



British Columbia  
School Trustees  
Association

# BCSTA

## 2026 Budget Submission



# Message from BCSTA President

As the President of the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA), I am proud to present our Budget Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, a crucial step in advocating for the future of public education in our province.

We are at a crucial juncture for K-12 public education in British Columbia, facing the consequences of funding that has not kept pace with the myriad of pressures boards now face. Boards are grappling with significant deficits that directly compromise their ability to deliver the high-quality education students deserve.

Investments in students are stable investments in our future, offering a guaranteed return. These investments are how we protect our economy and secure our future. However, over the past two decades, funding for public education has declined from 15.49% of the provincial budget in 2001-2002 to a mere 7.97% in 2024-25. This trend has forced school boards into a position where they must make painful decisions, often sacrificing educational opportunities for students.

Let's be clear: this is not just about dollars. It's about children's right to a quality education. Our schools should be able to continually evolve and expand their programs to promote equity in education, enabling students to pursue their passions and contribute to society in their own unique ways. Increasing funding means schools would have the ability to increase supports for students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities, Indigenous students and children in care. Investing in student success means investing in our future.

Today's students are tomorrow's parents, workers, and leaders; we rely on them to make our communities vibrant and our economy strong. And yet, across the province, the lack of funding is forcing school boards to balance their budgets by cutting essential services.

The funding requests outlined in this submission are informed directly by our members, as voted on during our Annual General Meeting and through BCSTA's working groups. These working groups focus on the critical issues at hand and develop well-researched, actionable recommendations.

By submitting this document, we request that the government prioritize students by increasing funding for public education. Every student in British Columbia—regardless of their background or geographic location—must have access to the resources necessary to thrive. Together, we can forge a path towards a brighter future for our students and all our communities!

## **Tracy Loffler**

President,  
BC School Trustees Association

# Introduction of BCSTA Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) governs the nonpartisan provincial advocacy organization that represents democratically elected boards of education across British Columbia. Comprising elected trustees from diverse communities, the Board embodies a collective commitment to advocating for the needs of students, parents, and educators in British Columbia.

The Board's primary mission is to enhance the quality of public education through effective governance, policy development, and collaboration among stakeholders.

The Board of Directors champions the interests of local trustees and their communities through a provincial lens, promoting equitable access to resources and advocating for sustainable funding.

The Board is dedicated to ensuring that trustees throughout the province can continue to empower every child to thrive in a nurturing and inclusive learning environment.

## The Board of Directors of the BCSTA for the 2025-2027 term are:

- **Tracy Loffler** - President
- **Bob Holmes** - Vice President
- **Roxanne Gulick** - Director
- **Erica McLean** - Director
- **George Nelson** - Director
- **David Swankey** - Director
- **Catherine Zaitsoff** - Director
- **Carolyn Broady** - Past President
- **Trevor Davies** - CEO



# Who is the BCSTA?

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) champions good governance practices among school boards through exceptional professional development and province-wide advocacy, all dedicated to ensuring the success of every student across British Columbia. As the sole nonpartisan organization representing the democratically and locally elected boards of education, BCSTA has been a steadfast champion for good governance in public education for 120 years.

Good governance is the cornerstone of our democratic society. As democratically elected boards of education continually develop and focus on this goal, they ignite passion and innovation within school districts, driving impactful change. Through their unique role as governors of their local education system, boards foster collaboration and transparency, creating vibrant learning environments where students can thrive and reach their full potential.

Each school trustee plays a critical role in ensuring that local districts fulfill this promise through their strategic governance. At BCSTA, we are committed to supporting trustees in their essential work, leveraging their profound understanding of their local education system and the unique challenges within their own contexts.

**BCSTA**

British Columbia  
School Trustees  
Association



# Executive Summary

In alignment with our commitment to fostering excellence in education, the BCSTA presents this budget submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. It reflects the collective priorities established at BCSTA AGM 2025, as well as recommendations developed by our dedicated working groups. The proposals outlined in this document are designed to address critical needs within our educational system, ensuring that all students across British Columbia receive equitable and quality learning experiences and can realize success in the public education system.

The motions submitted at the BCSTA AGM 2025 serve as a foundation for our advocacy efforts, encapsulating the voices of trustees, educators, and their communities. Each request has been submitted to address pressing challenges faced by boards of education and to promote initiatives that will enhance student outcomes, support inclusive practices, and ensure sustainable funding for future generations.

This submission is part of our road map for a brighter future for all students in British Columbia. We are confident that by investing in these key areas, the provincial government will take significant strides toward building a robust, equitable, and inclusive educational framework for the public education system.

On behalf of school trustees from across the province and every student we represent and advocate for, we appreciate your consideration of our proposals and look forward to collaborating to create a sustainable educational system that will help every student in B.C. find success in a world of their choosing.



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# BCSTA Budget Requests: AGM 2025



# Request 1:

## INCREASED FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 30*

*That BCSTA urge the Premier, the Minister of Finance, and the Treasury Board to prioritize education funding and increase the percentage of the Provincial Budget that the Ministry of Education and Child Care receives.*

### Why this matters:

Boards of Education face significant challenges as funding is not keeping pace with rising costs, aging school infrastructure, and increasing enrollment. Increased non-targeted funding will support students by allowing schools to continually evolve and expand to provide equity in education, enabling students to pursue their passions and contribute to society in their own unique ways.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

Every year, education funding increases, but this is driven almost exclusively by population and wage increases. Other increased expenses from inflation, unfunded capital needs, growing numbers of students with complex learning needs, and many other funding pressures remain unfunded year after year. Countless motions have been passed asking for the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide more money for a variety of needs, but until education is made more of a priority for government, any substantive improvement is impossible.

- **In the 2001-2002 budget, public school districts received 15.49% of the provincial budget. In the 2024-25 budget, this had dropped to 7.97%.**
- **B.C. is second from the bottom in provincial K-12 education spending as a share of GDP.**

# Request 1:

## INCREASED FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION



### [Surrey Board of Education vice-chair provides update on budget realities for 2025-26 school year](#)

Surrey School District Board Vice-Chair Terry Allen says enrollment growth, capacity pressures, inflation, insufficient government grants, and rising replacement cost salaries as factors that have put a strain on the district's financial resources.



*As we look forward to the 2025-26 budget and the school year, this is going to be one of the most difficult budget years that we've had for many years, said Allen. We continue to see cost pressures on the budget due to inflation. Allen said the district has been forced to make difficult decisions due to provincial funding not keeping pace with inflation and rapid population growth.*



### [Lack of funding for education can hurt delivery of quality education says SD72 chair](#)

Without increased funding, school districts risk decreasing the quality of education their district can provide to their students. Kat Eddy, Board Chair of the SD72 Campbell River School Board says,



*British Columbia currently ranks as the second-lowest funded public K to 12 education system in Canada, and while that's been a long-standing concern, it's becoming more urgent, said Eddy. Many districts, especially smaller ones like ours, are grappling with rising costs, the impacts of inflation, and a growing need for student mental health, behavioural and learning supports.*

# Request 2:

## EA'S IN EVERY PRIMARY CLASSROOM FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 27*

*That BCSTA urges government to keep their 2024 election promise to staff and provide new funding for each classroom with an education assistant for kindergarten through to grade three no later than the 2025-2026 school year.*

### Why this matters:

Students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities face challenges in accessing equitable education opportunities due to a lack of trained professional staff to support them. An EA in every classroom means increased support for students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities, allowing them to succeed in B.C.'s public education system and in their future.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

This election promise cannot wait. Children born during the pandemic—who have now begun to enter the K-12 education system have been shown to have significantly reduced verbal, motor, and overall cognitive performance compared to children born pre-pandemic, with children from lower socioeconomic families being the most affected. These neurocognitive findings are supported by neuroimaging data, which also shows reduced brain white matter development in children born since July 2020 compared to their counterparts from 2011 to 2019\*.

Education assistants (EAs) play critical roles in early intervention, an evidence based, cost effective measure to provide supports when they are most needed and most successful—in the early years of a child's K-12 education journey.



# Request 3:

## FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS IN KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE THREE

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 36*

*That BCSTA requests the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide funding and support to students in kindergarten to grade three using a social model instead of a medical model.*

### Why this matters:

Students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities receive support solely based on medical diagnosis. This leaves students lacking in support until an official diagnosis can be made. Updating disability classification to a social model will provide students with the proper supports to find success in their educational journey and their future.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

In British Columbia, the public education system primarily employs the Medical Model of disability classification, which focuses on diagnosing and “treating” students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities. While this model aids in resource allocation, it often pathologizes individuals and requires a medical diagnosis for funding support. A major challenge is the backlog of diagnostic assessments, especially in rural areas, delaying necessary support for students. As a result, funding is often unavailable when it’s most crucial, particularly at the start of their K-12 education.

To address these issues, school districts redirect operational funds to support students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities, but this is insufficient and harms general classroom learning. The NDP government promises to staff K-3 classrooms with education assistants, which could be enhanced by shifting from a Medical to a Social Model of disability. The Social Model focuses on environmental factors that hinder learning, maximizing the benefits of support, and potentially reducing the need for extensive diagnostic assessments.

Additionally, children born during the pandemic show significant developmental delays, particularly in lower socioeconomic families. Adopting a Social Model could foster inclusive classrooms, benefiting all students by accommodating diverse learning needs and enhancing overall educational experiences.

# Request 3:

## FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS IN KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE THREE

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*In Southeast Kootenay, we're welcoming more young children who require personal care, struggle to speak or play with peers, and need intensive support from day one. We're already using our operational funds to subsidize funding for diverse needs, but it's not enough. Without targeted investment in early intervention now, these challenges – and their costs – will only grow.*

- Trina Ayling, Trustee  
Board of Education for Southeast Kootenay

# Request 4:

## FUNDING & SUPPORT FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INITIATIVES

BCSTA AGM 2025 - Motion 37

*That BCSTA requests the Provincial Government for sustained funding to engage school districts and public education partners in a coordinated effort to improve community understanding of Sexual Orientation Gender Identity Inclusive education.*

### Why this matters:

Every student deserves to feel seen, respected, and safe at school. To achieve this, we need sustained funding for comprehensive resources and community engagement that support Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) inclusive education. Province-wide efforts to ensure school communities are informed, supported, and equipped to foster truly inclusive learning environments not only in schools but between families.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

By supporting all boards of education in improving community understanding and engagement with SOGI-inclusive education, we can empower parents with the knowledge and confidence to support their children in navigating topics around gender identity and sexual orientation. This also strengthens awareness of how SOGI-inclusive education creates safer, more inclusive schools for all while safeguarding boards of education, staff, students, and public education itself. Improved collaboration between families and schools helps all students—especially 2SLGBTQIA+ youth—get the support they need to grow, thrive, and feel a true sense of belonging.



# Request 5:

## FUNDING FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 38*

*The BCSTA requests that the Ministry of Education and Child Care provide sustainable and targeted early learning funding to school districts, ensuring equitable access to pre kindergarten educational opportunities and screening.*

### Why this matters:

Equitable access to high-quality early learning is essential for every child's success. Sustainable and targeted early learning funding to school districts is essential to guarantee equitable access to pre-kindergarten education and early screening services, helping school communities identify and support learning needs early—before challenges grow. With dedicated resources, school districts can better serve children and families, particularly in underserved areas. Investing in early learning not only supports children's development but also strengthens long-term outcomes across the entire education system.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

The British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care has made significant strides in early childhood education, recognizing its vital role in lifelong learning and student success. However, funding gaps remain, necessitating dedicated financial support for school boards.

Key actions reflect the Ministry's commitment to early learning:

- **Full-Day Kindergarten Expansion (2010-2011):** The transition from half-day to full-day kindergarten emphasized the importance of early learning in child development.
- **Childcare Transition to the Ministry of Education (February 2022):** This shift acknowledged that early learning is foundational to K-12 success.
- **Capital Funding for Childcare Spaces (2018-Present):** The ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund has supported school-based childcare, yet operational funding shortfalls persist.

Despite these initiatives, school districts face critical funding challenges in delivering early learning services. BCSTA motions have urged full funding for these programs, highlighting the need for equitable access, particularly in underserved areas.

This proposed motion advocates for sustainable funding for early childhood services, aligning with the government's priorities and addressing the concerns of education leaders. By prioritizing early screening for learning disabilities, we can enhance support for students, enabling them to reach their full potential and reducing the need for later diagnoses.

# Request 5:

## FUNDING FOR PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

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*Investing in prekindergarten funding is not just a moral imperative—it's a strategic one. Early learning lays the foundation for lifelong success, promotes equity, and helps identify development challenges before they escalate. School boards need sustainable, dedicated funding to deliver these vital programs equitably across all communities. Aligning with provincial priorities and past commitments, this support ensures every child enters kindergarten ready to learn, grow and thrive—regardless of demographic or geographic barriers.*

- Marie-Pierre Lavoie, Chair  
Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique

# Request 6:

## ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR COSTS IN CHILDCARE

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 34*

*The BCSTA requests the Ministry of Education and Child Care to work with the Parliamentary Secretary for Child Care, to provide dedicated funding directly to boards of education in covering all costs for district childcare facilities, so that these expenses are not funded by the K-12 education budgets.*

### Why this matters:

K-12 education funding must be protected. Dedicated funding to school boards to cover all costs associated with district child care facilities is needed. Without this support, critical K-12 resources—already under pressure—are being diverted to maintain child care spaces. School boards cannot continue to shoulder these costs without jeopardizing classroom learning, staffing, and student supports. Providing this dedicated funding ensures core educational services can continue for all students.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

In a year marked by extreme budget pressures, it is alarming that critical funding is being diverted from the K-12 education system to subsidize child care operations. One school district alone is facing a \$4.4 million shortfall while also absorbing an additional \$1.115 million annually to cover the custodial and maintenance costs of seven stand-alone child care facilities situated on our school properties.

These facilities, operated by third-party providers such as the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA, play an essential role in supporting families. However, the financial burden of maintaining them has been unfairly placed on the K-12 system. Due to fee restrictions on child care operators, they cannot contribute adequately to the upkeep of these facilities, leaving our district responsible for maintenance and custodial work, resources that should be allocated to classrooms and educational programming.

Our operational staff now manage seven additional buildings without corresponding funding increases. This includes approximately \$350,000 for additional operational staff, \$200,000 for a fully funded District Principal of Early Learning, and \$500,000 in ongoing capital-related maintenance costs.

Given these financial realities, it is imperative for the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide dedicated funding for the maintenance of child care facilities. The current reallocation of funds is unsustainable and threatens the future of K-12 education. Immediate action is needed to alleviate this burden.

# Request 6:

## ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR COSTS IN CHILDCARE

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*Amid widespread and challenging budget constraints in school districts across British Columbia, it is increasingly concerning that essential K-12 education funding is being redirected to subsidize childcare operations. In the Central Okanagan School District, the financial strain continues to grow as the district is expected to absorb the ongoing capital maintenance costs of seven stand-alone childcare facilities located on school district land. Our core mandate is to serve students from kindergarten through Grade 12, and with districts already facing significant fiscal challenges, every dollar diverted from our classrooms to subsidize childcare infrastructure places additional pressure on our ability to deliver quality education. This is not about opposing childcare—it’s about ensuring the appropriate sector carries the financial responsibility for it.*

- Julia Fraser, Chair  
Board of Education for Central Okanagan Public Schools

# Request 7:

## MIDDLE YEARS DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (MDI) FUNDING BY MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE (ECC)

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 23*

*The BCSTA urges the Ministry of Education and Child Care to fund the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) for all B.C. school districts.*

### Why this matters:

Children in middle childhood are in a critical stage of emotional, social and cognitive development. The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) captures their voices and helps school boards make informed decisions that support student well-being and success. Ensuring every child in B.C. is heard and represented leads to improved programs, policies and outcomes for students across the province.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

The MDI is developed and administered by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at UBC and helps us gain a deeper understanding of children's social and emotional health, well-being and assets during middle childhood - from their own perspective.

Children in middle childhood and early adolescence, ages 6 to 13, are in a key phase of physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, along with changes in relationships. Supporting positive development during this time lays the foundation for success, and listening to children provides valuable data to shape programs, practices, and policies. MDI data helps school districts to drive positive change during this critical transition.

School districts must each pay to participate in the MDI (the current cost for the Vancouver School District is \$20,000) and in the 2023-24 school year 34 school districts took part. With Ministry of Education and Childcare funding, school districts would not have a financial barrier to participation and there would be the additional value of getting the perspectives from every child in B.C.

Similar motions were adopted at the 2016 and 2021 BCSTA AGMs but there had not yet been actions by the Ministry. At the 2025 AGM, as we are now in the 2022-26 term, there is the opportunity to bring this motion forward again, at the beginning of a new provincial government's term.

# Request 8:

## FULLY FUNDING YEAR END FTE STAFFING COSTS

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 35*

*The BCSTA requests the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Ministry of Finance to fully fund costs based on year-end staff FTE counts for each school year.*

### Why this matters:

Current funding practices do not reflect the realities of staffing needs throughout the year. The Ministry of Education and Child Care funds labour settlement costs based on staffing levels at the start of the school year, even though many districts must hire additional staff as enrollment grows. These unfunded positions place significant financial pressure on boards, stretching already limited budgets and compromising the services provided to students. Proper funding enables funds to be allocated where they are needed, supporting exceptional learning opportunities for students.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

Currently, the Ministry of Education and Child Care calculates, and funds labour settlement costs based on staffing levels at the start of each school year. However, staffing levels fluctuate throughout the year, particularly in districts experiencing student enrollment growth. When additional staff are hired after the Ministry's initial count, those positions do not receive funding support, leaving school districts to cover the costs. This creates a significant financial strain, forcing districts to absorb unfunded salary expenses and further stretching already limited budgets. Given that districts have no control over negotiated labour costs, it is essential that the Ministry fully fund these expenses based on actual year-end staffing levels, ensuring school districts can meet both their contractual obligations and operational needs without compromising essential services.



# Request 8:

## FULLY FUNDING YEAR END FTE STAFFING COSTS

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*The impact of unfunded staff positions is profound; learners are losing access to opportunities, staff are stretched beyond measure, and families are left feeling unsupported. The legal requirement to pass a balanced budget, even when there simply aren't enough funds from the province, forces us into impossible choices. These decisions are not guided by what our students need, or what our values demand. The sad truth is, the Burnaby School District can no longer subsidize the public education system as it is. Chronic underfunding has brought us to this point, and the ones who suffer the most are children. This reality is not lost on us, and it's something we, as a Board, carry heavily as we make these decisions. This is one of the most heartbreaking times to be in public education.*

- Kristin Schnider, Chair,  
Board of Education for the Burnaby School District



# Request 9:

## COORDINATED, FUNDED PROVINCIAL APPROACH - CYBERSECURITY

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 31*

*The BCSTA requests to the Ministry of Citizens' Services, the Ministry of Education and Childcare, and the Ministry of Finance for a coordinated and fully funded provincial plan to mitigate the risks and challenges districts face in implementing and sustaining cybersecurity measures.*

### Why this matters:

Cyberattacks on school districts across British Columbia are increasing in frequency and severity, posing a risk to student and family data and digital learning environments. Boards currently lack the necessary resources, training, and staffing to respond effectively. A coordinated and fully funded provincial approach will ensure all districts can mitigate risks for their communities.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

The BCSTA supports the spirit of Minister Beare's letter on cybersecurity (dated November 29, 2024) but notes that the school districts are specifically not provided resources nor training to maintain and secure a safe digital learning environment.

This motion arises due to the escalating frequency of cyberattacks on school district across British Columbia. In response, BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Education and Child Care for the creation and funding of a coordinated provincial approach to address these growing cybersecurity threats. School boards and administrators acknowledge the critical need for robust network security; however, there is a lack of equitable access to resources, including the recruitment of skilled technology professionals, funding to modernize outdated hardware and software, and sustained investment in infrastructure maintenance. Addressing these gaps is essential to safeguarding the province's educational systems.

This may include sector wide negotiations for security software, access to specialized technical supports, and funding at the district level to strengthen and support all B.C. school districts cybersecurity measures.

# Request 10:

## **SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT BENEFIT COSTS**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 39*

*The BCSTA urges the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide the necessary funding to fully cover the actual School District costs associated with increased extended health and dental benefits premiums incurred as a result of negotiated collective agreement terms.*

### **Why this matters:**

School Boards across B.C. face an unsustainable financial burden due to negotiated increases in extended health and dental benefit premiums. Dedicated funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care will ensure that boards can uphold their negotiated obligations without compromising classroom services and student supports. This targeted financial support is crucial for maintaining equitable access to healthcare while ensuring the quality of education for all students.

### **Reasoning:**

#### *Motion Rationale*

The recent round of collective bargaining resulted in negotiated improvements to extended health and dental benefits for unionized staff, reflecting a commitment to employee well-being and equitable access to healthcare. However, these improvements have led to a significant increase in the number of extended benefit claims submitted to third-party providers, resulting in substantially higher costs for School Districts across B.C.

Currently, the Ministry of Education and Child Care does not provide dedicated funding to cover these increased premium costs. As a result, School Districts are forced to absorb these additional expenses within their already overstretched operational budgets. Without targeted financial support from the Ministry, the growing cost of extended health and dental benefits is diverting critical resources away from direct classroom services and student supports.

The funding model must align with the realities of negotiated agreements. Individual School Districts have no control over the outcome of provincial bargaining yet are required to shoulder the financial impact of benefit enhancements without corresponding funding. This creates an unsustainable financial burden that directly impacts the ability of districts to maintain essential programs, staffing levels, and student services.

To ensure that negotiated improvements to employee benefits do not come at the expense of student learning and classroom resources, it is imperative that the Ministry of Education and Child Care provides additional funding to support the actual costs incurred by School Districts due to increased extended health and dental benefit premiums. Sustainable funding for these costs will allow districts to uphold their commitments to both staff and students without compromising educational quality.

# Request 11:

## DEVELOPMENT OF CLIMATE ACTION CURRICULUM

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 22*

*That BCSTA requests that the Ministry of Education and Child Care develop a Climate Action and Sustainability Curriculum and provide funding for teacher training.*

### Why this matters:

Students across B.C. are facing significant climate anxiety due to the lack of a dedicated Climate Action and Sustainability Curriculum. Providing funding for curriculum development and teacher training ensures that students are empowered with the knowledge and skills needed to address climate change. This proactive approach will alleviate anxiety, inspire hope and equip young people to take meaningful action, fostering a sustainable future for themselves and the planet.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

Provincial climate change curriculum is embedded within science courses, but there is an obvious and significant lack of 'climate action' curriculum. One without the other only exacerbates climate anxiety in our students. There have been a number of current studies tying climate change to climate anxiety in students.

For example, "Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey from *the Lancet* (Planetary Health) 2021 - 10,000 students gr. 11, 12 up to 25 years old in 10 different countries. More than 45% of respondents said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning, and many reported a high number of negative thoughts about climate change (eg, 75% said that they think the future is frightening and 83% said that they think people have failed to take care of the planet)."

Education addressing the issue of climate action is important to support the well-being and potential of all learners. Ensuring students have the knowledge and skills to access is important to reduce anxiety caused by this relevant concern in young peoples' lives.

Curriculum development in the area of climate action and sustainability will encourage learners to change their attitudes, behavior, and assist students to use critical thinking, effective communication, and work with/learn from community agencies and partners to broadly understand complex ideas around climate change and action.

In the classroom, young people can be taught the impact of climate change and learn how to adapt to Climate Change and take Climate Action. Education in this area will reduce climate anxiety in students by empowering them with knowledge and tangible avenues for action. This will bring hope and opportunity for our students to help create a sustainable and brighter future for them and our world.

Urgent action is needed to advocate for the development of climate action curriculum in B.C. schools.

# Request 12:

## FUND AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (AED'S) IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 32*

*The BCSTA requests the Minister of Education and Child Care and the Minister of Health that the Provincial Government fully fund the purchase, installation, maintenance and ongoing training for the deployment of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in all public school and district buildings.*

### Why this matters:

Schools in B.C. face a life-saving gap in emergency preparedness due to the lack of accessible Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs). Providing full funding for the purchase, installation, maintenance, and training on AEDs ensures that every school is equipped to save a life. This funding will enhance student and staff safety, promote equity among districts, and significantly increase the chances of survival in life-threatening situations. Every life saved is worth the investment, and timely access to AEDs can make all the difference.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

According to the *Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation*, there are over 60,000 out of hospital cardiac arrests each year and of those 60,000, up to 6,000 die in B.C. StartMeUpBC, along with the St. John's Ambulance states on their website that "in the event of sudden cardiac arrest, bystander use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), along with CPR, is crucial and increases the chance of survival by 75% or higher. Despite this, AEDs in B.C. aren't always readily available."

Since 2018, there have been several youth deaths in B.C. public schools where there were no accessible AEDs. Most recently in our district, one student death has occurred, and this youth's life may have been saved if there had been an AED on site.

In 2019, the Provincial Government introduced BILL M 216 - 2019 *Defibrillator Public Access Act*. This Bill contemplated making it mandatory to put AEDs in all public spaces as designated by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. According to my research, this Bill has been introduced into the legislature at least three times but has yet to be debated and passed.

The question of equity has been raised in the discussion of this issue. Currently, there are some school districts like Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, and North Vancouver have AEDs installed in schools. North Okanagan-Shuswap has been implementing a three-year plan to have AEDs in all schools and school operational facilities. This has created a "have" and "have not" situation. If the BCSTA passes this motion, the BCSTA would advocate to the Provincial government to provide and fully fund AEDs for every public-school site. In doing so, this would address the issue of equity, and it would address the issue of cost to school districts.

B.C. Education Minister Lisa Beare stated on January 3rd, 2025, that she agreed that AEDs should be in schools across the province. This motion would affirm and support the Minister's position for the need for a province-wide plan.

Providing life saving measures for students and employees should not be decided upon as to whether our school district has enough money in its budget to pay for AEDs. If one life is saved, it is worth it.

# Request 13:

## AIR QUALITY AND TEMPERATURE FACILITY FUNDING

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 40*

*The BCSTA requests that the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and the Ministry of Infrastructure provide funding to address issues related to increasing temperature and negative air quality experienced in district facilities.*

### Why this matters:

Students and staff in B.C. schools face health and safety risks due to increasing temperatures and poor air quality. Providing targeted funding to address this will ensure a safe and conducive learning environment. This investment will enhance student outcomes, reduce absenteeism, and promote equitable access to quality education, while also aligning with B.C.'s sustainability goals and fostering long-term climate resilience.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

The Ministry of Education should fund cooling systems in B.C. schools to protect the health and safety of students and staff, especially as climate change increases the frequency of extreme heat and wildfire smoke. Cooler classrooms improve learning outcomes by enhancing focus, reducing absenteeism, and ensuring equitable access to safe environments across all schools. Modern cooling systems can also align with B.C.'s sustainability goals, serving as a long-term investment in climate resilience and community well-being.



# Request 13: AIR QUALITY AND TEMPERATURE FACILITY FUNDING

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*Districts are concerned about having safe work and learning environments for their staff and students. With the ever-changing climate and environmental issues, there needs to be a priority on our ability to request additional funding to address fluctuations in temperature and air quality. While some government programs may offer funding opportunities, the current levels of support are limited and insufficient to fully address these growing challenges. Increased funding is essential to help districts effectively respond to these environmental demands.*

- Amber Byklum , Chair  
Board of Education for the Rocky Mountain School District

# Request 14:

## FUNDING FOR PORTABLES

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 41*

*The BCSTA requests the Ministry of Education and Child Care to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure to protect and prioritize school district operating budgets to ensure funds are directed primarily towards student learning by establishing a separate and distinct funding envelope specifically designated for portables and their related infrastructure costs (including site preparation, moving, furnishing, removal, and decommissioning).*

### Why this matters:

School districts in British Columbia face significant funding challenges due to the high costs of portable classrooms and their associated costs. Providing dedicated funding to address this will allow districts to prioritize student learning and improve resources for the growing number of students without sacrificing classroom quality.

### Reasoning:

#### *Motion Rationale*

The New Westminster School District currently uses 53 portables for instruction, which is a substantial number given our size. For added perspective, we use a greater number of portables on a per capita basis than the Surrey School District, which often makes headlines for the number of portables on their school grounds.

New Westminster Schools spent approximately \$850,000 purchasing portables to address capacity issues for the 2024-2025 school year. Given our district is at over 120 per cent of capacity across all schools, we anticipate more operating funds being redirected to creating space for growing enrollment in upcoming years. For smaller districts like ours, portable purchasing charges are more burdensome and have a far greater impact on classrooms due to our small economy of scale.

The Ministry's Operating Grant funding remains insufficient to meet the infrastructure demands that growing enrollment pressures place on districts across the province. At present, new portables cost \$150,000 and must come out of district operating budgets, not capital funding.

There is no separate funding provided by government for portables and as such, these costs take resources away from children and youth. Portables should be covered by capital budgets or operating funding increased for Districts having to pay for these expenses to support enrollment growth. In addition to these costs, an extra \$100,000 are generally spent on site preparation, portable placement and accessibility structures such as ramps and walkways. It is clear that self-funding large portions of capital and infrastructure projects from Operation Grants compromises the educational experience of students, particularly in growing districts.

The New Westminster School Board has advocated vigorously for funding for portable costs and as part of our advocacy, is utilizing the British Columbia Schools Trustees Association which represents all Districts within the province of British Columbia to amplify the growing concern across our District and so many others.

# Request 14: FUNDING FOR PORTABLES

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*Our students lose out in two ways. Portables literally consume their play space, and they eat up funds that should go to specialist teachers or classroom resources. It's just not fair that children in growing, urban communities pay the price. Parents don't understand how it's possible that their kids are squeezed like this.*

- Maya Russell, Chair,  
Board of Education for New Westminster Schools

# BCSTA Working Groups

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) working groups are initiated by the Board of Directors, or through AGM motions, to address specific educational challenges and opportunities within the province, as identified by the membership. Working groups rely on the collective expertise of members to develop innovative solutions and best practices. Their work culminates in comprehensive reports, policy recommendations, and resources that empower school boards and enhance governance and educational outcomes. By fostering dialogue and collaboration, BCSTA working groups play a crucial role in shaping a responsive and effective educational landscape in British Columbia, ensuring that every student has access to quality learning experiences.



# Capital Working Group

## Making Progress Toward Sustainable Schools

### Overview:

In the spring of 2023, the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) board of directors invited several trustees from member boards of education, as well as representatives of the BC School Superintendent's Association (BCSSA) and the BC Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO), to sit on the 2023/24 Capital Working Group (CWG).

Out of this work came recommendations to the Board of Directors for advocacy of the following points:

\*Please review the report '[Making progress towards sustainable schools](#)' for the full content and context of BCSTA's Capital Working Group



*Available funds do not reflect what is required to address increasingly complex classrooms. SD 40 uses 53 portables for a student population of over 7,800. 1 in 4 K-8 students are taught in a portable.*

- New Westminster Schools

## Requests

### 1. Increased Annual Allocations

- Annual Facility Grant (AFG): Increase by 3% annually for new buildings, plus an additional 3% for inflation and 15% beyond inflation to address deferred maintenance.
  - Estimated funding: \$179M in 2024/25 and \$218M in 2025/26.
- School Enhancement Program (SEP): Apply the same inflation and maintenance-based increases.
  - Estimated funding: \$85M in 2024/25 and \$101M in 2025/26.

### 2. Support for Portables

- Provide life-cycle maintenance funding for older portables when replacement with prefabricated classrooms is delayed.
- Fund the cost of portables in districts experiencing enrollment growth that are not yet covered by other capital programs.

### 3. Climate Change Strategy and Adaptation

- Develop and fully fund a multi-year, province-wide climate change plan for public schools, including GHG reduction and adaptation strategies, building on the *UBC Capstone* report.
- Explore and secure external funding sources identified in the UBC report.
- Incorporate any additional unfunded costs into the CNCP (Carbon Neutral Capital Program) and BUS (Building Upgrades and Seismic) programs.

Provide specific funding for:

- Air cooling systems in schools not converting to heat pumps.
- Climate change adaptation measures to protect infrastructure and maintain healthy learning environments.
- A new capital fund dedicated to climate risk reduction and emergency preparedness.
- Ensure new school construction targets net-zero emissions as closely as possible.
- Allow regional variation in GHG investment based on potential for emissions reductions.

### 4. Major Capital Program Funding

- Increase funding for new school construction, additions, and land purchases to align with projected student population growth, and to replace aging portables.
  - Target funding: \$1.5 billion per year.
- Cover the upfront costs of Project Definition Reports (school planning) rather than reimbursing them after the fact.

# Comprehensive School Health Working Group

[!\[\]\(311e630c32806714146bed03eb4d14ee\_img.jpg\) One province, one plan  
substance and overdose safety in B.C. schools](#)



## Overview:

The report from the Comprehensive School Health Working Group focuses on substance use and overdose policies in B.C. public schools and aims to guide action toward creating a unifying, province-wide approach. Survey responses from 45 of our 60 member school districts revealed a range of policies and practices on substance use, prevention, education and overdose response. Our report underlines the urgency in creating consistent provincial guidelines for schools based on expert advice and evidence while still allowing for local flexibility.

## Request

The BCSTA urges the provincial government to increase funding for mental health supports to ensure that all school districts across British Columbia have equitable access to the resources necessary to effectively support student mental health and well-being.

# Rural and Remote Network Working Group

Important context on cost-pressures of rural and remote districts:

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*Rural and remote districts face some different cost pressures than larger districts. It is expensive to get needed supplies to rural locations. There is scale of economy issues in all areas of operation. There is similar business that needs to be done no matter the size of the district. An economic downturn that causes even a small decline in enrollment can result in serious financial implications for a district.*

- Helen Gilbert, Chair  
Board of Education for Peace River North

# Conclusion

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) firmly believes that sustained and increased funding for K-12 public education is essential for B.C. to secure a thriving future for its students and communities. The challenges we face—ranging from systemic budget shortfalls to the urgent need for qualified educators—require swift action from our government.

We recognize that our challenges are shared and that the provincial government must balance the needs of all citizens when providing support for programs and services throughout the province. However, in prioritizing education funding, we can ensure that every student in our province has access to a quality learning environment that supports their individual needs and fosters their potential. It is essential to recognize that investing in education is investing in the future of our democracy, as it shapes the leaders, innovators, and citizens of tomorrow.

We urge the provincial government to listen to the voices of school trustees and communities across British Columbia. Together, let us build a public education system that reflects our collective commitment to equity, inclusion, and excellence. By doing so, we will not only enhance the educational outcomes of our students but also strengthen the foundation of our economy and society for generations to come.



British Columbia  
School Trustees  
Association

# Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read the BCSTA Budget Submission. We would like to acknowledge member boards and trustees from around our province who continue to be champions of public education. Their tireless work on behalf of students and communities has played a foundational role in this budget submission.

We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of BCSTA staff who created this budget submission. From writing to design to outreach, BCSTA staff spearheaded the development of this document.



# Appendix

## Why this matters:

### **Request 1: Increased Funding for Public Education**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 3*

Boards of Education face significant challenges as funding is not keeping pace with rising costs, aging school infrastructure, and increasing enrollment. Increased non-targeted funding will support students by allowing schools to continually evolve and expand their programs to promote equity in education, enabling students to pursue their passions and contribute to society in their own unique ways.

### **Request 2: EAs in Every Primary Classroom for the 2025-2026 School Year**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 27*

Students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities face challenges in accessing equitable education opportunities due to a lack of trained professional staff to support them. An EA in every classroom means increased support for students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities, allowing them to succeed in B.C.'s public education system and in their future.

### **Request 3: Funding and Support for Inclusive Classrooms in Kindergarten to Grade Three**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 36*

Students with disabilities and students with diverse abilities receive support solely based on medical diagnosis. This leaves students lacking in support until an official diagnosis can be made. Updating disability classification to a social model will provide students with the proper supports to find success in their educational journey and their future.

### **Request 4: Funding & Support for Engaging Community in Inclusive Education Initiatives**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 37*

Every student deserves to feel seen, respected, and safe at school. To achieve this, we need sustained funding for comprehensive resources and community engagement that support Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) inclusive education. Province-wide efforts to ensure school communities are informed, supported, and equipped to foster truly inclusive learning environments not only in schools but between families.

## **Request 5: Funding for Pre-Kindergarten Programs**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 38*

Equitable access to high-quality early learning is essential for every child's success. Sustainable and targeted early learning funding to school districts is essential to guarantee equitable access to pre-kindergarten education and early screening services, helping school communities identify and support learning needs early—before challenges grow. With dedicated resources, school districts can better serve children and families, particularly in underserved areas. Investing in early learning not only supports children's development but also strengthens long-term outcomes across the entire education system.

## **Request 6: Adequate Funding for Costs in Childcare**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 34*

K-12 education funding must be protected. Dedicated funding to school boards to cover all costs associated with district child care facilities is needed. Without this support, critical K-12 resources—already under pressure—are being diverted to maintain child care spaces. School boards cannot continue to shoulder these costs without jeopardizing classroom learning, staffing, and student supports. Providing this dedicated funding ensures core educational services can continue for all students.

## **Request 7: Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) funding by Ministry of Education and Child Care (ECC)**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 23*

Children in middle childhood are in a critical stage of emotional, social and cognitive development. The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) captures their voices and helps school boards make informed decisions that support student well-being and success. Ensuring every child in B.C. is heard and represented leads to improved programs, policies and outcomes for students across the province.

## **Request 8: Fully Funding Year End FTE Staffing Costs**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 35*

Current funding practices do not reflect the realities of staffing needs throughout the year. The Ministry of Education and Child Care funds labour settlement costs based on staffing levels at the start of the school year, even though many districts must hire additional staff as enrollment grows. These unfunded positions place significant financial pressure on boards, stretching already limited budgets and compromising the services provided to students. Proper funding enables funds to be allocated where they are needed, supporting exceptional learning opportunities for students.

## **Request 9: Coordinated, Funded Provincial Approach - Cybersecurity**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 31*

Cyberattacks on school districts across British Columbia are increasing in frequency and severity, posing a risk to student and family data and digital learning environments. Boards currently lack the necessary resources, training, and staffing to respond effectively. A coordinated and fully funded provincial approach will ensure all districts can mitigate risks for their communities.

## **Request 10: Sustainable Funding for School District Benefit Costs**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 39*

School Boards across B.C. face an unsustainable financial burden due to negotiated increases in extended health and dental benefit premiums. Dedicated funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care will ensure that boards can uphold their negotiated obligations without compromising classroom services and student supports. This targeted financial support is crucial for maintaining equitable access to healthcare while ensuring the quality of education for all students.

## **Request 11: Development of Climate Action Curriculum**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 22*

Students across B.C. are facing significant climate anxiety due to the lack of a dedicated Climate Action and Sustainability Curriculum. Providing funding for curriculum development and teacher training ensures that students are empowered with the knowledge and skills needed to address climate change. This proactive approach will alleviate anxiety, inspire hope and equip young people to take meaningful action, fostering a sustainable future for themselves and the planet.

## **Request 12: Fund Automated External Defibrillators (AED's) in All Public School Buildings**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 32*

Schools in B.C. face a life-saving gap in emergency preparedness due to the lack of accessible Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs). Providing full funding for the purchase, installation, maintenance, and training on AEDs ensures that every school is equipped to save a life. This funding will enhance student and staff safety, promote equity among districts, and significantly increase the chances of survival in life-threatening situations. Every life saved is worth the investment, and timely access to AEDs can make all the difference.

## **Request 13: Air Quality and Temperature Facility Funding**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 40*

Students and staff in B.C. schools face health and safety risks due to increasing temperatures and poor air quality. Providing targeted funding to address this will ensure a safe and conducive learning environment. This investment will enhance student outcomes, reduce absenteeism, and promote equitable access to quality education, while also aligning with B.C.'s sustainability goals and fostering long-term climate resilience.

## **Request 14: Funding for Portables**

BCSTA AGM 2025 - *Motion 41*

School districts in British Columbia face significant funding challenges due to the high costs of portable classrooms and their associated costs. Providing dedicated funding to address this will allow districts to prioritize student learning and improve resources for the growing number of students without sacrificing classroom quality.

# BCSTA






## 2026 Budget Submission

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