

# Framework for Enhancing Student Learning



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



September 2026

# 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.

The Special Purpose fund contains "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.

In 2025/26, the District received approximately \$105.8 million in total revenue across its operating, special purpose, and capital funds as shown in Figure 1.

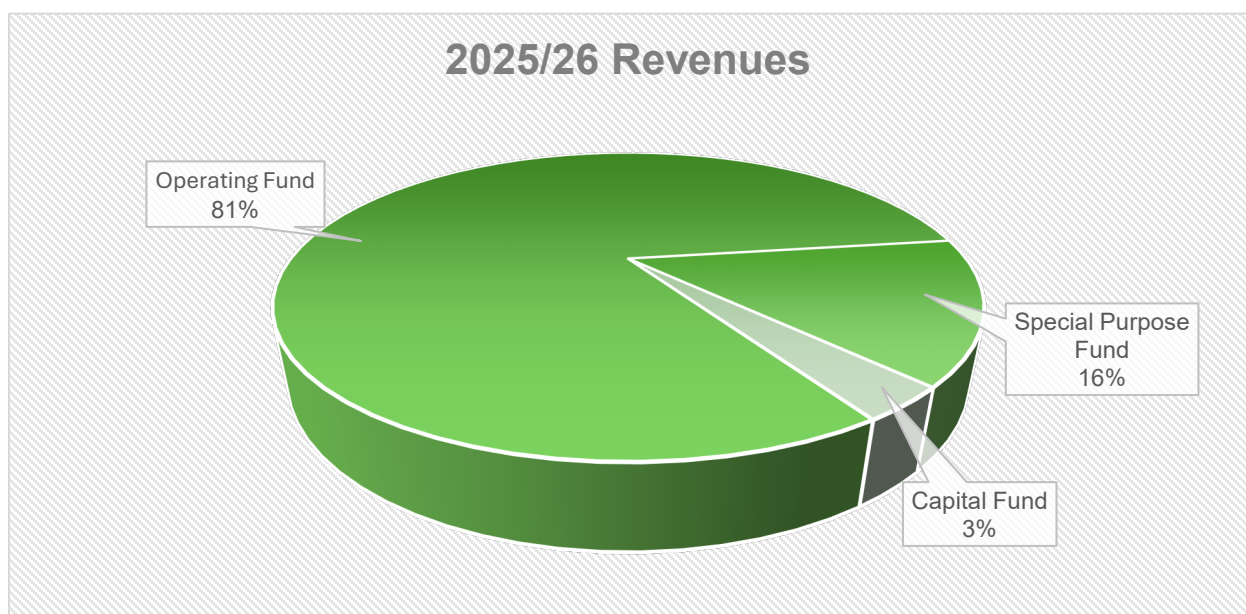


Figure 1

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.

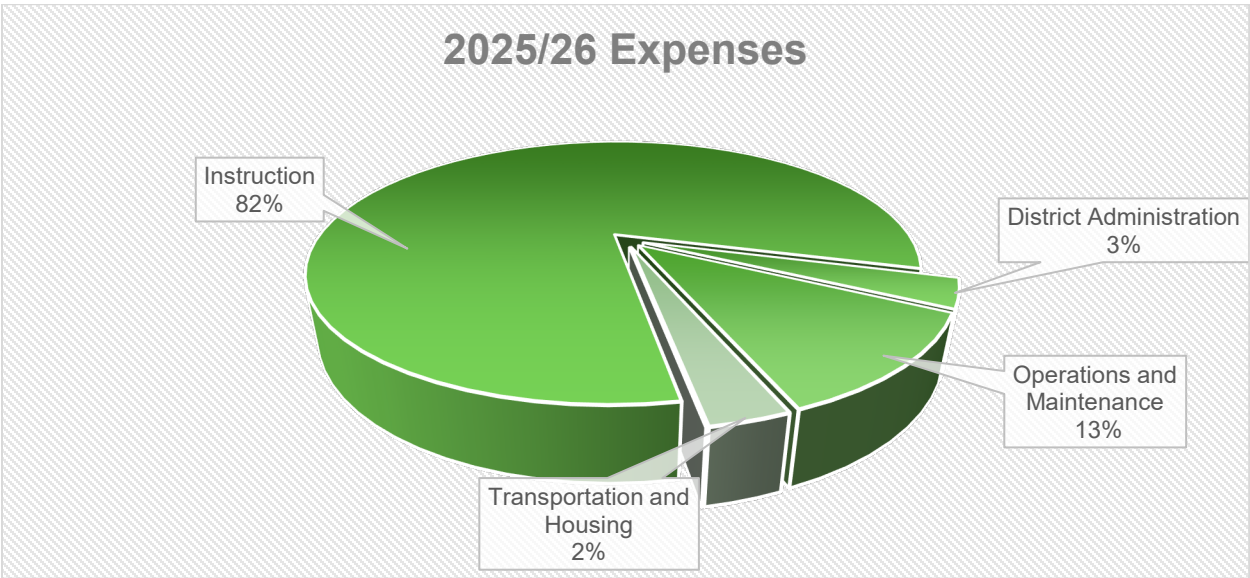


Figure 2

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

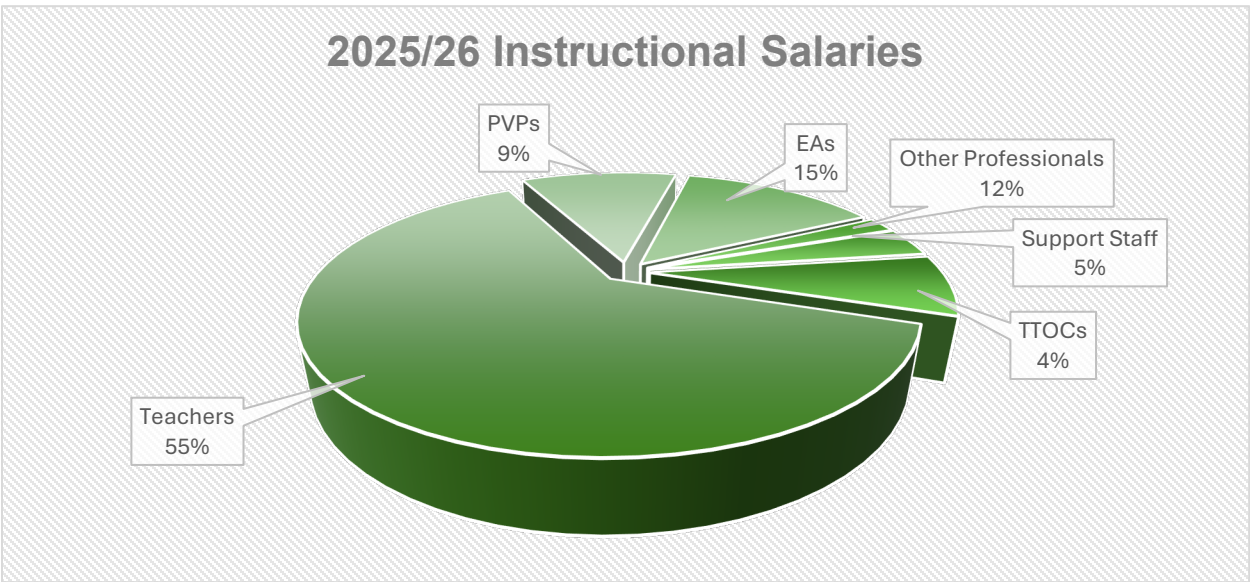


Figure 3

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, learners with diverse abilities, capacity building, early learning, and French programming, and have been allocated to support the Board of Education’s strategic priorities.

This allocation aligns with Learning Priority Three – 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, the District actively sought public input to ensure rightsholders and community partners had the opportunity to contribute their feedback and ideas to the 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 and safety and recruitment and retention initiatives. We continue to maintain one of the highest custodial staffing ratios in British Columbia, implement programs designed to reduce workplace violence—efforts aimed at mitigating the significant employee absence issues we currently face, and prioritize funds to continue the District French, Literacy, and Numeracy positions.

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. The focus remains on the well-being of students and staff, ensuring alignment with the District's strategic priorities.

The majority of the special purpose funds relate to the Classroom Enhancement Fund, which is provided to appropriately staff the schools for restored language to the Collective Agreements. During 2025/26, the District received \$10.5 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 the 2026/27 annual budget and experienced a \$2.76 million surplus in 2025/26.

In 2025/26, high utility, fuel, supplies, and construction costs continued to place pressure on District operations.

Maintaining existing staffing levels in the budget was possible due to the Classroom Enhancement Fund, Feeding Futures and federal food 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 continue to create a low degree of flexibility in the budget for 2026/27. As a result, the 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, the District is experiencing increased funding needs and enhanced service expectations, yet it is now facing a significantly tighter budget with a focus on fiscal conservatism. As a result, the District continues 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 and classrooms. 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, options for balancing the budget while avoiding impacts on the classroom are limited due to declining student enrolment.

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 of Education's strategic plan;
-  review and improve business processes and business systems to create value;
-  support the 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 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 and Child Care that outlines the major capital projects the District has identified.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care approved the District for a new Fernie Elementary School at a budget of \$33.5 million and child care spaces at a budget of \$8.0 million. The District is excited to continue the work on these significant projects 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 is continuing to work closely with the Ministry of Infrastructure and anticipates a final decision on the business case during the 2026/27 fiscal year.

The District has continued to work towards reducing emissions and achieving the goal of carbon neutrality. All departments continue to be in the mindset of reducing unnecessary emissions through the removal of inefficient printers, purchasing energy-saving appliances, and purchasing hybrid white fleet vehicles. 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 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 with both Indigenous communities supports adjustments to the 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 its carbon footprint, the District operates four electric buses.

## Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) Department supports the conditions required for student learning by providing secure, reliable, and accessible digital services for schools and District operations. Technology planning is aligned with the District Strategic Plan and the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, with an emphasis on equitable access, evidence-informed decision-making, privacy, business continuity, and the responsible use of emerging technologies. During 2025/26, the Department continued to advance integrated digital services, data modernization, workflow improvement, cybersecurity, and governance to support student learning and District operations.

## Strategic Goals and Alignment

The District's technology planning supports 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.

## Progress and Contribution to Student Learning

### Secure and Reliable Learning Environment

Network and infrastructure modernization, District-wide multi-factor authentication, stronger identity protections, and lifecycle replacement planning continue to provide a secure and reliable foundation for access to digital learning and operational systems. As essential services become increasingly cloud dependent, the District continues to strengthen cybersecurity, backup and

recovery practices, incident response, and business continuity to support continuity of learning and reduce operational risk.

### Data, Reporting, and Evidence-Informed Decision Support

The District continues to enhance its reporting capabilities and data governance through Power BI and Microsoft Fabric tools, including the MyEducation BC/Atrieve reporting data warehouse project. This work is intended to improve reporting reliability, reduce manual compilation from disconnected systems, improve data quality, and establish governed and reusable data models. Improved access to timely and reliable information supports school and District leaders in reviewing evidence, identifying areas for growth, and making informed decisions.

### Digital Workflows and Service Improvement

SharePoint and Power Automate are being used to improve digital workflows and reduce reliance on stand-alone forms, email-based approvals, and duplicate data entry. The Resource Hub/SD5 Requests Hub provides a more consistent entry point for forms, service requests, policies, application review, and support resources. These improvements support transparency, record keeping, auditability, and easier access to District processes while reducing administrative effort for schools and departments.

### 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.

The District maintains digital platforms that support learning, communication, student information, administration, and District operations. Microsoft 365 and related accessibility features, including Immersive Reader and Dictate, provide additional tools to support productivity, differentiated access to learning, and communication.

### Professional Learning and Student Support

Professional learning continues to support digital citizenship, cybersecurity awareness, Microsoft 365 productivity and accessibility, technology integration, and responsible artificial intelligence use. Technology integration supports literacy and numeracy, formative assessment, communication, and the development of skills required for students and staff to engage with digital tools safely, responsibly, and ethically.

Artificial intelligence is being approached as both an opportunity and a governance responsibility. Staff learning and implementation will continue to address privacy, transparency, appropriate use, data protection, bias awareness, copyright, and alignment with [Administrative Procedure 142](#).

### Risk Management and Business Continuity

Privacy and security are embedded in technology adoption through Privacy Impact Assessments, application review, vendor assessment, informed consent processes, and alignment with FIPPA and District risk management expectations. Business continuity is supported through cybersecurity practices, backup and recovery planning, incident response, and contingency

measures designed to maintain access to essential systems during natural disasters, cyberattacks, or service outages.

## Equity in Technology Access

Equitable access remains a core technology priority. Device allocation, software access, and accessibility supports are intended to reflect student need, program requirements, and school context, including support for Indigenous students, children and youth in care, students with disabilities or diverse abilities, and other vulnerable learners. Microsoft 365 accessibility features and related digital tools support differentiated access to learning and communication.

## Continuous Improvement and Evidence

The IT Department will use operational evidence to assess whether technology modernization is improving access, reliability, service quality, and decision support. Evidence will include service and help desk trends, stakeholder feedback, digital workflow adoption, application and privacy review records, and progress in data reporting and modernization. This information will help identify recurring barriers, service gaps, and opportunities to improve documentation, training, automation, and service design as part of the District's ongoing review and response cycle.

## Information Technology Priorities for 2026/27

During 2026/27, Information Technology will continue to focus on integrated digital services, cybersecurity and business continuity, data modernization, responsible artificial intelligence, and equitable access to technology. Priorities include continued development of digital request and workflow services, strengthened identity and cybersecurity practices, expansion of governed reporting and data tools, responsible AI implementation and professional learning, and continued accessibility supports for students and staff.

## Additional District Initiatives for 2026/27

### Shop Equipment Replacement Plan

-  The Board of Education has continued its long-term (over ten years) commitment of \$100,000 per year towards a plan to repair, replace, and upgrade school shop equipment.

### Additional Initiatives This Year

-  The Board of Education has continued custodial supports in all schools at levels staffed during COVID-19 which resulted in additional supports valued at \$260,000 to support the general health and well-being of all students and staff.
-  The Board of Education continues to support the District French Teacher, Literacy Support Teacher, and Numeracy Support Teacher at an approximate cost of \$390,000.
-  The Board of Education supported the creation of additional social and emotional learning supports through a designated teaching position to support Education Assistants in their profession at a cost of \$140,000.

-  The Board of Education continues to support Special Education (Learning Services) for a total district budget of \$17.2 million compared to funding received of \$12.7 million for Level 1, 2 and 3 students, a difference of \$4.5 million or 26 percent covered by operating funds, which demonstrates the Board's significant ongoing commitment to Student Services.
-  The District is continuing its development of a hot lunch program for students through discussions with vendors and non-profit organizations. The goal remains to scale this up to a daily pay-what-you-can hot lunch program.

## 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 at the end of 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 five 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.

Ongoing upgrades are necessary to properly serve 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 when excluding the reliance on portable classrooms. 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 late fiscal 2027/28.

## Summary

The Finance, Operations, 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.