

**Richmond Teachers' Association**

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February 14, 2024

Board of Education  
School District No. 38 (Richmond)  
7811 Granville Avenue  
Richmond, BC V6Y 3E3

Dear Heather,

**Re: Budget Brief**

On behalf of the Richmond Teachers' Association, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit a budget brief for the upcoming 2024-2025 District budget. The RTA recognizes the current budget situation is more positive because of enrollment growth and past Board decisions. However, enrollment growth continues to create challenges for the District, including the ability to recruit and retain staff and manage the space pressures that continue in City Center.

In 2023-2024, daily teacher shortages continue, where a baseline of shortages is 20 teachers, which means specialist teachers must often be redeployed to cover classroom positions leaving less support for students and increasing teacher workload. The RTA encourages the Board and District to prioritize ways to address teacher workload while we continue to experience high staffing shortages. This could mean elements of the District's Strategic Plan will need to be paused or shifted until there is sufficient staffing. When systems are under stress, we cannot ask people to do more. Rather, we should find meaningful ways to address workload.

The RTA provides the following suggested budget priorities that are in alignment with the District's Strategic Plan and the staffing shortages that are being experienced daily across Richmond Schools.

2024/2025 Budget Suggestions

- **Recruitment and Retention – increasing the number of shared and part-time assignments and increasing the number of unassigned positions**
  - Recruitment and retention of staff is the greatest challenge to ensuring the District can fulfill the Priorities, Goals and Objectives of the Board’s Strategic Plan. Securing staff must be a priority, which means the District must be flexible and agile with staffing. The teaching profession is not known for flexibility due to the rigid hours of instruction. This reality is in direct contrast to the changing workforce that is looking for increased flexibility. The District cannot change the hours of instruction, but they can offer a greater range of flexible teaching options, including:
    - increasing the numbers of shared and part-time assignments for classroom and specialist positions.
    - increasing the numbers of unassigned positions (contract TTOC positions) to at least 50 per year.
  - The RTA recognizes these decisions require the District to fund additional benefits (Extended Health, Dental, Insurance), but this is a small cost when considering a student may be without a classroom teacher or specialist support because the District is unable to recruit and retain teachers. This year, unassigned positions have provided the district flexibility to place teachers into unfilled positions while they continued to recruit applicants who were interested in staying or moving into the Richmond School District. To be a top employer, the approach to recruitment and retention must continue to evolve. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners”, Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion” and Priority 4 – “A Progressive Workplace”.
- **Recruitment and Retention - \$250,000 fund to provide mentoring support and access to training and university partnerships**
  - Additional 2.0 FTE Mentoring Teacher Consultants – The current budget only provides for a 1.0 FTE Mentoring Teacher Consultant position that spans K-12. This year HR and RTA agreed to access collective agreement funds to provide additional mentoring support for teachers. This agreement allowed the district to address Teacher Consultant workload and divide up support to three distinct areas: K-5, 6-12 and LRT/ELL/LET. In Richmond, almost 25% of the teaching force has under five years of experience, which is almost 500 RTA Members. In 2018, the Board passed a Budget that added a Teacher-Consultant position for mentoring. At that time, the number of teachers with under five years of experience was 150 RTA Members. Today that number is three times larger. With an aging workforce, alongside enrollment growth, the demand for mentoring will continue to grow. Mentoring is a tangible way to support teachers and enhance recruitment and retention.
  - Support university partnerships and a Richmond cohort model for specialist positions, including counselling and LRT/LA/ELL positions.
  - Enhance university partnerships to support Teacher Candidates with access to workshops and expanded opportunities for extended practicums.

The District and Province continues to have an insufficient supply of specialist teachers resulting in inequitable access to learning environments for students. This challenge cannot be solved simply by recruiting new staff. It is imperative that the District increase its focus on encouraging Richmond teachers to engage in additional training to become specialist teachers. Additional funds can support additional consultant time, access to release time, meeting spaces, and food. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 4 – Goal 4 – “High-quality staff with growth potential are recruited and retained in all positions across the district.”

- **Indigenous-Focused Graduation Courses**
  - Maintain additional staffing to support the implementation of the Indigenous Focused Graduation Requirement. Implementation of any new course in secondary schools always impacts enrollment in other elective courses; this is especially true when the Richmond School District continues to see several secondary schools with populations well below 1200 students. As a result of this graduation requirement, many secondary schools have implemented from three to five new First Peoples courses. Additional blocks need to be maintained to ensure all Indigenous-Focused Graduation courses continue to run while maintaining any low-enrollment blocks identified as a departure from previous years. The RTA recommends these are not divided per population, but rather by identified need. Further, the Board of Education should continue to request accounting of these blocks and how they support secondary schools, which will help guide future decisions. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners” and Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion”.
- **Learning Resources – First Peoples Principles**
  - Additional funds must be added to school budgets to support Container 2 – Learning Resources. These additional funds should come with direction to schools to add a specific budget line item - First Peoples Principles. This will provide schools with continued and targeted access to a variety of learning resources which could include guest speakers, honorariums, and field trips. A specific budget line item with additional support has continually been identified as a need by teachers. This request aligns with TRC – Calls to Action, Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners” and Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion”.
- **Additional Classroom Staffing to ensure there is space in elementary schools for mid-year enrollment**
  - The RTA requests that staffing for 2024-2025 continues to include consideration for mid-year enrollment increases. With current enrollment growth, it is essential that spaces are available to welcome new students into schools. Rather than opening a new division that is only composed of students new to Richmond, it would be preferable to place them into existing diverse classrooms. The flexibility of staffing allocations will allow for teachers to be better able to focus their attention and provide specialized support to address the needs of all learners. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 2 – Goal 1 – “District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.”

The RTA encourages the Superintendent to review class size and composition pressures and, where necessary per LOU 12, approve smaller classes. This would allow the District to seek funding through the Classroom Enhancement Fund.

- **Supplement for Small Secondary Schools**

- Staffing of secondary schools is generally based on one block per 26 students. For smaller schools this should be decreased to one block per 24 students. This will help maintain a more equitable diversity of offerings across the District, which in turn will help students stay in their neighbourhood schools rather than looking to move to a larger school. Additional support is necessary to ensure an appropriate variety of courses can be offered to students. Further, additional staffing will help support a teacher's ability to grow or maintain programs while helping them to manage their workload. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners” and Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion” and Strategic Priority 4 – Goal 4 – “All staffing allocations are determined equitably, responsibly, and responsively.”

- **Daytime Custodial Staffing for Large Elementary Schools**

- There are five elementary schools that are as large as the smallest secondary school, but they do not have an equivalent level of custodial support. Elementary schools are busy places with students who are still learning to regularly wash their hands and attend to personal health. Providing greater custodial support will enhance the ability to provide clean, healthy, and safe facilities. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 3 – Goal 2 – “The District’s facilities are well-maintained, equitable, safe and conducive to learning.”

- **Literacy/Numeracy Support**

- Additional support must be provided to enhance teacher access to professional learning opportunities in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Learning Services has invested significant time developing the Pillars of Literacy & Numeracy and teachers are eager to engage with these resources. At elementary, the District needs to enhance professional learning by providing access to collaboration time. Current models only provide access to collaboration time for secondary teachers. The District needs to expand opportunities to elementary schools, as this will allow strategic support to be provided to implement the K-12 literacy and numeracy framework. The RTA recommends that collaboration time be built into elementary schedules to allow access at least seven times per year.

If time cannot be built into current schedules, then additional staffing (6.0 FTE) should be added to allow cohorts of elementary teachers to meet and learn together. The District has experience with models that provide flexible access to collaboration time.

At secondary schools, greater support is needed to support literacy and numeracy foundations. The RTA recommends that 0.143 FTE is added to each secondary school (Total 1.143 FTE) to return dedicated support that existed when we had Literacy Leads. This successful model focused support at grades 8 and 9 or the key transition years. These recommendations align with Strategic Priority 1 – Goal 4 –

Objectives 1 and 2 – “Develop and implement and k-12 literacy/numeracy vision and framework.”

- **AED Defibrillators**

- The RTA recommends that AEDs are placed in every school. The purchase and installation of AEDs is a one-time budget cost, but ongoing costs will need to be addressed. Training can be addressed as part of the current First Aid training budgets. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 3 – Goal 2 – “The district’s facilities are well-maintained, equitable, safe and conducive to learning” and Strategic Priority 4 – Goal 3 – “Employee Health and well-being is valued and supported within a culture of caring.”

- **Naloxone Kits**

- The RTA recommends that a Naloxone kit should be part of every school’s first aid kit. It is the RTAs understanding that Naloxone kits are accessible without cost and further that administering Naloxone is part of regular First Aid training. Naloxone is a First Aid tool that may save a life in the event of an emergency. This life may be a community member, an employee, or a student. Including Naloxone in First Aid kits doesn’t take away from a school’s responsibility to educate students on physical health and decision making. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 3 – Goal 2 – “The district’s facilities are well-maintained, equitable, safe and conducive to learning” and Strategic Priority 4 – Goal 3 – “Employee Health and well-being is valued and supported within a culture of caring.”

- **Health & Safety Training**

- Additional funds must be added to school budgets to support container 3 – Staff Development. This addition should come with direction to schools to include a specific budget line item for Health & Safety Committee training. Targeted funds will demonstrate the commitment to Health & Safety Committees and the function they provide to address rising incidents and injuries related to violence.

These funds can also be available for necessary First Aid Training to support implementation of AEDs and Naloxone Kits. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 3 – Goal 2 - “The district’s facilities are well-maintained, equitable, safe and conducive to learning” and Strategic Priority 4 – Goal 3 - “Employee Health and well-being is valued and supported within a culture of caring.”

- **District Program Coordinator – Truth and Reconciliation – 1.0 FTE**

- The addition of a District Program Coordinator for Truth and Reconciliation will support the District’s work to honour and implement the Calls to Action related to education and our commitment to increase access to authentic learning opportunities which enhance understanding of Indigenous Peoples’ culture and history. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – Goal 3 – “Indigenous Peoples’ history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices.”

- **Teacher Consultant – Indigenous Education – 1.0 FTE**
  - The current workload for Teacher Consultants – Indigenous Education is immense, as they support Indigenous Focused Graduation Courses and embedding First Peoples’ Principles of learning across K-12.  
Honouring our commitment to the TRC Calls to Action requires increased support to ensure teachers can provide authentic learning opportunities, select appropriate resources, and have meaningful collaboration in a well-supported environment. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – Goal 3 – “Indigenous Peoples’ history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices.”
  
- **Teacher Consultant – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion - SOGI – 1.0 FTE**
  - In September 2022 and 2023, the District and Partner Groups made a joint statement in support of SOGI and we reaffirmed our commitment to Board Policy 106 “...to ensure that every individual is treated with fairness, respect and dignity...and to encourage a climate of welcome, respect and support for those who identify as LGBTQ+ and the challenges they often encounter in being accepted and fully included in the life of the school community.” Despite these joint statements, we have been witnessing examples that show this commitment is not well understood or valued by all community members. There is still significant work to be done by the District’s SOGI Advisory Committee, both in terms of the District’s SOGI Policy, but also supporting schools as they continue to ensure schools are supportive and respectful learning environments. The addition of a Teacher Consultant – SOGI will help ensure that every student, employee and family feels safe and accepted for who they are. Currently, the SOGI portfolio is supported as an add-on to the work of Teacher Consultants and Coordinators. The workload is not strategic nor sustainable. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners” – Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion” and Priority 4 – “A Progressive Workplace”.
  
- **Additional 3.0 FTE of Counselling**
  - The RTA has heard from our members that students require more access to mental health supports, and many students have echoed this during conversations with the Board.

The RTA/RSD Collective Agreement outlines the minimum non-enrolling support for counselling. Like all collective agreement ratios, these numbers are minimums that the District supplements with general operating funds.

Experience is showing that the support is still insufficient to meet demand. Additional FTE may allow the District some flexibility to consider staffing options to help address school based pressures that arise with leaves of absence or mid-year resignations. The RTA would be open to engage in these discussions with relevant Partner Groups. The additional counselling support aligns with Strategic Priority 1, Goals 1 and 2 – “Learners have increased capacity to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world and the district fosters resilient and healthy life-long learners.”

### Local Capital Projects

- **Support for overcrowded elementary schools**
  - In December 2023, the RTA presented a letter and brief to the Board about Enrollment Growth and Elementary Space and Facilities.  
The RTA believes there are opportunities through local capital funds to help address space pressures, which includes access to meeting and learning support space, as well as additional multi-purpose space and playground equipment. In the longer term, these pressures will only be addressed by the addition of a new school in City Center. The RTA appreciates the continued and increased advocacy by the Board to secure land and funding. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners”, Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion” and Priority 3 – “Optimized Facilities and Technology”.
  
- **Continued support for Sustainability and Climate Action Projects such as Solar Panels, electric charging stations, and safe storage for electric bikes**
  - Impacts of climate change are ever present in today’s world. Students and staff understand these realities and expect to be part of action. Adding solar panels, electric charging stations and the ability to safely store electric bikes would be visible and tangible support for the climate. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 3 – Goal 3 – “The district fosters energy efficient and environmentally sustainable facilities and practices.”

Thank you for the opportunity to present our suggestions for the 2024-2025 District budget.

Sincerely,



Liz Baverstock  
President, RTA

cc: Chris Usih, Superintendent of Schools  
Cindy Wang, Secretary–Treasurer  
Steve Wenglowski, 1<sup>st</sup> VP, RTA  
JW Cho, VP, RTA  
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