

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Education **DATE:** May 27, 2025
FROM: Carrie McVeigh, Secretary-Treasurer
RE: **2025-26 Annual Budget – Public Feedback & Next Steps**

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to provide the Board with a summary of the public feedback received through the 2025-26 Budget Process to date.

Background

The preliminary 2025-26 Annual Operating Budget was presented to the Committee of the Whole on May 13, 2025. Educational partners were invited to attend and given the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions. Leadership also attended a District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) meeting on May 5, as well as a special meeting with the Indigenous Education Council (IEC) on May 15, 2025.

It should be noted that budget conversations are taking place throughout the year with Leadership and our partners on a regular basis and feedback is considered during the development of the budget. In addition, a survey was launched and made available on the Districts' website and shared on social media outlets April 23-May 12, 2025.

Public Feedback

285 responses were received through the budget survey and have been summarized in Attachment #1.

The table below provides some additional feedback received verbally during various meetings with Partners.

<u>2025-26 Annual Budget - Additional Partner Feedback Collected to May 20, 2025</u>	
Employee Benefit Premiums	Advocacy to Ministry to assist with covering large benefit premium increases
Indigenous Education	Encouraged to continue Board commitment to move \$100,000/year out of targeted funding to operating beyond 3 years.

Strategic Alignment

Providing feedback received through the 2025-26 budget process aligns with the Boards Strategic Plan Value of **INTEGRITY**, by upholding high ethical standards through transparency, honesty and accountability.

Next Steps

The Board is required to approve an Annual Budget on or before June 30, 2025 for the 2025-26 school year.

The budget development process and timelines have been structured to facilitate a consultation process that will ensure timely decisions are made in order to adopt a balanced budget before June 30th; and allow for implementation of the budget for the 2025-26 school year. Details regarding Capital and Special Purpose funds will be shared in an upcoming meeting on June 10th.

The 2025-26 Annual Budget and Bylaw will be prepared in the required format and will be tentatively presented for adoption at the Board Meeting on June 24, 2025.

Public and Partner feedback received through the budget process may also be considered at year end when surplus restrictions are considered, the 2025/26 amended budget process once actual enrolment is realized in the fall, and future budget development years.

Recommendation:

THAT the Board of Education for School District No.71 (Comox Valley) receive the public feedback regarding the 2025-26 Annual Preliminary Operating Budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie McVeigh

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Secretary-Treasurer

Attachment #1 – 2025-26 Budget Survey Results

Budget Feedback Survey – April 23 – May 12, 2025

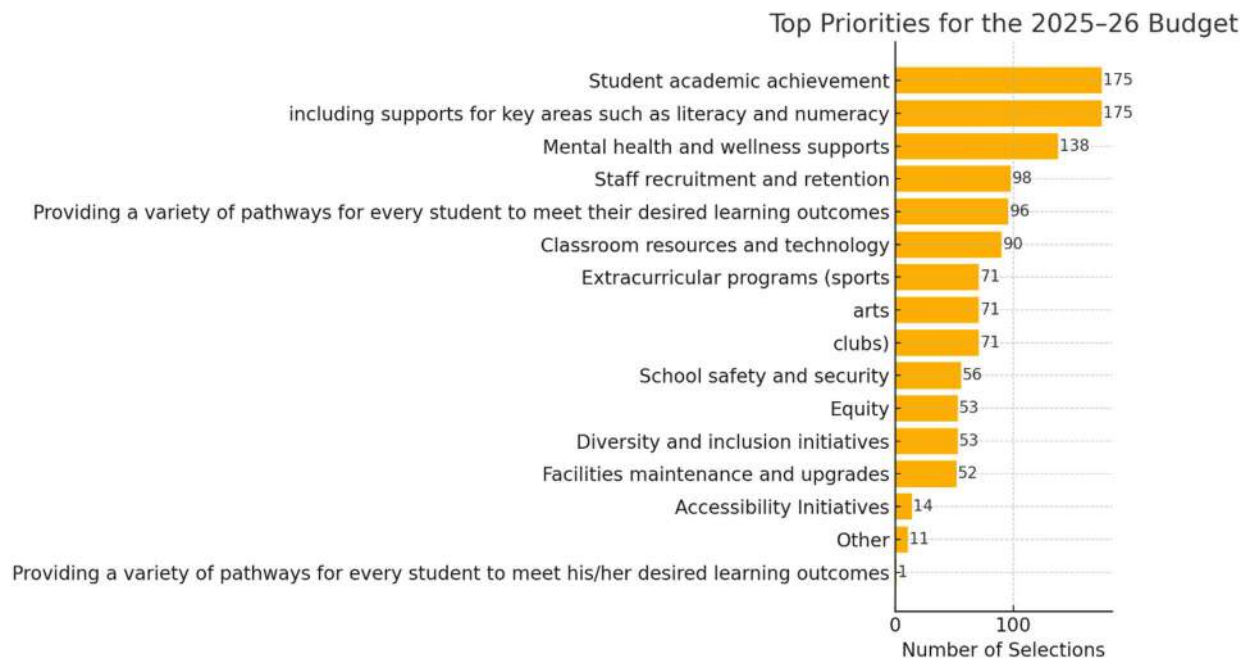
Question: *What best describes your connection to the Comox Valley School District?*
(Required)

The respondents include:

- 135 Teachers (47.4%)
- 65 Support Staff Members (22.8%)
- 59 Parents (20.7%)
- 14 Site or School Administrators (4.9%)
- 6 Community Members (2.1%)
- 4 Students (1.4%)
- 2 Other (0.7%)

Question: *What should be the top three priorities for the 2025-26 budget? (Required)*

Select exactly 3 choices.



Question: *Having reviewed the Board's Strategic Plan, do you have advice regarding alignment of the budget with the Board's strategic priorities? (Top themes identified)*

Enhanced Support for Diverse and Neurodiverse Learners

Many respondents emphasized the need for greater funding and training for Educational Assistants, classroom supports, and inclusive practices to help neurodiverse students and those requiring unique education support.

Investment in Mental Health and Student Wellbeing

There were repeated calls for sustained and improved access to mental health supports, counselling services, and trauma-informed resources for both students and staff.

Equity in Access to Programs and Services

Several comments emphasized the importance of equitable district programs and encouraged equal access regardless of school catchment or location. (e.g., distributed learning, music, behaviour support)

Sustainable Support for Arts and Music

Respondents expressed the importance of protection and restoration of music and arts programs. They feel that these programs are valuable contributors to student engagement, well-being, and development.

Transportation for Learning Opportunities

A number of comments asked for improved transportation options to support educational field trips, extracurriculars, and equitable participation in learning opportunities outside of the school setting.

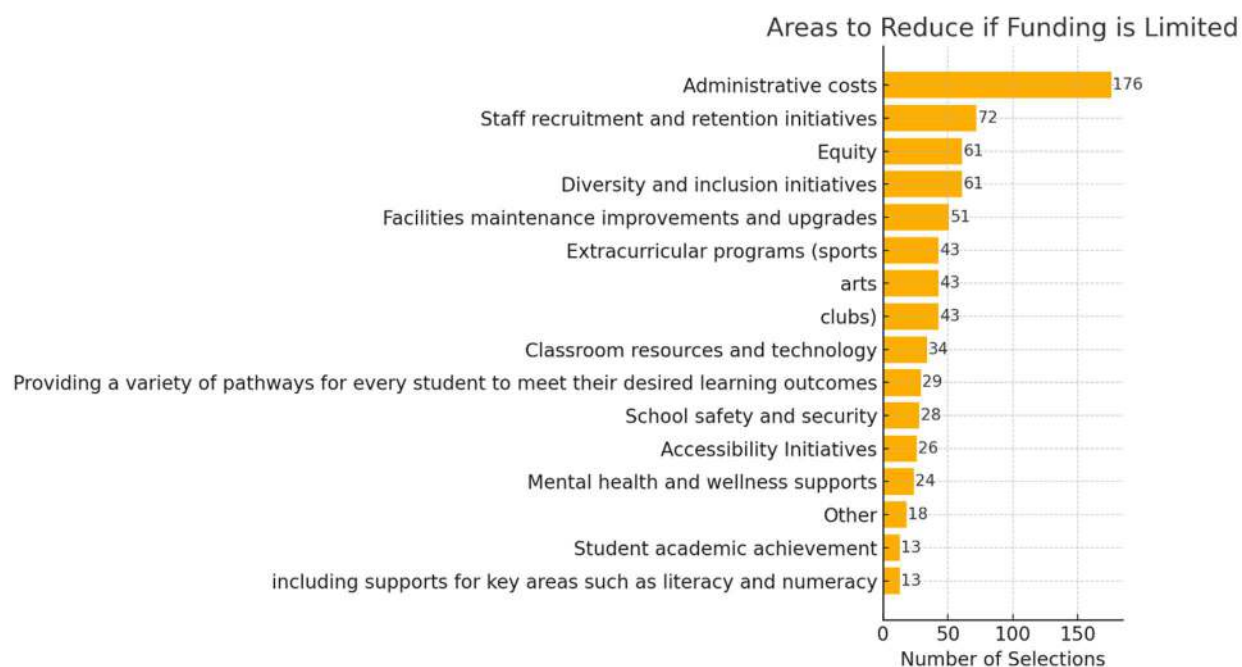
Teacher and Leadership Support

Respondents voiced the need to invest in leadership roles like department heads or instructional coordinators to support staff professionally and address workload and retention concerns.

Accountability and Value for Spending

A few responses emphasized the importance of financial transparency to ensure the alignment with the strategic plan and classroom needs.

Question: *If funding is limited, which area would you not invest in or reduce? (Required)*
Select between 1 and 3 choices.



****53 respondents selected only "Administrative costs" as their sole area for reduction.**

Question: *Do you have any further advice for the Board of Education regarding Budget 2025/26?*

The following are themes identified from the responses:

More Classroom and Mental Health Support

A recurring message was the necessity for additional in-class support and mental health resources for students struggling academically, emotionally, or behaviourally.

Meet the Needs of All Learners

Comments pointed to the importance of supporting a diverse range of student needs—including neurodivergent learners and those with undiagnosed challenges—through inclusive learning strategies and funding.

Investment in Front-Line Staff

Many respondents emphasized the need to prioritize funding for teachers, Educational Assistants (EAs), and school-based staff.

Reduce Inequity and Prioritize Student-Centred Spending

Several respondents recommended aligning funds with student needs across schools, ensuring smaller or rural schools are considered.

Increase EA Staffing and Training

Several respondents encouraged greater funding and training for Educational Assistants.

Prioritize Spending on Learning and Ensure Budgeting Aligns with School Needs

Some respondents urged the district to keep resources focused in schools where the impact is direct and visible. The importance of ensuring budgets are based on school staffing requirements and program gaps was emphasized.

Question: *How well do you feel informed about the district's current budget and spending priorities? (Required)*

Regarding how informed respondents feel about the budget:

- 174 (61%) are "Somewhat informed"
- 86 (30%) are "Not informed"
- 25 (9%) are "Very informed"

Question: *What's the best way for the district to share budget information with you? (Required)*

1. Email Newsletters (selected in 224 responses)
2. Website Updates (selected in 113 responses)
3. Social Media (selected in 62 responses)
4. Community Meetings (selected in 40 responses)
5. Printed Materials (selected in 31 responses)