



2025 – 2026 BUDGET SUMMARY

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DIVISION CONTACTS

FOOTHILLS SCHOOL DIVISION

OPERATING BUDGET SUMMARY

2025-2026

The Foothills School Division (FSD) has established a budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, projecting revenue of \$98.22 million and planned expenditures of \$99.17 million. FSD provides public, K-12 education services to the County of Foothills, Alberta, Canada, and other municipalities therein, including the Towns of Okotoks, High River, Diamond Valley and the Village of Longview.

Foothills School Division Education Plan
Annual Education Results Report
Audited Financial Statements
Operational Plan



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We honour the spirit, life, and lessons this land and its ancestors teach us. We acknowledge the traditional land and territories of the Siksika, Piikani, Kainai, Tsuut'ina, and Îyârhe Nakoda as well as the Foothills District and the Rocky View District within the Battle River Territory of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of Alberta.

Truth and Reconciliation for Learner Success in Foothills School Division



VISION

Engagement, Support, and Success for each learner.



MISSION

Each learner entrusted to our care, has unique gifts and abilities. It is our mission to find out what these are...Explore them...Develop them...Celebrate them!



PRIORITIES

Engagement: Ensure and maintain Division wide engagement that is timely, meaningful, and collaborative with all learners and communities.

Support: Ensure and maintain Division wide learning environments that are welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, and inclusive.

Success: Ensure and maintain Division wide excellence in teaching, learning and leadership.

Board Policy 01: Division Foundational Statements

Board Policy 14: A Place for All



OUR DIVISION LEADERSHIP

The Foothills School Division prides itself on providing outstanding educational opportunities for the communities we serve and believes in its purpose of *education at the centre of a flourishing community*.

For further information about The Foothills School Division, view our Five-Year Education Plan, Annual Education Results Report, and the Audited Financial Statements on the Division's website at foothillsschooldivision.com. The website is a great resource to provide further information about The Foothills School Division's schools, services, and resources.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



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Corporate Services
Secretary Treasurer



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Assistant Superintendent
Employee Services



[Caroline Roberts](#)

Assistant Superintendent
Learning Services

OUR SCHOOLS

HIGH RIVER & AREA SCHOOLS

- [École Joe Clark School](#) (K-5)
- [Spitzee Elementary School](#) (K-5)
- [École Senator Riley Middle School](#) (6-8)
- [École Secondaire Highwood High School](#) (9-12)
- [Blackie School](#) (K-8), Blackie
- [Cayley School](#) (K-8), Cayley
- [Cayley Colony School](#)
- [High River Colony School](#)
- [MacMillan Colony School](#)

OKOTOKS & AREA SCHOOLS

- [Big Rock School](#) (K-6)
- [Dr. Morris Gibson School](#) (K-6)
- [Meadow Ridge School](#) (K-9)
- [École Percy Pegler School](#) (K-6)
- [Westmount School](#) (K-9)
- [École Okotoks Junior High School](#) (7-9)
- [École Secondaire Foothills Composite High School | Alberta High School of Fine Arts](#) (10-12)
- [Foothills Outreach Education Centre | Cameron Crossing School](#) (7-12)
- [Heritage Heights School](#) (K-9), DeWinton
- [Red Deer Lake School](#) (K-9), Foothills County

HIGH COUNTRY SCHOOLS

- [C. Ian McLaren School](#) (K-6), Diamond Valley
- [Turner Valley School](#) (K-6), Diamond Valley
- [Longview School](#) (K-6), Longview
- [Millarville Community School](#) (K-8), Millarville
- [Oilfields School](#) (7-12), Diamond Valley

LEARN ANYWHERE

- [Foothills Digital School](#) (1-12)



» BUDGET ENGAGEMENT

OUR STORY OF ENGAGEMENT

We are committed to engaging and collaborating meaningfully with our learners and communities. We communicate division progress and the use of resources transparently and with a view to guiding future decision-making. We consult widely and in a variety of ways with our learners, parents, and communities to include their voice in our decision-making and to build partnerships. We seek to understand the views of our learners and communities and use this knowledge to inform our decision-making. We do this to assure our communities that our decision-making is based on the best interests of all learners.

- [A Flourishing Community](#)
- [Advocacy](#)
- [Celebrating our Flourishing Community](#)
- [Celebrations for All](#)
- [Community Engagement](#)
- [Engagement Opportunities](#)
- [Foothills Flourishing Community Award](#)
- [FSD Footnotes](#)
- [FSD News](#)
- [Get Involved](#)
- [Ideas that Make Cents](#)
- [Safety for All](#)
- [School Council Presentations](#)

WHAT WE HEARD

The Foothills School Division Lead Team have completed a thorough review of the stakeholder engagement feedback collected throughout the year. FSD received several responses from partners in education to the Ideas that Make Cents engagement opportunity as well as considered feedback received by email and discussions with our leadership teams. Through this process we have identified the following priorities:

- Increase frontline staff wherever possible (teachers and educational assistants)
- Implement user fees for transportation
- Centralize administrative services
- Increase advocacy efforts to improve funding in schools
- Expand community access to facility rentals



BUDGET PROCESS

The Board of Trustees developed belief statements and set priorities, through our [Education Plan](#), that guides the development of the 2025-2026 budget. Administration gathers information from Alberta Education, schools, divisional leadership along with parents and staff (through the assurance and engagement process) in formulating how the budget helps carry out the Division's plan.

The Foothills School Division continues to place an emphasis on classroom supports and student learning. Although the Division is projecting an enrollment decline in the 2025-2026 school year, it will continue to navigate challenges related to unfunded support staff salary increases and inflation, particularly concerning rising costs of utilities, transportation and supplies. These factors have been thoughtfully considered during the budgeting process, allowing for strategic planning to mitigate concerns and ensure a successful upcoming school year.



SCHOOL AUTHORITY PLANNING AND RESULTS REPORTING

The planning and reporting processes that school authorities use should reflect the guiding principles, domains and enabling processes outlined in the Assurance Framework. Effective planning and results reporting occurs in a continuous improvement cycle and are integral to school authority accountability and assurance. The planning and reporting cycle (see graphic below) involves:

- Developing/updating plans based on results, contextual information, input from stakeholders, and provincial direction
- Preparing budgets that allocate or re-direct resources to achieve priorities and meet responsibilities
- Implementing research and practice-informed strategies to maintain or improve performance within and across domains and focused on student growth and achievement
- Monitoring implementation and adjusting efforts as needed
- Measuring, analyzing and reporting results

- Using results to identify areas for improvement and to develop strategies and targets for the next plan (i.e. evidence-informed decision making)
- Communicating and engaging with stakeholders about school authority plans and results throughout the process.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Successful work within and across the domains occurs within a continuous improvement cycle. There are a variety of approaches to improvement, and many include the following components:



Alberta Education Assurance Framework

- *Explore*: Involves accessing, analyzing and interpreting accurate and relevant data and identifying and understanding an issue, concern or problem. Key question: What is going on here?
- *Develop*: Involves identification of a problem or challenge that can be addressed; identification of potentially successful strategies to address a learner-centered problem/challenge; and developing an action plan. Key question: What needs to be improved? How?
- *Take action*: Involves learning as you implement the plan and making adjustments through formative feedback. Key question: How are we 'actioning' the plan?
- *Evaluate*: Involves evaluating the impact of the plan. Key question: Did our planned strategies have the desired outcomes? What is next?

Key Enabling Processes for Continuous Improvement

Key enabling processes that must be part of all phases of a continuous improvement cycle (see graphic) include:

1. **Evidence-informed decision-making**: In a continuous improvement cycle, participants are persistently attentive to gathering ongoing, triangulated evidence to inform next steps.
2. **Engagement**: Effective engagement processes rely on education partners working together for the purposes of bringing about positive change, with all partners recognizing that the nature of the engagement will vary according to the needs of the participants.
3. **Learning and Capacity Building**: In assurance, reflection on learning is critical. Because the provision of assurance is a dynamic process, the opportunities for building capacity for change and improvement must be ongoing.

CHANGES & INITIATIVES

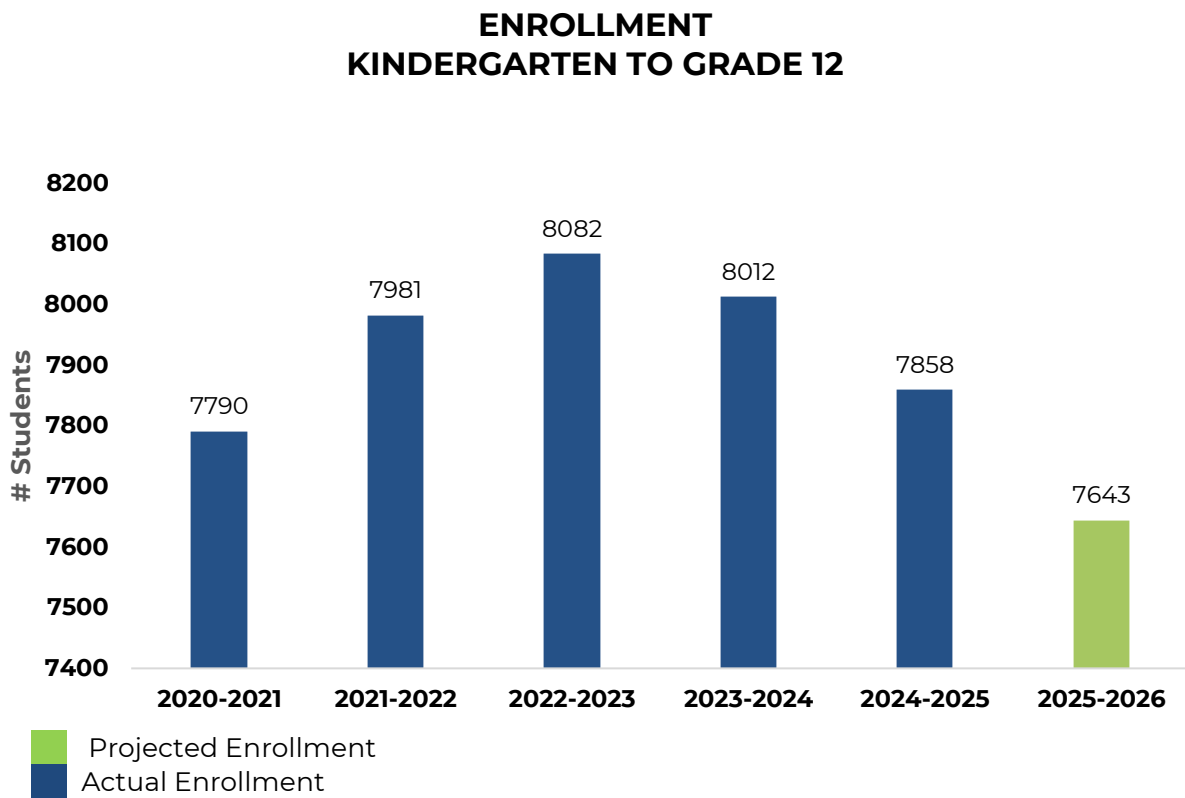
- The [Alberta Education Assurance Funding Model](#) and changes to the funding framework.
- A focus on supporting the key priorities identified in FSD's [Education Plan](#).
- A decrease in enrollment throughout the Division. This is in part due to delayed development in growing municipalities and decreasing birth rate in the region.
- Continued academic supports for Numeracy and Literacy .
- Ongoing development and necessary increase of youth mental health supports. The Division is working towards a centralized support model that will ensure that each student's unique needs are met with tailored supports.
- The Division continues to enhance educational outcomes through the implementation of new curriculum.
- Continued focus on enhancing the wellness and well-being of our students, staff team, families, and communities.
- The Foothills School Division continues to provide high quality professional development for teachers. Our priorities continue to target designing engaging learning for students through authentic, relevant learning opportunities, providing differentiated instruction as well as quality assessment practices.
- The province continues to promote and facilitate an increased awareness in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education Changes to curriculum and focusing on the *Truth and Reconciliation* recommendations continue to play a part within the work of The Foothills School Division.
- Advancing community partnerships by placing education at the centre of a flourishing Foothills community.



ENROLLMENT

The Foothills School Division has 7,643 students projected in early education (kindergarten) through grade 12 in the 2025-2026 school year as compared to the actual 7,858 in 2024-2025. This results in an overall projected decrease of 2.7% in student enrollment from the prior 2024-2025 year.

Historical enrollment data and conversations with school administrative teams is used to predict enrollment for subsequent budget periods. The following chart illustrates the change in enrollment from September 2020 to September 2024 and projected enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year.

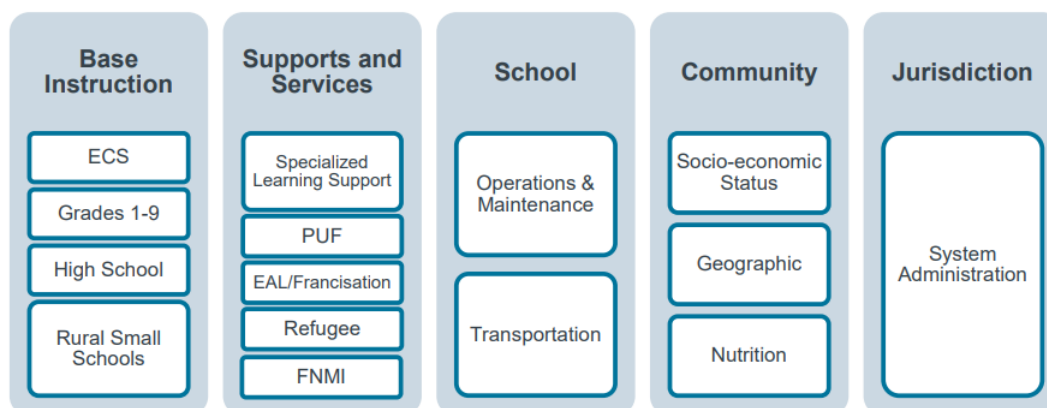


Enrollment projections are shared and deliberated with the individual schools. The Foothills School Division works closely with all its municipal partners and utilizes census data to prepare for the fluctuations in enrollment growth.

Programs and school offerings are key in meeting student and community priorities. FSD hopes to increase enrollment through an expansion of the Foothills Digital School and through continued development of programs that parents and students see as priorities. Before and After School Programs, Junior Kindergarten Programs, and full day Kindergarten are all aimed at providing early learners with the supports they need to focus on their social, and physical wellness from a younger age.

REVENUE

The Foothills School Division is financially dependent on funding from the Province of Alberta. The school division receives 95 percent of its funding from provincial government sources. Grants are received in the envelopes shown below:



The Division's Revenue is broken into five main operational programs. These programs consist of Instruction (ECS-Grade 12), Operations and Maintenance, Transportation, System Administration and External Services. The Division also has control over other revenue sources, such as fees, other sales and services, investment, fundraising and grant revenues, which equates to five (5) % of the Division's revenue.

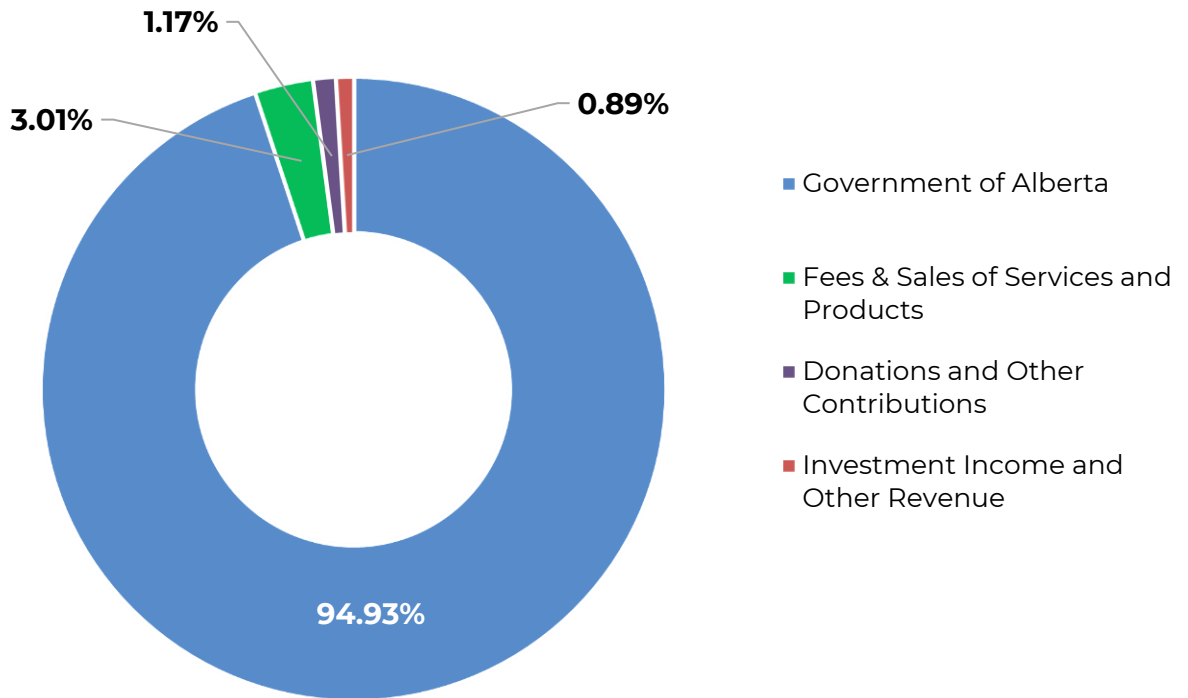
Total budgeted revenues for 2025-2026 is \$98 million.

For the upcoming fiscal 2025-2026 year, the province adopted the Adjusted Enrollment Method (AEM) over the Weighted Moving Average (WMA) method. This change redistributed a heavier weighting to projected students from 50 percent to 70 percent. Due to this change in funding methodology, the Supplemental Enrollment Growth Grant has now been eliminated.

In addition to the change above, school divisions saw an increase in the following Learning Support grant rates.

- Program Unit Funding (PUF)
- Specialized Learning Support Grant (SLS)
- Moderate Language Delay Grant
- English as an Additional Language allocation (EAL)
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education (FNMI)
- Refugee Student Grant
- Socio-Economic Status Grant
- Geographic Grant
- School Nutrition Grant
- Student Transportation Grant
- The Classroom Complexity Grant increased by 20 percent. The intent of this increase in funding is to further support the diverse needs of students by addressing classroom complexity and improving access to various supports in the classroom.
- Operations and Maintenance will receive a three (3) percent grant rate increase for all school authorities.

REVENUE



*Government of Alberta – Inclusive of Alberta Education, Alberta Infrastructure, Federal Government

Revenue Comparison

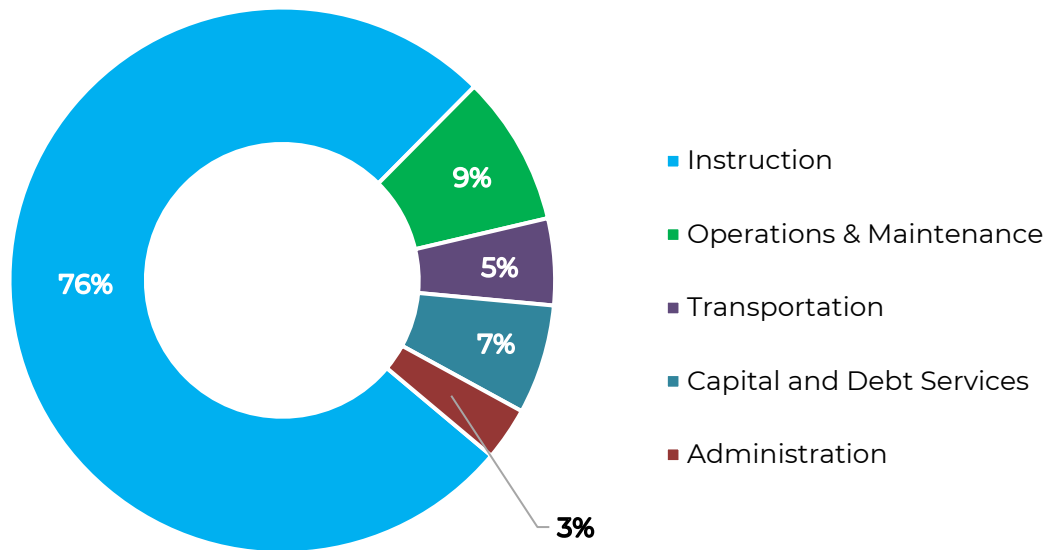
Revenues	Budget 2025-2026	Budget 2024-2025	Actual 2023-2024
Alberta Education	\$86,488,948	\$87,811,188	\$89,122,467
Alberta Infrastructure	\$5,717,627	\$5,973,948	\$5,790,297
Federal Government and First Nations	\$315,000	\$315,000	\$905,938
Other – Government of Alberta	\$718,877	\$1,190,806	\$449,913
Fees	\$2,292,700	\$1,866,260	\$2,190,963
Other sales and services	\$664,000	\$774,250	\$963,735
Investment income	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$492,692
Gifts and donations	\$500,000	\$515,000	\$712,030
Rental of facilities	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$127,372
Fundraising	\$650,000	\$550,000	\$728,196
Other revenue	\$443,750	\$625,500	\$283,907
TOTAL REVENUES	\$98,220,902	\$100,031,952	\$101,767,510
Variance	-1.81%	-1.71%	

EXPENDITURES

EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM

Funding is allocated to division programs and services to ensure that programs meet the needs of students and schools to remain viable. The \$100.56 million of funding resources are allocated to major program areas including Instruction, Operations and Maintenance, Transportation, System Administration, as well as Capital and Debt Services.

**Expenditures by Program
2025-2026**



Expenses by Program	Budget 2025-2026	Budget 2024-2025	Actual 2023-2024
Instruction – ECS	\$3,675,803	\$3,188,988	\$2,008,574
Instruction – Grades 1 to 12	\$72,052,721	\$73,648,128	\$76,228,169
Operations & Maintenance	\$14,636,693	\$14,802,753	\$15,039,351
Transportation	\$5,909,340	\$5,782,193	\$5,751,494
Administration	\$3,169,322	\$3,141,726	\$3,112,427
External Services	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$99,170,879	\$100,563,788	\$102,140,015
Variance	-1.39%	-1.54%	

Instruction - The allocation to all schools and other instructional programs, such as the Foothills Digital School and our outreach school (Cameron Crossing). Instruction includes our Junior Kindergarten, Early Childhood Services (Kindergarten) through to the grade 12 student

population. Students can attend school and be fully funded by the province if they are older than 6 years of age and younger than 19 years of age as of September 1. System instructional support is also included as part of this program expenditures category.

Operations and Maintenance - Activities relate to the Division's responsibility for the construction, operation, maintenance, safety and security of all school buildings and the maintenance facility.

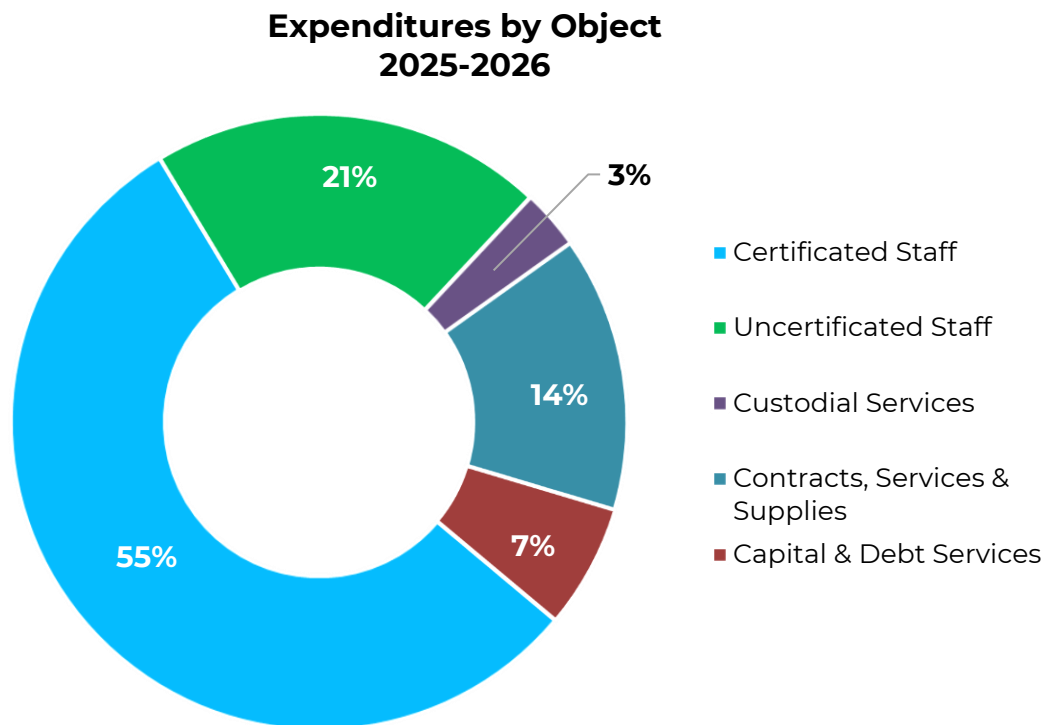
Transportation - Program relates to all activities of transporting students to and from their attendance area schools.

Capital and Debt Services - Includes the provision of unamortized portion of school buildings and supported debt from the Province of Alberta. Also included in the Capital and Debt Services budget is the amortization of capital assets as well as Capital Maintenance and Renewal (CMR).

Administration - Includes Board Governance, Corporate Services, Employee Services, Board and System Administration.

EXPENDITURES BY OBJECT

The Foothills School Division will spend approximately \$75.2 million on staffing, which is about 76 percent of the Division's \$99.17 million budgeted expenditures. Out of this total, 72 percent has been spent on certificated staff and 27 percent spent on uncertificated staff. The Division contracts out custodial services, and this amount is included within the Operations and Maintenance supplies and services.



The chart below compares the expenditures of the 2025-2026 budget compared to the 2024-2025 and 2023-2024 actuals.

Expenses by Object	Budget 2025-2026	Budget 2024-2025	Actual 2023-2024
Certificated	\$54,784,061	\$56,340,523	\$56,580,470
Non-Certificated	\$20,461,674	\$19,935,808	\$20,139,677
Custodial Services	\$3,149,000	\$3,117,000	\$3,118,003
Contracts, Services & Supplies	\$14,251,317	\$14,581,377	\$15,453,392
Capital & Debt Services (Supported and Unsupported)	\$6,524,827	\$6,589,080	\$6,848,473
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$99,170,879	\$100,563,788	\$102,140,015
Variance	-1.39%	-1.54%	

FINANCIAL IMPACTS, RISKS, AND RESERVES

FINANCIAL RISKS & ASSUMPTIONS

- Assessment:** Certificated and non-certificated salaries increase.
Impacts: Unfunded support staff increases pose a significant risk to the Division if they remain unfunded. These are critical roles that allow the Division to operate in an effective manner.
Risk Level: High. 78 percent of the Division's expenses relate to salary and benefit costs. Due to FSD's unionized certificated and non-certificated unionized environment, it is critical that increases are funded to ensure the long-term financial feasibility and health of the Division.
- Assessment:** Benefits - Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) increases.
Impacts: The base rate for the Division continues to increase due to medical inflation and historical claims.
Risk Level: Medium to High. Benefits are covered 100% by the employer for both certificated and non-certificated support staff. Therefore, there is limited flexibility, and the financial impacts are significant overall. School divisions continue to work with ASEBP to support them in implementing various cost containment measures.
- Assessment:** Classroom Complexity Funding
Impacts: There has been a rise of student complexities within the classroom. These complexities pose an additional risk due the temporary nature of the grant. Although the increase in funding has allowed the Division to support staff, the uncertainty surrounding the sustainability of this funding is a concern.
Risk Level: Medium to High. The province increased the funding by 20% in comparison to prior 2024-2025 funding levels; however, there is a concern over the effectiveness of these funds due to the concern over the commitment of these funds

and due to rising support staff salaries.

4. **Assessment:** Enrollment Fluctuations.

Impacts: The Division has seen a significant fluctuation in enrollment over the past four years. The recent change from the Weighted Moving Average model to the Adjusted Enrollment model decreased the overall base funding for the Division due to the change in student enrollment weighting. The AEM model provides funding based on 70% of student projections and 30% of current student enrollment.

Risk Level: Medium to High. This funding model change resulted in a negative impacted for FSD due to its declining enrollment.

5. **Assessment:** Insurance Premiums

Impacts: Due to the catastrophic floods that occurred in 2013, the Division experienced unprecedented insurance cost increases. In 2020, the Division worked toward forming the Alberta Risk Managed Insurance Consortium (ARMIC) with the support of the provincial government. Despite the establishment of this consortium, the Division experienced significant premium increases that has resulted in a reduction of resources in the area of instruction.

Risk Level: Medium. The Division continues to work hard to foster a risk intelligent culture and find ways to mitigate risk to work toward a decline in our premium rates.

6. **Assessment:** Operating Reserves – In Decline

Impacts: Over the past few years, the Division utilized its reserves to meet the provincial minimum reserve level requirements (3.2%) established by the Government of Alberta. Over the years, the Division has been spending down its reserves to meet this requirement; however, the Division now continues to access reserves due to the significant and unanticipated reduction in the Geographical grant, enrollment decline and due to the change to the AEM funding model.

Risk Level: High. The Division is close to the minimum reserve level of 1%, which poses a concern. The Division will need to make significant adjustments if base funding does not increase or if adjustments to the Geographical grant that reflects each division's local context are not implemented.

Overall, the Division will continue to find ways to mitigate risks, and will continue to place an emphasis on maximizing dollars into the classroom to provide the appropriate supports to all its students and staff.

ACCUMULATED SURPLUS FROM OPERATIONS AND CAPITAL RESERVES

The province has required that Boards have a minimum level of operating reserves at no less than 1% of expenditures as per the Division's most recent Audited Financial Statements. Maximum and minimum reserve levels are as of August 31, 2024. The Division's plan to run a deficit position in the 2025-2026 year continues to allow the Division to remain above and in compliance with the minimum reserve level requirements. School divisions must have sufficient reserve levels to cover projected deficits.

Operating Reserves

The Board's operating reserves has provided it with flexibility and the opportunity to be

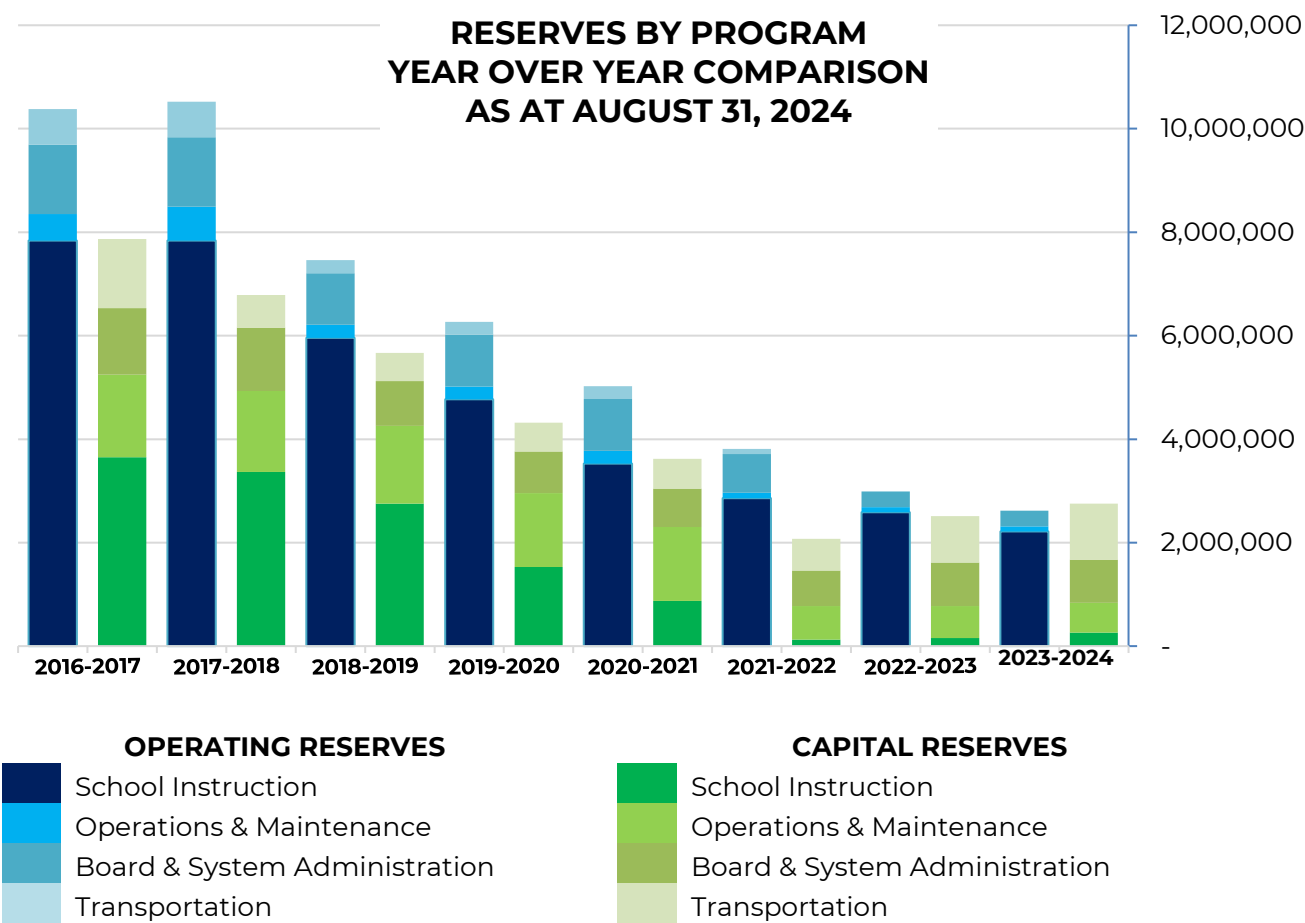
innovative. Some of the purposes reserves have been used for include:

- The opportunity to design and implement the Classroom Program Innovative Projects
- Allows the Division to continue to integrate technology into the classroom
- Allowed for the provision of additional teaching and support staff
- Augment the furniture and equipment budgets during recent modernizations or new builds
- Provide dollars in the case of emergencies.

Capital Reserves

The Board uses capital reserves to provide for purchases which meet Alberta Education’s capitalization criteria.

These capital reserves also allow us to purchase buses and equipment for the Transportation and Facility Services departments and to provide upgrades to non-supported buildings. The Division will need to monitor its reserve levels in future operating budgets to ensure that it maintains an appropriate balance between meeting the needs of students and the overall financial health of the Division.



CAPITAL PLAN

All new school facilities are funded from the Province of Alberta through Alberta Infrastructure in consultation with the Department of Education. Each year, school jurisdictions submit facility needs for the next three years and await funding and approval from the province. These projects are as follows:

New Construction

1. New K – 9 School, Okotoks (900 Capacity)
2. New School, High River (Configuration TBD at Spitzee Crossing Development)

Modernization Priorities

1. École Senator Riley Middle School – High River
2. Turner Valley School – Turner Valley
3. C. Ian McLaren School – Diamond Valley
4. Cayley School – Cayley
5. École Joe Clark School – High River
6. Big Rock School – Okotoks
7. Longview School – Longview

Overall Priority List

1. École Senator Riley Middle School – Modernization, High River
2. Turner Valley School – Modernization, Diamond Valley
3. C. Ian McLaren School – Modernization, Diamond Valley
4. Cayley School – Modernization, Cayley
5. New K – 9 School, 900 total capacity - Okotoks
6. New School High River, Configuration TBD at Spitzee Crossing Development
7. Longview School – Modernization, Longview
8. École Joe Clark School – Modernization, High River
9. Big Rock School – Modernization, Okotoks

On February 15, 2025, the construction funding for a new grade 10-12 high school in Okotoks for Foothills School Division was included in a School Construction Accelerator Program announcement made by the Ministry of Education. The Division will continue to work with Alberta Infrastructure, the Town of Okotoks, and the project's engineering, design and consulting firm throughout the duration of this capital project.

The Foothills School Division factors its Three-Year Capital Plan within its operations as the acquisition of capital could have an impact on the budget due to the costs of maintaining and operating these newly acquired assets.