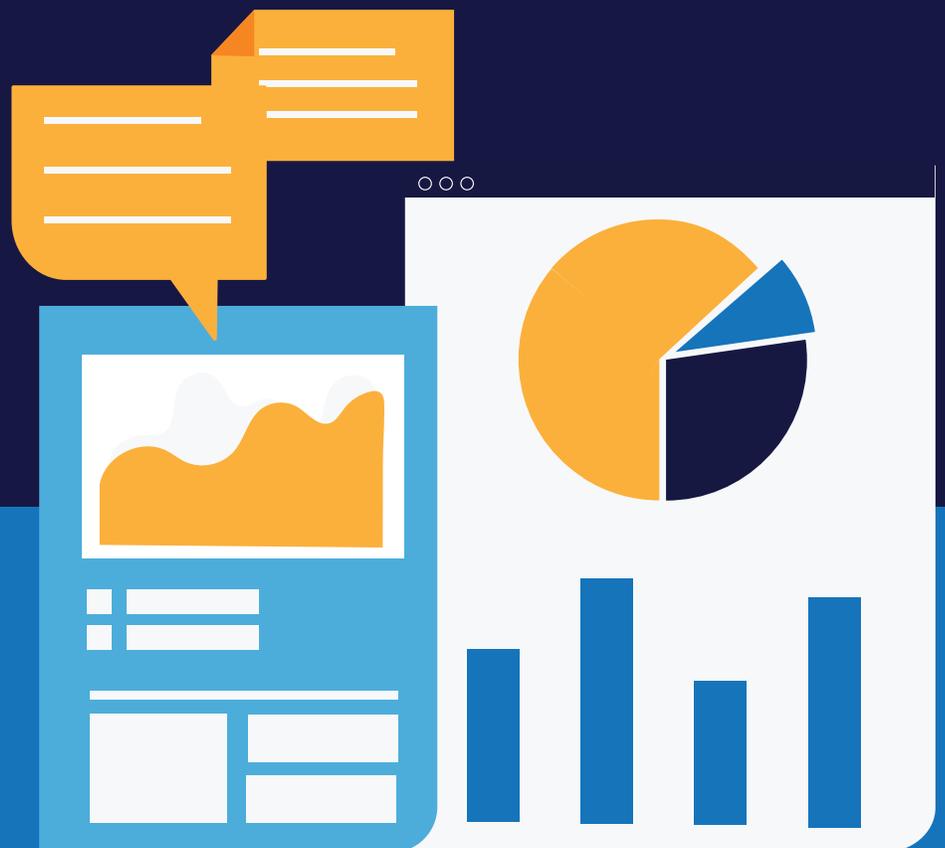


# VSB's Building for Modern Learning What We Heard Report

**PRESENTED BY:**

Spur Communication

January, 2021



# Letter from the Chair

Dear students, families, community members and staff,

Thank you for your participation in our Building for Modern Learning engagement. 2020 has been a challenging year. We know that Vancouverites have navigated many demands on their time and energy. With that in mind, we are particularly pleased to have received so much valuable feedback from students, families, community members and staff across the District, throughout this engagement.

As many of you know, each board of education in B.C. develops a Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) for its District, which lays out a vision for managing its buildings, facilities and assets in support of its educational goals. Through this process, we create a collective vision for our District that is designed to meet the needs of Vancouverites and our changing communities, today, and into the future.

In late 2019 and throughout 2020, we completed a two-phase engagement project, in which we sought input from students, families, community members and staff. We wanted to learn about ways to use VSB buildings across the city to create modern learning spaces, while we ensure students are in seismically safe schools.

In Phase I, we were pleased to hear from over 4,100 Vancouverites about the future of schools in our District, through an online engagement. We compiled both quantitative and qualitative feedback to understand Vancouverites' priorities for modern learning. In Phase II, we sought to dig deeper into your feedback.

Originally planned as a series of in-person workshops, the COVID-19 pandemic led the Board and its partners to re-imagine the engagement to a digital format, and on an amended timeline. Throughout the process, we remained committed to hearing from you - our students, staff, families and community members - in ways that prioritized inclusivity, equity, accessibility and transparency. Trustees attended all nine workshops. Once again, we were impressed by your passion and vision for education in our communities. Phase II also included rich engagement with regional Indigenous people and governments. Our findings from Phases I and II are outlined in the pages that follow.

On behalf of the entire Board, I want to express our sincere appreciation to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts with us, across the duration of this in-depth community engagement. Thank you for being an important partner in helping students reach their intellectual, social, and physical potential in a safe and inclusive environment.

With Regards,

Carmen Cho, Board Chair

cc: VBE Trustees, Suzanne Hoffman, Superintendent, J. David Green, Secretary-Treasurer

# Executive Summary

In 2020, we learned about what it means to be a community. We were reminded that the strongest communities are both responsive to the now, and forward-looking to the future. They are strategic in their planning, yet adaptable to changing climates. These themes were salient throughout this engagement.

Notwithstanding the lessons of this particular time, we know that schools are always vital to the communities they serve. It is imperative, then, that community members be invited to create a collective vision for schools in our city. This is the ethos that drove this engagement.

In addition to fulfilling its obligations to the Ministry of Education, VSB sees the creation of an updated Long Range Facilities Plan as an opportunity to continue an ongoing dialogue with students, staff, families and community members. Just as facilities plans must be developed annually, reviewed and amended to account for changing conditions, conversations with students, families, community members and staff must also be open and ongoing.

VSB had several objectives for this project, chief among them being to increase awareness and understanding of the LRFP, operational constraints, capital asset management, and school capacity; and to understand what Vancouverites envision for the future of schools. With 4,185 respondents to our online engagement in Phase I, and 70 participants in 10 workshops in Phase II, we gathered insights from a diverse cross-section of students, staff, families and community members.

This engagement took place on the shared traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh, the same lands on which VSB operates. Through this engagement, VSB also sought to deepen relationships with other levels of government, aligning with reconciliation principles. The Board wanted the engagement to be inclusive and equitable. With this in mind, in Phase I we specifically sought input from those who self-identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous or Person of Colour), and LGTBQ2S+. In Phase II, we offered workshops specifically for students, and for people who identified as Indigenous. As a result of direct outreach to all regional First Nations, we met and heard from the Squamish Nation. While Indigenous feedback is specifically highlighted in this document (see “Group-specific Findings” on page 44), it is also integrated throughout this report’s Key Findings.

Overall, this engagement revealed three key findings:

1. First, on matters of sustainability and structure, participants encourage VSB to invest in building materials that reduce costs and environmental impacts, over time. They also feel strongly that student comfort is integral to learning. If school upgrades or replacements cannot adequately ensure a modern level of comfort for students, additional investments are required to meet this expectation.
2. Second, participants’ views are strongest when it comes to designing for modern learning. People who attended workshops had difficulty prioritizing some enhancements over others, offering instead that the entire spectrum of modern learning features should be included in contemporary schools. In fact, participants

do not see these as enhancements at all. There is strong demand for everything VSB identified for input, from adaptable and integrated technology, flexible spaces and culturally responsive design, to opportunities to learn through the arts and in hands-on ways.

3. Lastly, most participants do not support selling portions of VSB properties. They favour short-term leases of full properties, and long-term leases of portions of properties, as a way to generate revenue to fulfill the expectations above.

With all of this in mind, it is our understanding that Vancouverites could support short-term leases of full properties, and long-term leases of portions of properties, if this generated revenue necessary to build schools with sustainable materials and modern comforts. The same is true of designing schools to support elements of modern learning, the improvements about which people feel the most passionate. That said, there are some conditions and considerations for short- and long-term leasing, namely:

1. Prioritizing student safety;
2. Prioritizing lease-agreements that preserve VSB properties for community use;
3. Developing lease arrangements as part of an integrated and holistic urban planning process, prioritizing flexibility as educational needs change; and
4. Conducting community-specific engagement to support changes at specific schools.

For more details about these summary findings and recommendations, see pages 54-56.

We thank everyone who participated in this engagement process for your time, your insights, your flexibility, your passion and your vision. We look forward to the next step in VSB's development of its LRFP.



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# Engagement Objectives

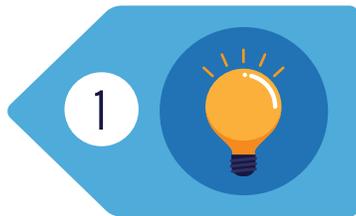
# Engagement Objectives

In late 2019 and throughout 2020, Vancouver School Board (VSB) sought to undertake a year-long visioning process with communities and neighbourhoods. The Board wanted to identify opportunities for enhanced and renewed teaching and learning environments as part of its Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP). As part of this process, they wanted to learn about community and neighbourhood needs, student safety, special spaces in schools, innovative programs and learning spaces. Ultimately, the Board engaged the public to learn about ways to use VSB buildings across the city to create modern learning spaces, while we ensure students are in seismically safe schools.

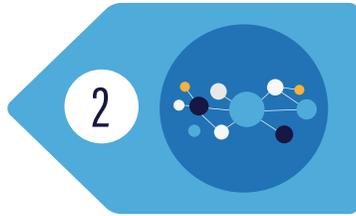
The Board had five priorities throughout this engagement process:

-  1 Earn trust through a transparent engagement process
-  2 Increase awareness and understanding of the LRFP, operational constraints, capital asset management, and school capacity
-  3 Understand what Vancouverites envision for the future of schools
-  4 Hear from Vancouver's diverse residents through an inclusive and inviting engagement process
-  5 Deepen relationships with other levels of government, aligning with reconciliation principles where possible

The Board also identified measurable targets:



Increase awareness and shared understanding of the ongoing engagement process by reaching 50,000 Vancouverites



Engage a diverse range of 2,500 students, staff, parents, stakeholders and community members throughout the engagement process



Build trust through developing and distributing a comprehensive What We Heard Report.

THE BOARD HAD FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THIS ENGAGEMENT PROCESS:

## INCLUSIVITY

through broad-based communication and engagement promotion

## EQUITY

through creating safe spaces that foster meaningful conversation

## ACCESSIBILITY

through emphasizing non-traditional means of engagement and prioritizing visual communication

## TRANSPARENCY

through clearly outlining the engagement process and selecting an online tool that allows participants to track results in real-time

# Phase I Summary

# Phase I Summary

## PHASE I AT A GLANCE

PHASE I INCLUDED A MULTI-PRONGED COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN. WE USED:



Organic & paid social media



Traditional advertising



Email marketing



Traditional news media



Posters



Presentations



Newsletters

We hosted three weeks of online engagement, exploring participants' priorities for modern learning, potential community uses for school sites, comfort with various forms of capital asset management, and considerations around school closures.

### OVERALL, WE HEARD FROM:

4185

Participants



4%

Students



7%

Staff



65%

Parents



24%

Community

827

people identified as people of colour, Indigenous or LGBTQ2S+



# What We Heard in Phase I

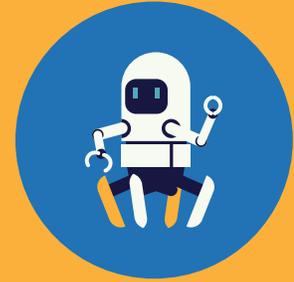
## Top three priorities for modern learning:



Learning through the arts



Sustainable spaces



Technology in classrooms

## Top three ideas for community use:



Childcare



Healthy living hub



Green spaces

## Top options for capital asset management:



Short-term leases with full properties



Long-term leases with portions of properties

# Phase I Participant Summary



**4185** TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



**2742** TOTAL COMMENTS

Participant types: 1943 VSB parents, 727 community members (including 244 parents of future VSB students), 220 VSB students, 214 staff, with the remaining unidentified.

We heard from a diverse group of participants. Nearly 10 per cent of participants identified a home language other than English, with more than five per cent of participants identifying Cantonese as the primary language. Overall, 652 (16 per cent) participants identified as people of colour, 75 (two per cent) as Indigenous and 201 (five per cent) as LGBTQ2S+. The highest diversity appeared to be among student participants - nearly a third of VSB student participants identified as people of colour, six per cent identified as Indigenous and 17 per cent identified as LGBTQ2S+.

## Vision for Modern Learning

The Board asked participants to help build a vision for modern learning. Most VSB schools are more than 70 years old, which means many of them are in great need of upgrades and repairs. It also means that these schools weren't designed with today's modern teaching styles and technology in mind. Defining a vision for the future of learning at schools now means that VSB can make the most of any upgrades and repairs to ensure our school sites will support student learning and the needs of the surrounding community for years to come.

We asked for your feedback about:

	<b>Flexible Learning Spaces</b>	Flexible spaces allow teachers to change the classroom set-up to teach different subjects and support students with different learning styles.
	<b>Learning from the Land</b>	This could include school gardens; learning about Indigenous ways of knowing the land, sea, and air; as well as learning about our natural surroundings here in Vancouver.
	<b>Technology in Classrooms</b>	Spaces that support evolving technology help students and teachers access changing technological resources. These could include science labs and maker-spaces.
	<b>Culturally-Responsive Learning Environments</b>	Culturally-responsive learning environments acknowledge Vancouver's history and celebrate the diversity of our city today. As a diverse community within three First Nations territories, VSB school spaces could reflect Indigenous and multicultural values to remind us of our shared history.

	<b>Sustainable Schools</b>	<p>Sustainable buildings offer healthy learning and working spaces for students and staff. They are also more cost-effective to maintain because they use less electricity and other resources.</p>
	<b>Learning through the Arts</b>	<p>The arts help students develop skills like creativity, self-expression and critical thinking. Having dedicated space for the arts, like music rooms or art studios, helps support student learning.</p>
	<b>Learning Commons</b>	<p>Learning Commons are modern school libraries. They are spaces that allow students to learn in different ways using a variety of resources. In the past, school libraries were full of books and were used for quiet reading and study. Learning Commons still have books and quiet areas, but they also have modern technology, activity zones, and meeting spaces.</p>

Overall, there was a high level of support for all the elements presented in this section. Different aspects of modern learning received equal support from diverse participants, regardless of differences in their age, gender, or other traits. Participants expressed the most support for learning through the arts and sustainable schools. The least supported elements were culturally-responsive learning environments and flexible learning spaces. The following graphic provides an overview of public support for the various options.

Despite a slightly lower interest among respondents, culturally-responsive learning environments and flexible learning spaces remain priorities. VSB is committed to applying relevant recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and supporting students of diverse cultural backgrounds. VSB is also responsible for ensuring schools are accessible for all students. Feedback from the community must, therefore, be balanced with these obligations.

Modern Learning Element	Average Score
Learning through the Arts	 92%
Sustainable Schools	 90%
Technology in Classrooms	 89%
Learning Commons	 86%
Learning from the Land	 85%
Flexible Learning Spaces	 80%
Culturally-Responsive Learning Environments	 70%

## What Else You Said

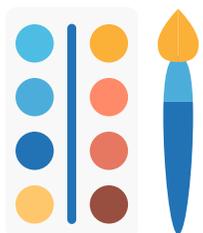
This section had a total of 1081 comments. Participants provided comments directly related to aspects of modern learning identified above. Still, several new themes also emerged in these comments, including learning through physical movement, improvements to existing basic facilities, and possibilities for community uses for schools. These themes are summarized below.

## Learning through the Arts

Participant comments about the arts focused on schools that can support a wide variety of arts programs through dedicated or flexible spaces for these programs, including performance and fine arts spaces. A handful of comments pertained to the culinary arts (providing garden and kitchen spaces where students could learn to grow and prepare food while learning about food sustainability and healthy nutrition).

### QUOTES:

- *“Space for physical education (gyms, playgrounds) and for performing arts and community events (auditorium/stages).”*
- *“Dedicated spaces for the arts, not multipurpose rooms. Ensure space for inclusion - accessibility, [manage] sensory issues (noise, visual distractions - glass walls), [with spaces for students to self-regulate].”*
- *“Theatre spaces that bring students together to collaborate and work together and engage in social and emotional learning!!”*
- *“We need to have spaces where students can cook and learn about nutrition. Imagine if kids grew food, harvested it, cooked it, learned about what it did in their bodies, and then exercised.”*



### # OF COMMENTS

Flexible Learning Spaces 185

Learning through Movement 168

Technology in Classrooms 135

Learning through the Arts 91

Improvements to Existing Facilities 71

Sustainable Schools 66

Learning Commons 63

Culturally-Responsive Learning Environments 35

Learning from the Land 32

# Sustainable Schools

“

**LESS TOXIC BUILDING MATERIALS AND IMPROVED VENTILATION SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN AND SCHOOL STAFF**

There was overwhelmingly strong support for the principles of sustainability in current and future school spaces.

Participants made many suggestions for improving recycling and composting practices (e.g. availability of bins), reviewing basic hygiene supplies in washroom facilities (e.g. water, paper towels), and creating zero-waste management practices within schools. A handful of comments related to creating safe routes to schools. Participants expressed concern that a perceived abundance of students who cross boundaries to attend specialized programs leads to a lack of capacity at neighbourhood schools. Participants also expressed a desire to lower the distance families travel to school to reduce transportation-related emissions.

When it came to building new school spaces, participants expressed support for low-carbon buildings with maximum natural light and ventilation. Participants viewed sustainable buildings as contributing to both the mental and physical well-being of staff and students. A handful of comments indicated the desire to see outdoor green spaces for learning through play and gardening activities.

## QUOTES:

- *“In addition to having more energy-efficient buildings, it’s also [important to] have less toxic building materials and improved ventilation systems to protect the health of our children and school staff.”*
- *“I support buildings and education that [use low-carbon materials] and lowest possible carbon emissions. New buildings should consider solar panel installations, passive building technology etc.”*
- *“Focus on sustainability & environmental education, more outdoor classrooms, reduce playground traffic pollution with living walls. Flexible, interactive common areas for more inter collaborative work.”*

# Learning from the Land

This element was strongly supported, but it generated minimal discussion. Participant comments focused mainly on the desire to see students engage in gardening activities at school, perhaps as part of a holistic model to teach students about food and nutrition. There was a brief mention of combining learning from the land with learning through play and physical movement in schools’ outdoor learning spaces.

## QUOTES:

- *“More schools should [offer] gardening programs. These programs are great for teaching children about nutrition and establishing healthy lifestyle habits.”*
- *“In addition to [the] section on ‘Learning from the Land’ I highly encourage re-wilding, [re-forestry] school lands for naturalized play areas (with major mental, physical and environmental health benefits).”*
- *“Yes! I totally agree with this. In Vancouver, this means flexible covered outdoor spaces in addition to natural areas, nature-based playgrounds, and outdoor classrooms.”*

# Technology in Classrooms

“

**I'D LIKE TO SEE A QUIET SPACE THAT'S TECH-FREE FOR STUDY AND CALM TIME FOR ALL STUDENTS**

There was mixed support for having technology in classrooms. A fifth of the comments expressed concerns about the health impacts of wireless internet frequencies and excessive screen time. These participants suggested that at least at younger ages, students' use of technology should be limited. Some went on to specifically demand banning the use of smartphones and removing wifi connections in schools.

The remaining comments expressed moderate support for having technology-capable classrooms. Participants indicated that while technology should not be the sole focus of teaching, various tools could enhance student learning experiences. Participants suggested that classrooms should not have a particular type of technology built-in but rather have adequate, flexible infrastructure to support any device now and into the

future. A handful of participants called for specialized high-tech spaces (e.g. a digital lounge), while others advocated for low-tech spaces, too.

## QUOTES:

- *“There seems to be technology in all parts of the school now - the classroom, the library/learning commons. I'd like to see a quiet space that's tech-free for study and calm time for all students.”*
- *“Technology is not something separate from our lives, it is fully ingrained. Our education approach should be similar and integrate tech holistically instead of designating 'tech-friendly spaces.’ “*
- *“I don't support wifi in schools as we don't know the long-term health effects, and I think that we should reconsider the over-reliance on addictive technology like smartphones.”*

# Learning Commons

This topic drew a lot of commentary from participants and centred on three issues.

First, participants felt providing paper books to students in learning commons was necessary for various reasons, including off-screen learning and providing fair access to resources for all students, regardless of family income. Second, participants identified the need for adequate quiet spaces within libraries to offer a calm, safe learning environment for students who may need it. Lastly, several participants commented on the need to ensure learning commons were resourced adequately with trained staff, though staffing is outside the scope of this engagement.

## QUOTES:

- *“it will be beneficial to have a specific space for sensory needs of different students.”*
- *“As more families do not own books and some children struggle with reading skills, it's important to maintain libraries with strong book collections.”*
- *“This needs to be considered carefully with expert, experienced teacher-librarians as well as architects collaborating together. Books are still very relevant and must be included in this flexible space.”*



## Flexible Learning Spaces

“  
**EQUIPMENT TO  
ENCOURAGE  
MOVEMENT,  
ACTIVE SITTING,  
AND ACTIVE  
STANDING  
THROUGHOUT  
THE DAY**

This topic generated a lot of commentary. Participants recognized the benefit of having flexible rooms to accommodate a wide range of school activities as well as before- and after-school use by the community. Many participants connected such spaces with greater opportunity to cater to students’ different learning styles, to support collaboration, and to facilitate group learning.

However, participants also shared the practical challenges of teaching and learning in such open spaces. Participant comments again reflected concerns that many students need quiet spaces with minimal distractions, and have a more challenging time learning in an open environment. A handful of comments indicated support for a design process informed by educators to ensure spaces match instructors’ needs and philosophies.

Participants were also cautious that flexible spaces should not replace dedicated specialized spaces such as theatres or music rooms. Storage space for teaching materials and equipment was identified as a challenge if more classroom spaces became flex rooms.

### QUOTES:

- “Some children are overwhelmed and/or distracted by big open spaces and learn better in focused, smaller spaces. Keep this in mind as you design classrooms and learning commons.”
- “Equipment to encourage movement, active sitting, and active standing throughout the day. E.g., standing desks, wobble cushions, other aids. Environments that support a variety of learning types.”
- “Invest in flexible common areas that can be used for town halls, exhibitions, and modern performances. These spaces can be used for school activities during the day and rented out for community use.”
- “New schools should be designed with the capacity to accommodate unplanned future conditions. With adaptability built into the core, schools can address fluctuating student numbers and climate issues.”

## Culturally-Responsive Learning Environments

The majority of comments related to cultural diversity expressed a desire to see greater inclusion of various cultures through curriculum changes or modes of instruction. Some participants indicated that they did not view the need for integrating cultural elements into the physical learning environment but rather expressed the desire for these cultural lessons to be shared through existing curricular activities.

Culturally-responsive learning environments and flexible learning spaces are priorities for VSB because the Board is committed to applying relevant recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The board is responsible for ensuring schools are accessible for all students. Feedback from the community must, therefore, be balanced with these obligations.



## QUOTES:

- *“Continue to expand with teaching about Indigenous people’s history, residential school, and colonialism. We need truth-telling about these things for this next generation.”*
- *“Spaces that support cross-cultural understanding, support for diverse identities and ways of learning, and community building and engagement through the Arts and STEM.”*

## Learning through Movement

This was a new theme that emerged from the comments. Around 10 per cent of comments related to both informal movement (recreation) and formal movement (physical education) as essential considerations in modern learning environments. Comments showed that participants viewed indoor and outdoor physical activity as critical for students’ learning and health. The comments showed strong support for more indoor and outdoor spaces for general play, structured sports activities and more specialized gym and field spaces for quality physical education and sports programs.

## QUOTES:

- *“Don’t forget traditional playground structures as well as nature-inspired ones, similar to those seen at Terra Nova Park in Richmond and Douglas Park in Vancouver. Outdoor physical play is integral!”*
- *“Indoor exercise areas aside from the gym. Hopscotch hallways, tiny trampolines, indoor climbing walls are a few examples.”*
- *“Multi-use sport space to provide not only school use during the day, but able to provide after school sport’s programs.”*

## Improvements to Existing Facilities

Some participants commented on improving maintenance practices of current facilities and shared thoughts about the design of new ones. Examples included fixing broken water fountains and creating an adequate number of gender-neutral washrooms.

“

**APPROPRIATE LUNCHROOM/ SPACE TO ALLOW STUDENTS TO HAVE MINDFUL MEALTIME WITHOUT BEING RUSHED**

Other comments pointed to existing challenges that could be remedied while upgrading or rebuilding a school. This included making the entire building accessible to people of all abilities; lunchrooms or cafeteria sized to accommodate most students; ensuring classroom sizes are big enough to accommodate students with all their belongings, or having adequate storage space for students’ belongings; and the provision of showers and lockers for those biking to school/work.

## QUOTES:

- *“Libraries with actual books are very important. Large spaces to eat lunch. Playgrounds are important. Windows that open. Bathrooms designed for kids. Taps that are easy to use and warm water & soap.”*
- *“Appropriate lunchroom/space to allow students to have mindful mealtime without being rushed. Having enough time to eat and socialize during lunchtime will boost students’ energy and pm learning.”*
- *“BIGGER CLASSROOMS. Proper heating/cooling of classrooms. Storage for teachers in the classrooms. Good lighting in classrooms and natural light.”*



# Vision for Community Use

We asked Vancouverites to explore how schools could also benefit our local communities. To do so, we looked at existing VSB priorities and previous public engagement projects to create ideas about potential community uses of schools. We asked for your feedback about:

## CHILDCARE

School spaces may be used to provide childcare.

## HOUSING AND HOMES

School sites can be used for residential living - including staff housing, mixed-use development (a mix of residential and business or community use), mixed-income housing (a combination of housing where some are less expensive to allow more people to access it) or accommodation for vulnerable youth.

## HEALTHY LIVING HUBS

Schools can be community hubs for healthy living. They could host neighbourhood learning centres, community centres, sports and recreational programs, and can rent space to community groups or other organizations. These hubs could also include health and well-being services for students like doctors, dentists, counselling and youth services.

## LOCAL BUSINESSES

Non-profit or for-profit organizations could use school spaces for business purposes, such as office space or shops.

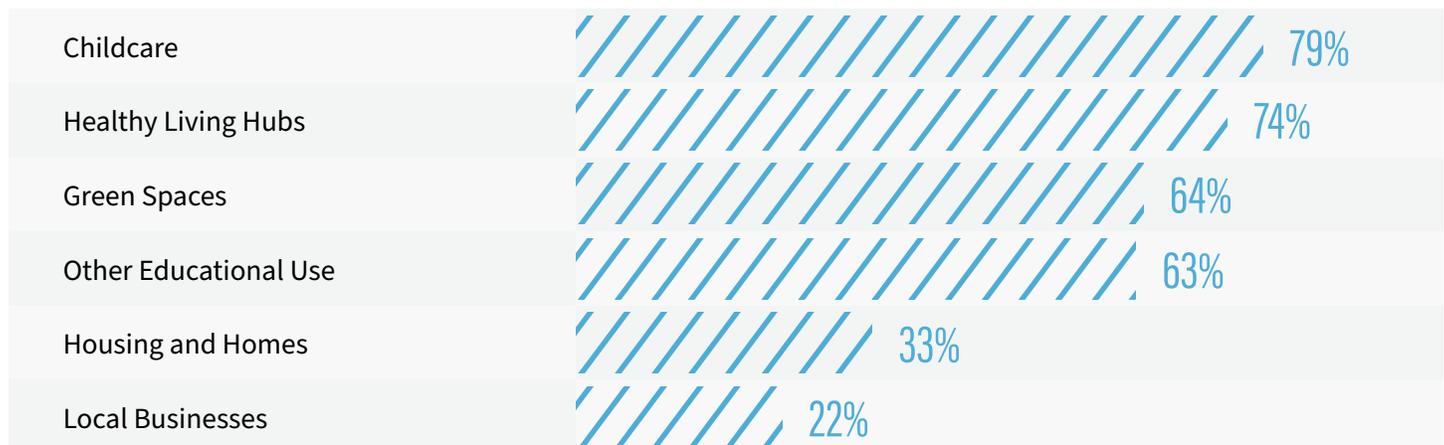
## GREEN SPACES

School sites can provide space for community gardens and green spaces for public use.

## OTHER EDUCATIONAL USES

School buildings could be used by organizations that offer education in Vancouver but fall outside VSB - for example, the Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF), the publicly-funded French-language provincial school authority.

We heard varying levels of support for these options. We also received over 500 open-ended comments, which gave us important insights. There was no discernable difference in preference between the different types of participants. The following graphic provides an overview of public support for the various options.



## What Else You Said

As we mentioned above, many Vancouverites took the time to provide additional, open-ended feedback. We received an additional 528 comments about the potential community uses for schools. We analyzed this feedback and summarized it in the sections below.



Community Use Themes	# of comments
General Comments	287
Housing and Homes	63
Childcare	58
Other Educational Uses	10
Green Spaces	22
Local Businesses	117
Healthy Living Hubs	37

## General Comments

Overall, there was broad support for using school sites outside of school hours to serve the community and create revenue for VSB. Those who opposed the alternate use of school sites overwhelmingly cited concerns about students’ welfare and safety. Some people also worried that focusing on community use shifted focus from education.

### QUOTES:

- *“Recognizing that the Board runs a business, maximizing use of space where it doesn’t interfere with student safety, and learning/development is smart business, which should be encouraged by taxpayers.”*
- *“Schools need to prioritize children’s learning and safety. That is not going to happen if they become multi-purpose commercial, residential and community facilities.”*

## Childcare

Participants universally supported childcare. Participants who wrote about childcare focused on whom should have access to these spots. Many participants wanted to see spots held for families attending catchment schools or living in the catchment area. A few participants also commented on the benefit of co-locating drop-in or activity spaces for seniors.

### QUOTES:

- *“More spaces for before and after school care. This is fundamental to meeting the needs of the present and future.”*
- *“Use of space for activities for seniors in the community. Incorporate seniors more in the education of children - two populations who could benefit tremendously from each other’s energy and experience.”*

**“SCHOOLS NEED TO PRIORITIZE CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND SAFETY”**

## Healthy Living Hubs

“

**SCHOOL SPACES  
COULD BE USED  
TO PROMOTE THE  
ARTS BY HOSTING  
GALLERIES,  
CONCERTS,  
THEATRE, AND  
DANCE.**

Most participants welcomed the idea of school sites promoting well-being. People wrote about how existing school spaces could be opened up to the public during non-school hours. This included the use of specialized spaces - such as theatres or cafeterias - for drama or cooking lessons open to the public, or indoor gyms or outdoor fields for various sports.

At the same time, people did not generally support the provision of medical services.

### QUOTES:

- *“School spaces could be used to promote the arts by hosting galleries, concerts, theatre, and dance.”*
- *“I support a Healthy Living Hub but not doctors in schools. Medical care should be in a doctor’s office.”*
- *“Making broader use of school facilities is a great idea. You could have a tennis club in [the] evenings & weekends, while having facilities available for students during weekdays, for example.”*

## Green Space

Generally, participants saw the provision of green space positively. People saw benefits to increasing green spaces and spoke explicitly about the importance of providing a calm, relaxing environment to promote overall well-being, improved mental health and learning essential life skills. When people had concerns, they referenced worries about ensuring student safety.

How people interpreted green space varied widely. Some people thought of green space as outdoor areas designed for play; others thought about it as a means to create gardens for food production; and others spoke to enhancing outdoor spaces with natural features such as streams or ponds.

An additional recurrent theme outlined the need for more covered open space to prevent students from getting wet while outside.

### QUOTES:

- *“Food gardens are an incredible educational tool to understand the importance of learning to grow food.”*
- *“Provide sheltered outdoor space for children to play outdoors when it’s raining, snowing, or shade from the hot sun.”*
- *“GREEN SPACES would be a win-win situation for everyone. Due to climate change, all public facilities should do whatever they can to go carbon-neutral. Also, kids need to [reconnect] with the outdoors!”*



## Other Educational Uses

Only a handful of comments spoke to using VSB school sites for other educational purposes. There was mixed support for providing VSB space to CSF, the Francophone public school board. There was no support for leasing VSB sites to private schools. Overall, there were very few comments on this topic.

## Housing and Homes

After business uses, exploring the use of school spaces for housing was the second most discussed topic. Comments on this topic were mixed. About half the comments opposed using school sites for housing, citing primary concerns around student safety. More specifically, participants worried about controlling access to school spaces and overcrowding in already dense areas.

The other half of the comments expressed varying degrees of housing support. In particular, affordable housing for staff (workforce housing), housing for vulnerable youth or international students, and seniors were generally supported. Participants were more supportive of public housing (rentals) than market condos, which was referred to as the privatization of public lands.

### QUOTES:

- *“Keep housing out of school property. Kids are vulnerable enough without bringing unvetted strangers into direct proximity with students.”*
- *“Schools should be built with residential units on top. For seniors, families. Rents can be used to subsidize operating costs for [the] school. Rooftop gardens would help [the] community. Fruit trees onsite.”*
- *“I support the idea of having [a] residential living site at school for staff. This is very common in many Asian cities, where teachers and their family live at residential buildings provided by the school.”*

## Local Businesses

Comments around business use for VSB properties were the most common theme in the open-ended comments exploring community use. There were more than 120 comments on this theme.

Overall, most participant comments supported the use of school sites for non-profits - but participants were generally strongly opposed to using school sites for corporate entities. There was one outlier to this rule. Participants had greater support for for-profit companies that provided services to children and families (e.g. after school care, the arts, or sports activities).

We heard concerns around corporate interests superseding school spaces' educational focus and student safety - particularly at elementary schools. To some participants, the addition of a business that would attract the general public was seen as a threat to student safety. The idea that schools should be sanctuary spaces and be used mainly by students and families even outside school hours was predominant.

## QUOTES:

- “The primary use should serve the community. Thus I would support the use of space by non-profits that support the local community but not that of private business.”
- “I like community use options, but I don’t think that business not related to education and community support should be located in school buildings.”
- “School spaces can be rented out during off-school hours. If businesses are allowed to operate on-site, then consider appropriate foot traffic type to ensure student safety and productivity.”

## Capital Asset Management

We asked Vancouverites to tell us their views on capital asset management. Capital asset management refers to how the Board can manage VSB property to raise money to help transition ageing buildings into modern learning spaces that reflect student needs today and into the future. VSB already does this. For example, it raises money through rent and other arrangements with Kingsgate Mall, BC Hydro and the BC School Trustees Association.

There are many ways to manage VSB property to increase revenue. We asked for your feedback about:



### SHORT-TERM LEASES WITH FULL PROPERTIES

VSB could lease a whole building to a business or a non-profit group for a few years. This type of short-term lease may result in the school building being used for childcare, as office space or even as a film set.

#### Impact

Short-term leases like these allow VSB to raise money while enrolment is low, but gives us the option to go back to using the building for K-12 education in the future if enrolment goes up.

#### Benefit

This could give VSB a few million dollars every year for the duration of the lease.

#### Example of when this may be an option

Three of the four elementary schools in a neighbourhood have enough seismically safe seats to accommodate all students within a 20-minute walking distance. The fourth school is not scheduled for a seismic upgrade yet. The whole school building is not currently needed for K-12 education.

### LONG-TERM LEASES WITH PORTIONS OF PROPERTIES

VSB could rent out part of a property to a business or non-profit group through a long-term lease (e.g. 99 years). This would allow that business or non-profit group to create a new use for the space, such as an office building, a shopping mall or a daycare.

Impact

This long-term lease strategy could allow VSB to continue using the school for K-12 education while also raising money from the extra space that is no longer needed. As the property owner, VSB would retain some control over what happens on that site.

Benefit

This option could give VSB a few thousand to a few million dollars every year, depending on the space's size for lease.

Example of when this may be an option

A school with three sports fields gets two improved fields. It can now run all of its athletic programs with only two fields, so the third field is no longer needed.

### LONG-TERM LEASES WITH FULL PROPERTIES

VSB could lease a full building to a for-profit or non-profit organization for a long-term lease (e.g. 99 years). This would allow the organization to create a new use for space. For example, they could make a new building for offices, housing or both.

Impact

The lease could allow VSB to keep some space in the new building. For example, 10 per cent of housing could be held for VSB staff.

Benefit

This could give VSB a few million dollars every year for the duration of the lease. This option is likely to generate the most amount of money for VSB.

Example of when this may be an option

Some VSB school sites might not be needed in the future because there are fewer students in those neighbourhoods today than there were when the school was built years ago.

### SELLING PORTIONS OF PROPERTIES

VSB could sell part of a school property that is no longer needed for delivering K-12 education.

Impact

Selling the space could mean that the land is no longer available to the school if needed in the future, and VSB would not control what happens on that site.

Benefit

This option could give VSB a few thousand to a few million dollars, one time (depending on the size of space).

Example of when this may be an option

A large school site where some of the lands face a major roadway and is not needed to run the school.

Generally, the broadest support from participants was for short-term leases with full properties. Long-term leases were also relatively well supported, although many participants expressed concerns about these leases' duration. The sale of parts of school property was least supported. The following graphic provides an overview of public support for the various options.



## What Else You Said

There were 345 open-ended comments about capital asset management. For the most part, participants focused on the difference between short-term leases, long-term leases and sales, and not on the difference between partial or full properties. The following sections provide a summary of public feedback.

Capital Asset Management Themes	# of comments
Sales	160
Long-term Leases	88
Rentals	97

## Sales

We asked participants for feedback about sales of partial properties. That said, nearly all the comments about sales were about the sale of a whole school site.

**>10%** Less than 10 per cent of participants expressed support for selling VSB sites that were not needed for educational purposes. In some instances, this support was conditional on the funds returning to the education system, even if it was a different neighbourhood. Other conditional support asked for sales to be restricted to another government entity (such as the City of Vancouver or the Vancouver Parks Board).

More than 90 per cent of comments about sales expressed moderate to strong opposition to public land sale. Overwhelmingly, participants stated that land sales based on current projections would be short-sighted and a poor management of a public asset, as the land would not be available if needed in the future. Leasing was viewed as a more popular option to generate revenue.

### QUOTES:

- “There are areas of the city where VSB holds a lot of sites very close together. These are the areas where I could support land disposal, as future growth could be accommodated on remaining sites.”
- “It’s not realistic that enrolment will magically go up in places that are made up of all single-family homes. Enrolment is going down in those areas already. I see no problem with selling the property.”

“I am in favour of leasing depending on the use: childcare yes, shopping mall maybe not so much. Schools are public assets that should not be sold off, and school enrolments fluctuate.”

“Do not sell any school property. Lease only to generate moderate income to support learning.”

## Long-term Leases

“

**I'M ALL FOR THESE SOLUTIONS IF IT MEANS THAT ALL OF THE EXISTING SCHOOLS BE BROUGHT INTO THE 21ST CENTURY AND SEISMICALLY UPGRADED**

Long-term lease options provoked varied responses. Participants who supported leasing school sites saw it as an opportunity to improve overall seismic safety and modernize learning environments.

Simultaneously, about half the participants who wrote about long-term leases voiced opposition to this option overall. A handful of participants worried that leasing full properties was a mechanism to close schools, while others felt that a long-term lease would have the same effect as selling a school site. The latter concern was echoed by participants who generally supported leasing school sites.

Most participants' underlying concern was about the lease duration, given that a 99-year lease would effectively remove a school site from a neighbourhood for several generations. This would limit VSB's ability to respond to changing demographics in these neighbourhoods. The majority of participants preferred 20- to 50-year leases.

### QUOTES:

- “The leases should definitely not be for 100 years. They should be for 20-25 years, with constant renewal and contract negotiations.”
- “I'm all for these solutions if it means that all of the existing schools be brought into the 21st century and seismically upgraded - including schools in marginalized neighbourhoods.”
- “I've seen schools turned into seniors' centres in other places, and given how demographics are shifting, it may make sense to make long-term commitments like this to support the ageing population.”
- “Please close schools and use the money (from leasing or sale) to fund school spaces to support student learning.”
- “It needs to be transparent that any school spaces that are sold/leased are in areas where enrolment is down and that funds are being allocated to areas where spaces are desperately needed.”

## Short-term Leases

Most comments supported short-term rentals. Over two-thirds of the comments we received about short-term leases voiced strong support for this option. Participants view short-term leases as an opportunity to generate revenue while leaving VSB nimble to respond to changes in neighbourhood demographics over time. Some comments expressed the desire to see specific types of rentals, which were consistent with the sentiments expressed previously in the Community Use page (i.e. support for services catering to children and families, with opposition to housing and corporate interests). There were, however, some expressions of opposition. The reasons for opposition were similar to concerns heard

previously on the Community Use page - focused mainly on student safety and the desire to guard against corporations funding public education.

**QUOTES:**

- “Revenue-generating leases or varying term length seem like a great idea!”
- “Some schools have low enrolment, but others are so crowded they need a lottery. VSB needs to be able to respond to shifting demographics, so [shorter-term] leases are better.”
- “I urge VSB to get more creative in leveraging [its] facilities after hours in order to both enhance community engagement and generate revenue. Schools are expensive but underutilized facilities.”

## Considerations for School Closures

We asked participants to identify their priority considerations around school closures. VSB is not making any decisions about closures through this engagement; however, it is important to hear from the public to inform future discussions on this topic.

VSB Policy 14 requires the Board to assess several factors when considering potential closures. We have listed the factors listed in this policy and other issues previously identified by the public. Participants were asked to choose their top three priority considerations from this list. The table below reflects the collective priority of all participants - the greater the number, the higher it ranked as a priority. Participants’ top three priorities included: program offering, distance to similar schools, and class size. Participants considered the potential re-uses of school buildings and land to be the least important.

Topic	# of participants
Program Offering, Including Specialized Programs	1589
Distance to Similar Schools in the Area	1411
Class Size	1358
Travel Patterns and Safety of Access for Students	1214
Age and Condition of Building	1182
Current and Projected Enrolment Levels	907
Space Available in Nearby Schools	813
Uniqueness of Specialized Spaces (e.g. gym, theatre)	755
Potential Re-uses of School Buildings and Land	338



## What Else You Said

There were nearly 400 comments on this page that reflected participant concerns about this topic. The majority of the comments we received voiced either opposition or support for closures, however, two other themes emerged, including considerations around geographic inequalities and ensuring safe routes to school.

Considering School Closures Themes



## Oppose School Closure

Nearly half the comments on this page conveyed moderate to strong opposition to school closures. While some participants merely stated their preference for no school closures, many participants provided a rationale for their views and new alternatives.

Many people noted that they did not support closing schools because of financial necessity alone. Other comments centred around the need for schools to function as a means to build community and a sense of belonging. Finally, some participants expressed the desire to repurpose school space for other community functions. Participants expressed support for leasing school space to generate revenue as an acceptable alternative or suggested increasing residential development around low-enrolment schools. Finally, participants who have been through a closure process (being listed on a potential list, having had a school close) commented on the emotional and mental strain of going through the process.

### QUOTES:

- “[Having] schools within a community creates a better community; I’ve never experienced my community like I have since my son started K last Sept. Good community is part of students’ good learning and well-being.”
- “Don’t close any schools until something else is in place for the specific needs of that school! Don’t close schools without offering solutions for the kids that go to that school! [Put] kids’ needs first!”
- “Pack choice programs (Montessori, mandarin, even French immersion) as well as District classes into under-utilized schools rather than closing. Use buses prudently and strategically to shift students.”

*“While bigger schools may be able to offer more programming, schools can also be too large to foster a community spirit. Some kids may be more at ease in smaller schools than among 1000+ students.”*

## Safe Routes to School

### “ ALL ELEMENTARY STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE WALKING ACCESS TO THEIR SCHOOLS IN VANCOUVER

Of all the factors participants noted when they considered school closures, transportation generated the most comments. Participants expressed a desire for all students to have safe routes to get to and from school. In most cases, participants felt that schools should be within a 20-minute walk, and measures should be taken to ensure student safety along these routes - particularly for elementary students. In the situation where students may need to travel longer distances, participants felt that bus access should be provided - either through a dedicated bus route or by free public transit.

#### QUOTES:

- *“All elementary students should have walking access to their schools in Vancouver.”*
- *“Better commute options for kids that have [to] travel by transit, from K-12. There are some really busy roads to access the school [and] there should be some way to get the kids out there safely.”*
- *“Ensure that travel to local schools is available by walking and public transit. School access shouldn’t be car dependent. Many children already have to travel long distances to school.”*

## Support School Closures

A fifth of comments on this page expressed support for closing schools if this leads to more resources for improving the quality of learning or seismic safety for the overall student population in the District. Operating schools with lower student populations and underused space was not seen as an efficient use of taxpayer dollars, nor was it seen to provide optimal learning conditions for students.

#### QUOTES:

- *“Under some circumstances, school closures may need to happen in order to benefit the whole. A defined, transparent, process must exist that carefully weighs concerns/options.”*
- *“School closures, though unpleasant, are necessary. Schools often cannot run programs if [they are] too small. And, consolidating schools to be in a seismically safe school puts kids and safety first!”*
- *“I would much prefer my children attend a new, purpose [built] state of the art school that is further away than an old building that is falling apart. Merge schools and build new larger schools.”*

## Geographic Inequities

A fifth of comments on this page related to two particular geographic inequities across the city. Some participants wrote that low enrollment schools on the Westside that could be closed remained operational because influential parents could

advocate for their community effectively. Participants felt that this came at a cost to Eastside schools, especially those in lower-income or more culturally-diverse neighbourhoods.

Participants also commented on the need to respond to demographic changes to ensure school capacity keeps pace with neighbourhood densification. Some participants cited the specific example of densification resulting in school space shortages in Downtown and False Creek neighbourhoods.

### QUOTES:

- *“The schools typically slated for closure are disproportionately schools in lower-income neighbourhoods where parents may not be available to drive. A 20-minute walk across busy streets is too long.”*
- *“Again, when looking at options to close schools an equity lens is needed. More underutilized schools exist on the West side; where East side schools are bursting with students on waitlists.”*
- *“It’s unfair that kids in growing areas like Olympic Village and Downtown are lower priority compared to kids in (Westside) schools with vocal parents. Build schools where needed! Make tough choices.”*

## Timing

We asked respondents to provide a sense of how urgently they would like VSB to address specific issues. Participants felt the greatest sense of urgency about ensuring that Vancouver students were in seismically safe schools.

Participants ranked a sense of urgency on a scale of 0 to 100, 0 being not at all urgent, 100 being extremely critical.

Respondents rated the urgency of three issues, with the results below:



## What Else You Said

Participant comments on this page reiterated previously observed themes. In particular, a third of the comments restated either opposition or support for school closures, opposition to any sale of school sites, and support for short-

\*Kindergarten enrolment list release coincided with our online engagement.

and medium-term leases. Another third of the comments related to the importance of seismic upgrades, the role of the Province in providing funding as well as particulars about the engagement process and methodology itself. These topics are discussed in the section below as these themes were also observed on each of the other sections of the engagement.

Themes	# of comments
School Closures	117
Oppose Sale of Public Assets	25
Support for Capital Asset Management	16



### QUOTES:

- “I do not appreciate VSB closing any of the [schools]. It is very important [to] us to let my children graduate with their friends from the school they go to right now.”
- “It doesn’t make fiscal sense to close schools and then have to build more down the road. Maintain the assets the public owns and don’t privatize them in any way.”
- “Do not sell land. This is a short term solution and lacks foresight.”
- “Vacate low enrolment schools that need seismic upgrading. Turn old schools into green community parks, NOT housing or businesses.”

## Other General Themes

The comment section on each page allowed participants to share their views on the topics at hand, though these comments could and did often include feedback on other topics.

Comments about other topics were illustrative of other public concerns and priorities, outside the focus areas of the engagement. The key themes of all such comments, across all sections of the engagement, are summarised below

Themes	# of comments
Role of Provincial Government	132
Desire for Alternate Funding Options	88
Importance of Seismic Safety	83
Capacity, Enrolment and Catchment	59
Coordination between Governments	27
Inappropriate	15
Miscellaneous (Out-of-Scope)	618



## Role of Provincial Government

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**WE NEED  
TO PUSH  
FOR MORE  
FUNDING FOR  
CHILDREN'S  
EDUCATION**

Comments related to this theme were generated most frequently from the Vision for Modern Learning, Capital Asset Management and Timing pages. Participants felt that the provincial government was not providing adequate funding to cover the educational costs in Vancouver schools. Participants felt current funding levels to the public education system lead VSB to make decisions about their properties that are not in the community's best interests, in the long term. Participants expressed varying degrees of frustration towards elected officials and VSB for not advocating strongly for changes in the funding model. A handful of participants also expressed the desire for the provincial government to revoke funding from private and independent schools, and to redistribute those funds into the public education system.

### QUOTES:

- *“Leasing land/buildings does not solve the chronic underfunding of education in BC. We need to push for more funding for children’s education, not applying a bandaid by closing neighbourhood schools.”*
- *“VSB must do a better job of advocating for more funding from the Province so that it doesn’t need to close schools or sell or lease land.”*
- *“Perhaps we should look at not providing tax dollars to independent and private schools and therefore recover some costs that way.”*
- *“If the Province’s mandate is to provide enough money why does VSB [have] a budget short-fall? VSB should be going to the Province and not getting into the property management business.”*

## Desire for Alternate Funding Options

This theme emerged in comments for the Vision for Modern Learning and Capital Asset Management pages. Participants repeatedly expressed the desire to find options for school funding, other than school closures and capital asset management measures discussed in this engagement. As noted previously, others called on the Province of B.C. to increase education funding.

A smaller subset of comments offered specific suggestions, such as: considering public-private partnerships or social enterprise options; leveraging the equity of VSB's land and buildings through land trusts, land swaps or partnership with developers; exploring changes to staff salaries and benefits (e.g. removing free parking, cutting executive pay); increasing local (property) taxes on a sliding scale; or implementing process to improve efficiencies to reduce waste in operating and maintenance costs.

### QUOTES:

- *“VSB should consider collaborations with land developers in areas of increasing density in order to raise capital for school expansion - nearby schools (that aren’t full) are a selling point!”*
- *“What about building these schools with geothermal heating on their sporting fields then they can sell the electricity/*

- *heat to the surrounding neighbours - a major sustainable way to earn revenue?"*
- *"Get rid of free parking for school staff & teachers. No other industry, whether private/public, provides free parking. The land can be better used for the school or community rather than parked cars."*
- *"A progressive or graduated tax on property is a much more effective & fairer way to raise significant funds for schools. VSB should represent the public interest & not try to act like a business."*

## Importance of Seismic Safety

The Vision for Modern Learning and Timing pages generated the majority of comments regarding the need for urgently improving seismic safety for Vancouver schools. Participants expressed a strong desire to provide seismically safe spaces for all students and staff. Many participants felt that after core educational needs, seismic safety should be a key priority issue for VSB.

### QUOTES:

- *"We need to be fiscally responsible and think about safety and do this with better management of existing properties and raising funds for new schools."*
- *"I think we need to prepare for an earthquake. I was in Pakistan after the earthquake in Kashmir. Not nice. We need to be prepared and make it a high priority. Safe schools should be priority #1"*
- *"Difficult to answer these questions. It is all incredibly important, but pushing for faster seismic upgrading must mean raising money by perhaps closing schools. That is a case-by-case choice."*
- *"Safety of our children and school staff members should be the main priority besides catering to their educational needs"*

## Capacity, Enrolment and Catchment (Out of Scope)

Some participants commented on various ways that they felt the catchment areas could be defined differently, and felt that way catchment boundaries were determined caused enrolment pressures at some schools. Other participants said enrolment projections should be forecasted for longer than 10 years to account for longer term planning and shifts in neighbourhood demographics. Lastly, participants expressed the desire to see better accuracy in data and/or projections, citing examples of discrepancies in methodology between provincial and local projections. While related to the Long Range Facilities Plan, these topics were not the focus of this phase of the engagement.

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THERE SHOULD  
BE MORE  
FLEXIBILITY FOR  
FAMILIES TO  
CHOOSE THEIR  
CATCHMENT  
SCHOOL

### QUOTES:

- *"There should be more flexibility for families to choose their catchment school and not be restricted by borders on a map."*
- *"Before any \$\$ generating schemes are decided school capacity should be based on 'in catchment' placements and CoV densification plans to determine the population and placement need"*
- *"I am concerned that VSB doesn't have an accurate picture of neighbourhood demographics and that we need more classroom seats than anticipated"*

- *“The area standards for assessing ‘low enrolment’ and boundaries for catchment areas need to be changed. Schools can continue operating effectively in their communities if these metrics are adjusted.”*
- *“VSB needs to look at how space is used & class size to determine capacity, not just the number of students in seats before the decision to close a school is made.”*

## Coordination Between Governments

This theme emerged mainly on the Capital Asset Management and Considering School closures pages. Participant comments expressed the desire to see greater coordination between VSB, the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Parks Board and the Ministry of Education to ensure that decisions regarding local schools were in alignment with planned growth for neighborhoods. Participants expressed frustration with historical decisions to increase residential density in areas without adequate school capacity, or discussion about school closures in areas with currently low enrolment, but with future growth planned in the next decade.

### QUOTES:

- *“It’s essential to consider the City’s plans with regards to zoning/development when closing schools; just because enrolment is low in a neighbourhood now doesn’t mean it always will be.”*
- *“City of Vancouver zoning is the main reason Vancouver schools are dying. Solution is to rezone and add multi family dwellings near schools, community centres, parks. Schools need students not tenants!”*
- *“Please actually look into city planning when thinking about schools. There seems to be zero connection or thought put into how areas may densify or change or the actual need of an area.”*
- *“Retaining and repurposing schools would allow for more flexibility to meet future shifting demographics; VSB and City could work more closely to encourage development near existing school sites.”*

## Miscellaneous (Out of Scope)

Many comments fell outside the scope of this engagement. These comments were generated across all pages of the platform and could be grouped into the following sub-themes:

1. **Personal and partisan political commentary.** Beyond general funding levels and models, some participants expressed partisan views about education funding and their level of trust in VSB-related decisions.
2. **Teacher compensation.** Participants expressed their desire for more funding for teacher salaries, classroom supplies and equipment. These issues are addressed in collective bargaining and are therefore out of scope.
3. **Class size and composition.** Participants expressed desire for smaller class sizes. Class size and composition are also a part of the collective bargaining process, and out of scope.
4. **Curriculum.** Participants provided feedback on content they would like to see taught in schools. Curriculum-development is a process led by the Ministry of Education, and outside the scope of this engagement.

5. **Waitlists.** This engagement coincided with the release of kindergarten enrolment for the 2020-21 academic year. Comments about this issue were deemed out of scope.

#### QUOTES:

- *“Education needs to remain a public trust. Monetization is the death of egalitarian education. It is undemocratic, and un-Canadian”*
- *“How can we trust you to decide when a space is “no longer needed”? If that decision were made by the schools rather than the board, I would support it.”*
- *“Class sizes should be smaller in every school. Programs and courses with less students should still be allowed to run if they are the only elective of that type.”*
- *“Kids should be given opportunities for learning business through practical approach by asking them to host in evening market or other events”*
- *“There is already a wait list for kindergarten. We need more space, not less.”*

# Phase II Summary

# Phase II Summary

## PHASE II AT A GLANCE

PHASE II INCLUDED OUTREACH THROUGH MULTIPLE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS. WE USED:



Organic & paid social media



Email marketing



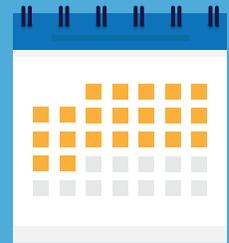
Newsletters

### WE HOSTED:

10  
Workshops



OVER  
THREE  
WEEKS



AT VARIOUS  
TIMES A DAY  
THROUGHOUT  
THE WEEK

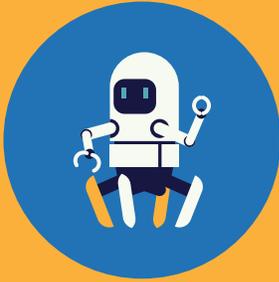
During the workshops, we dove deeper into understanding participants' priorities for modern learning and considerations around how VSB might leverage its property assets to provide revenue for future upgrades.

Overall, 151 participants signed up to join the Phase II workshops and we heard from 70 attendees.

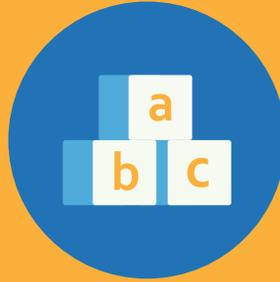
Many participants noted that Phase II coincided with a period where participants were facing engagement fatigue as a result of both ongoing political climates (such as the B.C. and U.S. elections) along with the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe this may have impacted attendance rates.

# What We Heard in Phase II

## Top feedback about sustainability and structure included:



Designing with the future in mind - from both a climate and financial perspective



Exploring what 'comfort' means to students at various grade levels



Exploring returns on long-term investments

## Top considerations about priorities for modern learning included:



Learning through the arts remained a top concern - participants noted how so many important life skills can be acquired through exposure to the arts



The importance of outdoor spaces came up continually, and across various priorities and conversations



Adaptability, flexibility and multi-use spaces across all VSB schools and properties

## Top themes about capital asset management:



Selling property was viewed as 'short-sighted' by many participants



Exploring the long-term partnerships available through leasing partial properties was flagged as an important opportunity

## Approach

Phase II was designed to report back Phase I findings to participants and to dive deeper into the “whys” and “how comes” behind respondents’ Phase I feedback. In the workshops, participants were guided through a structured exercise designed to elicit trade-offs they would be willing to make in three key areas: **sustainability and structure, priorities for modern learning, and capital asset management.**

In some workshops, participants were keen to follow the activity, while in others, participants chose to have a more open dialogue about structure, modern learning and capital asset management. In both scenarios, facilitators fostered a rich and respectful dialogue. We captured common values and sentiments underlying the choices and positions participants were making.

## Key Findings

### SUSTAINABILITY & STRUCTURE

Facilitators began the workshop exercise on matters of school structure and sustainability. This portion of the exercise was designed to provide clarity around what structural school costs are funded by the Province, and what would need to be funded by VSB. This tended to confuse and frustrate participants, so in later workshops the exercise was adjusted to address these questions after a discussion of modern learning. This revised approach mitigated confusion, while keeping qualitative data from the workshop consistent over time.

Participants’ considerations when choosing structural elements fell into the following themes.

### DESIGNING SUSTAINABLY - WITH ENERGY, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND LONGEVITY IN MIND

Participants expressed support for building elements that improved the school’s environmental footprint. This sentiment was most strongly expressed in the student session. Student participants unanimously agreed that fighting climate change and creating

### CHANGING THE PROGRAM THE REALITIES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Phase II engagement was originally planned as a series of in-person public events and workshops. Public health recommendations made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic led the project team to change the approach. The project team pivoted to instead host 10 digital dialogues with participant groups, including students, families, community members, staff, formal District stakeholder groups, self-identifying Indigenous peoples and



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## **SUSTAINABILITY IS KEY IN BUILDING AND REBUILDING SCHOOLS**

energy efficient spaces were their top priorities. In the workshop with those who self-identified as Indigenous, a participant noted that environmental sustainability is a central concern to many Indigenous peoples, “so this is of course important in our schools.”

Participants in other groups expressed varying levels of interest on this matter. When it was a focus, participants tended to stress the importance of structural longevity, as in these comments:

- *“Sustainability is key in building and rebuilding schools. We need to think long term - 50-100 years. These buildings need to be functional for that period of time.”*
- *“Most likely, new schools will be around for 100+ years, based on history. So you want to spend the extra now to make it sustainable for as long as possible including ventilation, windows, wiring, etc.”*
- *Below is a comment that reflects a common sentiment across workshops. Participants frequently expressed that sustainable design components should not be considered “upgrades” to a basic design envelope:*
- *“[The] majority of [enhancements listed] would be basic needs to survive pandemic and climate change. They shouldn’t be considered as upgrades - it should be part of the basics.”*

Another matter that came up several times was the issue of energy planning. In addition to prioritizing systems that are energy efficient, now and into the future, some participants pointed out a need for back-up generators, should an earthquake or other natural disaster interrupt power in schools.

## **FUTURE-PROOFING SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

Similar to the matter of building longevity, participants were in favour of building elements that would allow the school to support learning into the future. For some, this meant supporting upgrades to electrical/wiring or fibre optics to ensure technology could be easily integrated into the school structure, while for others they wanted to ensure that any technology that was installed in schools was modular and could be swapped out easily as newer versions came to market.

## **PRIORITIZING STUDENT COMFORT**

Creating a comfortable learning environment for students was highlighted, especially in the session with teachers. Participants spoke about how appropriate heating and cooling within classrooms impacts student success. Windows that don’t open, rooms that are either too hot or too cool, window placements that let in too much light at the wrong times of day or windowless rooms, were all brought up as elements that contribute to uncomfortable learning environments. In other sessions, participants expressed concerns that a seismically safe school structure might not be adequately comfortable for basic student use. See these comments:

- *“I understand we’re talking about basic seismic materials, but there needs to be some level of comfort for students.”*
- *“[I] would want a COMFORTABLE learning environment for the students. That may be carpets on the floor or heating/air conditioning... To be in a school that would have decent heat management.”*
- *“Allowing schools to be easy on the body of people would be important (concrete is hard to stand on).”*

“

**I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT A BASIC SCHOOL. I WANT TO SEE A SCHOOL THAT'S BEAUTIFUL, ENHANCED**

Participants also remarked that student comfort could be different depending on the age and demographics of the learners. For instance, carpeted floors may be more conducive in elementary schools where students may be seated on the floor more often.

### CONSIDERING LONG-TERM RETURNS ON INVESTMENT

Participants expressed support for building elements that may be expensive at the time of construction but would pay off in the long-term (e.g. energy efficiency). They acknowledged this may be an upfront cost for VSB, but may have a long-term benefit to the planet. Other participants indicated how some costs should be prioritized now, with other investments to be made later.

#### QUOTES:

- *“This feels like a ‘pay now or pay later’ situation. It’s sad that it would only be basic windows, when we could have energy efficient ones that are more comfortable and save money long term.”*
- *“Some elements (e.g. outdoor gardens) can be added to the school now or later depending on when costs would be actualized.”*

## PRIORITIES FOR MODERN LEARNING

We asked participants to share their preferences when it came to designing for modern learning. While participants did weigh their priorities in many of the workshops, in several cases participants expressed resistance to the idea of privileging some choices over others.

#### QUOTES:

- *“The question is, what are the basics versus what are the special enhancements? Coming from a school that’s already chronically underfunded for a long period of time, spanning generations, our school is already so basic. When I think about elementary schools already in the District, that are enhanced, they are beautiful. I don’t want to talk about a basic school. I want to see a school that’s beautiful, enhanced.”*
- *“Things that were built into our schools in the past, such as auditoriums and gyms - are not extras, they are necessary in our learning systems. These aren’t upgrades, they ARE the basics for children to learn all the things. Where this isn’t the case, that is a poorly-built school.”*
- *“This is the equivalent of saying we want to build a car - you can get steering wheels and tires, but brakes and seat belts are extra. Creating schools without these features would be a sub-standard school. You can’t be cutting fundamentals and these are fundamentals. Not budgeting for this is not ok.”*

## MAKING SPACE TO LEARN THROUGH THE ARTS

In all sessions, participants expressed strong support for learning spaces for music, performing arts and fine arts. Auditoria, studios and music rooms were viewed as integral features of the school, not as extras. Participants expressed frustration and disappointment at new builds that do not have these features. There was consistent consensus on two points related to learning through the arts: that arts-based education improves outcomes for students in all academic areas, and that art can be integrated into other subjects and cross-curricular projects.



## QUOTES:

- *“I also have an arts background and echo the importance of spaces for learning through the arts. The links between participation in the arts, particularly in music, and better school performance are well-documented.”*
- *“Learning through the arts is important. I feel the lessons that can be learned by applying math, reading, or writing can be applied through artistic expression. An architecture project is an example: artistic expression, but also the application of math.”*

## SUPPORT FOR HANDS-ON LEARNING

Participants were quite supportive of features that improved opportunities for hands-on learning. For instance outdoor gardens were seen as a space where students could observe and actively learn about biology, nutrition, etc. Participants cited how some features and uses run counter to this priority.

## QUOTES:

- *“Sports fields are fine but turf is invasive. We need to return to Indigenous use of land for food.”*
- *“For Indigenous students, learning from the land is key. We need to make sure these learning options are supported.”*

## CREATING CROSS-FUNCTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

There was strong support for building elements that promote multi-dimensional learning. For example, covered outdoor spaces or gardens were seen as spaces that would allow multiple subjects to be taught in a variety of ways; spaces where you can incorporate different aspects of a curriculum, together.

## QUOTES:

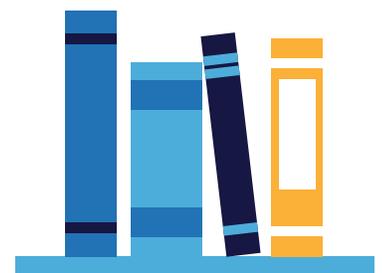
- *“Creative environments help foster learning. Emergent maths and literacy happen so easily when out of the classroom. It’s a far more efficient way of reinforcing classroom learning.”*
- *“It’s important to have hands-on learning [and] outdoor learning. Biology class could be outside where we could learn about plants in the school garden.”*

## MEETING NEEDS OF DIVERSE STUDENTS

Features that address student comfort, on a variety of levels, were considered important. For instance, libraries were seen as a quiet and safe space for students, as well as providing space for group work. Some respondents noted that sound disruption is common when room dividers are used in flexible learning spaces. Educators pointed to alternate approaches, such as the garage doors in Norma Rose Elementary School, as a better option. Others noted that some students require spaces specifically designed for their unique needs.

## QUOTES:

- *“[Addressing] diverse needs in a school could [mean including] a sensory room. This should be built to provide flex learning spaces for students with special needs. A sensory room is a basic need for children with autism to have a safe and welcoming environment.”*



“

**FLEXIBLE LEARNING SPACES ARE IMPORTANT, WITH WALLS AND FURNITURE THAT MOVE AROUND**

### PLANNING FOR MULTIPLE PURPOSES

Modern learning features that diversified how a space could be used by the school community were favoured. For instance, participants identified outdoor open spaces with a simple roof cover as a key feature that could support physical education, group activity, recess etc. This was also identified as a feature that has proven extremely useful during the pandemic. Some participants expressed support for building elements that would allow the school structure to be used for an additional purpose. For instance, participants noted that some wall construction types are better than others for using a school as a refuge during an emergency.

#### QUOTES:

- *“Flexible learning spaces are important, with walls and furniture that move around. At Capilano University, students like to be in different configurations, not just sitting and looking up at someone in one direction, but rather, lots of ways to shape the room. It makes students feel more like a collective.”*
- *“Flexibility should be seen on a global scale. We have issues with over-subscribed and under-subscribed schools. Entire schools should be flexible so that in low-attendance years, a building can adapt to community use, and then go back to school use later when more kids are enrolled [in that school’s catchment area].”*

### CELEBRATING CULTURE AND LOCAL HISTORY

Participants supported features that allowed the integration of culture into the school environment and student learning. In particular, learning from the land as a core Indigenous practice and principle was valued. Also participants pointed out that the school should represent not just the culture of the host Indigenous community, but also the cultural diversity of the community surrounding the school.

### CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

For each item in the capital asset management exercise, there were conditions under which this option would or would not be acceptable, as was illustrated in Phase I. The discussion in Phase II drew out the underlying values that participants were using to make their decisions.

### PRIORITIZING STUDENT SAFETY AND LOSS OF CONTROL

Sale or lease to entities that may be perceived as threatening were regarded negatively by participants. For instance, businesses that would draw a large number of adult strangers to the general proximity of the school, at least during school hours, would not be welcome. How the space would get used in the future and its subsequent impact on the existing school environment and school community was a significant concern among participants.

#### QUOTES:

- *“This might be paranoid thinking, but I’d be worried that if the school property is sold, then any business could operate there, maybe an inappropriate business. There may be less security or oversight.”*



## SEEING SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY ASSETS

Across many workshops, participants made the point that schools are not just “seats.” They see students, their families and the school community as a social construct. Some participants noted that closing a school is socially disruptive. In addition to considering how every student’s academic needs will be met in a new school, they asked that VSB consider how to support the entire school community through a closure - whether that’s keeping the school community together as it integrates to a new school or creating a process by which the school community can archive its memories and move on to a new school. People called for in-depth, school-specific engagements, time to deal with the change and support the school community through the change.

“

**YES, THESE SCENARIOS EQUATE SCHOOLS WITH THEIR BUILDINGS. WE ALSO NEED TO ACCOUNT FOR SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITIES**

### QUOTES:

- *“The idea here is that a school is just its space, its land. It doesn’t take into account that the school is more than the building. It’s a community and a community asset. Long-term leasing is problematic because it doesn’t account for that.”*
- *“Yes, these scenarios equate schools with their buildings. We also need to account for schools as communities.”*

## WEIGHING ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY VALUE

Capital asset management options that produce an additional community benefit were supported by some participants. For instance, lease or sale of partial property that allowed for the space to continue to be used by the public was well-regarded (eg. a partial lease/sale to the Parks board for recreational use).

### QUOTES:

- *“Imagine we have a piece of land, but we’re not sure where enrolment will go in the future. We could build the school in phases; start small, expand the structure over time as needed when enrolment goes up. In the short term you could lease the extra space for an appropriate and conducive use. Example: False Creek. Imagine if the school and the community centre had been built and planned together for long term adaptation, versus built separately (taking into consideration all the comments that have been made about safety and security, etc.)”*
- *“The long-term lease idea is intriguing. Imagine a five-storey structure with a playing field on top, with the top three floors used for a school, bottom two for some other compatible use (with separate entrances). Over time, if the design allows for it, the mix could be like an accordion and phase into all five floors as school use, or two floors for school / three for other use. The key is to ensure that the design is going to allow for expansion and contraction for the different program uses.”*

## CHALLENGING THE FRAMEWORK OF ‘OWNING’ UNCEDED LANDS

Participants expressed discomfort with viewing VSB-owned lands as property to be leased or sold. This discomfort was connected to VSB’s geographic area being on unceded Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Territories. See Group-Specific Findings, Indigenous Engagement, below, for more detailed information.



## FORECASTING INTO THE FUTURE

Participants noted that current VSB schools have been around for 100 years, but that the City of Vancouver planning cycle is much shorter. As a result, participants felt VSB’s ability

to forecast what will be needed beyond 20-30 years is limited. This underpinned many participants' anxiety around long-term leases. While it may generate an enormous amount of revenue, people are hesitant to support this option, sensing that it is ostensibly losing a school forever. There was general discomfort from participants when the duration of impact is longer than 20 years.

#### QUOTES:

- *"I agree with the point that we need long term considerations for demographic change. Selling land limits options long term."*
- *"I agree with the finality of selling property. It's final and there can be long-term repercussions."*

#### CHALLENGING THE NOTION THAT VSB IS A BUSINESS

Some participants felt that public education should not be run like a corporate entity. They expressed that while VSB has to responsibly manage its financial resources, they called on the Province to fund public education fully.

#### OPENNESS TO LAND SALES IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

Openness to land sales was neighbourhood-specific. One participant pointed to Prince of Wales Secondary School as an example where a partial land sale could be most beneficial, explaining that "there is a massive amount of unused land."

#### QUOTES:

- *"You could fit 10 schools on this 1 school site. It's deemed a teardown in a "red zone". People don't want to send their kids there. It's 80 per cent capacity, but a little piece could be sold, then used for teacher family housing, seniors housing - and then we could build a new school with the proceeds."*



# Group-specific Findings

## INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Dialogue with Indigenous students, families, communities and Nations is a priority for VSB. For this reason, we sought to prioritize Indigenous perspectives in this engagement in two ways. First, by convening a workshop specifically with those who self-identify as Indigenous. Second, by direct outreach to all regional First Nations, through which we were able to coordinate a meeting with the Squamish Nation. This government-to-government meeting was held between Trustees and senior Squamish community members.

In the following pages, we have noted shared sentiments expressed by individuals who attended both the workshop and the government-to-government meeting. Later, we provide information that was provided within each specific setting.

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## SHARED SENTIMENTS

Below are key themes that emerged from both our workshop and direct-to-nation dialogue.

### School Design and Spaces as an Act of Reconciliation

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**SO MANY OF OUR  
INDIGENOUS  
LEARNERS HAVE  
HAD THEIR  
ATTACHMENTS  
BROKEN THROUGH  
EDUCATION**

Participants reminded the VSB delegation that parents and community members sometimes carry negative memories of their own education; that present and future design of school spaces cannot be separated from our history of residential schools and its inter-generational harms and traumas for Indigenous peoples. For this reason, designing spaces that are intentionally welcoming and respectful of Indigenous culture, history and explicit belonging is critical as an act of reconciliation. Participants also indicated that spaces and structures are only as safe as the cultures inside of them.

### QUOTES:

- *“So many of our Indigenous learners have had their attachments broken through education. So these things have to be restorative. It’s not about generating revenue, it’s about restoration.”*
- *“Oppression is structural. Indigenous marginalization is a part of design. The way buildings are designed can be actually very dispossessing. This is a part of our history.”*
- *“Making spaces that are decolonized and open takes a lot of work and education, because there’s a lot of history there. We need to reconsider even small practices of education, and dismantle the structures so that it works better for us. I don’t necessarily have the answers. We recognize the corners where we’re not getting to. We run into barriers where we need to push a little further. Infrastructure is an insane amount of operational costs, a huge investment. But even if we*



*have the school of our dreams, if it's not utilized or led in the right way, it's not going to serve us."*

## Physical Acknowledgement and Recognition in Spaces

Participants said one way to better invite Indigenous students and families into VSB spaces is through visual acknowledgement and recognition. They offered that Indigenous students should readily see [their] people, territory, history, culture and contributions, and that spaces should acknowledge Indigenous histories in a way that is equal to non-Indigenous cultures. Examples of this include photographs of Indigenous leaders placed with images of the monarch, and seeing the Coast Salish Anthem along with the Canadian anthem. Speakers explained that part of reclaiming culture is about making it visible again; that visual cues remind people that [specific Indigenous] people are here, and have been there for generations. Language was noted as a significant consideration in this regard.

## Learning from the Land is Essential

Indigenous participants agreed engaging with the physical land presents an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to learn about Indigenous histories, cultures and food systems. Further, it is a natural opportunity for Indigenous students to learn more about who they are and where they come from. The group also spoke to favouring plants that can be harvested and cultivated, which could be used as an educational tool as well.

### QUOTES:

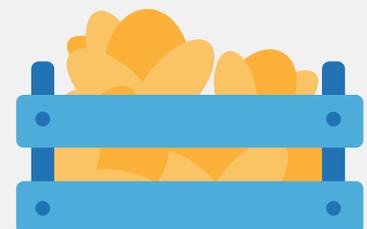
- *"It'd be great if the spaces we're envisioning - not just for Indigenous learners, but all learners - [created] a great way to build up pride and identity is through food and land and cultural practices. That's what we need, to be celebrated. We need spaces to share, to harvest food, to remember the ways our land sustains us."*

## Safe Gathering Spaces Designed with Students' Needs and Feelings in Mind

Participants said creating safe spaces would allow Indigenous students to refuge within schools. They added that supplying snacks was essential for food security. But with this in mind, participants also indicated that spaces and the resources inside them should feel genuinely accessible to Indigenous students, countering the sense that this population is not "deserving" of enhanced resources or spaces. Similarly, one participant noted the impacts when safe space is created in programming and pedagogy, but not physical buildings:

### QUOTES:

- *"The reality is when it comes to enhancements, people don't think they deserve or can have access to these things. Many Indigenous people are poor and don't think they deserve to have nice things in schools."*
- *"It's really hard when you have a beautiful concept of a school, but in an under-*



*served building. It's so hard when your kids always feel less-than, like they can't and don't have the nice things. It's hard when they are seeing themselves as poor when they aren't even living in poverty at home."*

## **Spaces that Recognize Alternative Learning Models**

Participants noted that before residential schools and public schools, Indigenous learning was traditionally experiential and collaborative. Building spaces that allow people to return to these traditional learning models was cited as important. At the same time, participants acknowledged practical challenges to different learning configurations.

### **QUOTES:**

- *"We could do things like creating circles instead of rows of desks, to create circles of leadership. But then we need to consider other things like noise, impact on teachers, disruption, etc. - things we wouldn't think of."*

## **Courage to Re-imagine Relationships, Process and Spaces**

Participants indicated dialogue between Indigenous families, nations and governments is essential before the design of new structures is on its way. Participants said the building process is an opportunity for relationship development and education. Looking at the example of the Sea-to-Sky highway construction, Squamish people developed a story about how that corridor was built. When there are opportunities to integrate Indigenous leadership in the building process, this will be important for building new stories and histories. Similarly other participants called for a different model of leadership and power sharing. Related to these different approaches, participants asked VSB to be equally courageous in questions of design, to create structures and concepts that are new.

### **QUOTES:**

- *"Yes we need indigenous leadership to be a part of this. How do we design spaces to redistribute power? It would have to be accompanied by something else meaningful on a wider level, like redistributed power among the actual Board and District."*

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## **LEARNINGS FROM INDIGENOUS FAMILIES**

The findings above capture common themes across different conversations within our Indigenous engagement. In our workshop with self-identified Indigenous families, participants echoed sentiments from non-Indigenous participants in other workshops - particularly in relation to their experiences engaging with VSB over many years, and the outreach process for this particular engagement. See "Additional Comments and Considerations" above, as well as "Stakeholder Relations" in the Recommendations section, below. Other themes emerged, as below.



## Challenging a Framework of Owning Unceded Lands

During the capital asset management portion of the engagement, participants expressed their discomfort with viewing VSB-owned lands as property to be leased or sold. This discomfort was connected to the fact that the VSB geographic area is on unceded Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Territories.

### QUOTES:

- *“I’m kind of jealous to see assets and holdings [on unceded lands]. It’s a privilege for the District to look at their holdings and lands and assets and think about what to do with them. I’m a third generation renter and we’re middle class.”*
- *“Any land or assets in the Vancouver School Board is on unceded territory. It is a total hypocritical stance to acknowledge this as Board members or programmers without actually understanding what this responsibility entails. VSB should work directly with host nations to repatriate land and assets to the host nations.”*

“

**VSB SHOULD  
WORK DIRECTLY  
WITH HOST  
NATIONS TO  
REPATRIATE LAND  
AND ASSETS  
TO THE HOST  
NATIONS**

## Needs of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Families

Workshop participants indicated a concern over the perception that improving spaces for Indigenous students might be perceived as taking resources away from non-Indigenous students. There is an expectation that VSB can and should mitigate this issue.

### QUOTES:

- *“This shouldn’t be about Indigenous parents wanting things that are at odds about what other parents want and what they want VSB to do. There’s a coming to head of values. It doesn’t help reconciliation for non-indigenous families to feel like we’re taking something away from them.”*

## Cultural Bias in Engagement

There was some criticism of the engagement process itself, insofar as it privileged a white, Western-view of education, educational spaces and community engagement.

### QUOTES:

- *“It’s tempting and easy to fall into linear ways to do research and consider policy, to choose the outcomes in goals and objectives, all rooted in a very culturally biased foundation. It assumes this is the only way of thinking about all of this. I feel like there are goals that overlap [between VSB and Indigenous families], there are things that don’t.”*





## LEARNINGS FROM THE SQUAMISH NATION

Our meeting with Squamish Nation unearthed several additional considerations, including:

### **Students Need to See Themselves in the Place and the Space**

Participants said that once inside a classroom, it is hard to be able to see where you are in the world. It was suggested that the outside world be embedded into the classroom, highlighting the history and Indigenous plants of the region.

### **Intentional Spaces Can Create Opportunities for Cultural Learning**

Squamish representatives asked for long-house structures at school sites. These spaces present an opportunity to teach about drumming, singing and traditional activities - for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

### **Storytelling and Learning from Elders**

Programs and education could better integrate oral histories, storytelling and opportunities to learn from Elders. It was also noted that these forms of learning are beneficial for all students - as not all students learn homogeneously.

### **Incorporate Seasons into Spaces and Learnings**

Spaces and teaching should change and reflect the region's seasons. This is especially important for people who struggle with traditional learning models.

### **Considering Various Forms of Indigenous Art**

Often, buildings that feature Indigenous art and design look to feature traditional art. Squamish representatives spoke to the importance of incorporating contemporary Indigenous art into new spaces as well.

The Squamish Nation also offered several additional comments, out of scope for this particular engagement, but important to share with VSB. These include:

- Indigenous inclusivity is about more than spaces
- Indigenous curriculum and inclusive education
- Indigenous support workers within schools
- Ensuring that Indigenous history and culture are taught with specificity and context
- Revitalizing culture through education
- Building a wealth of meaningful teaching resources
- Exploring bilingual program options
- Building and changing neighbourhoods

For complete feedback on the above topics, please see **APPENDIX A beginning on page 57.**

## THE VANCOUVER ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (VESTA)

During this phase of engagement, the Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association (VESTA) provided its policies, positions and recommendations related to school design, seismic upgrades and facilities planning. VESTA requested that the Long Range Facilities Plan focus on the importance of safe, functional well-maintained working and learning environments, and support for neighbourhood schools. They also called for dedicated space for art, music, non-enrolling teachers and multipurpose room space. On matters outside the scope of this engagement, they mentioned catchment and capacity issues, as well as school and class size, particularly: that the optimum school size for elementary is 350 and should not exceed 500; compliance with class size and composition collective agreement language; and a call to address enrolment pressure through boundary changes and review of placement for choice programs. They supported access to education for learners of all ages and advocated that VSB address funding issues through advocating for sustainable, predictable funding of public education from the Ministry of Education.

**Positions on land sales, Enhanced Services Schools, community schools and specialized programs for vulnerable students:** VESTA also shared that it opposes the sale of school property and public-private partnerships in schools. VESTA believes that in inner city schools (Enhanced Services Schools) there should be: i) increased teaching space so that all schools have adequate classroom space and appropriate facilities for non-enrolling teachers; and ii) the provision of space to accommodate non-teaching staff, parents, and other programs. In addition, VESTA supports models of community, full service and neighbourhood schools that include provision of community services such as health care, social services, recreation, education and training, multicultural and multilingual staff and resources so that school and community services continue throughout the day and evening all year. The association also supports specialized programs for after-school and holidays to provide meals, a reliable haven and other programs that enhance the quality of life for at-risk students when they are not in school.

**Recommendations for school design and specifications for school spaces:** Furthermore, VESTA indicated it has investigated and discussed the topic of school design through various committees over several years. They recommend that school design features be determined by requirements for: seismic safety; security of the students and staff and VSB emergency procedures; student supervision and safety concerns including that there be a minimal number of floor-to-ceiling glass walls; delivery of the curriculum; and fostering of a spirit of community within the whole school. VESTA has also outlined specifications for the design of each area in a school - from classrooms, libraries, gymnasiums and arts spaces, to special education and specialist rooms, hallways and storage areas. All of VESTA's detailed specifications can be found in **APPENDIX beginning on page 61.**

Finally, VESTA also recommends that all teaching areas include:

- Efficient, individually manageable temperature controls for heat and cold
- Efficient, individually manageable lighting controls with provision for dimming
- Blinds (for security and projection needs)
- Telephones to the inside and outside
- Electrical outlets which are accessible and thoughtfully positioned and more numerous than the minimum provided for by electrical code

- Lockable storage closets for technology with electrical power capacity for charging multiple devices, and for storage of valuables
- Windows that open
- Acoustic design for noise reduction
- Sinks
- Display space for student work
- Two accessible exits

## External Impacts on Feedback

### COVID-19

As discussed, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated that the team adapt its methodology for Phase II of this program, from in-person conversations to virtual workshops. But the format of these sessions wasn't the only thing impacted by COVID-19. Facilitators noticed that the current, lived experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic were influencing the input from workshop participants. Issues that might not have been as salient during a different engagement period were matters of frequent focus.

## COVERED OUTDOOR SPACES

Workshop participants raised the issue of covered outdoor spaces as a priority in the design of school upgrades or new schools.

### QUOTES:

- *“Distanced learning will likely continue even with [a] vaccine. With COVID so many schools and educational institutions are exploring outdoor learning. Certain schools in VSB have great access to parks and green space. There is natural distancing in outdoor learning. Outdoors is great for mental and physical health.”*
- *“Outdoor spaces and learning commons are important to fulfil the collaborative learning required in the new curriculum. I think we can agree that those schools with outdoor learning spaces currently have an advantage during this COVID time.”*
- *“The problem with our seismic upgrade is that we lost some covered spaces. This is a big problem given the amount of rain here, and now, distancing. Now our PAC is trying to raise money to get more cover. Covered spaces should be priority.”*
- *Several parents amplified this position, saying things like “I agree on covered areas”; and “Also agree with outdoor shelter. My kids are in a new build and it has no shelter”; and “I absolutely agree with outdoor shelter being a priority.”*

## FLEXIBLE SPACES - IN-PERSON AND REMOTE LEARNING

Other participants indicated that the COVID-19 health crisis demonstrated the importance of flexible learning spaces.

### QUOTES:

- *“In a COVID world, we can re-imagine education to include both in person and remote learning. Flexible multipurpose spaces could enable/support this.”*

## VENTILATION

Participants spoke about the importance of high-quality ventilation systems, and the value of fresh air for students.

### QUOTES:

- *“We also need windows that open. Many new schools have windows that don’t open, which we now see is a problem with COVID.”*

## Other Input: Out-of-Scope Topics

While the scope of the engagement was clear, inevitably participants wanted to discuss other issues related to questions of seismic upgrades for schools, and building for modern learning. Many saw other topics as inseparable from the focus of the engagement, while others simply wanted to ensure their feedback on these issues was being heard and recorded. Below are the primary themes of this kind of input.



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**I DON'T WANT KIDS ALL FUNNELLED INTO BUILDINGS THAT ARE AT FOUR-TIMES THEIR CAPACITY**

## CATCHMENT & CAPACITY

Calling for changes to catchment processes and capacity management: Many participants expressed frustration with catchment and capacity issues in VSB schools, particularly the matters of waitlists and long commutes for families who cannot attend their closest and preferred school. Some participants were concerned about how seismic upgrades might exacerbate these issues, as with students temporarily relocated to other schools, while others questioned why VSB would prioritize school upgrades over addressing waitlist issues.

### QUOTES:

- *“Two years into a new school, we are already exceeding capacity with many more families moving into the area. We have several major developments all around the school. We have dozens of families that won't be able to go to the school across the street.”*

## PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

Advocating for greater investments: Many participants felt that education is underfunded in B.C. Several people called on the Province to invest more in public education, and to enhance funding for seismic upgrades so that the money provided can go beyond the basic building envelope. Sometimes there was a sense that VSB could advocate more strongly with the Province.

## URBAN PLANNING WITH THE CITY OF VANCOUVER

Questioning collaboration at the city level: There was a general lack of confidence that VSB and the City of Vancouver are planning in an integrated way. This has historically not been the case from participants' perspective. Clarity on this point would improve public confidence in moving forward.

### QUOTES:

- *“I'd like to see better engagement with the City of Vancouver's Resilience Plan in these discussions.”*

## PROCESS OF SEISMIC UPGRADES

Space during seismic upgrades: Some participants shared concerns about the temporary learning configurations students would be in during any seismic upgrades to their schools.

### QUOTES:

- *“It would be inappropriate to take our program and jam it into a different school in the meantime in a different location that may not work for families that have already committed to sending kids to that school, with established routines and travel patterns.”*
- *“I don't want kids all funnelled into buildings that are at four-times their capacity.”*

## ONGOING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT FATIGUE

Some participants expressed stakeholder fatigue. This is not uncommon, and is likely compounded by the COVID-19

pandemic and the provincial election which took place within the engagement period. Some participants asked for information regarding how this engagement process was tied to previous, school-specific engagements. Other participants said they wanted to hear directly from parents impacted by seismic upgrades that are complete or in process. Many participants said any future decisions about a specific school would need to be made in close and transparent engagement with the families at that school.

# Recommendations

# Recommendations

## Engagement Takeaways

### SUSTAINABILITY AND STRUCTURE

This phase of engagement revealed several overarching themes. First, on matters of sustainability and structure, participants encourage VSB to invest in building materials that reduce costs and environmental impacts, over time. They also feel strongly that student comfort is integral to learning. If school upgrades or replacements cannot adequately ensure a modern level of comfort for students, additional investments are required to meet this expectation.

### DESIGNING FOR MODERN LEARNING

Second, participants' views are strongest when it comes to designing for modern learning. They push back against the idea of prioritizing some enhancements over others, offering instead that the entire spectrum of modern learning features should be included in contemporary schools. In fact, participants do not see these as enhancements at all. There is strong demand for everything VSB identified for input, from adaptable and integrated technology, flexible spaces and culturally responsive design, to opportunities to learn through the arts and in hands-on ways.

### CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

Lastly, most participants do not support selling portions of VSB properties. This was deemed “short-sighted” and risky, given unknown changes to city growth, development and enrolment over the decades to come. Long-term leases of full properties was also an unpopular option, though perhaps the one that generated the least discussion. Participants favour short-term leases of full properties, and long-term leases of portions of properties, as a way to generate revenue.

## Summary Recommendations

With all this in mind, it is our understanding that participants could support short-term lease of full properties, and long-term leases of portions of properties, if this generated revenue necessary to build schools with sustainable materials and modern comforts. The same is true of designing schools to support elements of modern learning, the improvements about which participants feel the most passionate. That said, there are some conditions and considerations for short- and long-term leasing:

- 1. Continue prioritizing student safety.** Any lease agreements should maintain student safety as a top priority. This means carefully considering not just the types of businesses near or on school property, but also issues like flow of people in and around school premises.
- 2. Prioritize lease-agreements that preserve VSB properties for community use.** Participants are most supportive of short- and long-term leases when the arrangements could address other community issues, such as child-care, housing, civic and recreational space. Many participants see schools as community assets - and/or communities unto themselves - and want to see this culture and civic good preserved or enhanced on VSB properties.

- 3. Develop lease arrangements as part of an integrated and holistic urban planning process, prioritizing flexibility as educational needs change.** Participants want VSB to work closely with the City, and to take into account current and future developments that would impact pressure points around VSB facilities. They encourage a collaborative planning model in which current and future community needs can be addressed, while maintaining the flexibility to reclaim VSB property for educational use when needed.
- 4. Conduct community-specific engagement to support changes at specific schools.** In alignment with VSB's approach to engagement, participants called for school-specific engagement around changes that disrupt existing facilities. Participants view schools as community hubs, and welcome the opportunity to engage on neighbourhood-specific issues.

### RECOMMENDATIONS: OUT-OF-SCOPE TOPICS

The workshops and meetings in this phase elicited quite a bit of feedback outside the focus areas for this engagement. While out of scope, we feel it is important to highlight these issues for the Board, when the issues were recurring and heavily weighted in our dialogues.

On matters of **catchment and school capacity**, we echo a recommendation participants' themselves identified: communicating closer collaboration and integration with the City of Vancouver, in regards to city planning, development and school enrolment changes. It is recommended that this planning take both a short- and long-term view, accounting for changing residential patterns across the city. Collaborating to ensure adaptable, safe, appropriately-sized schools are a part of the city's Resilient Vancouver, is one example.

In regards to **formal stakeholder and community relations**, the Board's worthwhile commitment to ongoing communication and engagement with its community appears to have a downside: fatigue and frustration when engagement is not apparently connected over time. This sentiment was most acute for parents who are active in community and education advocacy. Families feel like they are 'starting over' when new Boards are elected, and would be more interested and engaged in future engagements if past contributions were well-documented, actioned, and made publicly accessible in an assuring way. Parents shared how difficult it can be to prioritize for these important conversations about their children's education, while juggling all the other demands of work and their young families. As one possible solution, we will once again spotlight a suggestion from one participant, who called for a central hub dedicated to VSB's community engagement, across time.



# Appendix A

# VSB | Building for Modern Learning

## Squamish Nation Meeting Notes

### HOW CAN VSB MEET THE NEEDS OF SQUAMISH STUDENTS IN BUILDINGS, FIELDS AND SPACES?

Squamish Nation participants noted that space can be physical or conceptual. They shared stories of VSB staff members who have created positive conceptual spaces for Squamish students. When safe conceptual spaces are created by staff, their legacy is less certain should staff leave.

Participants reminded the VSB delegation that parents and community members sometimes carry negative memories of their own education. For this reason, designing spaces that are intentionally welcoming and respectful of culture, history and explicit belonging is critical as an act of reconciliation.

Acknowledgement should not only be historical. Squamish references should clearly indicate vital, living culture and values.

- **Physical acknowledgement and recognition in spaces.** One way to better invite Indigenous students and families into VSB spaces is through visual acknowledgement and recognition. Indigenous students should readily see Squamish people, territory, history, culture and contribution. Spaces need to acknowledge Indigenous histories in a way that is equal to non-Indigenous cultures. Examples of this include photographs of historical Indigenous leaders placed with images of the monarch and seeing the Coast Salish Anthem along with the Canadian anthem. Part of reclaiming culture is about making it visible again. Visual cues remind people that Squamish people are here, and have been there for generations. Language is a big part of this.
- **Learning from the land is essential.** Learning from the land presents an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to learn about the Indigenous plants in this region. Further, it is a natural opportunity for Indigenous students to learn more about who they are and where they come from. The group also spoke to favouring plants that can be harvested and cultivated, which could be used as an educational tool as well.
- **Safe gathering spaces designed with student needs in mind.** Building safe spaces would allow Indigenous students to refuge within schools. Supplying snacks was essential for food security.
- **Spaces should recognize alternative learning models.** Before residential schools and public schools, learning was traditionally very hands-on and collaborative. Building spaces that allow people to return to these traditional learning models is important.
- **Students need to see themselves in the place and the space.** Once inside a classroom, it is hard to be able to see where you are in the world. Embed the outside world into the classroom, highlighting the history and Indigenous plants of the region.
- **Building courageous spaces. Dialogue between nations and governments is essential before the design of new structures is on its way.** Squamish participants asked VSB to be courageous and

- create structures and concepts that are new.
- **The building process is an opportunity for relationship development and education.** Looking at the example of the Sea-to-Sky highway construction, Squamish people developed a story about how that corridor was built. When there are opportunities to integrate Squamish members in the building process, this will be important for building new stories and histories.

## How can we better teach - through our spaces - about Squamish values, culture and history?

- **Intentional spaces can create opportunities for cultural learning.** Squamish representatives asked for long-house structures at school sites. These spaces present an opportunity to teach about drumming, singing and traditional activities - for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.
- **Storytelling and learning from Elders.** Programs and education could better integrate oral histories, storytelling and opportunities to learn from Elders. It was also noted that these forms of learning are beneficial for all students - as not all students learn homogeneously.
- **Incorporate seasons into spaces and learnings.** This is especially important for people who struggle with traditional learning models.
- **Considering various forms of Indigenous art.** Often, buildings that feature Indigenous art and design look to feature traditional art. Squamish representatives spoke to the importance of incorporating contemporary Indigenous art into new spaces as well.

## Additional Considerations

Indigenous inclusivity is about more than spaces. Members of the Squamish Nation spoke to the importance of the people and programs within the schools. Although members noted the progress that has been made since the mid-90s, there is work to be done with students, graduates and families to enhance healing. Squamish representatives also spoke to the importance of:

- **Indigenous curriculum and inclusive education.** Squamish members spoke about the need to better communication opportunities for students' futures. A priority that was brought up was helping students and families restore confidence in various pathways to meaningful careers. Finding opportunities for mentorship and internship programs would be instrumental in setting up Indigenous students for future success.
- **Indigenous support workers within schools.** People are equally as important as spaces and structures. Support workers would allow Indigenous students to build relationships with people within schools and check in when needed. In particular, support individuals have the capacity to help Indigenous students understand the impact that they have on both their school and the broader community.

- **Ensuring that Indigenous history and culture are taught with specificity and context.** Indigenous histories are taught in a general way. By comparison, western history is taught with individual names, and dates. Indigenous history needs to be taught with the same level of specificity. Further, Indigenous histories are taught in the past tense, often including old, black and white imagery - which communicates that these issues are current and systemic.
- **Revitalizing culture through education.** Squamish people have educational goals connected to the cultural revitalization of their communities. They've experienced colonization, which has interrupted the transfer of their histories and culture. The school system is a pivotal place to share cultural knowledge. It has been shown in the Sea to Sky District that when people are given access to their culture as part of their educational experience, they are more likely to be successful with the other elements of the curriculum.
- **Building a wealth of meaningful teaching resources.** There aren't many published resources around Squamish resources and culture. Many materials were written at the turn of the 20th century and they don't accurately capture Squamish histories. Squamish is developing materials that document their history, and they're looking for ways to partner in the development of these resources. Increasing access to materials VSB teachers would have to draw from (maps, place names, curriculum, or materials) would enrich all student learning.
- **Exploring bilingual program options. Language is an imperative component of Indigenous culture.** In the future, Squamish may pursue an immersive language program. They'd like to explore options for this program in future VSB schools.
- **Building and changing neighbourhoods.** Over the next few decades, Squamish will be involved with several developments within Vancouver. This will likely include a lot of additional affordable housing options for Indigenous people and Squamish members. They are actively engaged in building new neighbourhoods with significant populations of Indigenous people.

## Hudson Elementary

Squamish Nation strongly encourages some redesign of the upcoming Hudson Elementary seismic project. They have also requested that VSB consider a renaming process.

## Next Steps

Squamish and VSB have both expressed interest in deepening their relationship. Superintendent, Suzanne Hoffman will continue to pursue additional meetings between VSB and Squamish.

Squamish members are also encouraging standing Board seats for Indigenous Trustees, and that ultimately, Squamish Nation needs to be a decision-maker, with equal influence in processes.

# Appendix B

# VSB | Building for Modern Learning

## Submission from VESTA

### HOW CAN VSB MEET THE NEEDS OF SQUAMISH STUDENTS IN BUILDINGS, FIELDS AND SPACES?

We are also guided by VESTA policy that has been put in place over the years through the discussion and decision-making processes. The following policies determine our input to the LRFP:

- That VESTA recognizes that members of Indigenous Communities and People of Colour, like the members of Black Communities, experience persistent issues with individual, structural and systemic racism in Canada and that VESTA expresses in voice and action condemnation of that racism and undertakes steps to improve the lives and experiences of members of all of these communities whenever possible.
- We are pleased to see that the Spur Communication report includes a commitment to applying the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as it has connections to our motion from last year.

VESTA policy that is in place that connects to the report would include, that VESTA feedback on the Long Range Facilities Plan focus on:

Importance of safe, functional well-maintained working and learning environments

- Our support for neighbourhood schools
- Our policy position that the optimum school size for elementary is 350 and should not exceed 500
- Access to education for learners of all ages
- Compliance with class size and composition collective agreement language
- Addressing enrollment pressure through boundary changes and review of placement for choice programs
- Addressing funding issues through advocating for sustainable, predictable funding of public education from the Ministry of Education
- The importance of dedicated space for art, music, non-enrolling teachers and multipurpose room space.

In addition we have other policies that connect to issues raised in the survey:

- That VESTA oppose the sale of school property and public-private partnerships in schools.
- That in the Inner City Schools (Enhanced Services Schools) there be:
- Increased teaching space so that all schools have adequate classroom space and appropriate facilities for non-enrolling teachers.

- The provision of space to accommodate non-teaching staff, parents, and other programs in Inner City Schools.
- Models of community, full service and neighbourhood schools that include provision of community services such as health care, social services, recreation, education and training, multicultural and multilingual staff and resources so that school and community services continue throughout the day and evening all year
- Specialized programs for after-school and holidays to provide meals, a reliable haven and other programs that enhance the quality of life for at-risk students when they are not attending school.

VESTA has also spent many years investigating and discussing the topic of school design through various committees including adoption by the executive in 2017 and came up with the following recommendations: School Design and Seismic Upgrade Committee Recommendations for Policy on Elementary School Design:

- That school design features be determined by requirements for:
  - seismic safety
  - security of the students and staff and VSB emergency procedures
  - student supervision and safety concerns including that there be a minimal number of floor-to-ceiling glass walls
  - delivery of the curriculum
  - fostering of a spirit of community within the whole school

That all teaching areas include:

- efficient, individually manageable temperature controls for heat and cold
- efficient, individually manageable lighting controls with provision for dimming
- blinds (for security and projection needs)
- telephones to the inside and outside
- electrical outlets which are accessible and thoughtfully positioned and more numerous than the minimum provided for by electrical code
- lockable storage closets for technology with electrical power capacity for charging multiple devices, and for storage of valuables
- windows that open
- acoustic design for noise reduction
- a sink
- display space for student work
- two accessible exits

That the following teaching spaces be built or renovated to meet the following criteria:

Classrooms:

- Classrooms shall be the same size, minimum 84m<sup>2</sup>, with kindergarten classrooms being a minimum of 110m<sup>2</sup>.

#### School library:

- The school library shall be at least 168m<sup>2</sup> for schools with a nominal capacity up to 100 students\*, with an additional 0.8m<sup>2</sup> for each student over 100.
- The library in a one-language school shall have wall-mounted shelving measuring a minimum of 120 linear metres for schools with a nominal capacity up to 100 students, with an additional 0.3 linear metres provided for each student over 100.
- The library in a two-language school shall have wall-mounted shelving measuring a minimum of 140 linear metres for schools with a nominal capacity up to 100 students, with an additional 0.4 linear metres provided for each student over 100.
- The library shall have specialized shelving to house picture books.
- The library shelving shall be a maximum of 1.65m high and a minimum of 15cm from the floor, with a minimum of 33cm between each shelf.
- The circulation desk shall be efficient and ergonomically designed.
- There shall be a lockable, soundproof library office space with floor-to ceiling walls.

#### Music room:

- Each school shall have a music room which is specially placed and specially soundproofed, with adequate storage for musical instruments.
- \*nominal capacity as defined in the Ministry of Education Area Standards document Section 2.2.1.

#### Fine arts room:

- Each school shall have a fine arts room with adequate storage for equipment and a sink with multiple faucets suitable for use by 6 or more students at a time.

#### Gymnasium:

- Each school shall have a full-size gymnasium with adequate storage for all sports equipment. There shall be consideration given to audio and projection needs, including a sound system and the ability to darken the gym.
- Performance area:
- Each school shall have a performance area for music and drama, such as a gym stage, a large multi-purpose room, or an amphitheatre.

#### Special education and specialist rooms:

- Each school shall have at least one learning assistance room, one ELL room, and one general special education room, each with an area of at least 40m<sup>2</sup>, as well as a room for the teacher psychologist, the teacher counselor, and the speech and language pathologist.

That the following spaces be built or renovated to meet the following criteria;

Passageways:

- Each school shall have stairways and hallways which:
- are sufficiently wide to allow safe and easy passage for large numbers of people going in opposing directions
- have safe, adequately-sized stair landings
- have display space for student work

Staffroom:

- Each school shall have a staffroom of at least 84m<sup>2</sup>, equipped with kitchen facilities, adult washrooms, and shower facilities.

Washrooms:

- There shall be washrooms to accommodate the maximum possible number of students and adults in the building. Student washrooms have toilets, urinals and sinks placed at the correct height for use by students K to 7. Washrooms for kindergarten, primary, and special needs classrooms shall be provided in the classroom or building in which the classroom is located.

Storage:

There shall be space for storage for:

- projector/laptop/tablet carts, with the ability for charging in storage
- primary book collections
- novel sets
- Textbooks
- science equipment
- art supplies
- stationery and large rolls of paper

