

**VSB**

**Submission to:**

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

**Budget 2016 Consultation**

**Submitted by:**

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

**September 21, 2015**

## **Context**

The Vancouver Board of Education (“VBE”) is one of the most diverse public school systems in Canada with an annual enrolment of over 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.

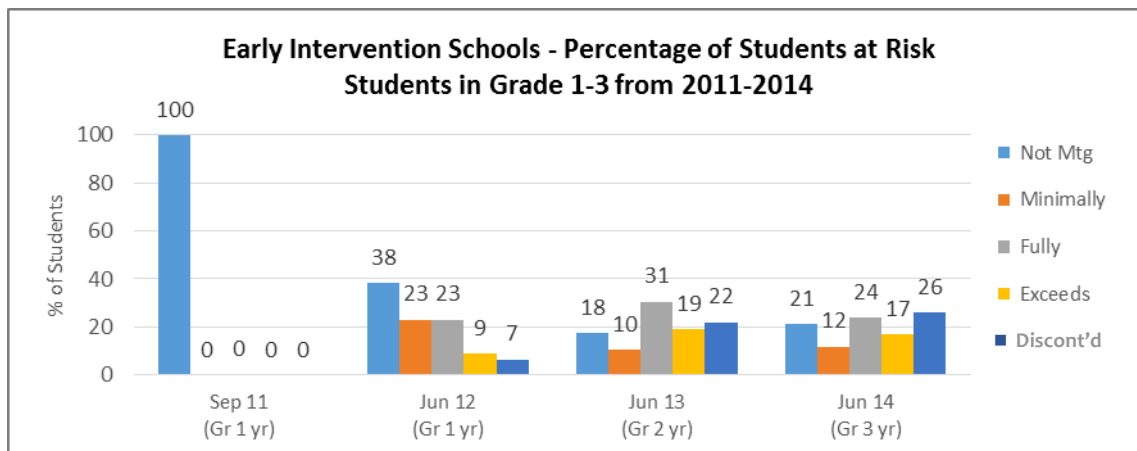
## **Student Achievement**

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. Vancouver School District 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 health and other community agencies, the district has implemented several new initiatives. One is providing early success programming for pre-K children and their families in the summer prior to Kindergarten entry. The purpose was to promote Kindergarten readiness for preschool students who had limited or no exposure to preschool learning opportunities, prior to their entry to kindergarten. Another 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. Both of these initiatives have 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.

### **Improvements in Reading Results for At-Risk Early Learners**



The district Early Intervention Initiative has resulted in gains for the most at-risk learners. The

data indicates that 53% of students identified as at-risk in their Kindergarten year, are **meeting or exceeding grade level reading expectations** by the end of Grade 3.

**Improvements in Six-Year Completion Rate**

School completion is a key success indicator. The district continues to make gains in this area, for all students and for Aboriginal students. The development of 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.

- *All students* in District 39 had an 87.4% Six-Year Completion Rate in 2014 in comparison to an 86.7% Six-Year Completion Rate in 2013.
- The Six-Year Completion Rate for *Aboriginal students* increased from 25% to 43% between 2009/10 and 2013/14.
- The percentage of *Aboriginal students* graduating with a Dogwood certificate increased from 29% to 47% between 2009/10 and 2013/14.

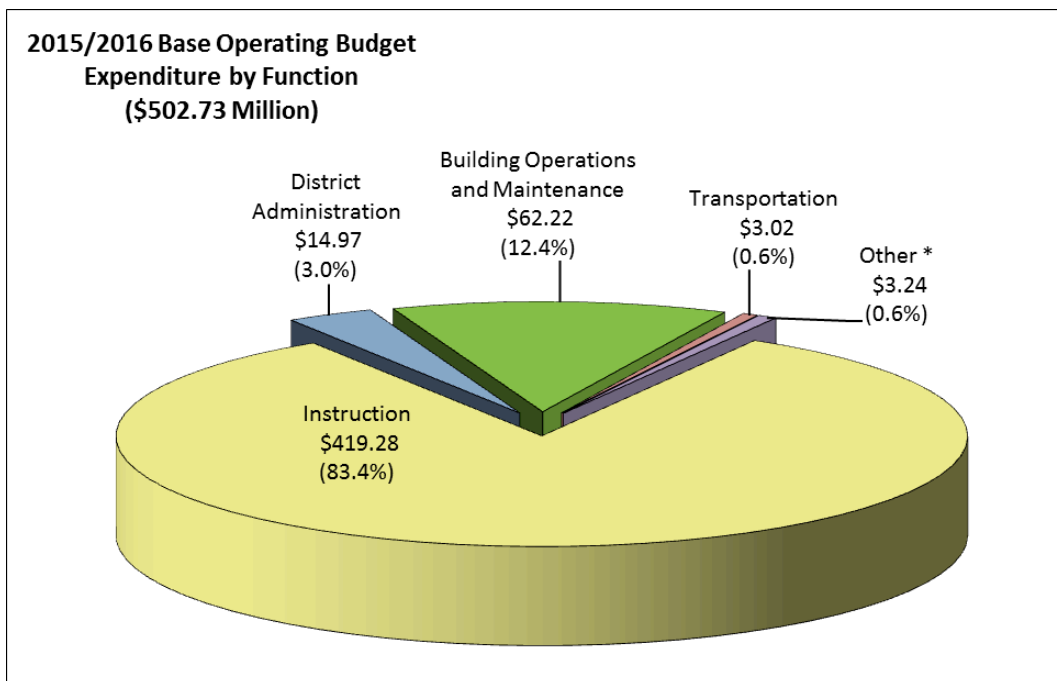
	Aboriginal			Non-Aboriginal		
	All Students	Female	Male	All Students	Female	Male
School Year	%	%	%	%	%	%
2008/09	29	34	24	82	86	78
2009/10	25	29	22	83	87	80
2010/11	32	35	29	85	89	80
2011/12	31	35	27	86	89	82
2012/13	43	46	40	88	92	85
2013/14	43	46	39	89	92	86

## Funding

Like most other school districts in the Province, the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) relies on provincial funding to provide 91% of the 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, over 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:

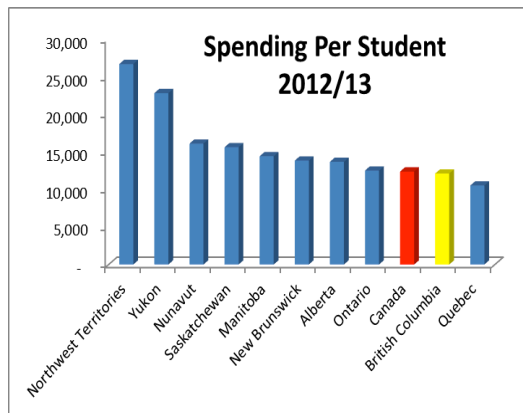


The VBE, like other school boards in the province, has faced significant funding shortfalls over the past decade. As a result of these funding shortfalls, school districts have had to make reductions to the level of services provided in order to achieve balanced budgets.

## Provincial Comparisons

BC is falling 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%.

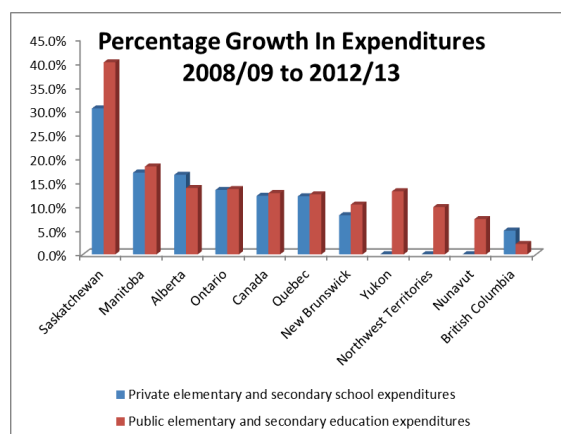
The average expenditure per student nationally for 2012/2013 (the most recent Statistics Canada figures) was \$12,377. BC remains at \$12,113.

If BC matched the \$12,377 average national expenditure, it would translate 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 in Canada.

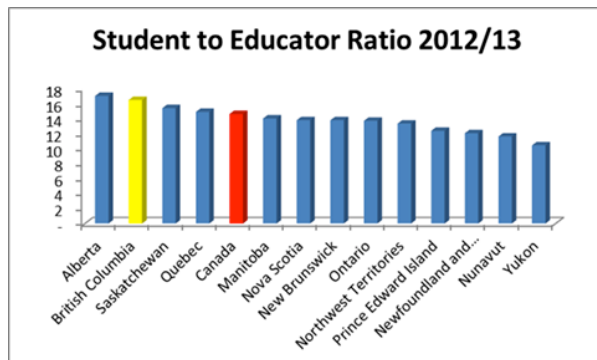


Between 2008/2009 and 2012/2013, operating expenditures in public K-12 in Canada grew by 12.8% while private elementary and secondary schools grew by 12.2%.

Operating expenditures for public K-12 education in BC over this time period grew by only 1.2% while 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. Instead, the province recently mandated sector wide administrative cost reductions of more than \$50 million over two years in the K-12 sector.

The freeze on salaries for exempt staff was recently lifted but school districts will require funding for any raises where these are appropriate.

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.**

For every dollar the province provides, the VBE spends almost double in supporting students with special needs.

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 VSB'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 VSB'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 recent 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 last year:

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.