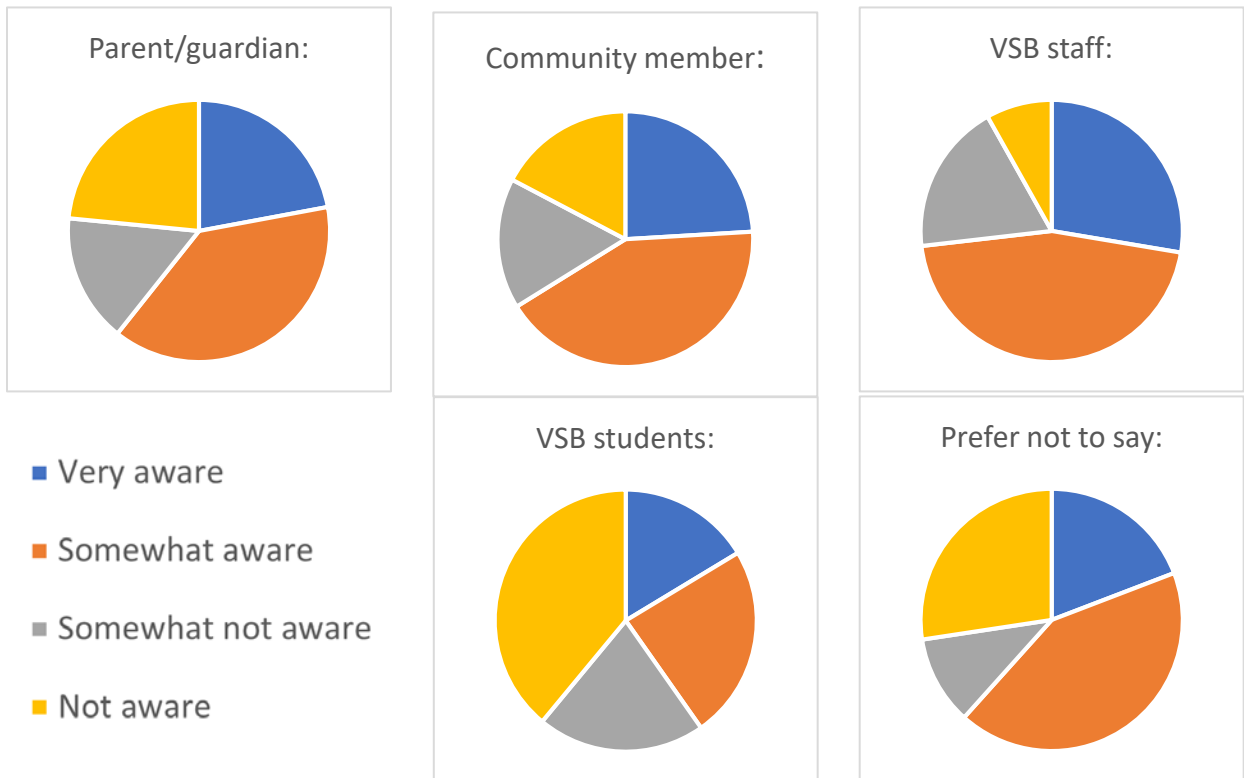
Question #5: “Building operations and maintenance accounts for 11.6% of the VSB operating budget. Were you aware that this amount of funding is directed to maintain facilities?”

Overall, more respondents were aware of this allocation to some capacity. However, a significant number remained unaware of this funding allocation.

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Somewhat not aware
- Not aware



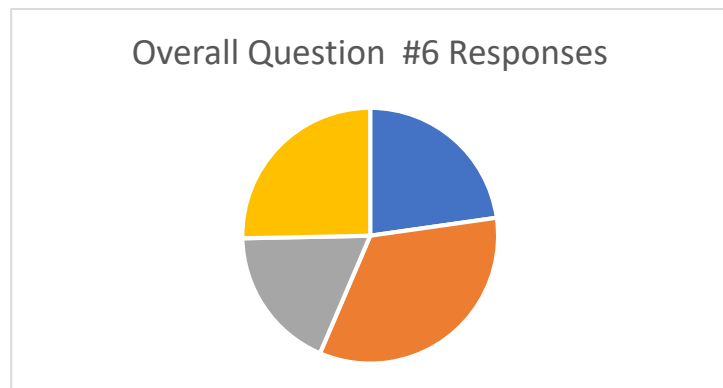
Segmented audiences responded as follows:



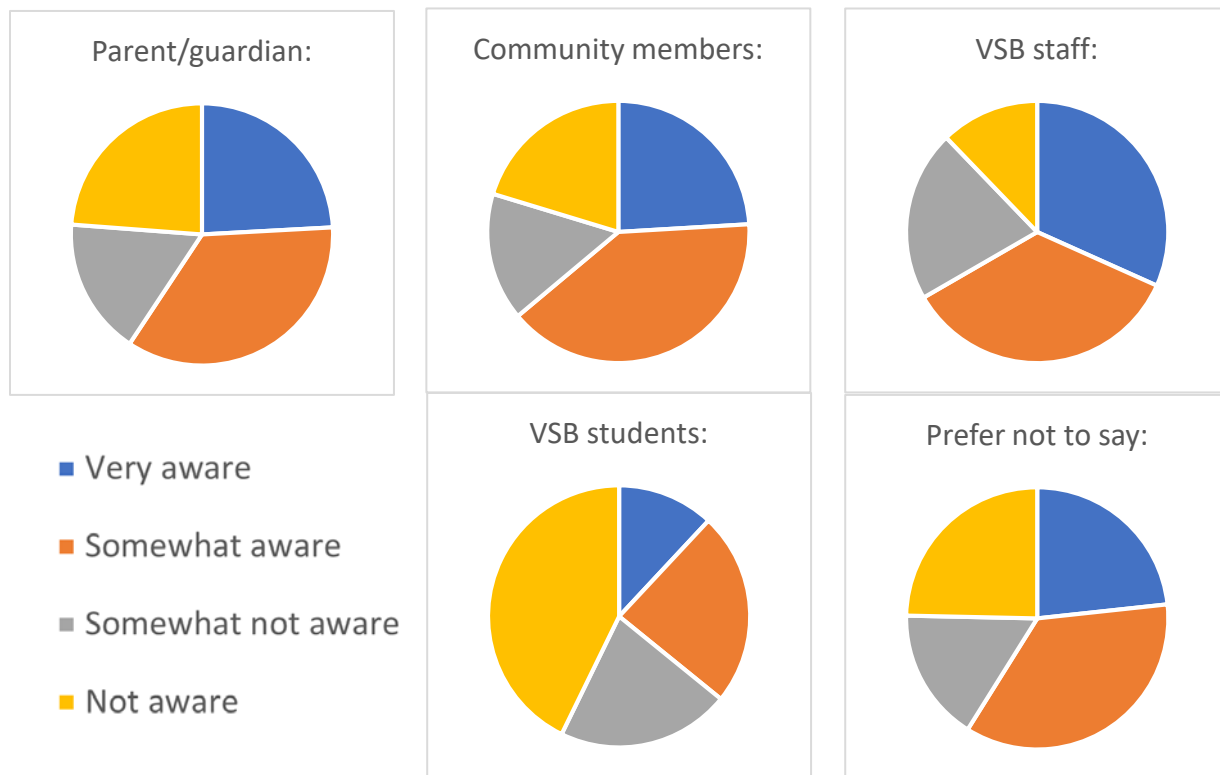
Question #6: "District administration accounts for 3.0% of the VSB operating budget. Were you aware that that this amount of funding is allocated towards administration?"

Overall, respondents were aware of VSB's budget allocation for district administration. The largest response category was "Somewhat aware" followed by "Unaware," "Strongly aware," and "Somewhat unaware."

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Somewhat not aware
- Not aware



Segmented audiences responded as follows:



Budget Priority Questions

Question #7: "Instruction-related considerations: please select and prioritize up to seven items from the list below that are most important to you."

Question #8: "Building and maintenance considerations: please select up to three items from the list below that are most important to you."

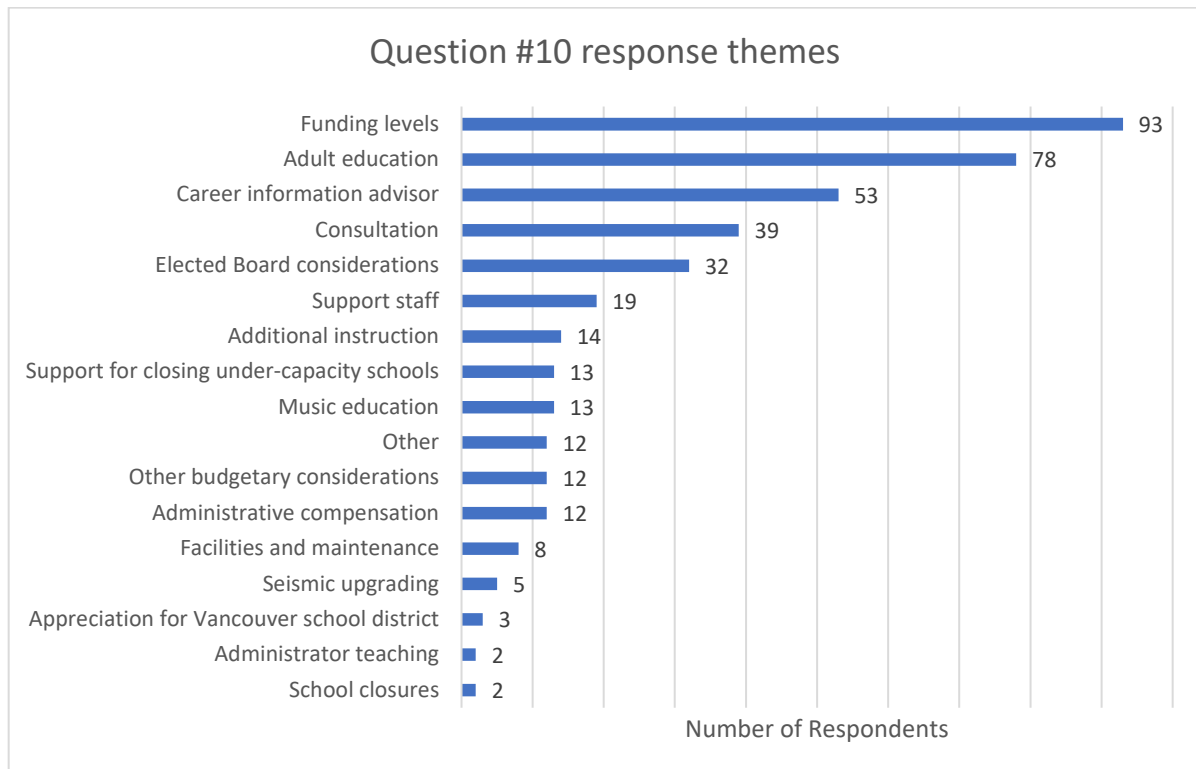
Question #9: "Administrative considerations: please select and prioritize up to three items from the list below that are most important to you."

Given concerns brought forward regarding questions 7, 8 and 9, responses are not being provided at this time. The official trustee will review responses and determine whether or not to consider this information in budget deliberations. If considered, responses to these questions will be shared with the public.

Other Questions

Question #10: “Are there any other considerations we’ve missed that you want us to be aware of through the Budget 2017 process?”

Respondents were invited to provide additional comments about the Budget 2017 process. Out of 778 respondents, 424 left comments, which were spread largely across 17 different broad themes. These themes are shown in the following chart:



Most open-ended comments fell into one of the following five themes: funding levels, adult education, career information advisor, consultation, and elected board considerations. Comments pertaining to funding levels and adult education were the two most prominent themes.

In general, many comments about funding levels referenced concern about being asked to denote spending priorities. Respondents further noted that all instructional priorities were valuable and that the VSB should request further funding from the Province.

Comments about adult education largely related to the proposed closures of the adult education centres at the Main Street Education Centre and the Gathering Place Education Centre. Comments reflected a desire to keep these centres open, as respondents felt they were vital to new immigrants, refugees, and low-income individuals.

In reference to career information advisor comments, many people expressed that these roles were a component of high school education. Respondents noted they were important both for those students pursuing post secondary education, as well as for those who were not planning to pursue post secondary education.

A number of respondents felt the consultation process was insufficient. Respondents' comments varied greatly, however, some sub-themes emerged, including: the restriction of engagement to an online platform; the provision of only English online material; the open nature of the survey, allowing people in any location to access the survey.

Finally, respondents noted considerations about the lack of an elected board. The majority of respondents whose comments fell into this category felt that budget decisions should be made by an elected board. Respondents felt that an elected board would not put forward the cuts that are proposed in the Budget 2017 proposal.

Question #11: “Are you a: parent/guardian of a VSB student, VSB student, community member, VSB staff, prefer not to say.”

A majority of respondents were parents/guardians of VSB students. The second largest category of survey respondents were VSB students, followed by community members. The next category of survey respondents were VSB staff. The smallest category of respondents preferred not to determine their segment base.

