

VSB

Submission to:

**Select Standing Committee on Finance and
Government Services**

Budget 2017 Consultation

Submitted by:

**Board of Education of School District No. 39
(Vancouver)**

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Context

The Vancouver Board of Education (“VBE”) is one of the most diverse public school systems in Canada with an annual enrolment of 50,000 students in Kindergarten to grade 12. In addition, the VBE provides educational programs and services to 600 adult students. The VSB invests significant resources in a broad range of programs to meet our learners’ diverse needs.

Student Achievement

The district continues to focus on the Board’s Strategic Plan goals of increasing student engagement and ensuring that all students are included and have the opportunity to succeed. VBE has a broad offering of specialty programs to support learners in a variety of ways, addressing a range of needs. There is a clear focus on improving the graduation rates for all students, and in particular Aboriginal learners. This begins with an emphasis on providing supportive learning experiences and interventions as children transition from pre-K into Kindergarten, through to Grade 12, and then on to post-secondary life.

Supporting Early Transitions

Working in partnership with a variety of community agencies, the district continues to support several initiatives. Some of these initiatives include:

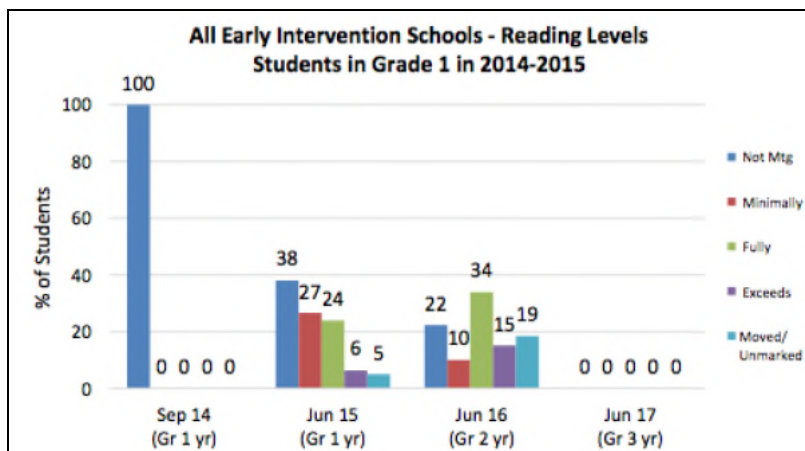
- IPALS (Immigrant Parents as Literacy Mentors) is working with new immigrant and refugee parents and grandparents and their preschool aged children. This program supports language and literacy development for the family.
- Support For School Success provides family and child friendly general health and wellness screening and assessments to children entering Kindergarten into schools where there may be a higher level of vulnerability amongst the student population. This initiative has resulted in families receiving supports earlier and children receiving needed identification and interventions from health and community agencies. As well, the schools have information to better receive and support students as they enter Kindergarten; in some instances, this has included the placement of ECE/SPED trained Student Support Assistant (SSA) in Kindergarten classes, to assist with transition from pre-K to K for vulnerable students. This initiative is offered in collaboration with Vancouver Coastal Health, Provincial Health Services Authority (RICHER), Ray-Cam Co-Operative Centre and Vancouver Children First.
- StrongStart programs run in 19 schools offering Early Learning Programs for preschool aged children and their parent / caregiver. We are also working in Partnership with Raycam Cooperative Centre and Kiwassa Neighbourhood House to provide enhanced services at Tier One StrongStart programs which include additional Family Support and summer programming.
- The Welcome to Kindergarten (WTK) Program is offered in 86 Elementary Schools ensuring that all families have the tools to work with their children during the summer to enhance school readiness for September.

As well, all elementary schools in Vancouver offer a “Ready Set Learn” event for preschool aged children in their community. These events are designed to ensure families with preschool aged children have the opportunity to connect with their neighbourhood school prior to school entry and to access a variety of Early Learning resources and activities.

Improvements in Reading Results for At-Risk Early Learners

The goal of Early Intervention is to dramatically reduce the number of children in our schools who fail to learn to read and write. Effective classroom teaching that is differentiated to meet the needs of the students is the first line of defense. However, even with an effective classroom program, some children are at risk of failing. Such children need extra instruction in small groups, and a small number will need even more focused one-to-one instruction to be successful.

The VSB Early Intervention model (EI) has been based on this understanding and incorporates all facets (differentiated instruction, small group support and one-to-one instruction in the Reading Recovery Program). The district continues to develop, expand and refine the Early Intervention Plan in support of success for each student. Since its inception in 2006, the initiative has expanded annually and is now in 58 of our 92 elementary schools and annexes.



The district Early Intervention Initiative has resulted in gains for the most at-risk learners. The data indicates that 59% of students identified as at-risk in their Kindergarten year, **are meeting or exceeding grade level reading expectations** by the end of Grade 2.

Data will continue to be collected for this cohort in their grade 3 year.

Improvements in Six-Year Completion Rate

School completion is a key indicator of student success. The district continues to make gains for all students in this area, as witnessed by the table below. In particular, Student Success Plans for Aboriginal students is one strategy being used to monitor, plan, and deliver interventions on an individual and personalized basis. There continue to be incremental improvements in the results for Aboriginal students. In June of the 2015-2016 school year, the District signed our second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, and we know that this Agreement will help us to continue to make education more relevant, meaningful and successful for our Aboriginal students.

- For the second year in a row, there is an 87.4% Six-Year Completion Rate for *all students* in the Vancouver School District. This is above the provincial completion rate.
- The Six-Year Completion Rate for *Aboriginal students* increased from 42.7% in 2013/14 to 47% in 2014/15. In actual fact, of the 89 VSB students of Aboriginal heritage who were registered in grade 12 and eligible to graduate in 2014/15, 76 students, or 85 percent, graduated with a Dogwood diploma.
- The completion rates for *ELL students and students with special needs* continue to be above the provincial average.

Six-Year Completion Rate*

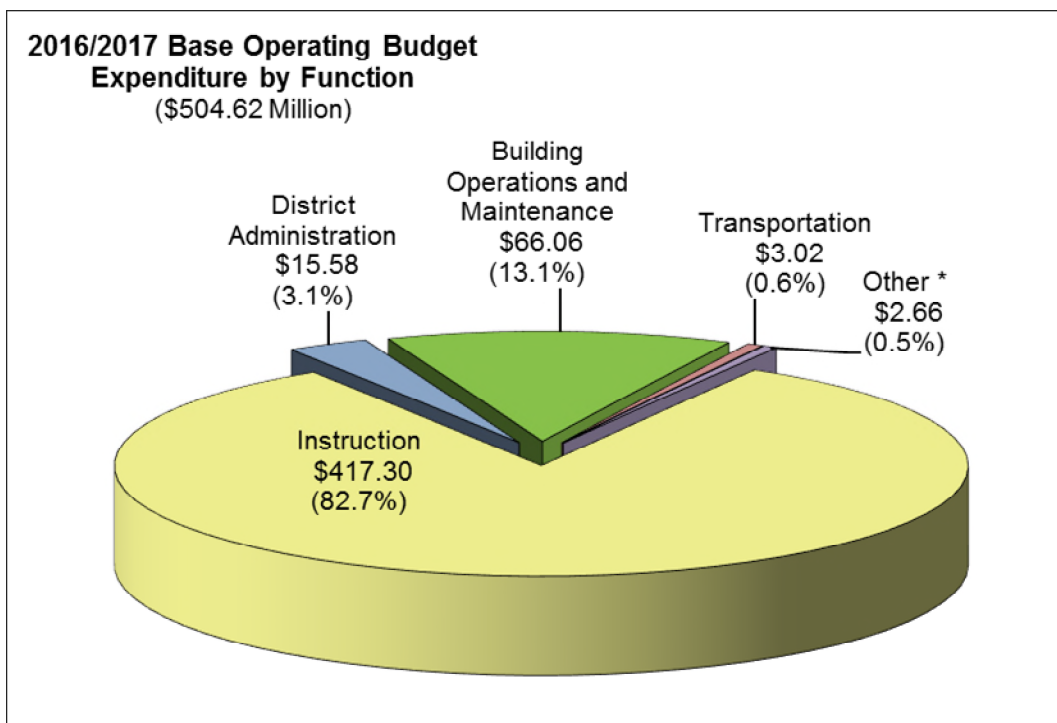
Year	All Students		Female		Male		Aboriginal		ELL		Special	
	SD	Prov	SD	Prov	SD	Prov	SD	Prov	SD	Prov	SD	Prov
2005/06	82.7	80.2	86.9	83.8	78.5	76.7	32.5	47.7	83.3	83.1	52.2	43.8
2006/07	81.1	80.1	86.4	83.8	76.0	76.7	21.1	47.3	83.3	82.6	46.6	44.3
2007/08	79.5	78.8	84.2	82.0	75.2	75.8	23.8	46.9	81.7	81.7	48.2	44.1
2008/09	79.6	79.2	83.9	82.1	75.6	76.5	29.1	48.8	81.4	81.5	48.4	45.7
2009/10	80.7	79.7	84.5	82.6	77.1	77.0	25.4	50.4	83.2	81.5	46.7	49.1
2010/11	82.5	81.0	87.1	83.4	78.2	78.7	32.1	53.7	83.4	83.3	56.3	52.7
2011/12	83.8	81.8	87.2	83.9	80.4	79.7	30.8	56.4	84.5	83.3	59.5	55.6
2012/13	86.7	83.6	90.0	85.4	83.7	81.9	43.3	59.4	87.2	86.1	62.1	58.7
2013/14	87.4	84.2	90.3	86.4	84.7	82.1	42.7	61.6	87.2	86.6	64.8	62.2
2014/15	87.4	83.9	90.4	86.0	84.3	81.9	47.0	63.0	87.8	86.2	67.0	65.9

Funding

Like most other school districts in the Province, the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) relies on provincial funding to provide 92% of annual revenues. This means that the education services and programs that are provided to students are significantly dependent on the level of provincial funding provided to school boards.

Expenditure

In terms of expenditures, 83% of VBE expenditures are directly related to providing instruction to students. Building operations and maintenance of our 110 schools is the next largest expenditure:



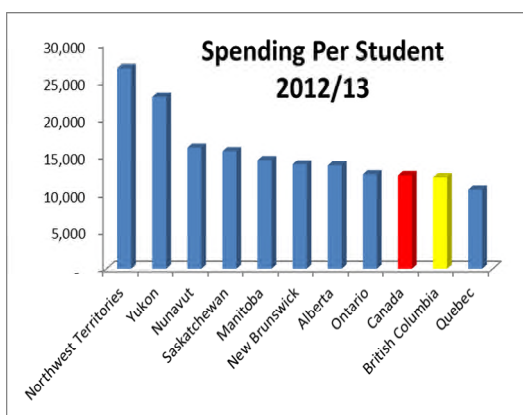
The VBE, like other school boards in the province, has faced significant funding shortfalls over the past decade. As a result of these funding shortfalls, school districts have had to make cuts and reductions to the level of services provided in order to achieve balanced budgets.

Provincial Comparisons

Statistics Canada has discontinued preparing the following charts. The data has not moved appreciably in the interim; the most recent charts (2012/13) are included as context for the purposes of this submission.

BC lags behind the rest of Canada in terms of spending per student, growth in education expenditures since 2008/2009 and student to educator ratio.

1. BC spending per student lags the Canadian average.



In the five-year period 2008/2009 to 2012/2013, the average expenditure per student in Canada increased 14.1% during that four-year period. BC lagged at 6.5%.

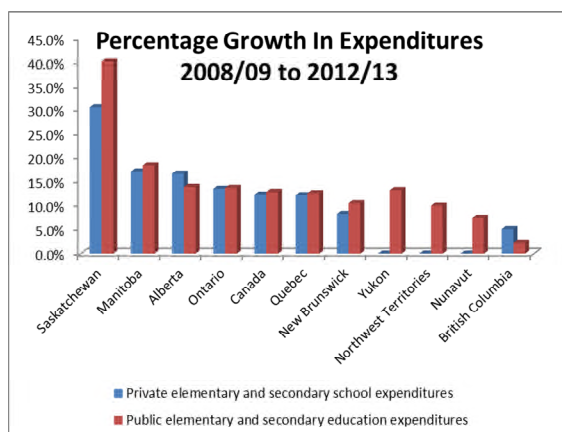
The average expenditure per student nationally for 2012/2013 (the most recent Statistics Canada figures) was \$12,377. BC remains at \$12,113.

If BC matched the \$12,377 average national expenditure, it translates to **\$143 million** more in funding for the province's 543,000 students.

Statistics Canada - Table 1 Headcount enrolments in public elementary and secondary schools, Canada, provinces and territories & Table 478-0014 - Public and private elementary and secondary education expenditures, annual (dollars) Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia and PEI suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/141121/t141121b001-eng.htm>

2. BC growth in public education expenditures lags the Canadian average, lags private education.

BC had the lowest growth in both private and public K-12 education expenditures in Canada.

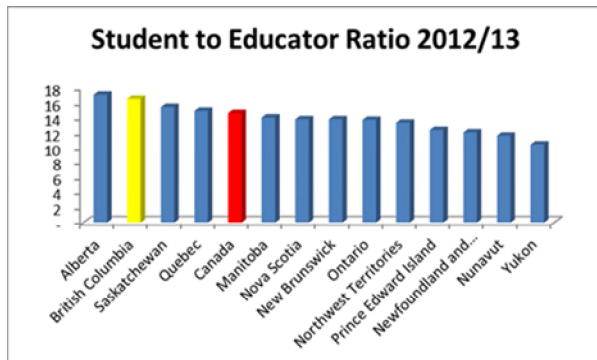


Between 2008/2009 and 2012/2013, operating expenditures in public K-12 in Canada grew by 12.8% while private elementary and secondary school expenditure grew by 12.2%.

Operating expenditures for public K-12 education in BC over this time period grew by only 1.2% while expenditure in private education grew by 4.9%.

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 478-0014 - Public and private elementary and secondary education expenditures, annual (dollars). Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia and PEI suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the Statistics Act

3. The number of BC students vying for educator support is the second highest in Canada.



Source: Statistics Canada, Elementary-Secondary Education Survey

‘Educator’ is defined by Statistics Canada as comprising teachers, administrators and pedagogical support.

The average educator in Canada supports 14.6 students. In BC, that figure is 16.5.

Said another way, the average educator in Canada supports 14.6 students. In BC, educators serve 2 more students on average, for a total of 16.5 students.

Recommendations

The VSB recommends that the provincial government:

1. Provide stable, predictable and adequate funding to enable school districts to fulfill their responsibility to provide continued equitable access to quality public education.

Unpredictable funding and unfunded cost increases require school districts to spend significant time and resources on balancing budgets each year instead of strategically planning the most effective use of funding to support student success. This continued underfunding also makes it increasingly difficult to fully support success for students as valuable programs and staff positions are further reduced in order to balance budgets.

Successful implementation of the new BCEd curriculum will require funding to support in-service, collaboration time and learning resources. School libraries will play an increasingly important role with personalized learning and require adequate funding for staffing and resources.

2. Fully fund cost increases negotiated by, or mandated by the province.

The Province does not provide funding for net cost increases of employee salary increments (for teachers, administrators and excluded staff as they gain experience and progress through the steps on their pay scales) or increased costs of benefits such as CPP, EI, WCB, extended health and MSP.

No provision for basic inflation is made in the funding calculation. Inflation slowly eats away at the purchasing power of the education grant.

The freeze on salaries for exempt staff was lifted, but school districts did not receive funding for the increases.

These increased/new costs divert spending away from supporting students in the classrooms.

3. Review and increase supplemental funding grants for students with special needs.

The VBE spends more in supporting students with special needs that is provided by the province in special needs operating grants.

Grant amounts should be based on functional assessments of learning needs — in other words, based on what specific supports a student needs to successfully access education.

4. Provide funding for increased maintenance and upgrades to address needs of aging school facilities.

The Province needs to increase funding for ongoing maintenance, and should employ industry maintenance standards as a guide.

Funding for school building maintenance is only 25% of industry standards (Building Owner and Managers Association) and the VBE's aging stock of buildings is at risk of accelerated deterioration due to insufficient maintenance levels.

5. Provide sufficient capital funding to honour the provincial government's commitment to upgrade or replace high seismic risk schools by 2020.

The Vancouver School Board has over 60 of its 110 schools in need of seismic upgrading or replacement. All of these schools have high risk buildings (i.e. H1, H2 or H3).

The Province needs to advance the pace of seismic capital funding, not delay it, in order to ensure the safety of students and staff and to ensure the sustainability of school buildings in the case of the significant seismic event.

- 6. Should, as a priority goal, develop and implement a poverty reduction strategy and ensure all families have access to affordable, quality child care.**

There is a strong correlation between child poverty and failure to succeed in school. Despite the VBE's allocation of additional resources through our enhanced support programs, the needs of our students far exceed our available funding to provide support.

BC is the only province in Canada without a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

- 7. Provide adequate provincial funding that fully supports Adult Education programs.**

The Province should restore funding for graduated adults to upgrade their high school courses. The cancellation of the education guarantee creates a substantial barrier for adult learners that erodes equity and access to education and career opportunities.

Finally, the VBE would like to remind the Committee of the following recommendations made in previous years:

22. Provide stable, predictable, and adequate funding to enable school districts to fulfill their responsibility to provide continued equitable access to quality public education, and to meet required repair and maintenance needs.

23. Provide adequate capital funding to school districts for facility improvements, seismic upgrades, and additional schools in rapidly growing communities.

24. Provide support for proposed new K-12 initiatives such as personalized learning and enhanced trades and technology training.

25. Provide resources to identify and address the growing number of students with special needs and those with minimal English language skills.