



Nicola  
Similkameen  
School District

Investing in our Future.

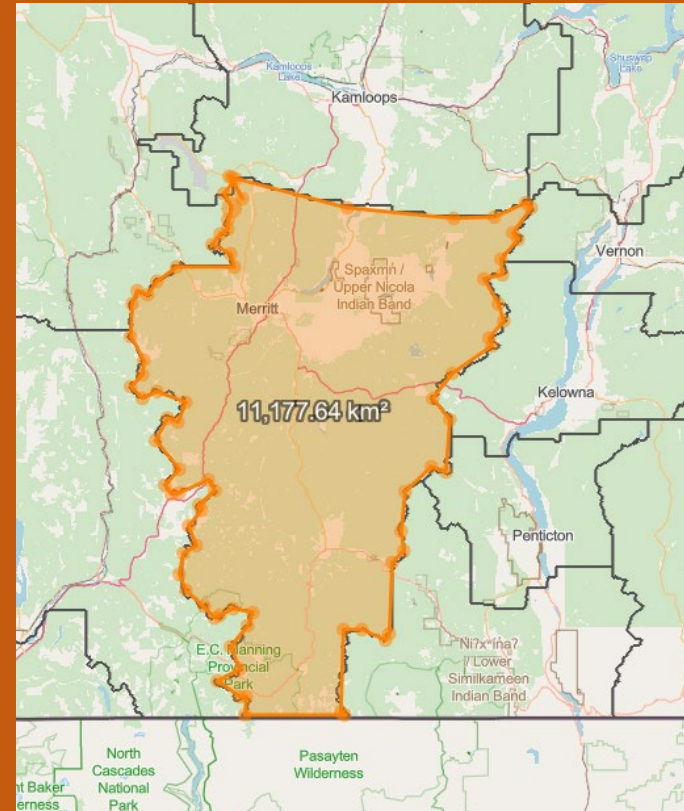
Prioritizing programs and services for our students.



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We humbly recognize and acknowledge that we learn, teach and work on the traditional unceded territories of the Nt̓eʔkepmx and Syilx people, and we acknowledge our Metis communities and their contributions to the Aboriginal ways of being and knowing.

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# Agenda

- 1) State of the District – PowerPoint (25 minutes) – provides background information about learning, finances, facilities, and enrollment.
- 2) Table Discussions
  - Trustees and/or Senior Staff will record the responses
  - Groups of 6-10 people
  - provide feedback to five questions on budget, school closure, and strategic plan

Nicola Similkameen School District Staff are reviewing four key factors that impact our ability to deliver its public education mandate. Our community engagement sessions provide information, share options and respond to questions as we plan for a sustainable future for our learners, their families and our communities.



# September Board Meeting

At the September 10, 2025, Public Board Meeting, the following motion was passed:

*“Be it resolved that the Board initiate the process to consider the possible closure of one of Merritt Central Elementary School or Collettsville Elementary School.”*

# Processes and Timelines

- **October to December 2025**
  - Fall Consultation
- **December 2025**
  - Data/Feedback Analysis **Release of Summary Reports Needed for Next Steps re**
  - School Closure
  - Strategic Planning
  - Annual Budget Consultation to Inform Preliminary Budget Preparation processes – January 2026
- **January & February 2026**
  - Second Round of Community Consultation on all 3 Processes
- **March 2026**
  - Board Decisions on School Closure and Strategic Plans Goals & Objectives
- **April 2026**
  - Board Decision on 26/27 Budget



# Purpose of Our Community Consultation Sessions

- to address issues of enrolment and capacity utilization that decrease the resources we have to provide the programs and services our students require.
- to share options we are considering to address efficient facility use.
- to align our next steps with the district's Strategic Plan, and with the changing needs of our community.
- The options the Board is considering will include the possibility of closing and/or consolidating schools and relocating programs.

# Fall 2025: Rights Holders and School Consultation Meetings

October 20, 2025		7:00 pm Merritt Central Elementary
October 28, 2025	4:30 pm Lower Nicola Indian Band	7:00 pm Collettville Elementary
October 29, 2025	5:00 pm Merritt Bench Elementary	7:00 pm Diamond Vale Elementary
October 30, 2025	5:00 pm Nicola-Canford Elementary	7:00 pm Merritt Secondary/CLC
November 4, 2025	5:30 pm Coldwater Band	
November 18, 2025	5:00 pm Upper Nicola Band	
December 1, 2025		7:00 pm All Princeton Schools Location: Princeton Secondary
December 3, 2025	Nooaitch/Shackan time TBD	

Schedule is on District Website. Posters have gone out by email and social media.



# Who are we?

- Nicola Similkameen serves the communities of Merritt and Princeton along with six local First Nations. The district currently enrolls approximately 1799 students in 9 schools, 27 in Alternate Programs and 344 (FTE) Distance Learning (SCIDES).
- Nicola Similkameen supports a diverse population including 39% of the student population who self-identify as having Indigenous ancestry (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit).
- Lower Nicola, Upper Nicola, Nooaitch, Shackan, Coldwater, and Upper Similkameen Indian Bands are local rightsholders.





# Programs & Services, Enrolment, Funding and Learning Spaces

- *We start by asking:*

- What programs and services do our learners need to thrive?
- What are our enrolment projections based on the best available data?
- How adequately will Ministry and other funding support the Board's Goals?
- What is the state of our facilities to provide appropriate learning space for effective and efficient program delivery?

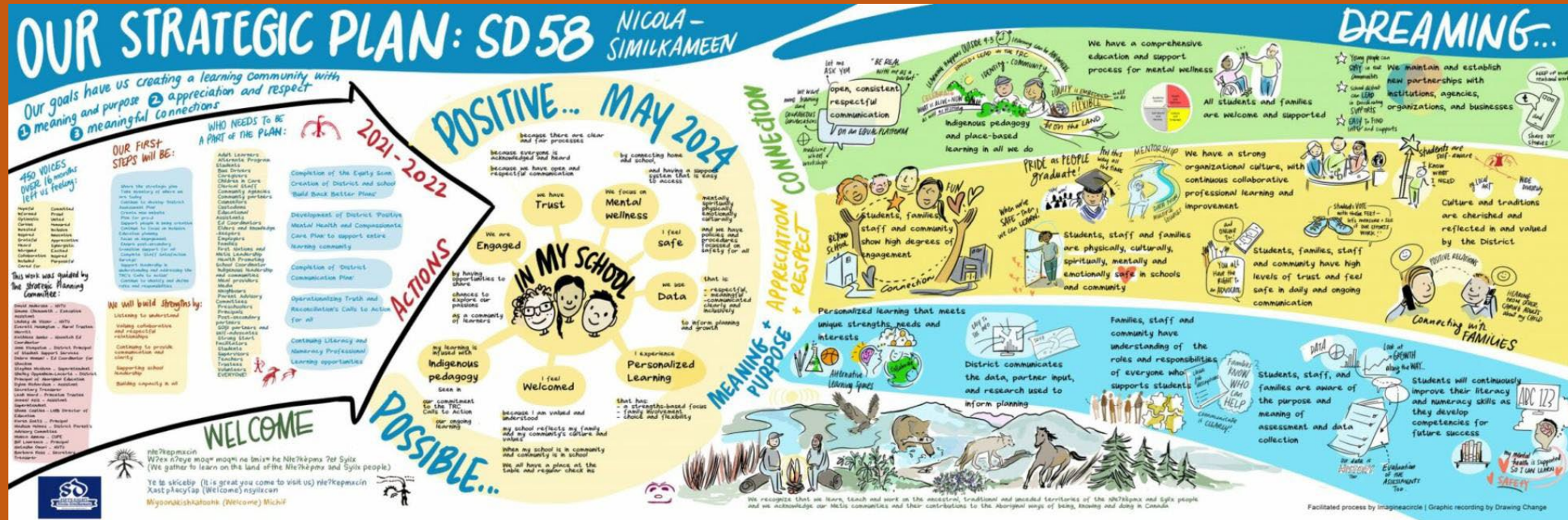
# Our Community Engagement sessions focus on four specific areas:

- Student performance data and the District Strategic Plan
- Enrolment projection trends based on demographic information
- Funding sources – Ministry and Local
- Long Range Facilities Inventory Assessment and Plans





## Part One - Programs and Services to Support Learners' Life Chances: Our Core Mandate



## School District Goal Areas:

Goal 1 – Meaning and Purpose  
Goal 2 – Appreciation and Respect  
Goal 3 - Connection

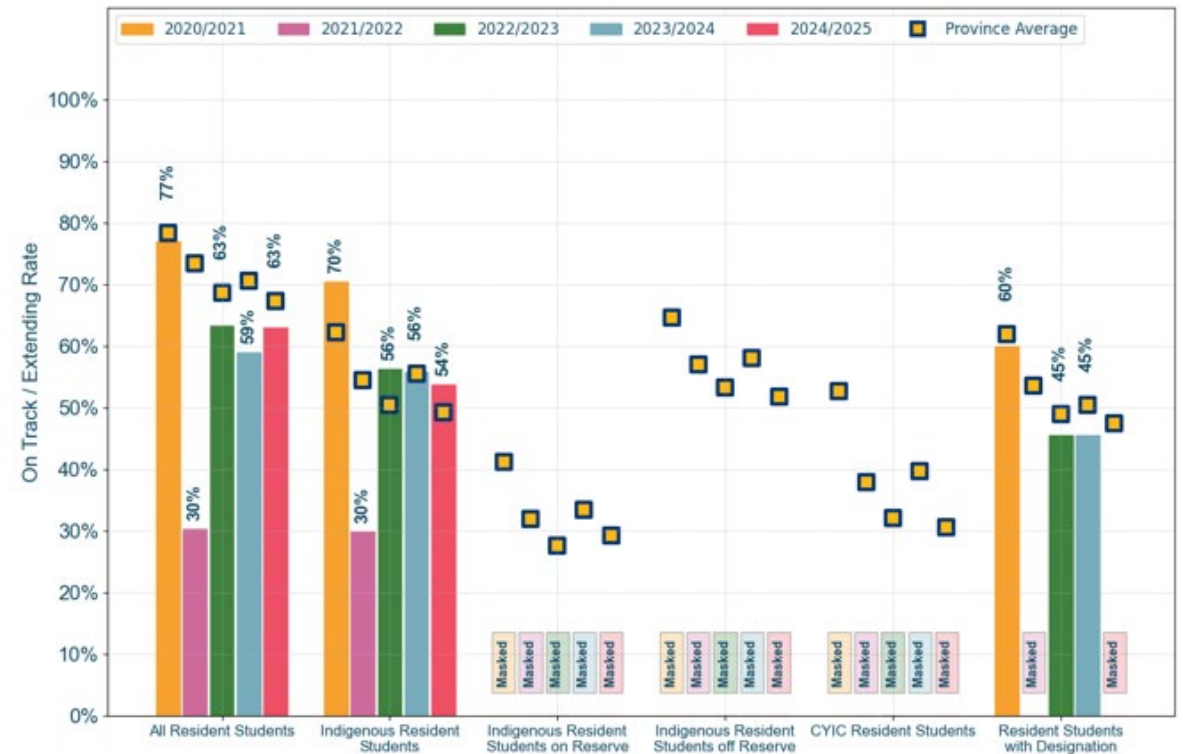


# Literacy Data – Grade 4 and 7

SD058 - Grade 4 FSA Literacy - On Track / Extending Rate

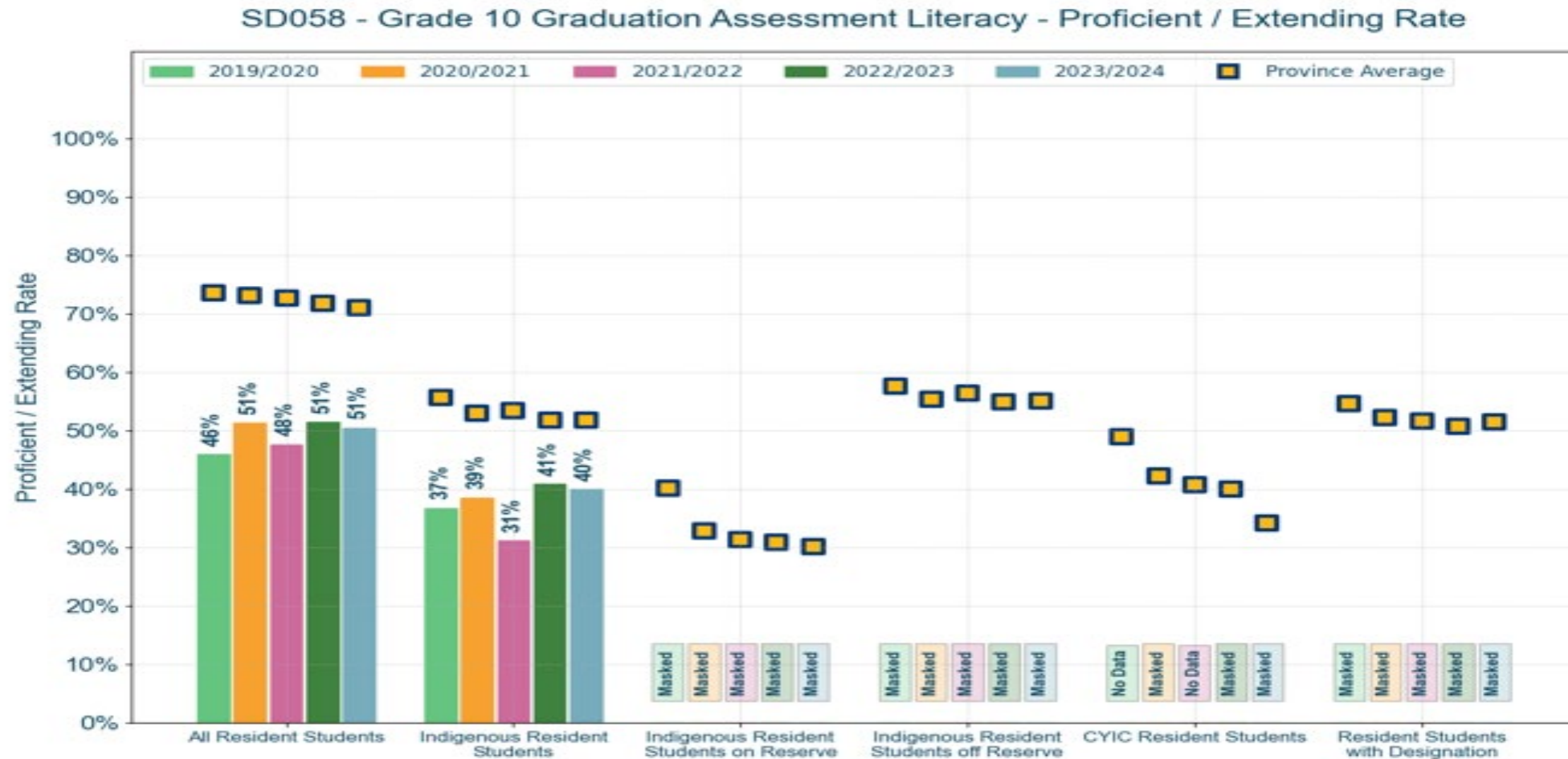


SD058 - Grade 7 FSA Literacy - On Track / Extending Rate



Below provincial average and the gap grows as our students move through the grades

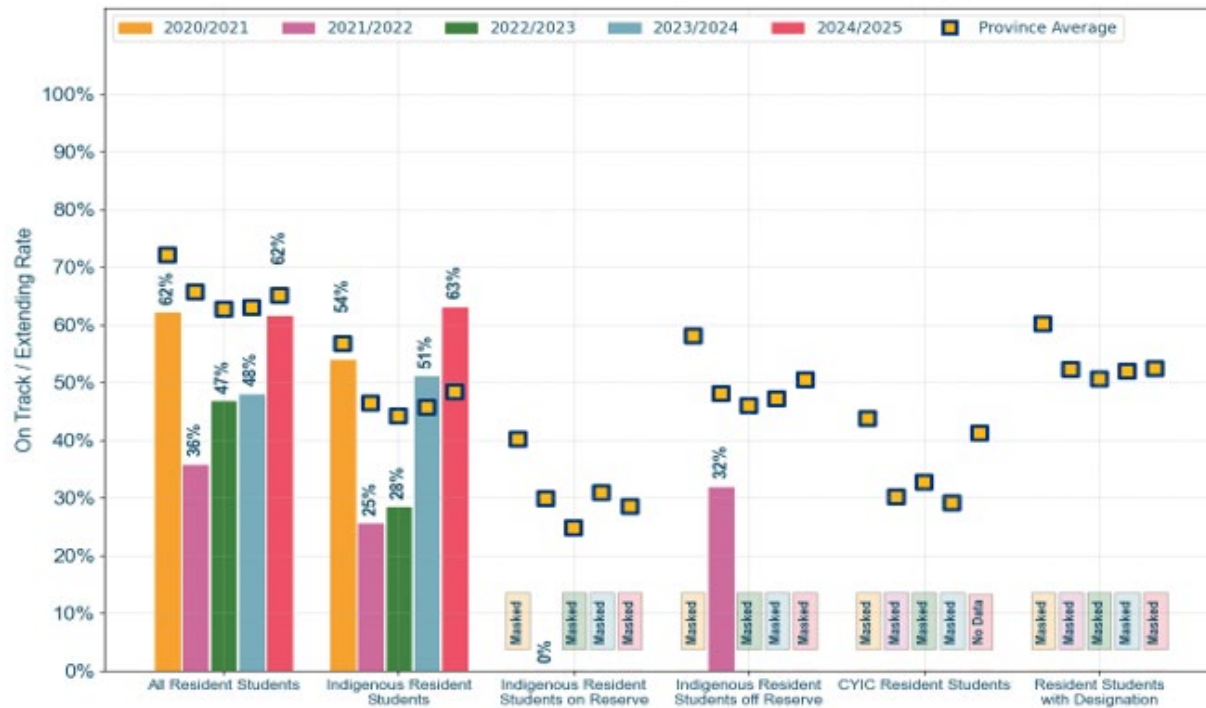
# Literacy Assessment – Grade 10



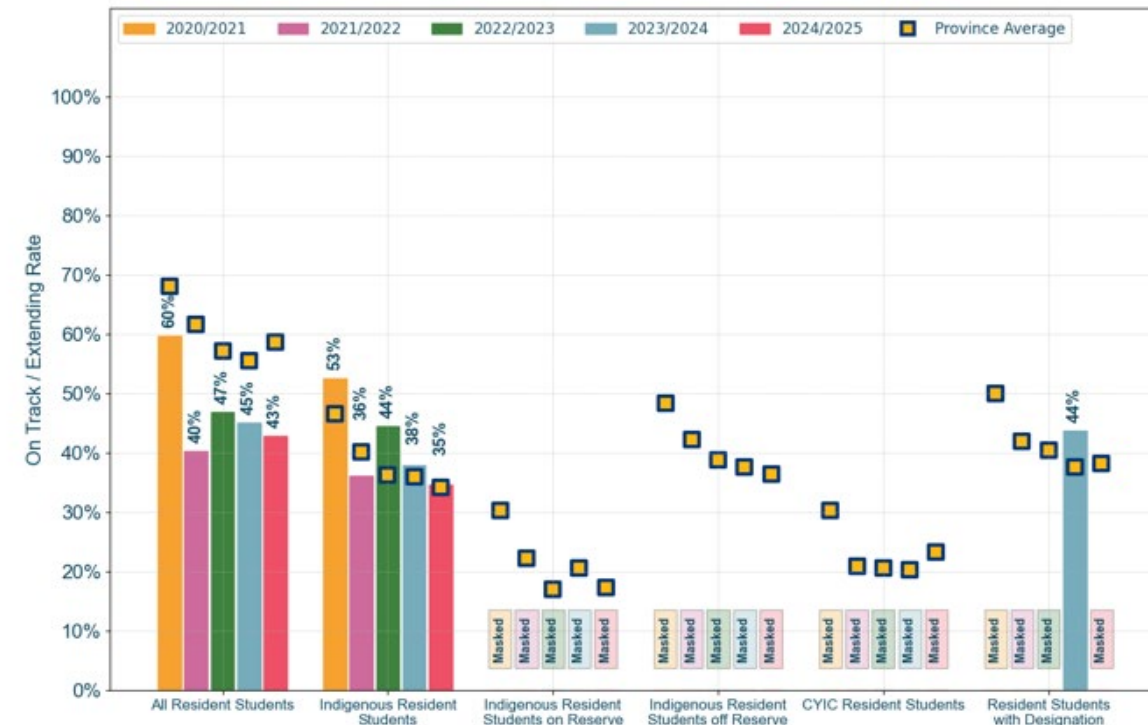
The gap continues to widen.

# Numeracy – Grade 4 and 7

SD058 - Grade 4 FSA Numeracy - On Track / Extending Rate



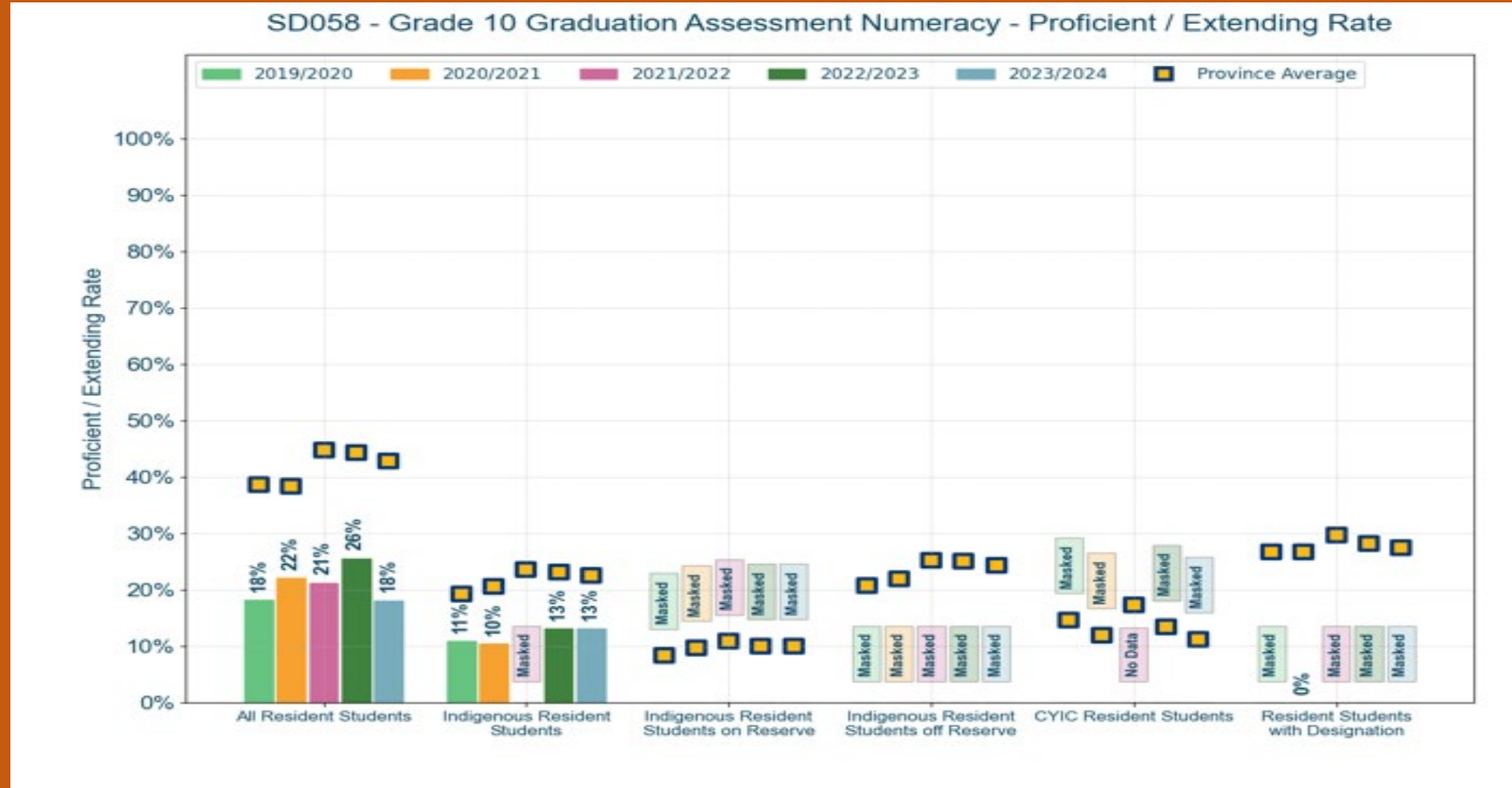
SD058 - Grade 7 FSA Numeracy - On Track / Extending Rate



While we have seen a rebound in Grade 4 results, we remain below Provincial average. There has been a significant decline in Grade 7, and we are well below provincial average

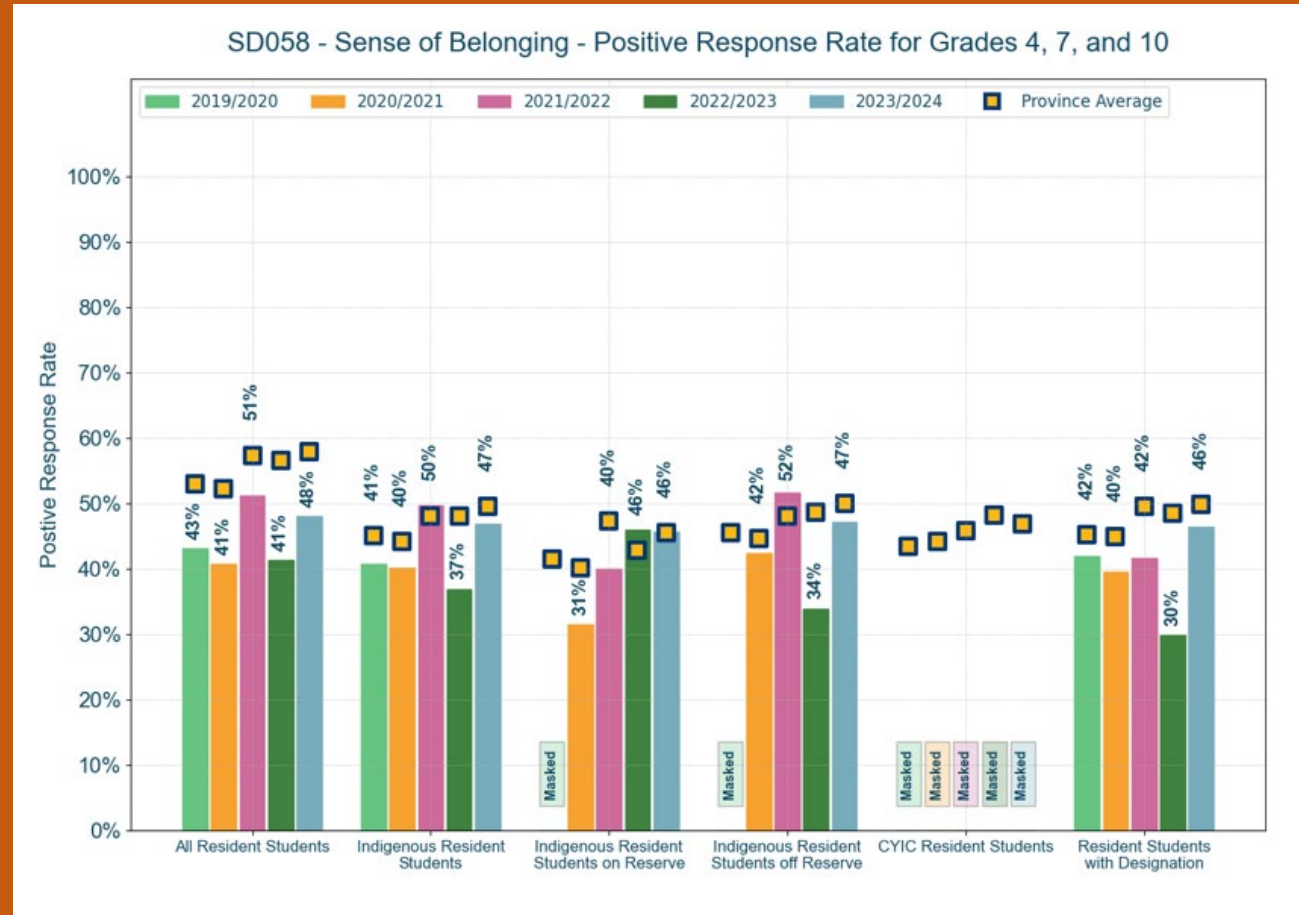


# Grade 10 - Numeracy



We are significantly below the Provincial average, and our results have dropped significantly in year-over-year- results.

# Sense of Belonging



While we saw significant year-over-year increases, we still remain below the province. Counsellors, Teachers, and EAs play a large role in creating this sense of belonging. Fewer staff means we are stretched and less able to meet diverse needs.

# The needs of our Students have changed over time.

*Growth in SPED Designations since 2019.*

Designations	2019	2025
Level 1 (Physically Dependent, Deaf and Blind)	(masked)	(masked) # the same
Level 2 (Autism, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Physical Disability, Visual Impairments, Chronic Health Impairments, Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities)	94	147
Level 3 Intensive Behaviour or Serious Mental Health	(masked)	(masked) reduced by 2
ELL	0	53
High Incidence (LD, mild intellectual disability, moderate behaviour, etc.)	178	196
Total	285	407

Increase of 56% in Level 2 (mostly Autism)    Increase of 43% overall designations



# The needs of our students have changed over time.

## Schools need to adjust:

- We have seen an increased need for **support for early learning and school readiness** for our primary students, and an overall need for the district to be flexible and innovative to meet the needs of all learners.
- Additional resources will allow us to maintain or increase the **mental health supports**, which continues to be a growing need.
- An overall need for the district to **be flexible and innovative** to meet the needs of all learners
- With declining enrolment, pressures on available funding, and increasing complexity in our student population, we can't sustain yesterday's operational expectations and address the needs of today's and tomorrow's learners.



## Part 2: Student enrolment and overall demographic information

1

Birth rates from  
BC Vital Statistics

2

Yield from birth  
rates over the  
past 10 years

3

Grade to grade  
transition trends

4

Community  
Planning  
Information

# Enrolment patterns have changed over time, and our schools need to adjust. The evidence indicates:

- There is a need to consider school closure and consolidation
- The inefficient use of school space places unsustainable operational cost pressures on the district.
- The most efficient use of funds through “right sizing” our school district will allow more supports to maintain and enhance student programs and services.





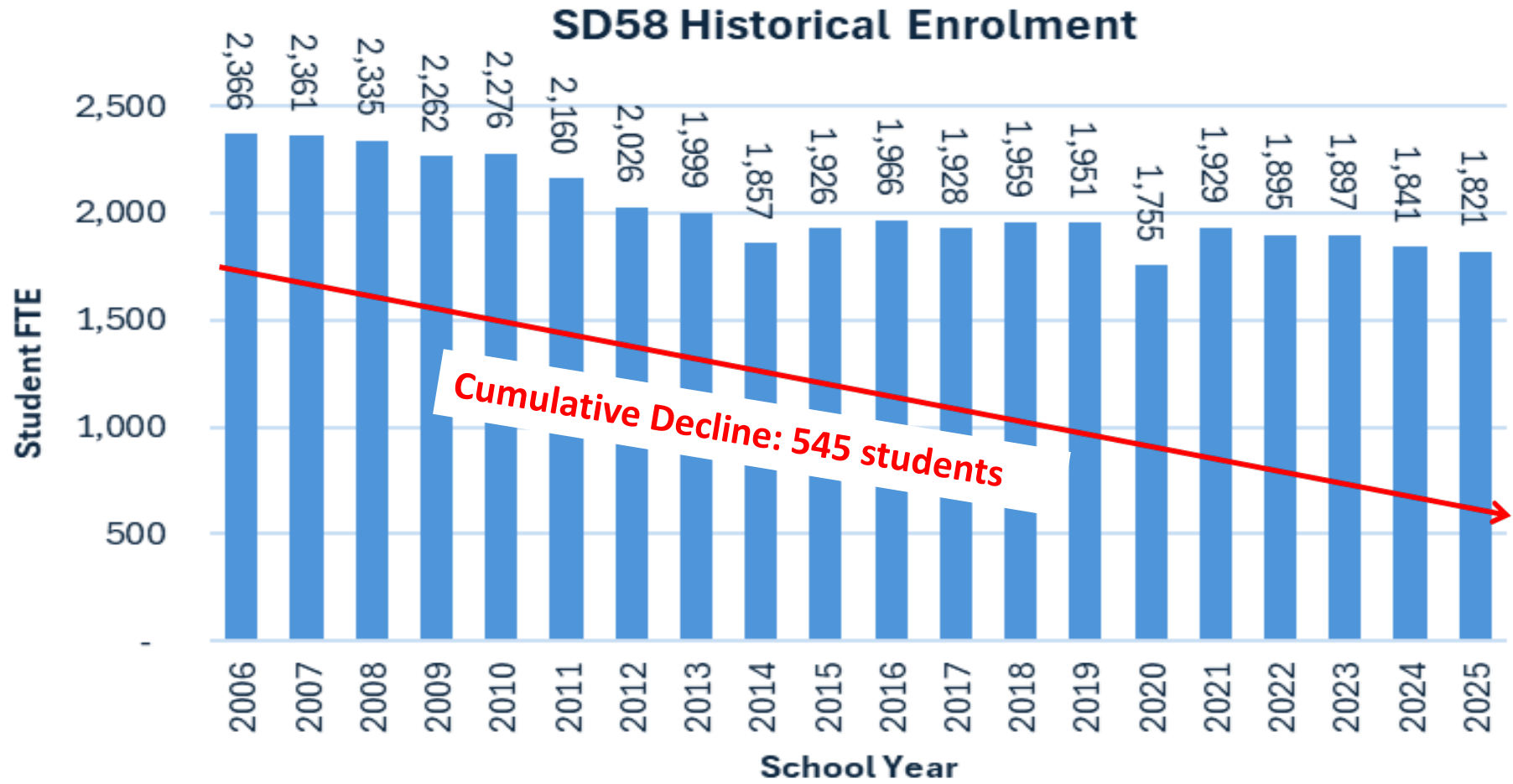
## 84% of Nicola Similkameen funding is enrolment based.

- Over the last 20 years, the district's enrolment has decreased overall by approximately:

*545 students (23%)*

- Projections are estimates based on multiple sources of data including historical trends, birth data from Vital Statistics, BC Census Data, and local knowledge, including discussion with local governments, and accessing Official Community Plan documents.



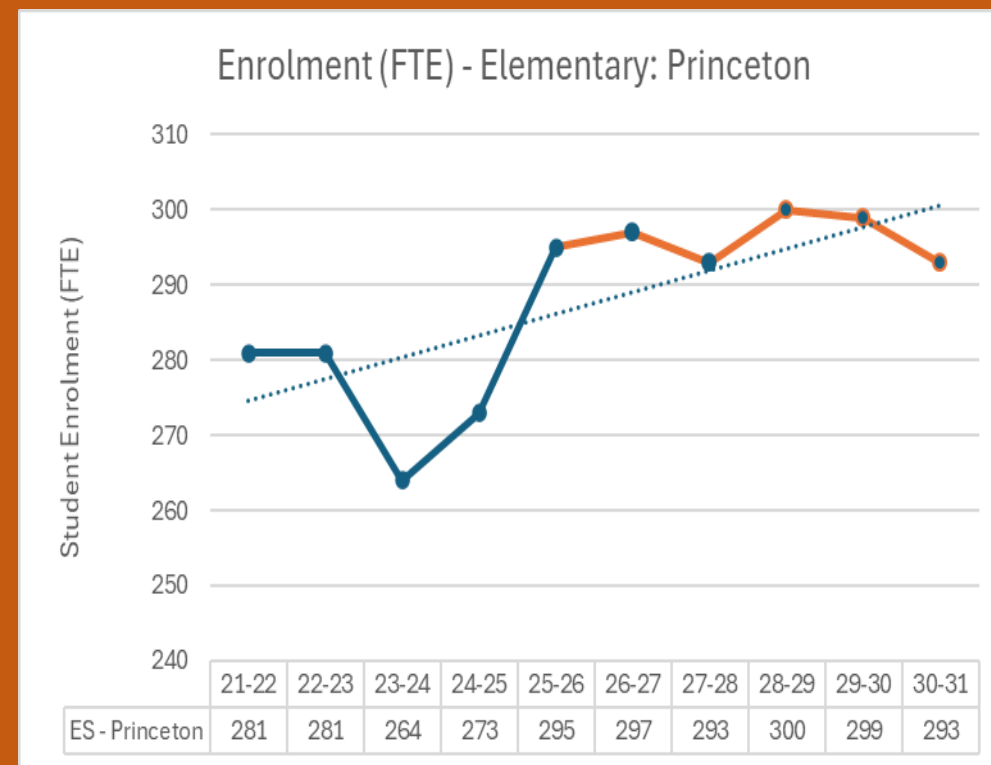
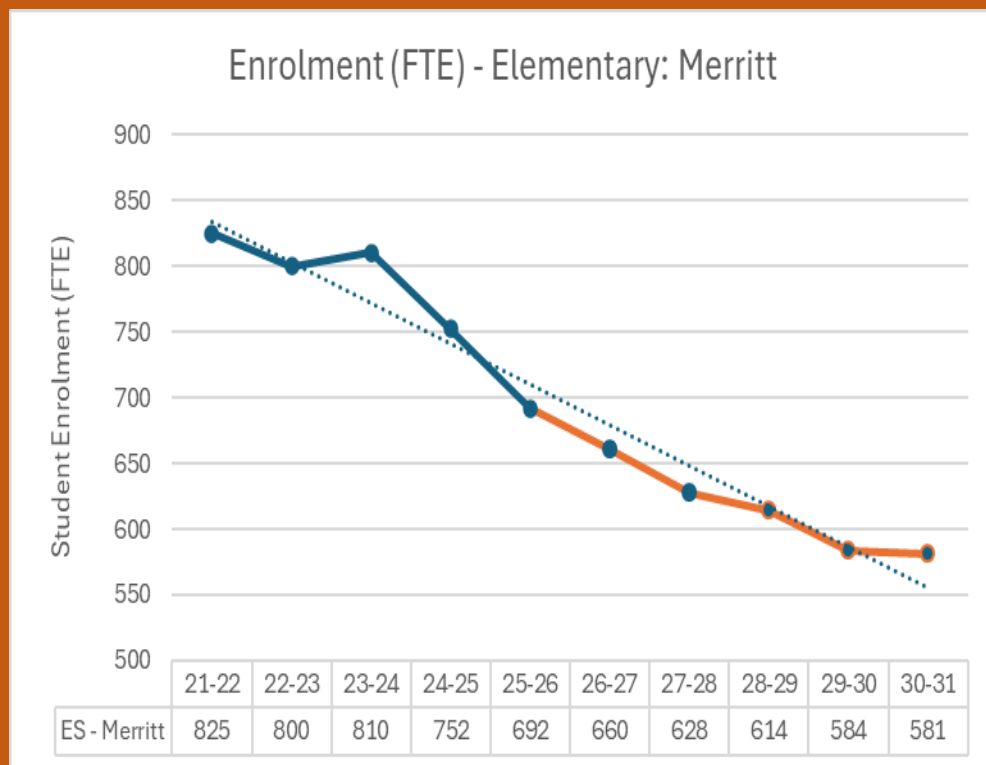


# Capacity Utilization

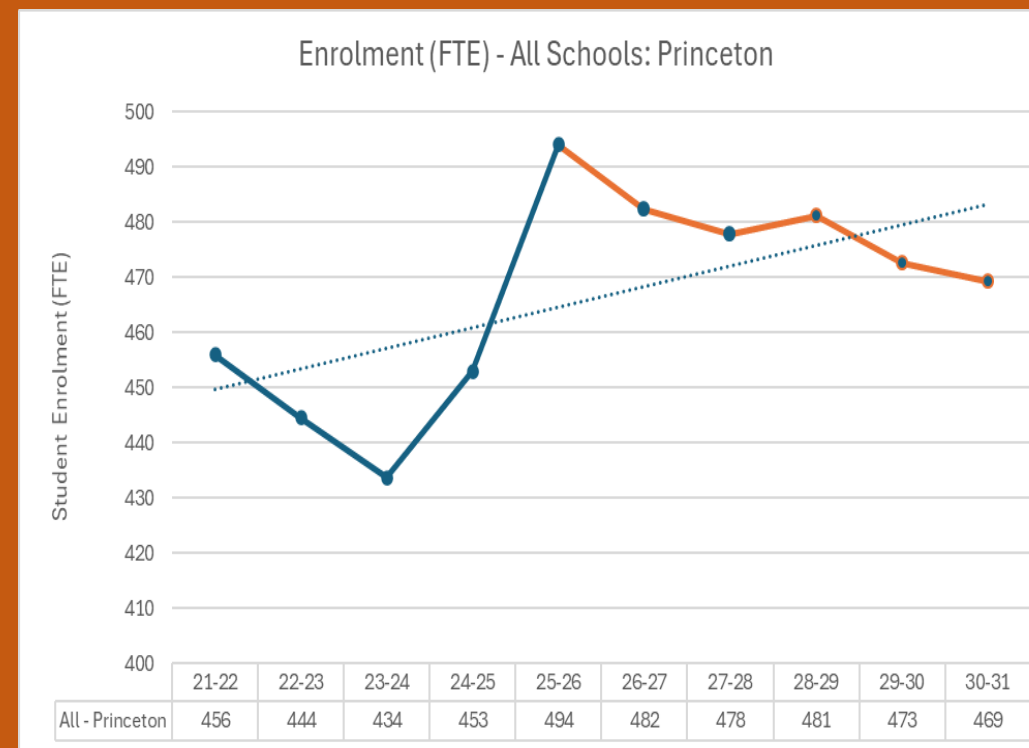
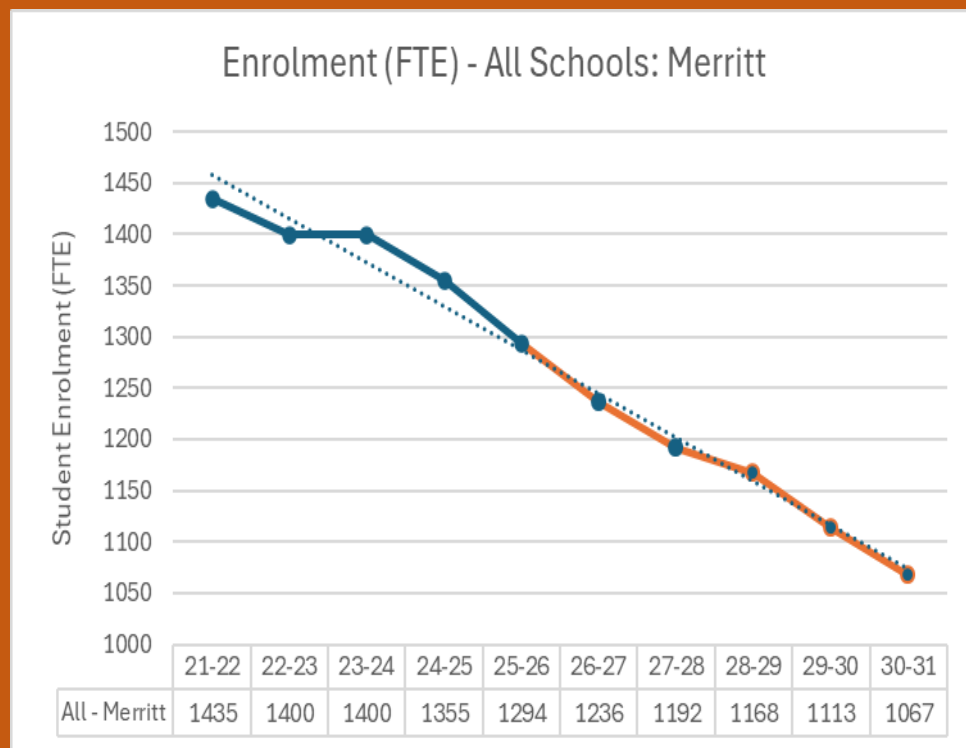
		Capacity	Enrolment	Utilization
Merritt	Collettsville Elementary	195	112	57%
Merritt	Diamond Vale Elementary	265	122	46%
Merritt	Merritt Bench Elementary	120	143	119%
Merritt	Merritt Central Elementary	320	203	63%
Merritt	Nicola Canford Elementary	170	119	70%
Merritt	Merritt Secondary	675	605	90%
Princeton	John Allison Elementary	145	151	104%
Princeton	Vermillion Forks Elementary	195	144	74%
Princeton	Princeton Secondary	325	200	62%
		<b>2,410</b>	<b>1,799</b>	<b>74.6%</b>



# Enrolment trends (Elementary)



# Enrolment trends (Regional)



## Part 3: How we are funded is based on the number of students in our district

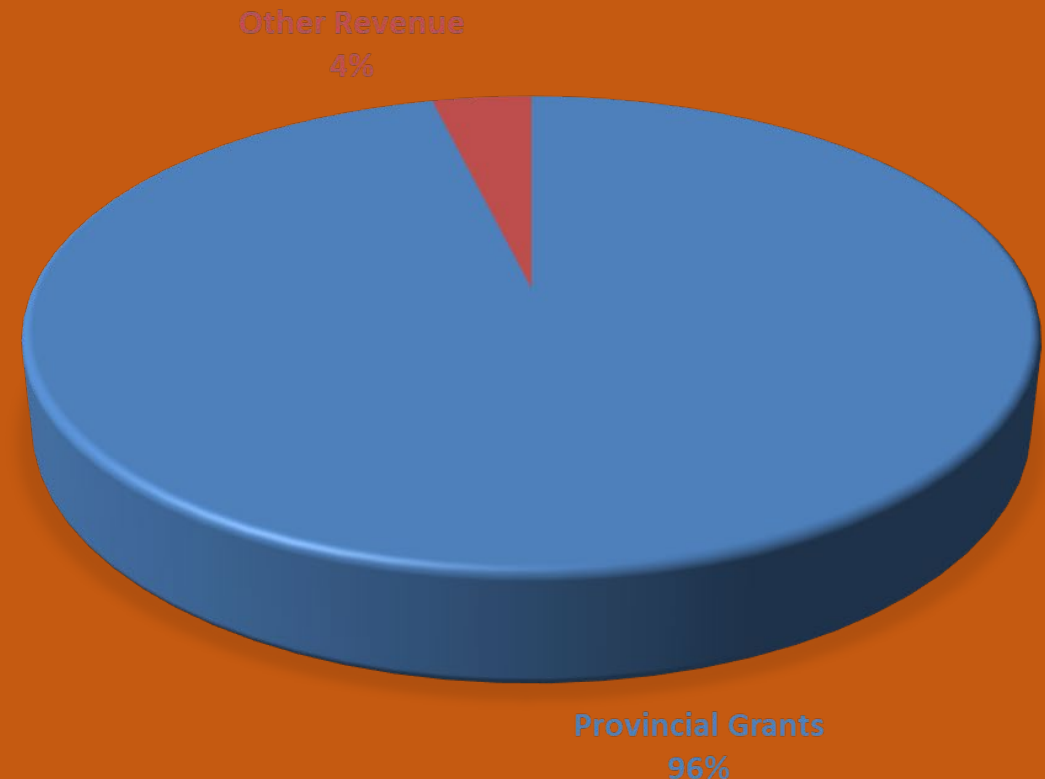
- All school districts in BC are provided funding based on a per-pupil model – districts are provided funding based on every child registered in a school as of September 30<sup>th</sup> in a school year.
- Funding occurs based on Full Time Equivalent or FTE student numbers for elementary students and on a course count for secondary (8 courses = 1 FTE).
- The funding provided is in “a block” – we are not provided with specific funding for heating, lighting, transportation or other “basic costs” of running our schools.
- On average, we receive about \$11,500 per student.
- There are other funding sources, targeted to support Inclusive Education and Indigenous Education, but the basic allocation amount is the bulk of our funding.



# How School Districts are funded is based on student enrolment.

96% of district funding is from the Ministry of Education and Child Care and is based on student enrolment.

Full Time Equivalency (FTE) is the structure used to determine funding.



Other Revenue = International tuition, Rentals/Leases, Investment Income, Misc. Revenue

*\*other revenue includes International tuition, rentals and leases, investment income and miscellaneous).*

# Cost Pressures



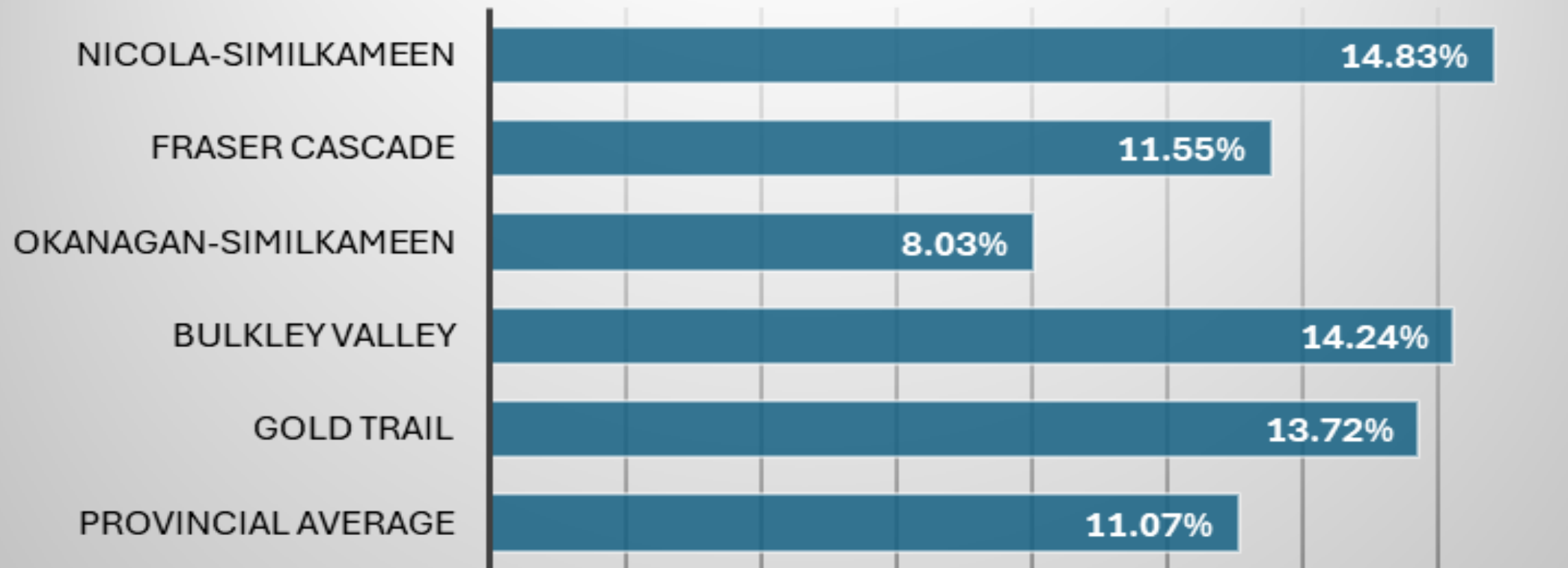
Every year the district faces unfunded inflationary cost pressures of up to \$0.25 Million.

These annual pressures include:

- Transportation increases
- Utilities/Fuel increases
- Replacement/illness costs
- Benefit premium increases (WCB, CPP, EI, pension, health/dental)

# Operations and Maintenance

% of total budget



Similar sized districts (Total budget and student enrolment)



## Part 4: Core areas of Long-Range Facility Plan (LRFP)

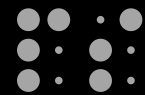
The LRFP guides the board's decisions regarding facility operations. It uses a ten-year planning horizon with a focus on three core areas:

- 1. Confirming School Capacity Utilization** - school districts use the total number of students (called headcount) that can be supported in each school to determine operational capacity. The MECC has a formula that identifies capacity (Area Standards), and class size and composition language also inform school operating capacity.
- 2. Projecting Enrolment** – reviewing projected student enrolment over time (5 years) to ensure schools are meeting student needs in each community.
- 3. Financial responsibility** – identifying funding challenges to align long-term financial and sustainability goals to ensure adequate funds are available for educational programs.

# Confirming School Capacity Utilization



How efficiently a group of schools is used is called “Capacity Utilization”.



Some of our schools are at capacity, while others have excess space.



Inefficient use of schools creates cost pressures on the district to operate and maintain buildings that are not being efficiently utilized.

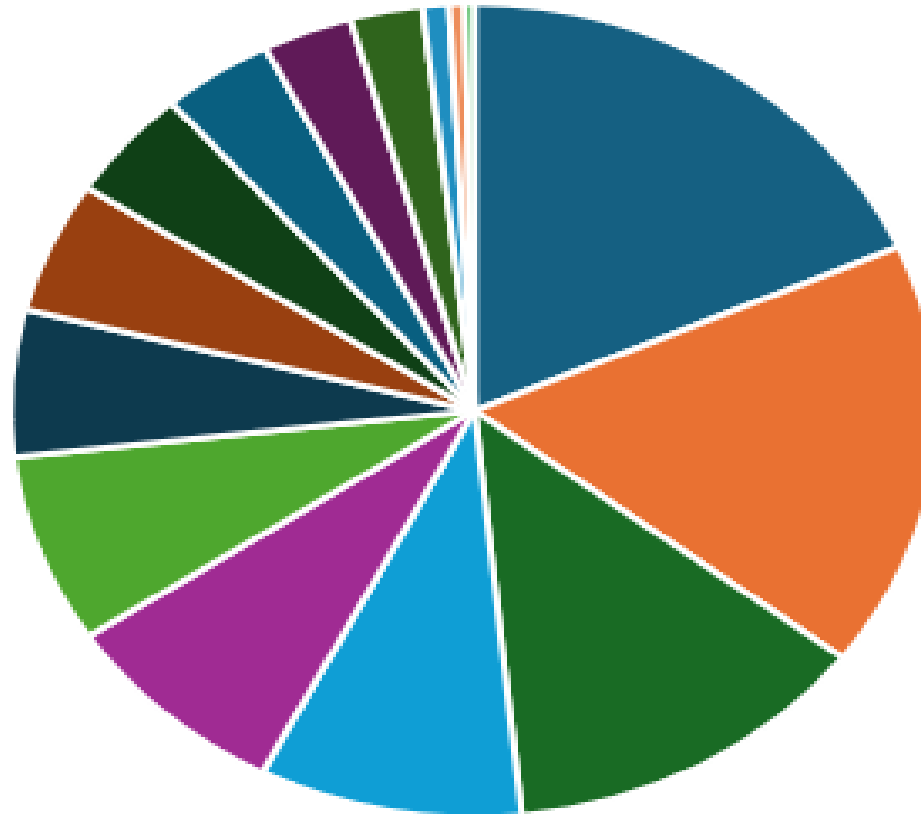
# Deferred Maintenance

Merritt Central will require \$2.3 million of capital upgrades within the next 10 years and a further \$1.8 million in 10-15 years.

Collettsville will require \$1.1 million of capital upgrades within the next 10 years.

Need to keep in mind opportunity cost of Ministry funding maintenance projects on ALL district facilities.

## School Maintenance Requests



- Merritt Board Office / Maintenance Yard
- Merritt Central Elementary
- Merritt Secondary
- Princeton Secondary School
- Diamond Vale Elementary School
- Collettville Elementary
- Merritt Bench Elementary
- Nicola Canford Elementary
- Vermillion Forks Elementary
- John Allison Elementary
- Princeton Maintenance Yard
- Coquihalla Middle School
- Riverside Learning Centre
- Kengard Learning Centre
- Princeton Board Office



# A Bottom Line:



**Inefficient use of buildings  
+  
decreased funding based on enrolment  
decline  
+  
Inflationary and other cost pressures  
=  
Continued  
Operational Cost Pressures  
and Budget Challenges**

**Resulting in Fewer Programs and  
Services for Students**

# Part 5 : Table Talk Primer: *If there is a dollar on the table...*

	Central	Collettsville
Staffing (mainly Admin & Secretary)	\$ 428,842	\$420,349
School Budgets	20,984	20,984
Maintenance/ Custodial	23,240	11,886
Utilities	43,087	41,639
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 516,153</b>	<b>\$494,856</b>

Savings allow us to sustain the equivalent to 4.5 FTE teaching positions or close to 11 EA positions

In contrast, doing nothing will bring about deficits of \$477,000 and \$879,000 over the next two years respectively.

Closures and efficient use of learning spaces protect programs and services for all students



# Nicola Similkameen School District

## Potential School Closure Website Page and Online Feedback

- We have a dedicated webpage on our District Website:
  - Under “Our District,” you will see “Potential School Closure Process.”
  - This page will house the Questions and Answers documents.
- We have also set up a dedicated email: [schoolclosure2025@sd58.bc.ca](mailto:schoolclosure2025@sd58.bc.ca)
  - Both feedback and questions can be submitted to this email.