

December 11, 2025

Introduction:

We would like to express our thanks as a Board and District for the parents and families, students, staff, Rightsholders, and stakeholders who took the time to come to our consultation sessions, as well as share their thoughts by letter or email. A potential school closure is a difficult process for all involved, especially for those whose school may close. Below is a summary of the consultation meetings with the five local Bands, as well as the summaries from the community consultation meetings. The summaries have been organized thematically.

Community/Band Consultation Meetings Dates – Fall 2025

We have completed 11 community consultations to date at:

- Central Elementary – October 20, 2025
- Lower Nicola Indian Band – October 28, 2025
- Collettville Elementary – October 28, 2025
- Bench Elementary – October 29, 2025
- Diamond Vale Elementary – October 29, 2025
- Nicola-Canford Elementary – October 30, 2025
- Merritt Secondary School and Community Learning Center – October 30, 2025
- Coldwater Indian Band – November 4, 2025
- Upper Nicola Indian Band – November 18, 2025
- Princeton Schools (All) – December 1, 2025
- Nooaitch and Shackan Indian Bands – December 3, 2025

The PowerPoint from the community consultation is linked here: [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

These are the five questions used at the table meetings:

1. *What other information would be helpful to understand potential budget strategies and options, including the potential for school closures?*
2. *If the District had a dollar left on the table. rank how that money should be spent?*

Rank	
	Staffing
	Services and resources for students
	Maintaining all current schools

3. *Please comment on the pro's and cons of each POTENTIAL scenario.*

Collettsville closes, French Immersion moves to Diamond Vale, and it becomes a dual-track school
Central closes; students move between Collettsville (becomes dual-track), Diamond Vale, and Nicola Canford through catchment reconfiguration. Bench is over capacity.
Central closes; French immersion moves to Diamond Vale; Central moves to Collettsville.
Do you have other scenarios for the board to consider?

4. *What should be the top three priorities in our new Strategic Plan?*

5. *What else do you think the Board should be considering to meet current and future budget challenges?*

Band Consultation Summary

1. Need for More Information & Clarity

Across all communities, people expressed a strong need for clearer, deeper, and more transparent information to fully understand the funding formula and each potential school-closure scenario. Many requested more details about school capacities, enrolment patterns, and why enrolment is declining—especially at CV. Questions were also raised about why CMS is not being used and how catchments might be adjusted. Communities want to understand how many students are in each school, the capacity of each building, class sizes, and how these factors influence long-term planning.

There is also a significant desire for fiscal clarity. Participants want to know how the budget directly affects children, why per-student funding is not increasing, and what maintenance and capital needs exist (such as CV upgrades). They also asked about the role of provincial and federal governments, their mandates, the potential sale value of Central, and whether all possible funding sources have been explored.

Many people requested clearer explanations of how each scenario would impact budget savings, family logistics, transportation and bus routes, student mental health, transitions, and supports for students with inclusive needs. Communities also asked for examples from other districts or previous closures to help them understand the potential impacts. In addition, several questions focused on Indigenous programming, including the future of FIM, language-teacher availability, and interest in Indigenous language immersion or partnerships with Indigenous organizations.

2. Where to Invest if Funds Remain

Across all communities, there was strong alignment on spending priorities. The top priority is staffing and student services, particularly inclusive education supports, counselling and mental health resources, EA support, tutoring, early-years services, learning interventions, and ISA support. Other suggested investments include food programs, transportation, sports, classroom resources, and building or maintenance work. However, facilities spending was consistently ranked the lowest priority unless safety was involved.

3. Pros & Cons of School-Closure Scenarios

Communities provided varied feedback on closure options, but several themes emerged.

Scenario 1: CV closes, FIM to DV (dual-track)

A few participants felt that fewer students would be disrupted and that a larger combined population could support social and cultural mixing. However, many expressed concerns about transitions, language-teacher shortages, mental health impacts, and the added challenges experienced by families already facing poverty.

Scenario 2: MC closes, redistribution to CV/DV/NC

Some felt it “makes most sense to close Central,” and believed it could work if catchments were well designed. Despite this, it was still the least popular scenario across all communities. Concerns focused on isolation, difficult transitions, and general safety issues.

Scenario 3: MC closes, FIM to DV, MC students to CV

The main advantage noted was that students would stay together, which communities valued highly. However, closing a school community remained a major concern, along with the emotional and transitional impacts seen across all scenarios.

Additional suggestions included considering MC as a dual-track school, reopening the middle school, and developing more efficient programming or structural changes before resorting to closures.

4. Top Strategic Plan Priorities

Communities shared common themes regarding long-term district priorities. The highest priority is student well-being, including mental health, self-worth, safe and stable environments, and supports for trauma, grief, and loss. Core learning—particularly literacy, numeracy, early-years foundations, and high-quality teaching—is another major focus. Cultural revitalization and belonging also emerged as central themes, emphasizing community connection, Indigenous ways of knowing, and the belief that “it takes a community to raise a child.” Finally, relationships and communication are a key priority, with calls for transparency, strengthened partnerships with communities, and better engagement with Bands and Nations.

5. Additional Considerations for the Board

Communities consistently expressed that students should be kept together, as splitting cohorts is strongly opposed and increases the risk of trauma. More meaningful consultation was also a frequent request, with communities calling for deeper collaboration with Bands, respect for cultural needs, and time to process complex information.

Safety continues to be a major theme, especially regarding bus route changes and ensuring emotionally and physically safe school environments. Communities also emphasized the need to support diverse learners through inclusive education, inclusive education services, mental-health supports, and smaller class sizes, expressing concern that closures would increase class sizes.

Many expressed interest in community-based problem solving, including fundraising, offering help directly, and using LEAs to guide decisions. Participants urged the Board to explore all options before closure, including maintenance solutions, new funding models, use of CMS, strategic student distribution, and adjusting grade structures, such as moving Grade 7 to secondary. Communities also want the district to examine what nearby districts are doing in literacy and numeracy and learn from past closures.

6. To Be Noted

Upper Nicola indicated that the community will hold its own meeting(s), without the District present, in order to process the information independently. Communities also expect follow-up communication after their January 28 meeting.

Another consideration is that Central is the school of choice for both Upper Nicola and Coldwater Bands. Bill 40 gives the right for each First Nation to designate a “school of choice.” The Bands will need to do a consultation with their members if Central closes and determine which school would become their new school of choice. This has potential impacts on catchment areas and whether the District will need to return all out-of-catchment students to their neighbourhood school or whether current out-of-catchment students can be “grandfathered.”

Summary of All School Community Consultations

Across all meetings, participants consistently asked for clear, transparent financial information to understand the funding formula and the rationale behind potential school closures. Parents, staff, and community members repeatedly requested detailed breakdowns of infrastructure costs, work orders, capital needs, administrative expenses, class sizes, transportation costs, program-specific funding (especially French Immersion), long-term enrollment projections, and catchment impacts for every school—not just the two being considered for closure. Many wanted comparisons with other districts, historical data on administrative growth, and explanations of why certain schools (e.g., Bench, DV) were not included in the closure scenarios. There was strong concern about the accuracy, clarity, and accessibility of financial information, with several groups requesting maps, charts, glossary terms, and more visual and scenario-based modelling.

See the Community Consultation Questions and Answers – Part 1 Document for information on these topics: <https://www.nssd.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2025-12/Community%20Consultation%20Questions%20and%20Answers%20-%20Nov.28.25.pdf>

A major theme was the desire to understand the impact on students, staff, and communities. Many noted that schools serve as community hubs and feared consequences for student wellbeing, mental health, safety, and relationships—especially for vulnerable and neurodivergent learners. People expressed deep worry about walking safety, transportation challenges, sidewalks, and flooding risks, and the emotional toll of displacement on students, families, and staff. Numerous tables warned that moving the French Immersion program—particularly from CV—could erode its culture, identity, enrollment, and long-term viability, with some fearing the program could collapse if moved or dual-tracked. Others felt that any scenario that splits cohorts across multiple schools risks damaging friendships, cultural continuity, and school identity.

Concerns about trust, process, and communication emerged across all sites. Some said they felt unheard, that the process appeared predetermined, and that missing information made it difficult to participate meaningfully. There were repeated calls for greater transparency, early communication about catchment changes, open meetings, summaries of consultation notes, and more time to digest data. Many wanted the Board to demonstrate stronger advocacy to the province on funding issues before considering closures.

When asked where an extra dollar should be spent, there was widespread agreement—across nearly every school—that staffing, student supports, and frontline services should be the top priority. Maintaining safe and functional buildings came second, but participants often emphasized that supports for students (counsellors, EAs, SSTs, basic needs programs) must not be reduced. Some at CV declined to answer without a clearer understanding of current expenditures.

Views on the proposed scenarios varied, but several patterns emerged. Many felt that closing MC would impact the greatest number of students and create major transportation and equity challenges, though some acknowledged that MC requires costly upgrades. Closing CV and moving FIM to DV was seen as the least disruptive in some groups but highly concerning to others due to concerns over dual-track space limitations, loss of French culture, and DV's smaller library and aging infrastructure. The scenario where MC closes, and FIM moves to DV while MC students shift to CV was often described as the most disruptive, displacing multiple school communities. Some groups suggested entirely different options, such as rebuilding Central, creating primary/intermediate configurations, moving programs into underused spaces, selling or leasing surplus properties, or exploring Indigenous immersion or Outdoor Ed programs to boost enrollment.

For the Strategic Plan, participants emphasized student well-being, literacy and numeracy, staff wellness and retention, safe facilities, strong relationships, and meaningful learning that connects to real-world skills and local culture. Many highlighted the need to support teacher morale, expand diverse learning pathways, strengthen connections and communication, and improve social-

emotional wellness. A number of groups declined to engage on Strategic Planning due to frustration with the closure process.

Finally, when asked what else the Board should consider, people urged attention to bussing solutions, catchment clarity, the future of FIM, emotional impacts, community culture, and opportunities to generate revenue through leasing, selling properties, or co-locating programs such as childcare. Several expressed concern that any closure may lead families to leave the district, enroll in band schools, or move to homeschooling or SCIDES. *Across all sites, the overarching message was to protect relationships, minimize student disruption, prioritize transparency, and ensure decisions genuinely reflect community input.*

Below are links to the summaries for each individual consultation meeting, as well as a link to a glossary of education abbreviations.

[Glossary of Education Abbreviations.pdf](#)

[Merritt Central Consultation Summary - Oct.20.2025.pdf](#)

[Lower Nicola Band Consultation Summary - Oct.28.2025.pdf](#)

[Collettville Consultation Summary - Oct.28.2025.pdf](#)

[Bench Consultation Summary - Oct.29.2025.pdf](#)

[Diamond Vale Consultation Summary - Oct.29.2025.pdf](#)

[Nicola-Canford Consultation Summary - Oct.30.2025.pdf](#)

[Merritt Secondary Consultation Summary - Oct.30.2025.pdf](#)

[Coldwater Band - Consultation Summary - Nov.4.2025.pdf](#)

[Microsoft Word - Upper Nicola Consultation Summary](#)

[Microsoft Word - Princeton Consultation Summary](#)

[Microsoft Word - Nooaitch and Shackan Consultation Summary](#)

Next Steps:

A second round of consultation meetings has been scheduled for January and February 2026:

January 6, 2026

6:00 pm

Central & Collettville, Merritt Central Gym

January 19, 2026

6:00 pm

MSS/CLC/Diamond Vale/Bench & Nicola Canford

MSS Multi-Purpose Room

January 28, 2026

5:00 pm

Rocky Pines Community Centre

Lower Nicola Band, Nooaitch Band and Shackan Band

January 29, 2026

5:00 pm

Upper Nicola Band

N'kwala School Gym

Dinner at 5:00

February 2, 2026

5:00 pm

Coldwater Indian Band

Coldwater School Gym

Dinner at 5:00 pm

Format for the Consultation:

1. Summary of What We Heard
2. Four Scenarios
3. Question and Answer Period

If you have additional questions or requests for information, please complete the form below. It is also linked on our website.

[Preparing for our January & February 2026 Consultation Meetings](#)

Timeline of Process:

- Secondary Community Consultation on all 3 Processes – January-February 2026
- Board Decisions on School Closure and Strategic Plans Goals & Objectives – March 2026
- BoE Decision on 26/27 Budget – April 2026