



Richmond Teachers' Association

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

Dear Debbie,

Re: Budget Brief

On behalf of the Richmond Teachers' Association, we thank you for the opportunity to submit a budget brief for the upcoming 2023-2024 District budget. While the last few years has created many challenges, there are positive signs for the budget, such as growth in student enrollment and some inflation adjustments. Unfortunately, increased enrollment is only adding to the continued difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers and other staff.

Across the District, schools are experiencing daily teacher shortages, which is increasing pressures at schools as teachers must 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 may mean elements of the District Strategic Plan will need to be paused or shifted until there is sufficient staffing.

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

- **Recruitment and Retention – Increasing the number shared and part-time assignments and increasing the number of Temporary and Continuing (unassigned positions)**
 - Recruitment and retention of staff is the greatest barrier 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

hours of instruction, but they can offer a greater range of flexible teaching options, including:

- increased number of shared and part time assignments for classroom and specialist positions.
- all classroom or specialist temporary assignments should be posted as continuing or permanent.
- all regular Teachers Teaching on Call should be placed into a temporary assignment with a set FTE, unless they request otherwise.
- The RTA recognizes this will require the District fund additional benefits (Extended Health, Dental, Insurance), but this is a small cost when you consider a student may be without classroom teacher or specialist support because the District is unable to recruit and retain teachers. Richmond is still known as a District that doesn't fully support part time teachers and this narrative must change. We also have Collective Agreement language that is inferior in terms of converting to a continuing contract – in some Districts a teacher must only work 80 days in an assignment, and then they will be automatically converted into a permanent or continuing position. We have no automatic conversion, which makes us less competitive than surrounding districts. To be a top employer the approach to recruitment and retention must change. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners”, Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion” and Priority 4 – “A Progressive Workplace”.
- **Recruitment and Retention - \$50,000 fund to provide up to \$1000 per teacher for coursework required for specialist assignments.**
 - Students and teachers require the support of many specialist teachers. Currently, the District and Province has an insufficient supply of specialist teachers resulting in inequitable access to learning environments. This challenge is unlikely to be solved by recruiting new staff. Rather, the solution lies in current Richmond teachers engaging in additional coursework to become specialist teachers. This requires time and money. The RTA encourages the District to provide funding for teachers to complete coursework required for specialist assignments. This funding should be accessible once coursework is completed, providing the teacher commits to hold a specialist assignment for up to three years. 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.”
- **Full access to paid professional development and the non-instructional day for part-time teachers.**
 - Strategic Priority 1 – Inspired Learners states that “We are all learners”. Part time teachers do not have full access to paid professional development or the Ministry regulated non-instructional day. Despite this, part-time teachers are expected to implement curriculum, reporting and new initiatives in the same way as full-time teachers. The RTA/RSD Collective Agreement does allow for part-time teachers to be paid if they are requested to attend Pro-D by their administrator. The RTA encourages the District to make this request. This aligns with Strategic Priority Four – Goal 2 – “Professional learning, leadership and skill development for all staff is promoted, encouraged and supported.”

- **Teacher Training/In-service/Collaboration Time/Release Time Support for Reporting**
 - Reporting or Communicating Student Learning has been in transition for many years. Next year, teachers will be expected to fully implement the reporting order. Unfortunately, this change has once again increased workload and expectations on teachers. The Ministry has not provided clear guidance or templates, leaving the real work of interpretation and communication to districts. What is clear to the RTA is teachers are caught in this uncertainty with perfection being the standard. Given this increased workload, the RTA requests teachers have access to one day of release across the school year to work on reporting. This is insufficient to the demands but would provide recognition of increased workload. It is important to note that reporting is only one Ministry initiative that is resulting in increased workload for teachers. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners” and Priority 4 – “A Progressive Workplace”.
- **Additional Classroom Staffing to ensure there is space in City Center elementary schools for mid-year enrollment.**
 - Richmond learners are the District’s priority, which is reflected in the Strategic Plan. The RTA requests that staffing for 2023-2024 take into consideration a mid-year enrollment increase. Staffing for the past two years has been extremely tight (causing class size overages), and the RTA recognizes that the Board had to make difficult decisions, as the District was working through structural shortfalls due to chronic underfunding of Public Education. 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. 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.
- **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 to 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**
 - 2023/2024 is the implementation year for the new Indigenous Focused Graduation requirement. Teachers are excited to teach BC First Peoples and English First Peoples, and enrollment numbers indicate that many teachers will be needed to teach these courses. The current workload for Teacher Consultants – Indigenous Education is already significant as they support embedding First Peoples’ Principles of learning across elementary and secondary schools. Implementation and honouring this work will require increased support in order to ensure teachers are able to provide authentic learning opportunities, select appropriate resources and have meaningful opportunities to collaborate 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.”
- **Additional Staffing to Support Implementation of the Indigenous Focused Graduation Requirement – 5.0 FTE**
 - 2023/2024 brings the addition of long requested Indigenous Focused Graduation requirement. Implementation of any new course at secondary always impacts enrollment in other elective courses; this is especially true when the Richmond School District continues to see a number of secondary schools with populations well below 1200. To maintain diversity of offerings across secondary schools, additional blocks (above the regular 1 block per 26 students) will need to be provided to each secondary school. The RTA requests these blocks are added after administration provide an update on course registration. Blocks should be added to ensure all Indigenous Focused Graduation courses are able 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 request accounting of these blocks and how they support secondary schools as this will help guide future decisions. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners” and Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion”.
- **School Psychologists – 3.0 FTE to be restored to the General Operating Fund**
 - For the 2022/2023 school year, 3.0 FTE School Psychologists time was cut from the General Operating Fund. This FTE should be restored to the General Operating Fund and when possible increased. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 2 – Goal 1 – “District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.”
- **School Psychologist application and exam fee to support the new Ministry of Health mandated requirement for School Psychologists to be members of the BC College of Psychologists, as of May 1, 2024.**
 - Cost \$825 (\$600 for the application fee and \$225 for the jurisprudence exam)
 - This request is without prejudice to Article B.13 Board Payment of Speech Language Pathologists and School Psychologists Professional Fees, where the Board is obligated to pay for annual Professional Certification required to be held for employment. This request is a one-time fee that current School Psychologists who are not currently registered with the BC College of Psychologists will be obligated to pay. The RTA has made this request to Human Resources as it aligns

with Strategic Priority 4 – A Progressive Workplace – Goal 4 – “High Quality staff with growth potential are recruited and retained in all positions across the District.”

- **Teacher Consultant – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion - SOGI – 1.0 FTE**

- In September 2022, the District and Stakeholders made a joint statement of 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.” Since this joint statement we have seen rising examples that show this commitment is not understood or valued by all community members across this province. There is still significant work to be actioned 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 – would help ensure we keep moving forward with our commitments to ensure every student, employee and family feels safe and accepted for who they are. Currently, the SOGI portfolio is supported by Consultants and Coordinators in addition to their current work. The workload is not sustainable and does not show the District’s full commitment to this work. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 1 – “Inspired Learners” – Priority 2 – “Equity and Inclusion” and Priority 4 – “A Progressive Workplace”.

- **Teacher Consultant – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion – Mentoring – 1.0 FTE**

- Recruitment and retention of teachers requires increased mentoring support. The current workload for the Teacher Consultant – Mentoring is unsustainable. Requests by early career teachers have increased in number and complexity since 2017. This is a result of several factors, including insufficient availability of teachers, complexities in classroom, increased workload associated with change, changing demographics and lack of defined resources, and learning standards. The RTA is observing an increased number of calls where teachers are ready to quit an assignment or even the profession because they are overwhelmed with workload and with that feel incapable of keeping up with the diversity of needs in the classroom. The work of Teacher Consultants especially the Teacher Consultant – Mentoring, is helping to prevent an exodus from contracts and the teaching profession. Teacher Consultants offer teachers hope. They provide concrete strategies to balance planning, assessment, reporting and life. With the changing demographics and the intensified need to retain staff, the Board of Education must increase support to early career teachers and teachers who are new to an assignment. 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 heard from our members that students require more access to mental health supports. 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 does supplement with general operating funds. However, support is still insufficient to meet demands and is often under added pressure when counsellors require leaves of absence. Additional FTE may allow the District some flexibility to consider additional staffing options to support school based pressures. The RTA would be open to engage in these discussions with relevant stakeholders. The additional counselling support aligns with Strategic 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.”
- **Additional custodial support to support emergencies and to mice/rodent infestations.**
 - Growth, construction, climate change and a community that exists below sea level has exacerbated the ongoing challenges of mice/rodent infestations. Despite efforts to keep doors closed and food secured, staff continue to see evidence of rodents in the buildings. The first years of the pandemic yielded increased custodial staff across all schools, which was welcomed and noticed by all teachers. The RTA encourages the District to add additional custodial support to support emergencies that occur each day in schools. Morning emergencies are particularly challenging for school-based administrators because their focus is needed on redeployment of staff in response to routine and regular staffing shortages. This challenge is most acute at elementary schools. This request aligns with Strategic Priority 3 – Goal 2 – “The district’s facilities are well-maintained, equitable, safe and conducive to learning.”

Local Capital Projects

- **Portables/modular spaces for City Center Growth**
 - In 2022, Canada welcomed over 1 million immigrants and non-permanent residents to our country, and this growth is anticipated to continue. Most of the growth occurs in surrounding regions of Vancouver and Toronto. City Center has benefited from this growth, but this has created earlier than expected pressures on elementary schools as there is insufficient space in neighbourhood schools to welcome new students. Richmond is not alone in these challenges and as such there will be no Ministry funding for a new school in the foreseeable future. This means the District must continue to use Local Capital Funds to secure portables and/or modular spaces. *The RTA does note this request should be funded by additional Provincial or Federal Funds.* The RTA encourages Trustees to seek Federal Funding for infrastructure projects that will help ensure new students are able to attend schools in their neighborhood. 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 and desire 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 2023-2024 District budget.

Sincerely,



Liz Baverstock,
President, RTA

cc: Rick Ryan, Acting Superintendent of Schools
Cindy Wang, Secretary–Treasurer
Tim McCracken, 1st VP, RTA
Steve Wenglowski, 2nd VP, RTA
JW Cho, 3rd VP, RTA