

# Framework for Enhancing Student Learning



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5  
SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)  
Finance, Operations, Transportation and  
Information Technology



September 2025

# Finance, Operations, Transportation, and Information Technology

## Finance

School districts' budgets in British Columbia are reported as a consolidation of three separate funds: operating, special purpose, and capital.

The Operating fund contains the revenues and expenses for the day-to-day operation of the District. Ministry grants and other revenues, including international student program fees and facility lease rental revenues, form the revenues for this fund. Expenses include costs for instructional programs, district administration, facilities, maintenance, and transportation.

Special Purpose fund(s) contain "restricted contributions" defined as legislative or contractual stipulations, or restrictions, as to the use of funds. Ministry funds including the Annual Facilities Grant (AFG), Classroom Enhancement Fund (CEF), School Generated Funds (SGF), and scholarships, are reported in this fund.

The Capital fund for the District primarily comprises building renewal and playground replacement projects funded from externally restricted capital revenues (mainly from the Ministry). Projects funded from operating or special purpose funds are largely for smaller building and facilities maintenance projects, technology and equipment replacement, and minor playground restorations.

The District operates on a budget of approximately \$100 million dollars annually. The budget breaks down into three main areas: Operating, Special Purpose, and Capital funds as shown in Figure 1.

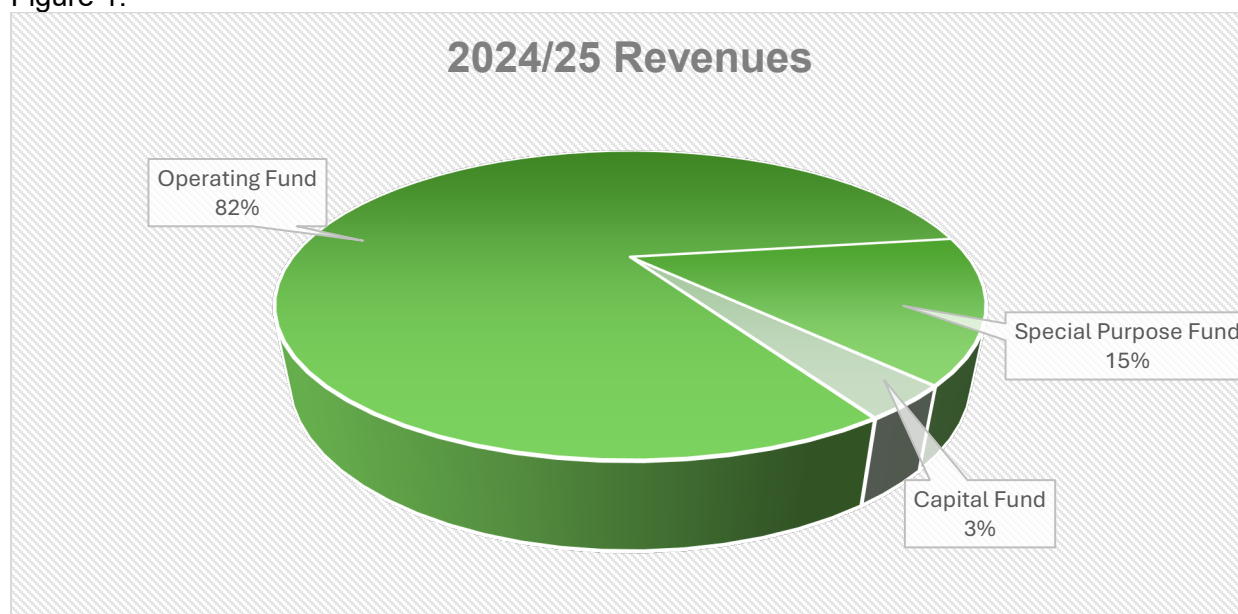


Figure 1

Staffing costs are determined based on student configuration within the schools. Instructional expenses make up the majority of the budget expenditures as shown in Figure 2.

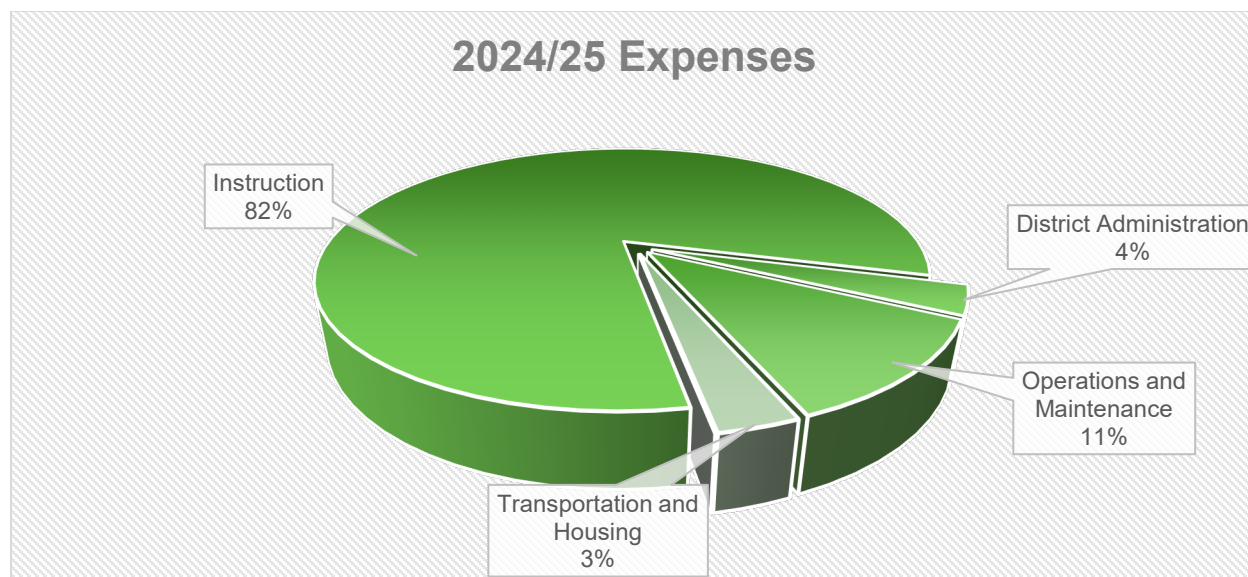


Figure 2

Instructional salaries are broken down further by role in Figure 3:

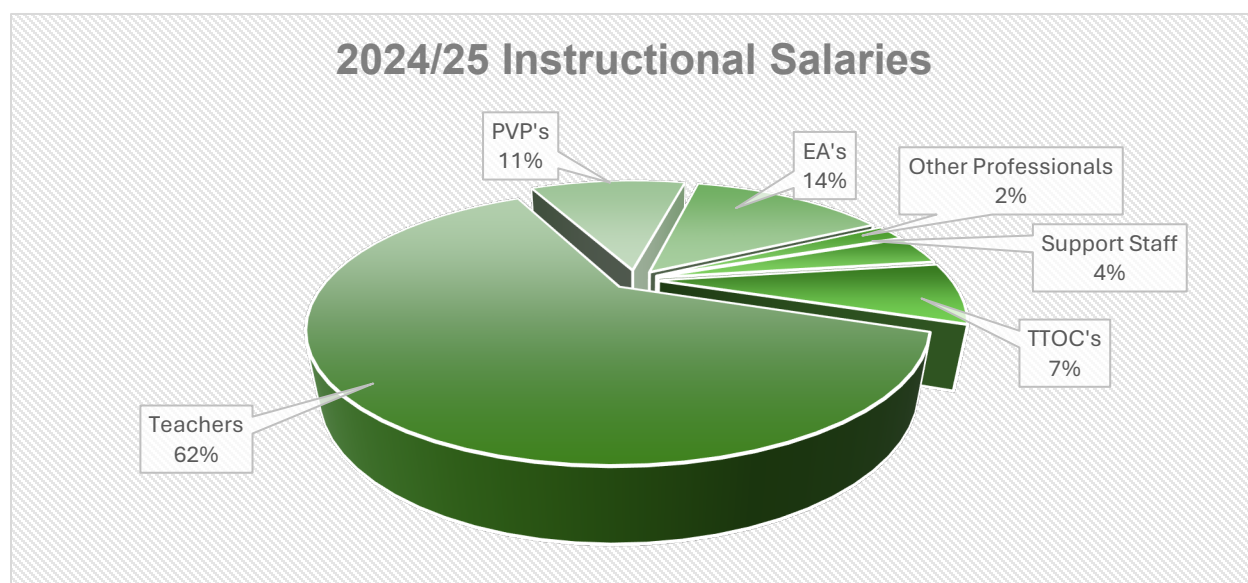


Figure 3

Instruction services and supplies are funds allocated to support student success. District administration, operations, maintenance, and transportation allocations are required to support the overall operations of the District. Special Purpose funds are grants provided by the Ministry which are outside of the normal operating grant and are targeted funds that support Ministry identified priorities or projects. Special Purpose funds and targeted funds add supports for Indigenous learners, English language learners, and learners with diverse abilities, capacity building, early learning and French programming and have been allocated to support the Board of Education strategic priorities.

This allocation aligns with Priority 3 (students will transition successfully from secondary school with the core competencies to achieve their life and career goals) by removing barriers to equity,

providing accessible learning environments, and inclusive opportunities while engaging all learners.

This year, we actively sought public input to ensure Rightsholders and community partners had the opportunity to contribute their feedback and ideas to our annual budget process. This engagement allowed us to foster valuable conversations with the community, helping us better understand and address their needs and priorities.

The Board of Education remains steadfast in its commitment to health, safety, and the recruitment and retention of staff. The District continues to maintain one of the highest custodial staffing ratios in British Columbia, while also implementing programs aimed at reducing workplace violence and addressing significant employee absence challenges. In addition, funds have been prioritized to support the continuation of the District French teaching position.

We are grateful to have received additional Provincial funding to support wage increases from labour settlements, which will help staff manage ongoing affordability concerns.

The Board of Education is dedicated to balancing the budget in a manner that prioritizes the best interests of students while safeguarding the school district from potential risks. We have diligently examined all areas for potential efficiencies, allowing us to redirect operating funds towards additional classroom support. Our focus remains on the wellbeing of students and staff, ensuring alignment with our strategic priorities.

The majority of the special purpose funds relate to Classroom Enhancement Funds which are provided to appropriately staff the schools for restored language to the Collective Agreements. During 2024/25, the district received \$10.3 million in funding through the Classroom Enhancement Fund (CEF) for teaching positions and for other overhead costs related to the contract restoration.

This funding aligns with the Learning Priorities in the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning.

## Current Financial Circumstances

The District has a small surplus projected in our 2025/2026 annual budget and experienced a \$3.0 million surplus in 2024/25.

In 2024/25, the District continued to experience high utilities and fuel costs, supplies, and construction costs resulting in continued strain on District operations.

Maintaining existing staffing levels in the budget was possible due to the Classroom Enhancement Fund, Feeding Futures foods funding, and a continued focus on removing contingency staffing amounts that did not fund the positions of specific individuals currently in assignment. Declining student enrolment and overall global economic uncertainty continues to create a low degree of flexibility in the budget for 2025/26. As a result, our capacity to top up district Reserve funds, which are often used to allocate dollars for initiatives that are not in the budget, is reduced.










In summary, we have developed increased funding needs and enhanced service expectations, yet we are now facing a significantly tighter budget with a focus on fiscal conservatism. As a result, we continue to believe the appropriate financial approach going forward is a cautious one.

The District remains committed to fully funding its operating costs without undue reliance on funding sources that are not committed in these uncertain times. The budget has been balanced by reducing expenses with the least possible impact to students. The District continues to be committed to holding sufficient Reserve funds to buffer potential revenue shortfalls.

Every department has examined its budget to identify possible efficiencies and areas for reduction. Unfortunately, balancing options that avoid impacts on the classroom are limited due to declining student enrolment resulting in difficult outcomes this year.

The District's goal is to effectively support the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning by providing a safe, healthy, and financially sustainable learning environment for students and staff. The Framework for Enhancing Student Learning is reflective of the commitment of the District to ensure student success by ensuring learners are literate, numerate, feel connected to schools and communities and, ultimately, graduate with purpose and options.

We will continue to:

-  ensure, through multi-year financial planning, budget reviews, and the annual budget process, the allocation of resources (people, time, and services) is completed in a fiscally responsible manner and supports the achievement of the Board's strategic plan;
-  review and improve business processes and business systems to create value;
-  support community of learners through effective communication which enables efficient decision making;
-  ensure business continuity through effective risk management, succession planning, strategic recruitment, retention, and professional development;
-  effectively support the governance function of the Board of Education;
-  continue to effectively represent the District perspective to provincial government on business related initiatives (i.e., Select Standing Committee);
-  ensure District assets are safeguarded and that the District's financial position is stable through the design and implementation of adequate internal controls and financial processes;
-  ensure departments have the organizational capacity (people and expertise) to manage all current and planned initiatives and projects, while delivering regular operations; and
-  focus on reallocating dollars from supplies and expense allowance funds to alleviate the need to reduce funding from actual filled positions or other critical initiatives, such as school-based budgets.

## Operations

The District facilities provide student-centred learning opportunities that are welcoming and safe and that prepare learners to achieve their career and life goals. These provisions align with the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning Educational Priorities.

The Board of Education is committed to the health and safety of students and staff in the District facilities. Facilities are maintained with one of the highest custodial staffing ratios in the province. The Operations Department enhances the learning environment and intellectual development of the District learners by maintaining the condition, safety, and cleanliness of our buildings, grounds, and equipment. This results in healthy school facilities for students and staff. The maintenance

teams provide service for the schools while maintaining building systems with a robust maintenance program.

Facility renewal project plans are completed annually to ensure the facilities remain safe and in good condition. Each year, the Board of Education submits a five-year capital plan to the Ministry of Education that outlines the major capital projects the District has identified.

The Ministry of Education approved the District for a new Fernie Elementary School at a budget of \$33.5 million. The District is excited to begin the work on this significant project and is working with community partners to best meet the needs of students and families from an education and child care focus.

On June 30, 2024, there was a fire at Amy Woodland Elementary School that caused significant damage. In spring 2025, the Ministry of Education and Child Care approved the District to move forward with the development of a business case and next steps to ensure the future needs of Cranbrook students are met.

The District has continued to work towards reducing emissions and has been working towards the goal of carbon neutrality. All departments continue to be in the mindset of reducing unnecessary emissions through the removal of inefficient printers and purchasing energy-saving appliances. The District believes the goal of collaborating with staff and students to become more energy-wise will continue to pay off in the years to come.

The District has replaced older light fixtures with LED lights and kits and dimming switches have been installed in all the classrooms allowing teachers to lower the light levels to foster the development of our classroom communities into comfortable learning environments.

The District will also continue with best practices for HVAC maintenance that was learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure a healthy environment for students and staff is maintained.

The above operational strategies ensure that the District will continue to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in life.

## Transportation

Approximately 2,400 students are transported on 25 bus routes in and around Cranbrook and the Elk Valley.

Supporting Educational Priority Two, students will have a place to belong in all District schools. The Transportation Department provides financial transportation assistance to parents whose children are eligible to receive transportation, where bussing is not available. This enhances the connection to the school and to the District. The District also strives to create a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment and currently has two accessible bus routes in Cranbrook and an accessible bus in the Elk Valley.

A transportation agreement has been developed in collaboration with both Indigenous communities to adjust our school bus routes to enhance the service level for Indigenous students. The Transportation Department is active in the creation and implementation of the transportation plan with respect to the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), providing extracurricular access to on-reserve Indigenous students.






As part of the District's commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, the District operates four electric buses.

## Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) Department supports the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning by ensuring that the District's digital infrastructure, systems, and services are aligned with the Board of Education's strategic priorities, vision, and values. Information Technology initiatives are designed to enhance student learning, improve operational efficiency, and maintain secure and reliable access to educational resources.

### Strategic Goals and Alignment






The District's IT Plan (2022–2026) directly links technology services to the District Strategic Plan and the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. The primary goals are to:

-  Ensure infrastructure supports current and future curricular needs in alignment with industry best practices;
-  Maintain cost-effective, high-quality administrative technologies;
-  Improve productivity by refining learning and business processes;
-  Fully support educators with professional learning to build the classroom of the future; and
-  Integrate technology to support curricular goals, assessment, and communication, including responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) use.

IT initiatives also align with the Indigenous Enhancement Agreement, the BC Education Plan, and Provincial curriculum, assessment, and reporting practices, with a particular focus on supporting vulnerable and diverse learners.

### Achievements and Investments (2017–2024)

Over the past several years, the IT Department has achieved significant milestones, including:

-  Infrastructure upgrades such as the Aruba network project and district-wide Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for all staff accounts;
-  Deployment of devices at points of learning across the District;
-  Launch of a new mobile-friendly District website with app integration;
-  Implementation of key systems such as SchoolMessenger, SafeArrival, MyEducation BC integration with Destiny, MyEducation Family Portal, Translink, and Xerox XDA; and
-  Adoption of pre-approved AI tools (ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot) in compliance with the privacy and security guidelines in [Administrative Procedure 142](#).

### Infrastructure and Systems

The District maintains a five-to-seven year replacement cycle for servers, networks, and phones, with staff and student devices replaced every four-to-five years. Device purchasing decisions are based on functional needs and a standardized stakeholder-based analysis process. Annual infrastructure updates follow best practices in MFA and identity management, with increased use of secure cloud services such as Microsoft 365.

Digital resource platforms include SchoolMessenger, SafeArrival, Permission Click, MyEducation BC, PowerSchool, My Fame, and KEV for organizational functions, as well as Microsoft 365



(M365), Microsoft Teams, Seesaw, myBlueprint, Destiny, and AI tools for educational support. The District also provides productivity and accessibility tools such as Immersive Reader, Microsoft Dictate, and Seeing AI.

## Professional Learning and Student Support

The District delivers professional development in AI tools (done in compliance with [Administrative Procedure 142](#)), and digital citizenship, along with training for integrating technology into classroom instruction. Learning communities are fostered to leverage digital tools effectively.

Technology integration supports literacy and numeracy goals, enhances formative assessment practices, and provides students with the skills to engage in safe, responsible, and ethical technology use. Digital citizenship education now includes responsible AI use, privacy, and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) compliance.





## Risk Management and Business Continuity

The IT Department ensures ongoing FIPPA compliance, informed consent processes, and governance of AI tools under [Administrative Procedure 142](#). Business continuity is supported through disaster recovery planning for natural disasters, cyberattacks, or outages with off-site backups and contingency network access in place.

## Equity in Technology Access

Device allocation ratios are designed to promote equitable access: one device per five students in elementary schools, and one device per three students in middle and secondary schools, with adjustments for Indigenous students, diverse learners, children in care, and vulnerable learners.

## Additional District Initiatives for 2025/26

-  The Board of Education has continued its commitment of additional supports in the form of 1.2 FTE worth of additional teaching time (estimated cost of \$162,000) to create full-time music, band, and shop positions to better attract and retain teachers for these roles.
-  The Board of Education continues to support Special Education for a total district budget of \$16,645,708 compared to funding received of \$12,371,620 for Level 1, 2 and 3 students, a difference of \$4,274,088 or 26% covered by operating funds which demonstrates the Board's significant commitment to Learning Services.
-  The Board of Education continues to review opportunities to support French Immersion programs by hiring French-speaking staff. The Board continued the support of a District French teaching position at a cost of \$135,000 to answer a reduction in French funding.
-  The Board has supported the hiring of a Numeracy Support Teacher at an approximate cost of \$130,000.



## Barriers and Other Factors

The average age of the District's facilities is 50 years, which is beyond their useful economic life. Replacing aging facilities will help reduce carbon emissions and reduce repairs and maintenance costs. At this time, immediate attention is required to replace multiple schools with significant building management systems surpassing their economic life.

The closure of Amy Woodland Elementary School after the fire on June 30, 2024, had an immediate impact on students and staff in Cranbrook. There were over 240 students in the Amy Woodland Elementary catchment area that were displaced due to the fire in addition to a total of 40 teaching, exempt and CUPE staff. The closure of Amy Woodland Elementary also provided barriers for transportation, after school child care, and the StrongStart program. This will continue to have significant operational impacts for the District for at least the next 5 years. As noted above, the Ministry has supported the District to proceed with developing a business case and the District is working through this process as expeditiously as possible.

There are necessary ongoing upgrades needed to properly serve our students and staff at Mount Baker Secondary School. The District believes the best option at this time for Mount Baker Secondary School is a full facility replacement and has been advocating for a replacement school for over 20 years.

The District continues to experience school capacity constraints with Isabella Dicken Elementary School in Fernie being well above capacity. The approval of the new Fernie Elementary School will help to meet the long-term needs of the community. The school is estimated to be ready for occupancy by fiscal 2027.

## Summary

The Finance, Facilities, Transportation and Information Technology departments of the District continue to support the Priorities identified in the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning through the transparent allocation of resources for instruction, efficient and effective communication, and understanding that all employees of the District are responsible for the success of students.