



# Appendix A

2026-2027 Budget Consultation

*Detailed Summary of Survey Findings*

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## Background

In preparation for the 2026-2027 Budget, HDSB invited input from parents, guardians, students, staff, and community members. A virtual [Public Information Session](#) was held on January 19, 2026, to educate the community about how the board is funded, and how resources are allocated. HDSB encouraged attendees to review the revised 2025-2026 budget and submit questions ahead of the session; the questions were directly addressed during the Public Information Sessions, and were used to create an [FAQ](#) for the community which was posted on the HDSB website.

Additional feedback was gathered through an online survey which was available from January 20 to February 1, 2026. The survey was promoted via the HDSB website, social media including advertisements, and through a media release. An email was also sent to all HDSB parents/guardians, staff, and secondary students to notify them of the opportunity to provide feedback. Student Trustees shared the survey invitation with the Student Senate, who communicated it to their peers. The budget survey link was also shared with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) members.

The survey asked respondents to share feedback on the following two areas: (1) As we continue to review our programs and resource allocation, please share any feedback on how HDSB can support you in minimizing the impact of budgetary reallocations. (2) From the list below, choose the top 3 areas that are most important to you and that you feel the HDSB should keep in mind when making decisions about resource allocation and reductions. Please enter number 1,2, or 3 in the box next to the area of most importance to you. The list consisted of 12 options, which were:

- Student Learning and Achievement
- Special Education
- Safe Schools (e.g., student safety, etc.)
- Student Mental Health and Well-Being
- Environmental Leadership
- Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusive Education
- Indigenous Rights and Education
- Student Opportunities to Liaise with Community Partners
- Programs that Support Staff Mental Health and Well-Being
- Investment in Technology and Infrastructure (e.g., cyber security, etc.)
- School Repair and Maintenance
- Other (please specify)

## Responses

The survey garnered a total of 3,181 responses, an additional 1113 surveys were submitted blank and therefore are not counted in the total. Majority of the 3,181 responses were received from parents/guardians (50% N=1,595), 24% from staff members (N=751), 23% from students (N=742), while community members, and community organizations contributed approximately 3% (N=81) of responses combined. Approximately 19% (N=608) of responses were received by respondents who endorsed multiple roles (e.g., parent and staff).

## Findings

**Area 1: As we continue to review our programs resource allocation, please share any feedback that you would like the HDSB to consider in the decision-making and review process.**

The feedback gathered reveals several key themes for budget priorities and where the budget could be potentially reallocated or optimized for further efficiencies in the upcoming school year (2026-2027). These priorities include: Smaller Class Sizes, Facilities Maintenance and Repairs, Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education, Equity and Inclusion, Student Mental Health and Well-Being, Administrative Overhead, Technology Infrastructure, Resources, Staffing, Core Academics and Inclusion Programs, Financial Management and Accountability, and Transportation.

### ***Theme: Smaller Class Sizes***

Numerous comments highlight class sizes as a priority, expressing a clear preference for smaller groups to facilitate individualized student support. Large class sizes are viewed as a barrier to effective instruction, particularly in the early years and high school, where personalized learning is deemed crucial for student success. There is a strong desire to maintain or reduce class sizes to ensure high-quality education and improve learning outcomes. Specifically, feedback noted the importance of smaller settings in early education and the challenge of managing diverse needs in larger environments. Consequently, there were calls for class size caps and improved student-teacher ratios to better accommodate various learning styles.

### ***Theme: Facilities Maintenance and Repairs***

Respondents stressed the need to prioritize upgrades and repairs to school facilities to ensure a safe and effective learning environment. Primary concerns centered on addressing aging infrastructure, improving HVAC systems for better climate control, and increasing custodial staff

to maintain higher standards of cleanliness. Calls were also made to address ongoing challenges associated with portable classrooms, enhance outdoor spaces, upgrade technology, and improve both the condition and availability of washrooms in schools.

***Theme: Curriculum and Instruction***

Respondents identified strengthening core subjects, such as math, science, reading, and writing, as a top priority for ensuring academic excellence and future success. Key themes emerged regarding the integration of technology within the curriculum, the provision of experiential learning opportunities, and the refinement of student assessments. Participants also emphasized the necessity of enhanced teacher training and the incorporation of specialized programs, including Artificial Intelligence, to better prepare students for modern career pathways. Furthermore, extracurricular activities were viewed as essential outlets vital for fostering a well-rounded and comprehensive learning experience.

***Theme: Special Education***

A major theme is the call for increased funding and resources for special education, specifically regarding Educational Assistants (EAs), specialized classrooms, and individualized support for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Many respondents highlighted a lack of resources and services for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and behavioral challenges, expressing concern that HDSB is falling behind other school boards in this area. Additionally, there is strong demand for continued investment in essential services such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and assistive technology. Participants fear that further cuts to special education programs may result in students with special needs being placed in mainstream classrooms without adequate support, limiting their ability to succeed.

***Theme: Equity and Inclusion***

Respondents prioritized equitable access to resources, opportunities, and support, focusing specifically on students from historically underserved communities and those with special education needs. A major concern was the fair allocation of resources between schools to ensure all students have what they need to succeed. Participants emphasized the importance of targeted support for equity-deserving groups and identified the removal of systemic barriers as essential to achieving equitable outcomes. Feedback also highlighted the advancement of Indigenous Rights and Education and improved accessibility, while underscoring the need for every student to receive an equitable share of resources and meaningful instructional time with teachers.

***Theme: Student Mental Health & Well-Being***

Many comments identified student mental health and well-being as a primary focus, calling for significantly increased access to resources such as counselors and dedicated support programs. Participants emphasized the necessity of providing safe spaces where students can speak with professionals on an as-needed basis. Respondents also highlighted the importance of creating safe and inclusive school environments free from bullying and discrimination. Additionally, respondents requested improvements in how student behavioral issues are addressed, specifically regarding violent incidents, and underscored the need for appropriate interventions for those displaying challenging behaviors. The overall focus is on ensuring students are provided with comprehensive mental health support in a safe environment.

***Theme: Administrative Overhead***

Many respondents stressed the need to reduce administrative overhead at the board level, calling for cuts to the number of trustees, superintendents, curriculum specialists, and other non-frontline staff. Instead, they suggest reallocating these resources to support school-level staff including classroom teachers, Educational Assistants (EAs), and library staff, to provide more direct support for students. Furthermore, respondents requested increased transparency and accountability regarding school board spending, citing concerns about ineffective or wasteful expenditures. There is a strong urge to prioritize funds for schools, particularly at the elementary level by decreasing administrative costs. Additional suggestions included bulk ordering supplies to reduce costs and cutting unnecessary administrative expenses. The overall sentiment is that by reducing administrative overhead and redirecting funds to student-facing roles, the board can achieve greater cost efficiency while prioritizing student learning.

***Theme: Technology Infrastructure***

Respondents debated technology investments, specifically regarding the use of Chromebooks versus textbooks and the time resources spent teaching technology. Many called for a reevaluation of current strategies. Some respondents advocated for reducing technology funding and returning to textbooks, arguing that physical books are more cost-effective, consistent, and conducive to home learning. They also raised concerns about the quality and frequent disrepair of devices, feeling that schools have become overly focused on technology at the expense of effective, hands-on learning methods. Conversely, others argued for increased technology funding, stating that students must remain ahead of the curve regarding the internet, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and emerging technologies. Additionally, calls were made to improve IT infrastructure, assess the effectiveness of digital tools, and reduce unnecessary

printing in classrooms and board offices.

***Theme: Resources***

Respondents identified the provision of adequate resources for schools, staff, and students as a significant priority. This includes ensuring teachers have access to essential materials—such as paper, workbooks, textbooks, and other supplies, to effectively support instruction.

Furthermore, respondents indicated that improving technology infrastructure is crucial, specifically calling for the provision of devices like Chromebooks. The modernization of library resources, including both physical collections and online databases, was also highlighted as a key requirement necessitating dedicated funding. While there is support for technology integration, concerns exist regarding over-reliance on digital tools, with requests to limit screen time and reintroduce traditional learning resources, such as textbooks, to maintain a balanced educational approach.

***Theme: Core Academics and Inclusion Programs***

Respondents identified several areas where funding could be reallocated to strengthen core academics and instruction. Many suggested that the HDSB reduce funding for equity and inclusion programs to focus more on core subjects, aiming to increase academic excellence and future student success. Some argued that the HDSB directs too much attention and funding toward inclusion programs; however, other respondents noted the importance of anti-discrimination education and called for a more balanced approach. Additionally, respondents suggested that administrative expenditures, such as professional development, gifted programs, and technology infrastructure costs, could be cut to prioritize and enhance academic instruction.

***Theme: Financial Management & Accountability***

Respondents flagged financial management and accountability as areas of concern, offering many suggestions to improve efficiency and reduce wasteful spending. Respondents emphasized the need to cut unnecessary expenditures, such as excessive professional development (PD) and low-quality IT resources. One specific suggestion involved consolidating supply orders across schools to leverage bulk purchasing for cost-effectiveness. Additionally, some respondents called for greater transparency in budget allocation, advocating for detailed expense reports to ensure a clearer understanding of how funds are utilized.

***Theme: Transportation***

Comments regarding transportation focused on reducing costs and optimizing services. Many

respondents believe the school board should limit transportation eligibility, particularly for older students capable of using public transit or alternative means such as walking, biking, or carpooling. Proposals to reduce bus numbers included combining similar routes to address staffing shortages and optimizing routes using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Other ideas involved encouraging walking and biking for health benefits, consolidating services across school boards, and promoting carpooling. Some respondents also suggested charging parents for bussing, with exceptions for low-income families. The overall aim is to reduce redundant costs while ensuring equitable access to education.

### **Consider additional funding opportunities**

Respondents provided several suggestions for securing additional funding, including charging fees for non-Canadian students, actively recruiting international students, and pursuing government grants and philanthropic funding. It was proposed that hiring personnel with sales expertise could help attract international students, similar to strategies used by private schools. Another suggestion was to rent out HDSB facilities during evenings or summer months to create an additional revenue stream. Other ideas included increasing school fundraising opportunities and leveraging partnerships with local businesses or tech firms to sponsor various programs.

**Area 2: Please enter number 1, 2, or 3 in the box next to the area of most importance to you and that you feel the HDSB should keep in mind when making decisions about resource allocation and reductions.**

Respondents were asked to rank the areas of most importance to them in terms of what they believe the HDSB should keep in mind while making decisions about resource allocations and reductions. The list consisted of 12 options, which were:

- Student Learning and Achievement
- Special Education
- Safe Schools (e.g., student safety, etc.)
- Student Mental Health and Well-Being
- Environmental Leadership
- Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusive Education
- Indigenous Rights and Education
- Student Opportunities to Liaise with Community Partners
- Programs that Support Staff Mental Health and Well-Being
- Investment in Technology and Infrastructure (e.g., cyber security, etc.)
- School Repair and Maintenance
- Other (please specify)

As shown in Table A, Student Learning and Achievement emerged as the primary focus, securing 33% of first-place rankings. Safe Schools followed at 17%, while Special Education rounded out the top three at 14%. School Repair and Maintenance and Student Mental Health and Well-Being tied for fourth, each receiving 10% of the vote. All other priority areas received 6% or less votes.

In the "Other" category, respondents identified specific unique priorities, with feedback centered on reducing class sizes and lowering student-to-teacher ratios. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of maintaining frontline staff to ensure academic success. Furthermore, there were calls for increased funding for extracurriculars (such as sports and arts), mental health support, trades education, and specialized programs like AP, IB, and French Immersion. These investments were viewed as essential for increasing student retention, remaining competitive with Catholic and private school boards, and supporting students' overall academic and emotional well-being.

**Table A:** Respondents' Priority Areas: Ranking of Overall Votes

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>% of Votes</b>
1	Student Learning & Achievement	33%
2	Safe Schools	17%
3	Special Education	14%
4 (Tied)	School Repair and Maintenance	10%
4 (Tied)	Student Mental Health and Well-Being	10%