

January 30, 2026

We are aware of the recent Facebook post on Merritt Wire. Some of the information shared does not accurately reflect how public reporting works and may lead to misunderstandings. Because financial and compensation reports have different reporting requirements and formats, the information can be easily misinterpreted. We are operating from the assumption that the post writer misunderstood the reports rather than misconstrued the information to serve a specific narrative.

We would like to provide clarification and accurate context below.

Each year, the district publishes two public reports: the Executive Compensation Disclosure and the Statement of Financial Information (SOFI). These reports serve different purposes and have different reporting thresholds. The salary for the Superintendent and the next four highest paid executives (exempt employees) over \$125,000 appear with on the Executive Compensation Disclosure, while earnings over \$75,000 are included in the SOFI report. This is why many employee groups, including teachers, appear on the SOFI list.

Inaccurate Facebook Statement – “Given the current situation of our district, it would seem logical to return to an administrative model like that in place in 2020/2021, which saw three positions over higher enrollment at an expense of \$587, 246.”

In 2020-2021, the reported exempt positions were:

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent
- Secretary Treasurer

Other Exempt positions that were not part of the Executive Compensation Disclosure were:

- District Principal of Indigenous Education
- District Principal of Inclusive Education
- Assistant Secretary Treasurer
- Manager of Human Resources

This is seven positions, not three. Moreover, these positions have existed since amalgamation, which is over 30 years ago, with various titles over the years. Total cost for all seven positions would have been \$1,147,133.

In 2024-2025, the reported exempt positions were:

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent
- Secretary Treasurer
- Director of Instruction: Indigenous Education (changed to District Principal in January 2025)
- Director of Instruction: Inclusive Education

Other Exempt positions that were not part of the Executive Compensation Disclosure were:

- Assistant Secretary Treasurer
- District Vice-Principal of Early Learning and Childcare (grant funded)
- Director of Human Resources & Health and Safety

Our Manager of Human Resources changed to the Director of Human Resources & Health and Safety for the District as Worksafe BC regulations are increasingly stringent and require training and certification to be in compliance. Our current Director of Human Resources has the certification and training, and this saves on contracting professional services. Previously, about 90% of the health and safety portfolio was contracted out.

Districts appear to approach the Executive Compensation Disclosure Report differently as the instructions are to disclose “the CEO and next 4 highest paid decision makers” so there is some flexibility in what constitutes a “decision maker.” Under the current Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer we report the next four highest salaries after the Superintendent regardless of professional association or bargaining unit to ensure greater transparency.

We also want to clarify that several District-based roles are teaching positions, not exempt or administrative roles. Positions such as literacy coach, numeracy coach, ELL leads, and Healthy Schools coordinator are teacher assignments funded through teacher salary budgets. While these staff work across multiple schools, they remain part of the teaching complement rather than administration or exempt employees.

Misleading Facebook Statement: By adapting a similar model to 2020/2021, our District could lower administrative costs to \$375/student, which is far more in alignment with provincial averages. This would allow an administrative budget of \$669,750, a reasonable 14% increased from 2020-2021, and a savings of \$511,733, which is enough to cover the deficit of \$477,00 for our schools to remain open.

This math is based on an inaccurate understanding of the 2020/2021 model having three positions. See above.

Inaccurate Facebook Statement – “To put that in perspective, that is more than a 100% increase of administrative wages over 4 years, and two additional positions, while enrollment declined.

We do not have two additional positions. Some titles are different.

In 2022, the District Principal Positions were changed by the former Superintendent to Director positions. District Principal and Director Positions fall under different reporting guidelines.

We no longer have a Director of Instruction: Indigenous Education, it was changed back to a District Principal Position in January 2025 with the retirement of the incumbent. The costs are lower with a District Principal position as there is a different salary range.

We also eliminated a District Vice-Principal of Early Learning and Childcare position at the end of June 2025. This position was combined with the Director of Instruction: Inclusive Education position and renamed Director of Instruction: Inclusive Education, Early Learning and Childcare.

We also eliminated our Vice Principal position at Central Elementary in February 2025 as part of \$1.5 million in Budget cuts last year.

We also eliminated our District Administrative Assistant. Our existing Executive Assistant to the Secretary Treasurer position was renamed Executive Secretary to the Secretary Treasurer and Human Resources.

Inaccurate Facebook Statement: In the 2022/2023 fiscal year, the salary of the superintendent was raised over 15% from \$213,135 to \$245,753, and another 15% in the 2023-2024 fiscal year from \$245,753 to \$272,205, resulting in a 30% salary increase over 2 years. To put this in perspective, government contracts offer a 2% increase per year.

Neither the \$245,753 nor the \$272,205 figures are correct for salary. Those figures include benefits and pension. Salary for the Superintendent (Mr. McNiven) for 2023/24 was \$223,483 with \$48,722 of pension and benefits. For 2022/23, it was \$195,353 with \$50,400 of pension, benefits and some vacation payout. Exempt staff can only carry forward 10 days of vacation into the next fiscal year as we are 12 month employees. Any remaining days must be paid out. It is important to remember the flood impacted the former Superintendent's ability to take vacation.

The current Superintendent's salary for 2024/2025 was \$197,083 with an additional \$49,302 for benefits and pension (important reminder this is for 11 months as the fiscal year starts July 1 and she started in August). As comparison, a teacher at the top of the education and salary grid earns \$109,520 as salary and a total of \$131,424 including benefits and pension as 10 month employees.

The salary grids from BCPSEA were adjusted for market conditions (competition in the labour market) and an 8 year freeze to match the substantial increases teachers received since 2020, totaling 20.3%. In the past, there was a tremendous amount of movement in exempt positions as the easy way to increase your salary was to apply to a different school district for a higher rate of pay. Part of the increases was to stabilize leadership as there have been a large number of retirements in the last five years.

2024-2025 Public Sector Executive Compensation Disclosure website:

“The BC Public School Employers Association administers a sectoral compensation management plan for all other exempt positions with the objective of enabling boards to attract and retain high-quality personnel through the establishment and maintenance of rational and defensible total compensation structures. Public school districts have a fiscal year that ends on June 30 and will disclose executive compensation before the end of the year.”

The grids continue to increase due to inflation over time. This means that the salary range for exempt positions like Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer increased in this time frame.

Our fiscal year starts July 1st. The current superintendent started in August 2024, so the salary quoted for 2024/2025 is not a true reflection of a year’s salary for one person.

There are five government or public sector unions bargaining with the Provincial Government currently, this includes CUPE (support Staff) and BCTF (Teachers). BCGEU is the only one to settle to date with a four-year contract with wage increases of 12% over the four years. In addition, there was an additional pot of money to increase wages at the bottom of the grid for wage parity. The unions all have a “Me-too” clauses and the settlements may actually increase before bargaining is done.

Misleading Facebook Statement: In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, 4 administrative positions were given performance-based salary increases of 3%-5% under declining enrollment numbers and educational budget cuts.

Salary increases for all unionized staff were between 3-4% for 2024/25, so most exempt staff received the minimum 3% increase as this was an inflationary adjustment of the salary grid. Increases above 3% were given to move staff up their respective grid ranges. The Ministry provided funding for these exempt salary increases, so this did not come on the backs of making other budget cuts.

Misleading Facebook Statement: Last year, we paid \$661.52/student to cover administrative compensation. To put this in perspective, a district of similar sizes sees a \$294.78/student cost for administrative compensation.

We would need to know which district is being referred to and where the information came from. However, as we have changed titles of positions over time, other Districts do the same thing. Depending on the title of the position, it may or may not appear on the Executive Compensation Disclosure, but they would be reflected in the SOFI report if they meet the \$75,000 threshold.

The organizational structure of each district is different. While all Districts are required to have a Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer as per the School Act, District Office positions go by a range of titles including Deputy Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Assistant Secretary Treasurer, Director of Finance, Manager of Finance, Controller, District Principal of Student Services etc.

Misleading Facebook Statement: In 2024/2025 fiscal year, the combined salaries of superintendent and assistant superintendent were \$586, 463. To put this into perspective. School districts of a similar size do NOT have assistant superintendents, and the overall cost for a superintendent is less than half the expense incurred.

The School Act requires a Superintendent. It is non-negotiable. Superintendents negotiate their contracts. There is a salary range for each position and it must be posted in the job ad. Contracts have to be approved by BCSPEA. The Superintendent will make more than some Superintendents and less than others. The grids and salary ranges have increased significantly over the past 5 Years as demand is high and to mirror the substantial teacher salary increase (20.2%). The later you were hired, the higher the salary range. Our Superintendent, Secretary-Treasurer, Assistant Superintendent, and Director of Instruction: Inclusive Education, Early Learning and Childcare, and District Principal of Indigenous Education positions have all turned over in the past year and half. Contracts use the most current salary range and grid.

As Financial Reports can be difficult to interpret, our Secretary Treasurer is happy to meet with any interested parties to review the reports and provide context.