



Richmond Teachers' Association

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

Dear Sandra,

Re: Budget Brief

On behalf of the Richmond Teachers' Association, we thank you for the opportunity to submit a budget brief for the upcoming 2022-2023 District budget. While the pandemic has created many challenges, there are positive signs, such as increased student enrollment. The RTA provides the following information that is in alignment with the District Strategic Plan, which should be useful in determining priorities for the 2022-2023 District Budget.

i. Strategic Priority 1 – Inspired Learners

There are many initiatives that the Board has undertaken before and throughout the pandemic. The RTA recognizes that the Board supports teachers and students by funding the Innovation Grant initiatives. While the RTA acknowledges there are current supports that exist for teachers and students, there are a few areas that the Board should consider on supporting:

- Innovation Grants – Truth and Reconciliation, Literacy, Numeracy and Community Engaged Learners
- Additional 5.0 FTE of Counselling
- Trustee Advocacy regarding implementation of the new changes to the Reporting Order

Innovation Grants

Richmond School District and the board has supported teachers and students to infuse Aboriginal Ways of Knowing and First People's Principles into the curriculum; the RTA believes there are more actions needed to further our mutual commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. One of the ways can be by adding an Indigenous Education grant area to support Truth and Reconciliation.

This will support Priority 1, Goal 3 – Indigenous Peoples' history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices. Teachers can access the grant to

further collaborate on Truth and Reconciliation work in classrooms and addition of this focus area will help strengthen our mutual commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

The RTA also encourages Trustees and the District to consider expanding the grant areas to specifically identify Literacy and Numeracy. While many of our students have returned to their schools this year, Richmond supported many remote learners, particularly elementary-aged students, during the pandemic. Many families and students faced and may still be facing challenges as we continue in the pandemic, and for some students, engaging in remote learning was difficult. The RTA wants to ensure that students with learning gaps, particularly in critical areas such as literacy and numeracy, are supported, and that gaps are narrowed. The addition of Literacy and Numeracy grant areas support Priority 1, Goal 4, Objectives 1 and 2 – Developing and implementing a K-12 literacy and numeracy vision and framework.

In addition, The RTA encourages a grant area is established to initiate and continue to develop our support for Community Engaged Learners. This grant area could be developed to provide additional opportunities for teachers to engage in inquiry projects to foster inspired learners through equity, inclusion and diversity within the Richmond schools or the greater community of Richmond.

Additional Counselling Support

Prior to the pandemic, the RTA heard from our members that students require more access to mental health supports. Many students echoed this during the conversation when the Board was developing the Strategic Plan. The pandemic has highlighted the utmost importance of everyone's well-being, including mental health. The RTA believes ongoing support is required to increase understanding of mental health issues, so that teachers can better assist students and ensure students are encouraged to seek help. The restored RTA/RSD Collective Agreement outlines the minimum non-enrolling support for counselling. Like all collective agreement ratios, these numbers are minimums that the District can supplement with general operating funds. The current minimum ratio for counselling time is as follows:

Secondary:

1.0 FTE Counselling time for every 360 secondary students. Here are some examples below:

School A of 1400 students must be staffed with 3.89 FTE of counselling support.

School B of 600 students must be staffed with 1.67 FTE of counselling support.

Elementary:

1.0 FTE Counselling time for every 1200 elementary students.

Richmond currently has approximately 13 FTE of Elementary Area Counsellors supporting 37 elementary schools.

This language was negotiated in the early 1990s and has not been bargained since. Since then, there has been an increased wait time to see a counsellor in elementary and secondary schools,

and it must be prioritized to address the most acute needs. Therefore, The RTA requests the Board to add 5.0 FTE of counselling support. To support our students.

Cost 5.0 FTE x \$78,000 ~ \$400,000

The additional counselling support aligns with Priority 1, Goal 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.

Trustee Advocacy – Implementation of the New Reporting Order

The RTA further requests that Trustees advocate to the Ministry of Education regarding changes to and implementation of the Reporting Order is properly supported by the Ministry of Education. A survey from the Ministry of Education was recently collected from all stakeholders, including the public, regarding proposed changes to the Reporting Order and produced a report "*What we Heard: K-12 Student Progress Reporting*" in December 2021. The report highlights key concerns raised regarding teachers' workloads and the quality and usefulness of feedback generated by teachers to advance students' learning. The RTA recognizes that the District has been supporting teachers in exploring possible changes to the Reporting Order through Innovation Grants. However, the RTA has heard from our members that the workload has significantly increased and some teachers have stopped participating in that grant area due to increase in workload. Some of the support for the implementation could include additional non-instructional days, similar to Curriculum Implementation Days, when the revised curriculum was being implemented, and training/in-service opportunities were provided to teachers. This in-service is especially important when new software or changes to software programs are used as part of the reporting student progress to families. While the final changes to the Reporting Order are not yet known, there should be adequate support when the changes are implemented, and the Ministry of Education should support how the changes are implemented. It reflects Priority 1 Goal 1 Objectives 2 and 4:

- Objective 2 – Support educators to deepen their understanding and effective implementation of the curriculum.
- Objective 4 – Strengthen learning by fully embedding formative assessment practices that involve both students and adults.

ii. Strategic Priority 2 – Equity and Inclusion

The Board has a Strategic Plan that aims to create learning environments that are inclusive and equitable to diverse learners in Richmond. The RTA encourages the Board to consider the following requests to take another step forward in creating an environment where students are, and their families feel welcomed and supported in their educational success.

- Teacher Training/In-Service
- Staffing with mid-year enrollment increase

Teacher Training / In-service

As we move to the endemic state of COVID-19, the RTA believes training should resume and be expanded to all teachers, particularly the SIOP training (Inclusive Practice Training – using

content and language instruction to teach ELL students) that the District has supported. There are a high number of ELL learning in Richmond and this training opportunity would allow Richmond teachers to continue to develop strong ELL pedagogy within their practice. Teachers need the time and training to understand the nuances of language acquisition within content areas that fold in cultural inclusivity and build a strong sense of literacy skills. The RTA acknowledges that the availability of TTOCs can be challenging at various times of the year. However, these opportunities can still exist for teachers if they are also made available as paid summer training. This supports the following objectives in Priority 2, Goals 1 and 2.

- G1. Objective 1 – Support all learners to develop a sense of connection, belonging and positive personal and cultural identity.
- G.1 Objective 3 – Devote focused attention and specialized support to address the individualized needs of learners with disabilities and diverse abilities.
- G.1 Objective 4 – Provide support for staff to increase understanding of and embed evidence-based practices related to the implementation of inclusive learning communities.
- G.2 Objective 4 – Ensure students and staff have access to current and relevant learning resources that reflect the diversity of, and the challenges faced by our community and the world.

Cost for training ~ \$50,000

Staffing with mid-year enrollment increase

Richmond learners are the District's priority, which is reflected in the Strategic Plan. The RTA requests that the staffing for 2022-2023 take into consideration a possible mid-year enrollment increase. Staffing for the 2021-2022 school year was extremely tight, and The RTA recognizes that the Board had to make tough decisions, as we were in deficits. Many of the city centre schools are at full capacity and, with current growth, it is essential spaces are available to welcome new students in their neighbourhood or close to neighbourhood schools. Ensuring that necessary space and supports are accessible is important when teachers are welcoming new students throughout the year. 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 and directly support objectives in Priority 2, Goal 1:

- Objective 2 – Provide equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all learners.
- Objective 3 – Devote focused attention and specialized support to address the individualized needs of learners with disabilities and diverse abilities.

Cost ~ \$500,000 (CEF Funding – Superintendent approval of a smaller class to ensure space is available within across schools)

iii. Strategic Priority 3 – Optimized Facilities and Technology

The pandemic has highlighted that maintaining a focus on Health and Safety is essential in creating a safe learning environment. The RTA recognizes the Board's advocacy and work to ensure that schools function safely by supplying N-95 masks and air purifiers to classrooms without mechanical ventilation, but this has to be a short-term, temporary measure. The RTA

encourages the Board to action the following items that will support creating learning spaces that are equitable, safe, and conducive to learning.

- Full mechanical ventilations in all schools
- Necessary electrical and boiler upgrades to accommodate the new equipment
- Removal of hazardous materials (i.e., asbestos)

Ventilation in schools

The RTA encourages the Trustees to consider using funds from the Capital Reserve. The upgrades will make an immediate impact on improving the learning environment, but they will also be sustainable in energy efficiency. These upgrades correlate to the following objectives in Priority 3, Goal 2 and 3.

- G.2. Objective 1 – Provide equitable learning environments through effective and efficient facilities planning, management and resources allocation.
- G.2. Objective 2 – Provide clean, healthy, and safe facilities.
- G.3. Objective 2 – Improve energy efficiency, climate resiliency and sustainability of all facilities through capital improvements.

As we remain optimistic that we will transition out of the worldwide pandemic soon, the pandemic has taught us that good ventilation is one of many measures that can enhance students' learning environments, improve public health, and take action on climate change.

Approximate cost ~ \$12 Million (Capital Reserve)

iv. Strategic Priority 4 – A Progressive Workplace

The RTA acknowledges increased access to support provided by the District's Foundations of a Healthy Workplace program. In the Board's Strategic Plan, the Board pursues attracting and retaining the best people and becoming one of the premier school districts to work. With that in mind, the RTA would like to make further requests to the trustees to consider:

- Ergonomic improvements
- EFAP for TTOCs
- Continue to offer vaccine programs

Ergonomic Improvements

Over the years, there has been an increase in administrative tasks that teachers need to complete, and as a result, teachers are spending more time on their laptops. The RTA has heard from our members that many teachers do not have chairs or desks that are conducive to a healthy workplace. Many teachers would benefit from ergonomic supports, such as new chairs, standing desks or standing laptop carts with external keyboards and mice. Teachers spend much of their day standing and moving, and they often bend quickly and awkwardly to access their desks and laptops. The increased ergonomic supports reflect Priority 4, Goals 3 and 4 and the following objectives:

- G.3. Objective 2 – Identify the primary areas of focus to grow or enhance existing supports.
- G.4. Objective 4 – Highlight and promote our District as an employer of choice.

EFAP for TTOCs

The importance of maintaining mental health has been highlighted as we have navigated the worldwide pandemic. The RTA requests the Board to consider making the Employee Family Assistance Program available for TTOCs. The EFAP is a great benefit that is available to contract teachers. The RTA acknowledges that the District grants access to the program to TTOCs upon request, but we would like to see this benefit expanded to all TTOCs, as many teachers are just starting their careers, and teaching is challenging, especially in the early stages.

Approximate Cost ~ \$6,000 (EFAP costs about \$38 per year per teacher. The RTA assumes that the District has approximately ~ 150 TTOCs)

Continuing Vaccine Programs

The RTA continues to support District initiatives on vaccination programs. While it is hard to predict the future concerning COVID-19, vaccination has been one of the key contributors in protecting ourselves from becoming ill. Preventative measures, such as offering the vaccine program is a proactive step that supports all employees.

The access to EFAP for TTOCs and Vaccine programs mirrors Priority 4, Goal 3 and 4 and the following objectives:

- G.3. Objective 2 - Identify the primary areas of focus to grow or enhance existing supports.
- G.3. Objective 4 – Provide opportunities for employees to engage in health and well-being activities.
- G.4. Objective 2 – Review and enhance recruitment and selection practices across the District.
- G.4. Objective 4 – Highlight and promote our District as an employer of choice.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to present our suggestions for the 2022-2023 District budget.

Sincerely,



Liz Baverstock,
President, RTA

cc: Scott Robinson, Superintendent Of Schools
Cindy Wang, Secretary–Treasurer
Tim McCracken, 1st VP, RTA
Steve Wenglowksi, 2nd VP, RTA
JW Cho, 3rd VP, RTA