



Prince Rupert District Teachers' Union

News for Members
February 2022

PRDTU's Budget Priorities for SD52

At the General Meeting on February 1st members passed the following motion on our union's priorities for the upcoming SD52 budget:

Moved that the presentation to the SD 52 Board of Education on the 2022-23 budget focus on the three priorities of (1) protecting members' jobs, (2) protecting members' job security, and (3) ensuring that SD52 adhere to the class size and class composition limits.

During the discussion, members wanted it to be clear that the provision of remedy, without administration making a "best effort" to follow the limits for size and composition, does not address our concerns. This year more than 60% of SD52 classes are overcapacity. The district is not doing its best to address this issue and remedy alone is not the answer.

By focusing on protecting the jobs of teaching professionals the PRDTU is standing up for students and their education. Last year our budget theme was "keeping the funding as close to the students as possible" and we still stand behind this principle. But SD52 did not seem to understand this message. To keep things clear and simple our message this year is: Stop cutting teaching positions. Our students need classroom teachers and other professionals whose job is to *directly* support student learning.

SD52 is a top-heavy district with too many employees working away from students. This explains why so many classes are overcapacity and why so many students are not receiving the educational supports that they need.

Classroom teachers and learning support teachers are struggling to support students. With more than 60% of classrooms exceeding the limits on class size or class composition, our students cannot afford another round of teacher layoffs. If the district must lay off employees, then those cuts should start with employees working outside of classrooms and schools. Better yet, SD52 should start shifting employees back into schools and classrooms – where the impact on student learning will make the most difference. PR

PRDTU Ratifies Local Matters Agreement

PRDTU members voted at the General Meeting on February 1st to ratify changes to the local Collective Agreement. Collective bargaining began in the fall and both the employer and the local union presented many proposals and counter proposals.

The resulting agreement improves language on spring staffing, in-school shuffles, the right of recall if laid off, and provisions for District Itinerant teachers. These improvements strengthen the principle of seniority in hiring and will make a difference for all members. The agreement will also establish a joint committee to develop a statement of shared commitment by SD52 and the PRDTU to work together for reconciliation.

The agreement has been ratified by SD52 and all clauses are now in effect.

Addressing Enrollment Decline Requires Proactive Strategies

The PRDTU Calls on SD52 to Support Teachers to Improve Attendance, Reduce Absenteeism

Listen closely to news about the SD52 budget and you'll notice a pattern: Our enrollment levels are declining. These enrollment declines are impacting more than just the budget. While some of the declines in student enrollment are due to demographic shifts, which are beyond the control of SD52, others are due to students dropping out of public education. The biggest cost for these declines is paid in terms of student learning, as students who drop out of public education risk losing out on their education entirely. With these losses we risk falling back on gains made in addressing the achievement gap, with students from low-income families and Indigenous students paying the most in terms of lost opportunities to their education. To address the district's budget woes, and declines in student enrollment, we must look beyond dollars and cents. One way to do this is by improving district-level and school-level supports for improving attendance and reducing absenteeism.

The PRDTU Executive Committee passed the following motion at its February 8th meeting:

Moved that the PRDTU advocate for improvements in addressing student attendance and absenteeism, including pushing for district-level and building-level tracking and reporting systems that are directly useful for classroom teachers; using existing administrative time and resources to build stronger connections with families for students with high barriers to regular attendance; and using existing resources to have administrators better coordinate student supports that are already provided at the building and classroom level, such as better promotion and implementation of homework help, clubs and teams, after school activities, breakfast and lunch programs, etc.

This motion calls on the PRDTU to advocate that SD52 use existing administrative and management resources to improve supports for students and teachers. There are many common-sense improvements that the district can immediately put in place to help reduce absenteeism and improve attendance, including:

- Increase promotion of existing homework help programs in schools
- Address issues for at-risk students who face barriers to attend school due to transportation needs
- Provide teachers with useful information about attendance trends in their school and classroom
- Monitor student attendance at the building-level and put in place measures to track at-risk attendance patterns (provide early interventions when a change in attendance is indicated)
- Provide managerial leadership to coordinate school-based communication with parents/guardians (especially in the middle and high school where students have more than one teacher over a day)
- Flag students who almost never attend school and support school-based teams to direct existing resources to support these students (provide early notification of when a student stop attending)
- Develop a strategy for reconnecting with students who stopped attending school due to the pandemic

By prioritizing the use of existing administrative and managerial resources to improve supports for students and teachers around attendance and absenteeism, SD52 can address learning loss due to COVID-19, the achievement gap, and declines in enrollment. This should be a priority for SD52 managers and administrators.