

2026/27 Budget Recommendations

BACKGROUND

Delta School District staff and the Board of Trustees are committed to a thoughtful, strategic, and student-centred approach to balancing the budget each year. Budget decisions are influenced by the district's [Vision for 2030](#), [Strategic Plan 2025/28](#), [Trustees' Budget priorities](#), and feedback from the annual budget consultation process. These elements shape decisions about programs, student supports, and daily operations with the aim of improving students' education and well-being. **A balanced budget is a stipulation of the *School Act*.**

For more information on the feedback received through Phase 1 of the Budget Input Process, as well as an overview of the district's Budget, Supplemental Funding and Reserve Funds, please review [this handout](#).

2026/27 ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET OVERVIEW

The Annual Operating Budget for 2026/27 is \$204.715 million, a decrease of \$1.413 million from the 2025/26 Amended Annual Operating Budget of \$206.128 million.

Each year, the budget is developed based on estimated enrolment for the upcoming school year. The district anticipates 245 fewer students for the 2026/27 school year, bringing the student enrolment total from 16,140 in the 2025/26 Amended Annual Operating Budget to 15,895 forecasted for the upcoming year. As a result, the draft budget has been developed on an anticipated decrease of 245 students. This estimated decrease in enrolment puts the district in Funding Protection, which is an additional amount to protect against any funding decline larger than 1.5% when compared to the previous autumn. **Please note:** The enrolment numbers are early estimates and may change. The final funding received will reflect the actual enrolment numbers reported once the 2026/27 school year has started.

The district is **projecting a shortfall in its Annual Operating Budget for 2026/27**. At **\$1.984 million** the shortfall makes up approximately **1%** of the 2026/27 budgeted operating expenses.

To balance the budget in the most sustainable and strategically effective way possible, the district will continue to adopt a budget balancing strategy based on the following themes:

- Ensuring that any proposed reductions have the least impact on students.
- Making decisions based on sound educational objectives and considerations.
- Decreasing program areas that have had limited impact on student success and wellbeing.

- Mitigating risk and ensuring long-term sustainability by reducing the reliance on Reserve Funds.
- Navigating ongoing financial constraints to ensure a balanced budget.

Approximately **90%** of the district's operating costs are staffing related. As always, the district staffs schools and provides resources based on student needs, enrolment trends and in compliance with the district's collective agreements.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry's Funding Announcement on March 12 resulted in overall Operating Grant funding of **\$176.697 million** for the Delta School District. The Per Pupil amounts included in the Operating Grant remain unchanged from 2025/26, and do not address the full impact of inflation and other costs, including increases to Employment Insurance (EI), CPP, WorkSafe, and employee illness/leave expenses, and soaring extended health and dental benefit rates. Labour settlement-related funding amounts for school districts have not yet been announced and will be provided as a separate grant for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 school years.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE BUDGET

School districts in B.C., including the Delta School District, are facing growing financial challenges as the cost of delivering K-12 programs is rising faster than provincial funding. Funding does not cover all inflationary pressures, including rising costs for employee benefits, technology, facility maintenance, equipment, and services and supplies. School districts are challenged to absorb unfunded inflationary costs without making budget reductions that negatively impact programs. Historically, enrolment growth has helped offset inflationary pressures, but with enrolment decline anticipated, that buffer will be reduced. Constrained financial resources continue to make it challenging to allocate funds to activities that do not receive direct funding through provincial operating grants, such as extra-curricular programs.

Efforts to tighten federal immigration policy have contributed to a decrease in school-aged enrolment projections. The 2025/26 graduating Grade 12 cohort is larger than next year's anticipated incoming Kindergarten cohort. Together, these factors have resulted in a **predicted decrease in overall student enrolment** for the upcoming school year. In addition to the overall decrease in student enrolment, the number of Inclusive Learning students and English Language Learners (ELL) is estimated to decrease by 70 and 152 FTE respectively, compared to the 2025/26 Amended Annual Operating Budget, with the number of Indigenous students estimated to remain the same. **Please note: As mentioned previously, the enrolment numbers are early estimates and may change.** The final funding the district receives from the Ministry, including supplemental funding for Inclusive Learning, Indigenous and ELL students, will reflect actual enrolment once the 2026/27 school year starts.

The Delta School District, like most other school districts in B.C., continues to face significant costs from workplace absenteeism. There has been an escalation of employee leave costs following the pandemic, resulting in substantial budgetary pressures in recent years. The impacts of the pandemic continue to reverberate, with people having a heightened awareness of their physical and mental well-being. A component of the increased absenteeism costs relates to unfunded additional leave entitlements for temporary employees resulting from amendments to the *Employment Standards Act*. The district has continued to significantly increase its budget to cover illness-related costs and remains committed to **proactively supporting staff health and wellness**.

Another ongoing reality for the district relates to the cost of running the **International Student Program (ISP) and its impact on net revenue**. Enrolment has remained relatively steady, but operational and logistical costs impacted by inflation have continued to rise. The district has increased ISP fees for the coming years to help address these costs but must also consider what the market will bear. As a result, the district must take a cautious approach to ISP revenue and not overly rely on it to supplement Ministry funding.

Investment rates and the amount of funding the district has available to invest have fluctuated in recent years. There has been a downward trend in investment rates since 2023/24 that has contributed to lower investment income for 2024/25 and 2025/26. Although rates are expected to increase slightly in 2026/27, investment income remains an uncertain source of funding that cannot be relied on to help balance the budget.

THE 2026/27 BUDGET SHORTFALL COMPOSITION

There is a preliminary budget shortfall of **\$1.984 million**. The key drivers of this shortfall include, but are not limited to:

- Unfunded wage and benefit increases¹
- Unavoidable inflationary increases and other non-salary related cost pressures²
- Higher employee leave costs

The district is committed to a rigorous strategic budgeting approach in alignment with current economic circumstances. **There continues to be more budgetary needs than funding available**. As a result, the district is required to make some difficult decisions regarding which resources, programs and initiatives to include in the budget each year.

¹The Ministry funding is not sufficient to cover certain increases such as extended health and dental, enhanced Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance and WorkSafe.

²For example, utilities, bussing, technology, insurance, and other miscellaneous costs.

2026/27 BUDGET BALANCING APPROACH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As in previous years, the district is recommending a budget strategy that ensures the **proposed changes have the least possible negative impact on students and classrooms**. This means implementing strategic balancing initiatives to address the **\$1.984 million shortfall** that will align staffing needs with available funding, safeguard the sustainability of ongoing important initiatives, and enable the district to operate in the most cost-effective manner possible. As always, the district is committed to fully funding its operations **without undue reliance on uncertain funding sources**.

Balancing the Budget

Balancing Initiatives – Savings of \$2.594 million

- As a result of the provincial government’s Feeding Futures Fund, there are savings available from the re-allocation of a portion of the district’s cafeteria program staffing costs from the Operating Budget that is fully aligned with the intent of the Feeding Futures program [\$60 thousand]
- A reallocation of funding for vacant contingency teacher positions will result in savings without causing any job losses. Over the last five years, the district has received Classroom Enhancement Funding (CEF) resulting in increased capacity and support in classrooms. Consequently, the reallocation of this funding will help reduce other budgetary pressures without impacting actual staffing levels [\$2.159 million]
- A reduction in the amount of contingency funds set aside in the Operating Budget for unfunded exempt position salary increases. Unfunded increases for 2026/27 will be covered by Reserve Funds [\$375 thousand]

Additional Needs – Costs of \$610 thousand

- The majority of feedback received through the budget engagement process prioritized the need for more Inclusive Education support in classrooms. Additional funding for Inclusive Learning will provide more staffing and other resources to help meet students’ needs and address safety concerns [\$250 thousand]
- Transfer the cost of the Safer Schools Manager position, which was previously funded from a grant that is ending in 2025/26, to the Operating Budget. The Manager works with schools, students, and families to support safe and inclusive learning environments by helping to address concerns related to violence, organized crime, and sexual exploitation. The cost of this position will be partially offset by substitute labour and supplies savings identified within the Inclusive Learning department [\$82 thousand]

- An addition of 1.0 FTE administrator (Principal/Vice Principal) time across elementary and secondary schools will provide administrators with more time so they can devote extra support to students and school staff. This includes transferring 0.4 FTE into the Operating Budget that was previously funded from the Reserve Funds [\$136 thousand]
- A slight adjustment to International Student Program staffing will help support an increased workload within the department and ensure continued efficiency and high-quality service to international students and host families [\$20 thousand]
- Transfer the cost of the Safety Advisor position from Reserve Funds to the Operating Budget. The Advisor plays a key role in keeping students and staff safe by supporting inspections, identifying hazards, and taking part in other risk mitigation efforts [\$122 thousand]

CAPITAL FUND, SPECIAL PURPOSE FUND, AND RESERVE FUNDS BUDGETS

In addition to the Operating Budget, the school district budget includes a Special Purpose Fund Budget, Capital Budget, and Reserve Funds (Accumulated Operating Surplus) Budget. The **Special Purpose Fund Budget** consists of funds and grants, from organizations like the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Federal Government, to deliver specific programs or activities. The **Capital Budget** provides for capital projects – these projects include facility upgrades, furniture and equipment, district vehicle maintenance, and education technology and infrastructure. Capital projects are developed based on school and other district needs and are incorporated into the district’s short and long-term capital planning. The district submits a Five-Year Capital Plan to the Ministry of Infrastructure every year. The **Reserve Funds Budget** is the budget for the district’s accumulation of prior-year funds in a surplus position; that is, when available funding over time exceeds expenses paid. The Reserve Funds Budget for the next school year, which is prepared at the same time as the Operating Budget, includes dollars earmarked for strategic objectives specific to the next school year where budget room was not available within the Operating Budget.

COMMENTARY

“High inflation and other significant increases to unavoidable costs are continuing to put pressure on our budget. Enrolment growth can help to offset such pressures, however, when enrolment is estimated to decline as we anticipate again this year, we must make some difficult decisions to balance the budget, including reductions in some areas.

Our focus remains on responding to the needs of students and our schools. As a result, our overall proposed budget balancing approach includes the addition of new staffing and the movement of some key support positions into the Operating Budget, to ensure students continue to be well supported within safe

learning environments. This aligns with our long-term budget strategy of ensuring the sustainability of key initiatives and responding to emerging needs and risks, while putting the needs of students at the centre of our financial decision-making. With our Reserve Funds, we hope to maximize their impact on students by ensuring we provide as much support for Inclusive Learning as possible. We will also use Reserve Funds to support needed technology replacement and the district's Justice and Equity Plan initiatives.

As in previous years, we gathered feedback on budget priorities via an online survey, as well as through the more traditional channels of email, mail and schools' Parent Advisory Councils. We received more than 165 responses through the online survey, which again highlighted support for Inclusive Learning as the top priority. In addition, we met with key rights-holders and stakeholders including the Delta Teachers' Association, CUPE Local 1091, the Delta Principals' and Vice Principals' Association, and the Indigenous Education Council, which represents local First Nations. We thank everyone who has provided feedback into our budget consultation process. This information has been invaluable as we considered various budgetary decisions, and we hope right-holders and stakeholders can see the effort we have made to address their priorities in these draft budget recommendations.

There is now an additional opportunity to provide input on the Budget Recommendations. The Delta Board of Education invites all rights-holders and stakeholders to attend the Public Board Meeting on **April 21** to share their thoughts or, alternatively, to respond via email or the new online survey which opened today.”

Jonathan Duffin, Secretary Treasurer
Delta School District

The Delta School District is committed to being an innovative, inclusive community where all learners belong and everyone soars. Its mission is to inspire and nurture thriving, future-ready learners.

PUBLIC INPUT

Members of the public are asked to provide their input and feedback on the 2026/27 Budget Recommendations. Options for providing feedback include:

- **Attending and speaking at the Special Public Board Meeting - Budget Input** on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at the School Board Office, 4585 Harvest Drive, Delta. We anticipate this meeting will start at **approximately 7:30 p.m.** It will take place after the Regular Public Board Meeting, which starts at 7p.m., has ended. To sign up to speak at the meeting, please email kaquino@deltaschools.ca by 5 p.m. on Monday, April 20, 2026.

- **Sending an email** to budget@deltaschools.ca by noon on Monday, April 20, 2026.
- **Completing the [online survey](#)** by noon on Monday, April 20, 2026.

The Delta Board of Education will consider all feedback received on the draft budget recommendations before amending and/or approving the budget for 2026/27. For more information on the budget process, please visit: <https://www.deltasd.bc.ca/news-events/news/2026-2027-budget-consultation-process/>