FUNDING MODEL IMPLEMENTATION

Adult and Continuing Education

WORKING GROUP REPORT

OCTOBER 4, 2019

Background

The Adult and Continuing Education Implementation Working Group was tasked with assisting the Ministry of Education in determining the best approach to implementing Recommendation 11 of the Independent Review Panel's report:

> Recommendation 11 – *Notwithstanding Recommendation 9, funding for the following programs should remain course-based:*
>
> - *Graduated adults*
> - *Non-graduated adults*
> - *Continuing education (adult and school-age learners)*
> - *Distributed learning (for adult learners only)*

While the Panel's original report included summer school as part of Recommendation 11, it is not related to Adult and Continuing Education and was therefore out of scope for the Working Group.

The Working Group agreed that there is a need for adult education programs in the K-12 sector. There are many reasons why some students do not complete and obtain their Dogwood in the regular timeframe, are unable to learn in the regular classroom setting or make life choices that require flexible scheduling of education. It is vital that the sector continue to provide adult education programs that ensure students are given the best opportunities so that they become or continue to be successful. This includes continuing to offer courses to adults through distributed learning.

The Working Group thoroughly discussed the need for adult programs, the delivery of those programs and how to better support students. The work included:

- Defining challenges and opportunities of existing program structures for Adult and Continuing Education;
- Revising the vision statement for Adult Education, as a foundation for program and funding policy;
- Reviewing relevant data, such as demographics of adult students and their educational outcomes, to articulate/provide stronger evidence on the current successes and challenges;
- Developing student profiles to better understand the range of learners in Adult Education programs, their learning needs, and their goals;
- Providing advice on key policy questions related to Adult Education, from system, district and school perspectives;
- Defining positive and negative implications for different funding approaches (i.e., course-based funding, program-based considerations and a combination/hybrid consideration);
- Suggesting mitigations for potential issues arising from different funding approaches; and
- Identifying possible indicators of success for adult programs and students, including completion and transition rates.

Meetings and Membership

The Working Group met four times between March and June 2019. The Working Group had 13 external members representing key partners in the BC K-12 education system and six members from the Ministry of Education, both from the Funding Model Implementation Team and the Adult Education program area. Emilie Hillier (Ministry of Education) and Deborah Jeffrey (Implementation Coordination Committee) co-chaired the Working Group. The Working Group's membership and meeting dates are listed in Appendix A.

Summary of Discussion Themes

Successes of current course-based funding model for adult and continuing education

- Non-graduated adults, including those who have struggled previously and other vulnerable adult students, have had success with current adult education programs.
- The Adult Dogwood provides a flexible pathway to graduation, employment and post-secondary studies for vulnerable students who are not able to complete the regular Dogwood and older adult learners who need a timely graduation credential.
- Elimination of tuition in 2017 for foundational and academic upgrading courses pursued by graduated adults has improved access to adult education.
- The current system provides the flexibility for adult students to enrol in the courses they need and when they need them (i.e., continuous entries throughout the year via distributed learning and Continuing Education centres).
- Course-based funding and multiple funding counts also enable districts to respond to increases in demand in adult education programs and at Continuing Education centres (adult and school-aged students).
- The current funding model is understood by current partners and stakeholders.

Diverse needs of adult learners

- Adult learners are diverse, and many are vulnerable students who have complex and unique learning needs.
- Some non-graduated adult students were not successful in achieving graduation as school-aged students and may face multiple barriers to education.
- In larger urban districts, many adult students are newcomers to Canada with language learning needs; some need additional supports (such as those from refugee backgrounds).
- While tuition may be free, many adult students face costs to attend school such as transportation, child care or foregone income.
- During their studies, some adults need a wide range of supports to be successful, such as counselling, learning support services or services for Indigenous students or English language learners. Under the current model, districts do not have access to supplemental funding for adults that re-enter the system.
- While it may cost less to educate adult students, the current funding differential between adult students and school-aged students and the lack of supplemental funding for adult students does not reflect all adult students' needs for supports.

Over-representation of Indigenous and young learners in adult education

- Indigenous learners, especially younger adults, are over-represented in adult education programs enrolment and in Adult Dogwood graduates.
- 18-year-olds also make up a significant proportion of adult learners and Adult Dogwood graduates.
- School-aged students should not be prematurely encouraged to pursue the Adult Graduation Program.
- If students are contemplating the Adult Dogwood, the student (and their parent/caregiver) should be fully informed of the implications, including how the credential differs from the regular Dogwood and the prerequisites needed for post-secondary study.

Continuing Education centres

- While many students at Continuing Education (CE) centres are adults, students aged 16 and up can also be enrolled in CE centres.
- Some school districts draw on the flexibility of CE centres to enrol school-aged students throughout the year to support career and trades programs that do not fit traditional school-year timelines.
- The current course-based funding model allows for innovative programming for school-aged students funded through CE centres, generating additional funding above the headcount funding.
- These programs are funded primarily in the second and third counts so should be considered in connection with the panel's Recommendation 9.

Other challenges and limitations of current funding model

- For some unique programs (e.g., in corrections centres or in rural/remote communities), course-based funding may not provide enough stability or consistency for a school district to offer adult education courses. In these circumstances, program-based funding could improve access to adult education.
- The 50/50 funding model for graduated adults poses financial planning challenges for school districts and may act as a disincentive for some districts to offer adult education courses.
- Students cross-enrolled in different districts are not eligible for funding in both locations, limiting the ability to take courses in neighbouring districts (e.g., adults at an Alternate Education school or school-aged students at a high school in one district are not funded for courses taken concurrently at a Continuing Education centre in another district).
- The restriction that students must be at least 16 to be funded through CE centres can limit access to career programs for younger students.
- The restriction that students claimed for funding at an Alternate Education school cannot be also claimed for funding at a CE centre limits vulnerable students' access to career programs in some districts.
- The differential in funding between courses for adults and school-aged students can limit the depth and complexity of the course design and delivery.

Proposed performance measures

- Completion rates for courses
- Time taken to complete courses
- At what levels courses are completed (e.g., what percent of students achieve C+ average or higher)
- Rates of transition from Foundations courses to high school completion courses
- Rates of transition from adult education programs to post-secondary institutions
- Positive feedback from post-secondary institutions, employers, local First Nations
- Feedback from students
- Fewer Indigenous students in the adult graduation programs
- Availability and variety of adult education programs throughout the province

Considerations

Funding model

- The group concurs with the Panel Recommendation to retain course-based funding for adult and continuing education and suggests maintaining multiple enrolment-count dates for funding.

Additional funding

- The group suggests that the Ministry consider adult students when deciding future directions for supplemental funding (e.g., for Indigenous learners, learners with special needs and English Language learners), as the course-based model does not include specific funding for support services.
- The group suggests addressing the funding differential between adults and school-aged students.

Other considerations

- The group suggests that accountability mechanisms be improved to focus on educational programming and student success.
- The group suggests that consideration be given to a process similar to the Quality Review process used previously for adult education programs.
- The group suggests that consideration be given for program-based funding for unique adult education programs (e.g., correctional facilities).

Related policy implications

- The group suggests that the needs of adult learners and continuing education programs be considered when examining the Independent Review Panel's Recommendations 4, 6, 9, 15 and 18 (see Appendix B for the full text of these recommendations).
- The group suggests that other issues raised through this process be further examined, with the potential to update relevant policies, including:
  - The premature shift of school-aged students and Indigenous students to the Adult Dogwood program;
  - Potential for the elimination of the 50/50 funding mechanism for tuition-free courses; and
  - Basing continuing education on course grade level instead of age.
- The group suggests that a final review of changes to the funding model be conducted in partnership between the Ministry data collection experts, partners and district leaders to examine unintended consequences.

Conclusion

Adult and continuing education play a critical role in BC's education system. It is vital to maintain adult education programs as options for learners. The decision to strike a full working group to examine Recommendation 11 speaks to the importance of adult and continuing education.

The Working Group appreciated the opportunity to thoroughly examine this recommendation with a wide group of partners beyond the usual stakeholders. Given the significant changes proposed as part of the funding model review, Working Group members appreciated the Ministry's approach of taking more time to consult and to establish multiple points of contact with partners. The Working Group felt that this was a useful model for future efforts to manage large-scale change to BC's education system.

Proposed approach	Implications of proposed approach	Mitigation strategies
Course-based Funding Model		
Course-based funding for all adult learners	**Positive** • Allows districts flexibility to respond to increases in demand • Allows adult learners flexibility to take classes they need, when they want • Allows adult learners flexibility to take courses in school or through distributed learning • Understood by current partners and stakeholders • Recognizes that most adults do not take a full course load (i.e., 8 courses concurrently) **Challenges** • May not provide enough support for unique or small programs (e.g., programs in correctional centres and rural/remote locations) • May not fully address the diverse needs of all adult learners	• Investigate possible increase to per-course funding for adults to assist in addressing the diverse needs of adult learners • Consider adults in the prevalence calculation for inclusive education • Consider addition of targeted funds for Indigenous adult learners • Investigate possible program-based funding for adult education programs in correctional centres and potentially also programs in rural/remote locations

Course-based funding at Continuing Education centres	**Positive** • Provides adults with another location for taking courses • Continuous multiple counts of students allows school-age students on the standard graduation program to take additional courses at non-traditional times (e.g., career courses that do not start and end in line with the school calendar and timetable) • Allows school-age students to take additional courses not offered/available at their local school (e.g., career pathway courses and dual credit programs offered in partnership with local college) • Enables districts in funding protection to respond to the needs/requirements of their respective students (i.e., students wanting specific and new career-oriented programs which would be offered/operated through a Continuing Education centre) **Challenges** • Conflicts with Recommendation 9 for headcount funding for school-age students • Without reconciliation with Recommendation 9, districts may report school-age students for funding through Continuing Education centres, resulting in a cost pressure to overall public education funding	• Investigate potential restrictions on the type of courses school-age students could take through a Continuing Education centre (e.g., only career pathway courses and dual credit programs) • Investigate potential restrictions on the number of courses school-age students could take through a Continuing Education centre • Ensure school-aged students at Continuing Education centres are there to supplement their learning (and not have it as their primary location for school) • Establish clear policies on dual credit and career programs

Appendix A: Working Group Membership and Meeting Dates

Membership:

Name	Organization
Emilie Hillier (co-chair)	Ministry of Education
Deborah Jeffrey (co-chair)	Implementation Coordination Committee
Steve Hopkins	BC Association of School Business Officials
John Gaiptman	BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
Larry Mattin	BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association
Mike McGlenen	BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association
Geoffery McKay	BC School District Continuing Education Directors Association
Kevin Brandt	BC School Superintendents Association
Val Adrian	BC School Trustees Association
Michal Rozworski	BC Teachers' Federation
Loree Wilcox	Canadian Union of Public Employees - BC
Thane Bonar	First Nations Education Steering Committee
Barbara Binczyk	Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training
Lynn Hauptman	Rural Education Advisory Committee
Sasha Gronsdahl	Ministry of Education
Janine Hannis	Ministry of Education
Brent Munro	Ministry of Education

FMI Secretariat Support:

Tammy Blair	Ministry of Education
Neal Dobinson	Ministry of Education

Meetings:

- March 7, 2019 – Victoria
- April 16, 2019 – Richmond
- May 15, 2019 – Richmond
- June 20, 2019 – Victoria

Appendix B: Additional Independent Review Panel Recommendations

Recommendation 4

The Ministry should consolidate and simplify existing geographic funding supplements, the Supplement for Salary Differential and relevant special grants outside the block into a single supplement, with the following two components:

Component 1: 'Unique School District' characteristics should reflect some of the operational challenges of school districts compared to the norm by considering:

- The enrolment of a school district compared to the provincial median school district enrolment;
- The distance from communities containing schools to geographic centres containing basic services;
- The climate of a school district, characterized by the cost of providing heat and cooling for school; and the fuel utilized, and the amount and duration of snowfall in a school district;
- The distribution of students and schools across a school district, as characterized by:
  - The density of the student population in a school district, compared to the highest density school district in the province;
  - The average distance from each school to the school board office, including the effect of geographic features; and
- A modification of the current salary differential funding approach to be based on total compensation and expanded to include all school district employees.

Component 2: 'Unique School' characteristics, not addressed in the first component, should recognize the operational challenges of some schools by considering:

- The number of small schools within a school district, with different weightings and sizes used for elementary and secondary schools, and provide an increased contribution where a school is the only one in the community and is persistently under capacity; and
- The persistent over-capacity of schools at the school district level.

Recommendation 6

The Ministry should create a single Inclusive Education Supplement that incorporates all of the following:

- Supplemental Special Needs Funding;
- English/French Language Learning;
- Supplement for Vulnerable Students;
- CommunityLINK;
- Ready Set Learn;
- Supplemental Student Location Factor; and
- Funding currently in the Basic Allocation that was previously allocated to high incidence categories of special needs.

This single Inclusive Education Supplement should allocate funding through the following two components:

Component 1: Students requiring high-cost supports should be funded, and school districts should continue to report and claim these students to the Ministry for funding. More specifically:

- Funding eligibility criteria and the annual funding rate for students requiring high-cost supports should be developed and communicated by the Ministry, focusing on those students that are physically dependent and/or have needs that significantly impact the students' learning; and
- All funding claims in this category should be based on a medical diagnosis and should be subject to compliance audits to verify that eligibility criteria have been met.

Component 2: The remaining inclusive education funds should be allocated to school districts through a prevalence-based model, using a comprehensive range of third-party medical and socio-economic population data. Categories of data and weightings should be as follows:

- Health factors (50%)
- Children in care (20%)
- Income and earnings (20%)
- English/French Language development (10%)

Recommendation 9

The Ministry should base funding allocations for school-age educational programming on the number of students, rather than on the number of courses being taken. The Ministry should phase out the current course-based funding model by the 2020/21 school year.

Recommendation 15

Consistent with the shift to supporting student improvement and learning, the Ministry should:

- Shift the focus of the Compliance Audit Program from purely financial to have a quality assurance emphasis that incorporates best practices-based recommendations regarding student outcomes, structure of programs and services, and overall management of school district operations.
- Defer the recovery of funding for one year, to allow school districts time to adopt compliance team recommendations. This one-year deferral would not be available if it is determined that there has been deliberate contravention of funding eligibility policies.

Recommendation 18

The Ministry should identify net cost pressures and new program expenditures and, as part of the provincial budgeting process, bring them forward to Treasury Board for consideration when the total quantum of public education funding is being set.