



On May 26, 2020 the Board of Education completed its third and final reading of the budget for the 2020-21 school year, in the amount of \$82,783,574.

This year's budget was particularly challenging given all the unknowns we face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued speculation about what it will look like to have students returning in September 2020.

Before the suspension of in-class instruction, the District had completed a series of in-depth consultation sessions with stakeholders. These included the Thought Exchange online forum (which garnered 685 participants who shared 340 thoughts and over 14,000 ratings), the student symposium and the Talking Tables session. The consultations reinforced priorities outlined in the District's strategic plan ("Our Learning Journey") which was published in January 2020 – including defining four key directions for the next five years: Transform the student experience, Build meaningful relationships, Ensure full participation in learning, and Lead into the future.

The challenges of the 2020-21 budget resulted in the District having to balance a significant budget shortfall. That included having to find efficiencies across all levels of staffing – support, teaching and administration.

The changes that were implemented were done thoughtfully, ensuring that minimal impacts will be felt in the classroom. But, here's what that plan looks like across the staffing levels mentioned:

- Adjustments were made in support staffing to create more consistency and alignment of resources across all sites.
- Adjustments were made in teaching where investments in a collaboration model have now been realized and dollars can be reinvested elsewhere.
- Finally, there were administrative amendments made to adjust for longer term outlooks over enrolment and better align work portfolios.

The adjustments made were ones that are long-term focused and not done as a result of immediate circumstances. As a result, the District has consciously decided to utilize a large portion of its operational surplus reserves, rather than making steep cuts which may negatively impact student learnings and outcomes. These reserves are "rainy day funds" that the District may draw upon in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. And the pandemic certainly qualified as both exceptional and unforeseen, and it speaks to why Districts must maintain some reserve balances. These funds are going to be used to weather the storm until we return to a state of normalcy.

All that said, the reserves limited and if planning for the following school year (2021-22) brings the same level of uncertainty, more significant changes may be required in order to balance our budget, which all districts must do by law.

Given the budget uncertainty for next year, the level of investments made were modest in comparison to those implemented for the 2019-20 school year. They are tied to the District's strategic plan which, again, is consistent with the consultation process undertaken this year.

A total of \$147,000 in strategic priorities will be invested into our schools in the upcoming year. This includes 2 additional education assistant positions which align with the Inclusive Education review conducted during the 2019-20 school year and will help students coming into the district who have been identified as needing supports.

In addition, \$50,000 was added to the technology budget. Technology, while a significant priority previous to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been propelled forward as a vital investment priority. The accelerated play will address the uncertainty we all share, as it pertains to the stage schools will be at when we return in the Fall, though it is likely that there will be some kind of blended learning, where many students will do some face-to-face instruction and some online learning.