

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)

PROPOSED SCHOOL CLOSURES 2010

FAQ 3

(Responses provided by the District Sustainability Committee)

- 1. According to my analysis, there are 300 administrators in the district making over \$75,000. per year.**

[If you are referring to the employees included in the school district's Financial Information Statement, as required under the *Financial Information Act*, qualified teachers make up 250 of the 300 employees listed.

- 2. Why does the district have a contracted travel agent?**

The district does not have a contracted travel agent. We do use a travel agent that has a \$25. booking fee. This ensures that the district is not out any money for cancelled flights. Credits go back to the district rather than to the employee. Credits are then transferrable to other employees.

- 3. Can the district's financial challenge be reduced by applying carbon offsets?**

Carbon offsets are not income. They are a levy the district will have to pay in 2010. Each year the district must report its consumption of utilities (natural gas and electricity), motor fuel, and paper. The consumption is measured in tonnes. The district will be required to pay \$25 per tonne to the Pacific Carbon Trust based upon our consumption for the year ending December 31, 2009. Any reduction from the tonnage from one year to the next would mean fewer offsets will have to be paid – if the rate stays the same. It is not likely that will be the case. The rising value of a tonne and the state of some of the district's older buildings combine to create the dilemma.

- 4. In 2009, the district paid for 3,711 teacher release days at \$300 per day, or \$1.1 million, on professional development release and travel. Why don't you cut district travel and release immediately?**

The 2009-10 school year is not yet completed. For this year, the district budget for release time (TOC) is a \$2.2 million allocation to schools. These dollars are to cover short-term teacher sick and medical days, release, and school-based release. The School Services Department has \$119,000 for regular release

and \$41,000 for mentorship release – a total of 533 days. The School Services Department uses these dollars for in-service and professional development initiatives.

5. **The district should eliminate a substantial portion of the \$215,267 it pays for catering. Why was this not done first, before looking at school closure?**

The major portion of these dollars (\$167,595) is used for the district school meals program – a service provided to disadvantaged children in our district. Hungry children do not learn. We are not planning to re-evaluate this expenditure.

6. **Why doesn't the district look at alternate ways to print needed materials? A budget of \$122,557 per year seems excessive.**

The district has a very limited professional printing budget. The amount referred to here is furniture and equipment purchased by schools from a local office equipment provider. School planners purchased by parents are also included in this amount.

7. **Will the school district look into offering an online learning program, such as e-bus, as part of its service to increase district revenue?**

Yes, there is a province-wide move in education to provide more and more sophisticated online learning. The District Technology Team has been working on developing new directions in regard to online learning, particularly on how it may affect our rural high schools. The reduced populations in those schools often make it difficult to offer comprehensive programs. The district currently offers online learning through its Center for Learning Alternatives.

8. **Have you heard anything new from these public meetings that the trustees or District Sustainability Committee (DSC) haven't already thought about?**

The DSC often hears different versions of particular themes which can be quite helpful. The report was put together over a period of several months, with daily three hour sessions, so a great deal of material was covered. There is a finite number of ways to find dollars to address our financial challenge, but we have attempted to predict what any opposition to a recommendation may look like and then discuss the merits of the arguments. So, yes, we have discussed many of the ideas that come up at the meetings.

However, trustees have not had all of the same discussions, so they are hearing some of the ideas for the first time when they come to the meetings. They do come to each meeting with open minds and they are very receptive to hearing new ideas. The community consultation has provided these new ideas for them as well as responses to ideas and recommendations already proposed. For example, following the meetings in Hixon and Dunster, the whole area of rural education has taken on a bigger life and the trustees have entered into conversations with local MLAs about that very subject.

We took from your question that you were concerned that there may be a feeling that there is nothing new that could be thought of, and therefore the input is not useful. This is not the case at all. Every meeting that we have has a debrief and a look at the presentation's content . . . whether the information is new, or an affirmation of what has been thought or heard before, or even totally false in its assertions. It all has value for members of the DSC and trustees!

- 9. I don't want my child crowded into a "mega-school" where class sizes will explode! Won't teachers feel helpless and overwhelmed in this situation?**

The district will still be bound by Bill 33, which regulates class size and composition. Schools will not be populated by more than the working capacity they are designed to hold.

- 10. Why did the district rebuild Duchess Park? It does not have the enrolment to support its operation.**

Duchess Park enrolment supports the size it has been built for. It will continue to be a triple-track school. With school closure and reconfigurations proposed in the DSC report, Duchess Park could operate at full capacity for many years.

- 11. Why do so many students in our district get on the bus before 7 a.m. and arrive home after 5 p.m.?**

Not one of our students who ride school buses is picked up before 7 a.m. Not one of our students returns home after 5 p.m.

See the chart attached to this document.

12. It seems ridiculous that the school district would spend \$34,000 on flowers. When will this practice stop?

The district does not buy flowers, other than a few bedding plants at the central administration office. The costs listed are for fertilizer so that our playing fields remain usable.

13. Part of the “fat” trimming should be to eliminate “perks” such as cars, lease vehicles and car rentals, which cost \$250,000 per year.

The district does not permit the rental of cars without the permission of the Superintendent of Schools.

The district does have leased vehicles and equipment used by the maintenance department.

The district also has leased two pool cars, which are used by employees for district business, and four vehicles are leased for the corporate officers of the board in accordance with district policy and employee contracts.

The current district travel rate is 50 cents per km. The two pool cars travel a total of 32,000 km each per year, for a total of 64,000 km. If the district were to pay mileage to its employees to drive their own vehicles for those same kms, it would cost \$32,000 per year. The current cost per year for gas, lease and insurance costs for both vehicles is \$24,600. In short – the current system is more cost-effective for the district.

14. Why doesn't the district save money by eliminating or reducing costs in the area of technology?

This has been an area of considerable discussion by the DSC. Living in the technological age, our district often faces criticism that we are not doing enough to prepare our youth for the future. Trends in education indicate a need for a greater use of technology, not a diminished use of it. Remember as well that technology is a great learning motivator for students!

Much of technology purchasing is done by schools through the administration of their annual budgets.

There is a misconception that principals receive a laptop grant. This is not the case. Principals can purchase technology as part of their PGPVPA contract. Even so, a laptop purchased in this way remains the property of the school district.

We are considering extending the district's computer replacement schedule to six years from the current five years. This would result in a cost reduction of \$120,000 per year.

We are also considering adopting single-platform computer technology. Currently, the district supports two platforms (Windows and Mac) on its networks. We believe cost reductions will be approximately \$250,000 per year if the district moves to a single platform.

15. I know we need to have our schools maintained but why don't you eliminate everyone else that works at the school board office? Those 100+ people don't help teach our kids! Leave the money in schools!

There are 67 people working in the central administration who are not connected to maintenance. These staff work in the following departments:

1. Accounting and Finance
2. Transportation
3. Payroll
4. Reception and Duplicating
5. Human Resources
6. BCeSIS and Technology
7. Schools (Curriculum and Special Education)
8. Corporate Office (Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer)

While not directly working with students, these employees play a critical support role in our district, as they ensure district finances are handled appropriately, staff are paid at the appropriate rates, contracts are managed appropriately including dispute resolution, and they offer direct support, in-service and professional development to teachers, teacher assistants, supervision assistants, etc., as well as support to school staff in areas of bussing, school management, leadership and record-keeping.

The total salary and benefits for these 67 individuals is \$5.22 million. Even if we were able to eliminate all of them, as per your suggestion, that would not solve the financial challenge facing the district.

16. Why have the estimated renovation costs to reconfigure schools changed since January 26?

The word renovation can refer to several things:

1. Minor changes are usually addressed by our maintenance staff. These are operating costs. Examples include window and door repair, fixing sinks and toilets, changing ballasts in light fixtures, etc.
2. More substantial renovations are paid for from the district's annual facility grant. These are capital costs. They may include code upgrades in areas such as heating, ventilation, air conditioning, electrical, etc. or major removal/addition of walls, bathrooms, etc.

The short, clear answer is, we are often asked to consider or factor in additional changes. A simple renovation would be \$50,000, which might include the installation of two Kindergarten bathrooms and the movement of a playground. More substantial renovation costs would be \$250,000, and might include not only the costs for Kindergarten bathrooms and playground movement, but also movement of walls and the gutting of elective rooms and rebuilding of classrooms in their place. When you factor code upgrades in areas of heating, ventilation, air conditioning and electrical, as well as parking lot improvements the cost can increase to close to \$1 million dollars.

Another fact is that until we have contracted an architect and the appropriate engineering professionals, we will not know the exact cost of any proposed renovations.

The discussion of renovation amounts is a "red herring" in our opinion. These dollars are one-time facility upgrades. The district's financial challenge is a yearly operating dollar challenge, unrelated to capital expenditures.

17. Haven't you and your committee read the research about large schools? In general terms students do better in smaller schools. I am shocked that you are looking to form larger schools.

If we did not face a financial challenge in the area of operating dollars, i.e. if the district had unlimited dollars to provide staff, program options and choice for our students, then we would look at a substantial amount of educational research in a variety of areas. Unfortunately the district is facing a different reality: a reality of declining enrolment, increased taxation and continually rising operating costs. Our larger schools are able to provide more learning support, program options and choice than smaller schools of the same configuration.

While we certainly do not dispute research put forward that speaks to the benefits of small schools, one might look at the definition used by researchers.

In an article entitled, "School Size, School Climate and Student Performance", Kathleen Cotton summarizes her review of 103 research studies that identify a relationship between school size and some aspect of education. In evaluating the benefits of small schools, Cotton notes that, while there is no concrete agreement on what defines a small school, "on average, the research indicates that an effective size (read small school) for an elementary school is in the range of 300-400 students." The Nguyen study of 2007 commissioned by a school PAC to refute closure of eight schools in School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) indicates that small school size related to her research is 250-300 students.

One has to be careful with research data related to school size. If we combine the Nguyen and Cotton data we could say that effective small schools are in the size range of 250-400 students. In our district, only Austin Road, Foothills, Malaspina, Southridge, Spruceland and Vanway could be considered to be effective small elementary schools using these criteria. All other elementary schools would be considered too small to be effective. Likewise, Heritage Elementary and College Heights Elementary are too large to be considered effective *small* schools. We could also use this data to seek the closure or consolidation of schools to create schools of an "effective size." It is doubtful that many would agree with this type of research-backed decision.

As a result, the education research we have focused on is that related to learning. Most researchers agree that what happens in the classroom: teaching is most critical in addressing student learning. Here is a tiny sample of research in this area:

1. Mortimore and Sammons (1987) found that teaching had 6 to 10 times as much impact on achievement as all other factors combined.
2. Schools like Bessemer and Stevenson force us to confront the fact that the single greatest determinant of learning is not socioeconomic factors or funding levels. It is instruction. (Schmoker, 2006)
3. Robert Marano (2003) points to numerous studies demonstrating that two teachers working with the same population can achieve starkly different results – for example 27% passing vs. 72% passing.
4. William Sanders, found that just three years of effective teaching accounts on average for an improvement of 35 – 50 percentile points and the effects are enduring (Sanders and Horn, 1994).
5. Eric Hanushek has found that five years of instruction from an above-average teacher could eliminate the achievement gap on some state assessments (Haycock, 2005).

6. A study reported on by Haycock and Huang, 2001, shows that the best teachers in a school have 6X as much impact as the bottom third of teachers.
7. Researcher Allen Odden concludes that "improved classroom instruction is the prime factor to produce student achievement gains" (Odden and Wallace, 2003).

DSC /wd
2010.03.11

DSC LONGEST ROUTE TIMES BY SCHOOL

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	SCHOOL	RTE	STOP	DEPART	ARRIVE	TOTAL TIME	NOTES
2		AM					First stop for actual pick up
3		PM					Time from schl to last stop
4	Beverly	22 AM	17640 Upper Mud River Rd	7:08 AM	8:08 AM	60 mins	Isle Pierre
5		21 PM	Schl to Isle Pierre RR	14:25 PM	15:50 PM	1 hr 25 mins	Hartman, Telachick, Isle Pierre
6	Blackburn	40 AM	Upper Fraser R & Bowron	6:55 AM	8:09 AM	1 hr 18 mins	Willow River area
7		45 PM	Schl to Shelley & Loopol Rd	14:21 PM	15:07 PM	46 mins	Shelley Town area
8	Buckhorn	31 AM	Yardley Rest Stop	7:08 AM	8:01 AM	53 mins	Most kids on at Race Trac Gas
9		31 PM	Kolling & Moore Rd	14:25 PM	15:36 PM	1 hr 11 mins	Rte 35 PM same minus 1 min
10	Dunster	55 AM	9509 Croyden	7:09 AM	7:52 AM	43 mins	Longer ride/Courties Valemount
11		55 PM	Schl to Airport Rd	15:17 PM	16:25 PM	1 hr 8 mins	Into McBride Elem area
12	Edgewood	63 AM	McClarty & Hillside	7:47 AM	8:20 AM	33 mins	North Nechako/Toombs/Bench
13		14 PM	Toombs & Bench Road	14:26 PM	14:54 PM	28 mins	
14	Foothills	18 AM	Cranbrook Hill & Otway	7:47 AM	8:25 PM	39 mins	Cranbrook Hill area
15		18 PM	Schl to 5233 Melmack & Gler	14:35 PM	15:16 PM	41 mins	Cranbrook Hill area
16	Giscome	38 AM	38128 Upper Fraser/Sinclair	7:35 AM	8:30 AM	55 mins	Upper Fraser area
17		40 PM	Schl-Upper Fraser W Perry	14:40 PM	15:55 PM	1 hr 15 mins	
18	Glenview	66 AM	Chestnut & Jade	7:48 AM	8:01 AM	13 mins	(Springwood area)
19		67 PM	Schl to Carr & Weisbrod	14:25 PM	14:39 PM	14 mins	
20	Hart Highlands	5 AM	4881 Randle Road	7:45 AM	8:15 AM	30 mins	
21		12 PM	Schl to Kenworth Rd	14:40 PM	15:02	22 mins	
22	Heritage		Bus in fr Miworth to Quinson				Used for Heritage Courtesies
23	Hixon	48 AM	Kolling & Moore	7:50 AM	8:23 AM	33 mins	
24		48 PM	Schl to Hwy 97/New Dale Rd	14:40 PM	15:16 PM	36 mins	
25	Mackenzie Elem	50 AM	4 Columbia Street	8:00 AM	8:27 AM	27 mins	Gantahaz (incl Morfee El stop)
26		50 PM	Schl to Alberta Street	14:40 AM	15:00 PM	20 mins	Elem ONLY
27		51 AM	Hwy 97 Poplar Point Rd	7:27 AM	8:27 AM	1 hr	McLeod Lake
28		50 PM	Schl to MacSec to Windy	14:40 PM	16:00 PM	1 hr 20 mins	continues to McLeod Lake
29	McBride Centennial	52 AM	Loos Rd-p/u Dome Creek	7:29 AM	8:22 AM	53 mins	Dome Creek in from Hwy 16 W
30		57 PM	Schl to 5795 Mountain View	14:57 PM	15:36 PM	39 mins	Mountain View Roads
31		55 AM	Dunster Elem (3 stops)	7:52 AM	8:21 AM	29 mins	Dunster to McBride Elem
32		58 AM	Hwy 16 E (Carr Road)	7:10 AM	8:10 AM	1 hr	Hwy 16 East
33		58 PM	Schl to Bunbury Road	14:57 PM	15:55 PM	58 mins	(incl Baker Cr to Bunbury Rd)

DSC LONGEST ROUTE TIMES BY SCHOOL

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
34	Morfee	50 AM	4 Columbia	8:00 AM	8:21 AM	21 mins	Gantahaz
35		50 PM	Schl to (4 Alberta)Gantahaz	14:45 PM	15:00 PM	15 mins	
36		50 PM	Schl on to McLeod Lake	14:45 PM	16:00 PM	1 hr 15 mins	Stop MacS;Windy Point, Mcleod
37		51 AM	McLeod Lake (Hwy 97 S)	7:27 AM	8:35 AM	1 hr 8 mins	Windy Point/McLeod Lake
38	Nukko	9 PM	Schl to Westfork Rd(NessLk)	14:25 PM	16:10 PM	1 hr 45 mins	Chief Lk/Eena Lk Connects #49
39		11 AM	26955 Ness Lake	7:15 AM	8:00 AM	45 mins	Ness Lake
40		11 PM	Schl to 26955 Ness Lk Rd	14:25 PM	15:51 PM	1 hr 26 mins	ChiefLk/ReidLk/Isle Pierre/Ness
41	Pineview	36 AM	Johnson & Chilcotin Roads	7:37 AM	8:11 AM	33 mins	
42		64 PM	Schl to Johnson & Sunhill	14:30 PM	14:54 PM	24 mins	Holmes, Parsnip, Sunhill
43	Quinson	17 AM	13210 Bergman Road	7:44 AM	8:17 AM	33 mins	Miworth(incl Ospika courtesies)
44		17 PM	Schl to 2805 Catherine Drive	14:40 PM	15:24 PM	44 mins	Miworth(incl Ospika courtesies)
45	Salmon Valley	2 AM	12465 Salmon Valley Rd	7:37 AM	7:57 AM	20 mins	
46		3 PM	Schl to 2110 OldSummit Lk	14:25 PM	15:47 PM	1 hr 22 mins	incl to Summit Lake
47	Shady Valley	19 AM	13545 Old Summit Lk Rd	7:31 AM	8:06 AM	35 mins	same as Landooz Northwd run
48		6 PM	Schl 7550 K'nasten/Landooz	14:25 PM	15:59 PM	34 mins	same as Landooz Northwd run
49	Springwood	1 AM	Bear Lake Elem	7:19 AM	8:17 AM	58 mins	Bear Lk & Summit Lake
50		4 AM	2330 Wright Cr Pitt Road	7:34 AM	8:11 AM	37 mins	Wright Cr/Hobby/Sooke
51		1 PM	Schl to Bear Lake Elem	15:13 PM	16:09 PM	56 mins	Bear Lk & Summit Lake/Hwy 97 N
52		7 PM	Schl to 6085 Franka Rd	14:30 PM	14:54 PM	24 mins	Shelbrooke, Homestead
53	Valemount Elem	56 AM	Bunbury & Hwy 16 East	7:35 AM	8:27 AM	52 mins	Crown/Blackman/Hwy 5 North
54		56 PM	Schl to 1445 5th Avenue	14:57 PM	16:00 PM	1 hr 3 mins	Blackman, Crown
55	Van Bien	34 AM	Queensway by Houston	8:14 AM	8:29 AM	15 mins	South Ft George to school
56		26 PM	Schl to Norwood & Village	14:40 PM	14:53 PM	13 mins	
57	Vanway	29 AM	Clearlake Sawmill	7:29 AM	8:12 AM	43 mins	Angel/Frenkel/Purdue Roads
58		30 AM	West Lake (Flynn Rd)	7:21 AM	8:03 AM	42 mins	West Lake/Angus/Foos
59		30 PM	Schl Clearlake Sawmill	2:40 PM	3:47 PM	1 hr 7 mins	BlackwaterWest Lk Rd/Clear Lake
60							

DSC LONGEST ROUTE TIMES BY SCHOOL

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
61							
62	HPMS	1 AM	Bear Lake Elem	7:19 AM	8:24 AM	1 hr 5 mins	Bear Lake
63		1 PM	Schl to Bear Lake Elem	14:54 PM	16:09 PM	1 hr 16 mins	Via KRS/Sprg/Summit Lk/Bear
64		2 AM	12465 Salmon Valley Rd	7:37 AM	8:14 AM	37 mins	Salmon Valley
65		2 PM	Schl to 12465 Salmon Val	15:00 PM	15:31 PM	29 mins	Salmon Valley
66							
67							
68	SECONDARIES						
69							
70	COLLEGE HEIGHTS	29 AM	Clear Lake Sawmill Site	7:29 AM	8:28 AM	1 hr	Blackwater/Tedford/Purdue
71		29 PM	CHS to West Lk Estates Rd	15:13 PM	16:11 PM	58 mins	Blackwater/West Lake Areas
72							
73	DUCHESS PARK	63 AM	McClarty & Hillside	7:47 AM	8:30 AM	43 mins	North Nechako/Toombs/Bench
74		15 PM	DPS to N Nechako/Morning	15:18 PM	15:49 PM	31 mins	Pidherry/Summerset Place
75							
76	KRSS	1 AM	Bear Lake Elem	7:19 AM	8:29 AM	1 hr 10 mins	Bear Lake & Summit Lake
77		1 PM	Schl to Bear Lake Elem	15:08 PM	16:09 PM	1 hr	Summit Lk & Bear Lake
78		2 AM	12465 Salmon Valley Rd	7:37 AM	8:17 AM	40 mins	Salmon Valley
79		2 PM	Schl to 12465 Salmon Val	15:08 PM	15:31 PM	23 mins	
80		4 AM	2330 Wright Cr Pitt Road	7:34 AM	8:17 AM	43 mins	
81		6 AM	1001 Landooz Road	7:26 AM	8:31 AM	1 hr 5 mins	K'nasten/Shady V/McIntosh
82		6 PM	KRSS to Willowbrook Rd	15:20 PM	16:10 PM	50 mins	Aintree/Northwood/Shady Valley
83		9 AM	28085 Westfork Rd	7:36 AM	8:28 AM	52 mins	Chief Lake/Eena Lake
84							
85	LAKWOOD JR	18 AM	1955 Sharlene Road	7:33 AM	8:32 AM	1 hr 1 min	Cranbrook Hill
86		32 PM	LJR to McKellar & Koroa	15:18 PM	16:21 PM	1 hr 3 mins	Sintich/Reeves and 15 Mile Road
87		34 PM	LJR to Hwy 97S & Taylor	15:18 PM	16:50 PM	1 hr 32 mins	Red Rock and Hixon
88		39 PM	37910 Upper Fraser Rd	15:25 PM	17:11 PM	1 hr 46 mins	Willow River/Upper Fraser
89							
90							
91	McINNIS JR	20 AM	1875 Isle Pierre Rd	7:03 AM	8:24 AM	1 hr 21 mins	
92		20 PM	Railway Crossing	15:05 PM	16:46 PM	1 hr 42 mins	Isle Pierre
93							
94	PGSS						
95		18 AM	1955 Sharlene Road	7:33 AM	8:42 AM	1 hr 9 mins	Cranbrook Hill
96		20 AM	1875 Isle Pierre Rd	7:03 AM	8:30 AM	1 hr 27 mins	

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
97		32 PM	LJR to McKellar & Koroa	15:30 PM	16:21 PM	51 mins	Sintich/Reeves and 15 Mile Road
98		34 PM	LJR to Hwy 97S & Taylor	15:18 PM	16:50 PM	1 hr 20 mins	Red Rock and Hixon
99		39 PM	37910 Upper Fraser Rd	15:16 PM	17:11 PM	1 hr 55 mins	Upper Fraser & Willow River
100		47 PM	Shelley Townsite	15:16 PM	16:20 PM	1 hr 4 mins	Grassland to Shelley Townsite area
101							
102							
103	VALEMOUNT SEC	56 AM	Bunbury & Hwy 16 East	7:35 AM	8:34 AM	59 mins	Crown/Blackman/Hwy 5 North
104		56 PM	Schl to 1445 5th Avenue	15:10 PM	16:43 PM	1 hr 33 mins	Blackman, Crown