

February 21, 2018

To Reg Bawa, Assistant Deputy Minister, and The K12 Funding Review Team,

My name is David Truss and I am the President of the British Columbia Distributed Learning Administrator's Association. This letter was co-written with the BCDLAA Executive, and based on feedback that we requested from 49 Distributed Learning schools from across BC. It was written to provide formal input requested regarding a future funding model for public education.

First and foremost, we would like to say thank you for requesting feedback from our association. Distributed Learning has played a significant role in the personalization of learning, as well as in providing innovative learning opportunities to the students of BC, and we know that we can continue to be leaders in supporting new curricular and learning opportunities in our province. With that said, we would like to formally request that a member of the BCDLAA Executive be invited onto the K12 Funding Review Team. As will be discussed below, Distributed Learning provides initiatives and opportunities which contribute, and add value, to Ministry educational goals, and our representation on the review team can provide a perspective unique to other stakeholders.

Our executive decided to break up our feedback based on 3 key areas:

1. "Value Add" benefits of Distributed Learning opportunities for students.
2. Challenges that the current funding model and possible changes and improvements
3. Suggestions we would like to see.

While we have done our best to collect information from across the province, please understand that we represent many districts that vary in size from very small to quite large, and programs that support local students as well as programs that support students across BC. Therefore, some of our feedback below may reflect only some of our association members and not all of them. However, a funding model change can drastically affect our ability to provide meaningful service to our students and we hope that any changes in the model take Distributed Learning schools and programs into consideration.

1. "Value Add" benefits of Distributed Learning opportunities for students.

- Personalization – In meeting the goals of the redesigned curriculum we provide opportunities to help develop the provinces vision of 'The Educated Citizen'.
- Blended Learning – Blurring the lines between Distributed Learning, Blended Learning and Learning.
- Flexibility, student scheduling – DL provides learning opportunities free of time and location restrictions.
- Spacing – Distributed Learning and Blended Learning can reduce challenges in schools where overcrowding is a concern.
- Choice – Delivery and quantity of courses available (especially for declining enrollment and small community challenges).
- Not all communities have enough college support for non-grad adults to get their Graduated Adult elective choices.

- Viable option for students 'unsuccessful' in our traditional schools. (Distributed Learning schools significantly improve the province's graduation rate.)
- Supporting students that add courses/programs/career-WEX programs throughout the year, not just in September. (February and May 1701's allow students to access courses that could not be funded and provided without this flexibility, and not all students have static graduation plans.)

2. Challenges that the current funding model and possible changes and improvements:

- Activation - How & when we are funded? As mentioned above, our three 1701's provide flexibility for students to personalize their learning after September 30th. Also, any changes to our activation model (funded after 5% of the work demonstrated) can affect our ability to provide services to students as mentioned below. Teachers end up 'wasting' intellectual capital on audit requirements rather than on learning.
- Concerns for inequity in funding – DL funding is less than regular funding and yet we are working to create better opportunities for students that involve blended learning, and more time-demanding programs. A Bricks and Mortar school running a similar blended program would be funded more than a DL school.
- Currently we see an onslaught of IEP's and students who require both the extra individualized support that distributed learning can offer, and also needs that are challenging to meet in an online environment. Courses for these students can take longer to activate and run longer (which is costly when we need to provide staffing over 1+ years for a course).
- Services like support blocks and supporting students that are not progressing at a good pace require labour-intensive time to help students succeed online, whether the student is in the local district or at a distance.
- Current model of funding for Grade 8 and 9 courses – This is set too low (at the summer rate of \$400) to run in any meaningful way. Students currently have MORE choice by going out of district than if they stay in, because of the limitation that a district only be funded 1.0 maximum for Grade 8's and 9's. Independent DL schools don't have districts and can unfairly compete with us. Quite bluntly, \$400 funding for Grade 8 & 9 DL courses, and having that funding only available outside of the district, doesn't make sense. It does not support student needs when they must go out of district to get something we can't fund in-district. ~ Students failing a course and unable to catch up, students with too many absences to succeed in a class, athletes with challenging training schedules, all need to go out of district to get Grade 8 or 9 funded courses, or districts must (unrealistically) staff programs either at significantly reduced funding, or without funding. These younger students will also often have higher needs or demands on teachers in an online environment.
- Funding model does not promote us being innovative ~ Although a lot of innovation happens in DL schools, blended and innovative offerings cost more to develop and run, and yet our programs are funded at less than Brick and Mortar schools.
- If we move away from course-by-course funding, how will that affect Distributed Learning programs? Please consider our courses and options that we provide to offer personalized learning to students, if considering changes that might prevent us from running programs.
- Grad adults vs non-grad – We do a lot to promote educated citizens and provide opportunities for adults to improve their economic standing, upgrading their education and getting better

jobs. When funding changes for adults, this can drastically affect our ability to provide services to our communities.

- Differences in funding models makes staffing difficult, while the lines between Learning, Blended Learning, and Distributed Learning are disappearing.
- DL issues are province-wide, not just district challenges.
- Staffing on projections, not on 'bums in seats'. Hard to meet needs and to staff appropriately through high and low times in the year.

3. Suggestions we would like to see:

The following are suggestions we would like to make to the K12 Funding Review Team.

- We would like representation on the working group/task force/review team.
- On the path to personalization, learning, blended learning and distributed learning... it's all Learning! Funding for pedagogical reasons and not based on delivery model is key to keeping BC innovative.
- Streamline audit processes so that it does not require as much time.
- Improve distributed learning funding to Grade 8's and 9's and maintain funding to adults.
- Any funding model changes need to consider the value added by distributed learning programs and ensure that they can continue to support our students and their growing needs as learners.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to express the views as administrators of public distributed learning schools. Distributed learning provides personalized learning to students whose needs are not always met in more traditional schools. We look forward to providing continued support to our school districts and to the province.



David Truss
BCDLAA President

Our BCDLAA Executive

Director – Jennifer Batallas – Saanich SD63, SIDES

Director – Mike Franklin – Cariboo-Chilcotin, SD27, Online Rural Secondary Program

Director – Kerry Hanscomb – Vancouver, SD39, Vancouver Learning Network

Director – Heather Lait – Sooke, SD62, Westshore Learning Centre

Director – Colleen Mullin - Cowichan Valley, SD79, Cowichan DL

Director – Brian Naka– Nechako Lakes, SD91, Ebus Academy

Past President – Kai Taylor – Campbell River, SD72, 72 Ways 2 Learn

President – David Truss - Coquitlam, SD43, Coquitlam Open Learning