

**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)
BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES**

**SPECIAL PUBLIC BOARD MEETING - BUDGET
DISTRICT OFFICE, BOARD ROOM**

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024

Chair:

Michael Thomas

Vice-Chair

Carol Brodie

Trustees:

Jennifer Blatherwick

Chuck Denison

Kerri Palmer Isaak

Lisa Park

Christine Pollock

Zoë Royer

Craig Woods

Regrets:

Administration:

Superintendent of Schools/CEO

Patricia Gartland

Secretary-Treasurer/CFO

Randy Manhas

Assistant Superintendents

Anthony Ciolfitto

Paul McNaughton

Nadine Tambellini

Stephen Whiffin

Robert Zambrano

Executive Director, Facilities & Planning Services

Ivano Cecchini

Executive Director, Human Resources

Michelle Daycock

Assistant Secretary-Treasurer,

Corporate and Financial Services

Nita Mikl

Assistant Director of Communications and

Community Relations

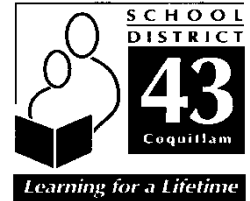
Ken Hoff

Executive Assistant

Jennifer Toderas

Michael Thomas, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

The Acknowledgement of Territory was expressed by Trustee Woods.



*Our mission is to ensure
quality learning opportunities
for all students of all ages*

PRESENT

CALL TO ORDER

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
OF TERRITORY**

The Chair asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.

ROYER/PARK moved acceptance of the agenda.

Question was called.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), Coquitlam Teachers' Association (CTA), and Coquitlam Principals and Vice Principals Association (CPVPA) representatives in attendance introduced themselves.

The District Leadership Team (DLT) members in attendance introduced themselves.

The Board Chair reviewed the budget process, guidelines, and sequence of events for the Special Public Board Meeting.

The Chair delivered remarks regarding the Board's continued financial focus and decision making guided by the goals and objectives of the *Directions 2025* strategic vision document.

The Chair commented that the Board's key budget objective is to maintain a financially healthy, stable, and sustainable school district for the long-term to continue in achieving their vision and mission.

Patricia Gartland, Superintendent, commented that the Board of Education and the District Leadership Team have listened carefully paying close attention to public and partner group feedback throughout the budget process. The Superintendent further remarked that the Board is committed to financial transparency and accountability.

The Superintendent thanked the Secretary-Treasurer and his team, the Board of Education and the District Leadership Team for their leadership and collaboration and for their commitment to the strategic vision and objectives of the board. The school district is in a very favorable position from a financial and a student outcome perspective.

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

INTRODUCTIONS

a) Partner Groups

b) DLT

OVERVIEW OF BUDGET PROCESS AND

REMARKS FROM BOARD CHAIR

REMARKS FROM SUPERINTENDENT

Rosey Manhas, DPAC President thanked the Board and District Leadership Team for their ongoing support and commitment to DPAC as a partner group. DPAC looks forward to continued engagement and partnership, with building even stronger relationships moving forward.

Further Ms. Manhas provided budgetary comments regarding the insufficient funding from the Ministry for Strong Start programs and committed to advocacy from DPAC on the matter.

Ken Christensen, CTA President, provided budgetary comments on behalf of the Coquitlam Teachers' Association membership, citing the difficulty in presenting a balanced the budget in the face of inflation, increasing costs, and government underfunding. Mr. Christensen stated his appreciation for the lack of layoff/recall for teachers and requested an increase in staffing for the IST team, and/or a decrease to the administrative requirements placed on counsellors, so their time can be better allocated to working with students.

Trustee questions and comments regarding respect for the work of the IST team membership, and what the specific request for increasing IST would be, were responded to.

Don Brent, Parent, expressed concern that parents were only hearing about the budget/space challenges regarding Strong Start programs during this budget process. Further, Mr. Brent stated that underfunding for programs such as Strong Start and increases to costs like CPP and benefits impact learners and now that success is at risk as funding challenges may leave behind the youngest learners, who may not get the required supports, therefore jeopardizing long term successes. Mr. Brent suggested that the Board should think of more 'outside the box' ideas to help mobilize parents and the community to advocate.

Chantelle Peddey, Parent, suggested to the Board that the lack of parent participation in the budget could be attributed to parents being at home with their children in the evenings. Ms. Peddey started an online petition that in five days has garnered 1100 signatures, and an additional 200 signatures on a physical petition, requesting that SD43 keep Strong Start program site and funding at the current level, and not close three sites. Ms. Peddey inquired as

**STAKEHOLDER BUDGET
FEEDBACK QUESTIONS
OR COMMENTS
DISTRICT PARENT
ADVISORY COUNCIL
(DPAC)**

**COQUITLAM
TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION**

**Parent, Glenayre
Elementary**

**Parent, Coquitlam
River/Hazel Trembath
– Strong Start**

to why the Vancouver School Board is able to fully fund their Strong Start Program, but SD43 is not.

Yung Le, Parent and her children collected signatures on a community petition, to help maintain funding for Strong Start and all the locations.

A trustee posed a question regarding the nature of the petition, and if there was an intent to forward the results to the local MLA.

Susan Donald, Strong Start Facilitator, requested that the Board of Education consider operating a morning and afternoon program in Strong Start classrooms to maintain the same number of spaces, despite closing three sites.

Heather McColl, Parent, expressed a desire for the Board of Education to provide the public with a progressive advocacy strategy in regard to gaining more funding. Ms. McColl asserted that while there is information available on the website it is overwhelming. Additionally, the PAC at Glenayre Elementary has committed to actively advocating to MLAs and the provincial government for additional funding.

Julia Punzo, Strong Start Facilitator, provided numerous statistics and calculations she had done regarding the Strong Start budget. Ms. Punzo articulated her disappointment that this issue was not brought forward earlier in the process to allow for solutions to be researched or advocacy to be done.

Brandie Cristales, Strong Start Facilitator, presented data and demographics of Strong Start program attendees and those affected by the changes. Ms. Cristales asked why Strong Start Facilitators were not made aware of this underfunding, and also asked how many years Strong Start has been on the district's risk list.

Jovita Rose, parent, provided trustees with anecdotal information regarding her experience at Strong Start. Ms. Rose stated that she is concerned that this is the beginning of further closures, and that the closure of three Strong Start sites is demonstrative of the district's failure to achieve its own goals regarding supporting all learners.

**Parent, Coquitlam
River/Hazel Trembath
– Strong Start**

Strong Start Facilitator

**Parent, Glenayre
Elementary**

Strong Start Facilitator

Strong Start Facilitator

Parent, Strong Start

Staff provided responses to trustee questions and comments regarding the 2024-2025 Preliminary Budget, which included:

- If there is sufficient capacity in the remaining 10 programs to accommodate the students from the sites that are being closed.
- The lack of ability of all families to have transportation to a location that is not in their immediate community.
- If consideration given to geographic dispersion of programs when closures/moves were decided upon.
- That the closure of the three Strong Start sites is not a trend, but an attempt to retain the program, and that continued engagement and advocacy could be beneficial.
- Noting the comments regarding communication, and that the public/parents are requesting more clarity.
- Why Strong Start underfunding has become a 'hot button' issue this year, when it has been underfunded for the last sixteen years.
- The need for continued advocacy, by both the Board and public, for these programs and priorities.
- That a clear, concise, actionable list of advocacy initiatives would benefit those wanting to undertake to advocate to their MLA or the provincial government.
- If it is possible or feasible to utilize models tried in other districts to use modular or portable buildings for programs with partnerships with municipalities.

At 7:46 p.m. the Chair opened the floor to questions.

There were no questions from trustees.

Susan Donald, Strong Start Facilitator, informed trustees about the factors that affect the capacity of a Strong Start site, over the 24-student room capacity, including behaviors, ages and special needs.

Julia Punzo, Strong Start Facilitator inquired how long SD43 has been supplementing Strong Start and expressed disappointment that there had not been more notice to allow staff future planning opportunities.

Brandi Cristales, Strong Start Facilitator asked if there was a room in the ELC that could accommodate a Strong Start if space was the restricting factor.

Yvonne Martin, Strong Start Facilitator, disputed the registration numbers for the Strong Start sites, stating that sites accommodate families that cannot register due to not having the proper documentation.

Heather McColl, Parent asked the trustees to look for innovative ways to increase communication regarding these types of issues, and ways to partner with municipalities.

TRUSTEE DISCUSSION

QUESTION PERIOD

a) Trustees

b) Gallery

Marina, Strong Start, Parent, expressed that she would be frustrated if she were to show up to a Strong Start program and be turned away if the site was full, and that she likely would not attempt to go to another site.

Gordon, Parent of children attending Strong Start, questioned the lack of funding for Strong Start, but the availability of funds for programs like 'Take a Hike' and approval of Board/Authority courses like Drumline.

Don Brent, Parent, challenged the Board of Education to provide clear communication, without burying the lead, and to consider communicating major risks, and challenges to community.

Brandi Cristales, Strong Start Facilitator, stated that the Vancouver School Board is running a deficit in Strong Start, but continuing the program. Ms. Cristales asked why does SD43 not see the value to continue these programs, and how many schools in the district have capacity to accommodate a strong start program.

Megan MacDonald, Parent, Hazel Trembath, asked if Ministry funding is revisited once enrolment is confirmed.

Julia Punzo, Strong Start Facilitator, inquired if SD43 has looked into supplementing Strong Start funding with preschool grants.

PALMER ISAAK/POLLOCK motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Question was called.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

"Original Signed by"

"Original Signed by"

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer