

To whom it may concern about the Funding Model Review,

I am the president of the BC Primary Teacher's Association (BCPTA). I am writing to provide a response from my association to the *Funding Model Review Discussion Paper* from March 2018.

When the BCPTA heard that the funding formula used in public education in BC was being reviewed, we were optimistic because we have seen the challenges with the current funding model and we welcomed ways to make improvements. We have now seen the proposed changes and no longer feel so optimistic and hopeful. We understand that you have asked for further comments. This indicates that you are still collecting information before a final recommendation is reached. We hope we are able to share our concerns and help you to alter your plan in order to see those real improvements the system so desperately needs.

We are gravely concerned with the proposals connected to special education funding. Currently the system is flawed, because many primary students are not yet designated, require support and are not able to get it due to the inability to access funds due to the lack of a designation. We also find the current formula flawed because the funding is not adequate to provide the staffing and support for those children with designations. For example, students with autism are only provided an equivalent half day of funding, but many require consistent, all day and ongoing support that funding does not cover. There are other designations that require significant investment (staffing and resources) that receive no extra funding above base level funding, and this is not acceptable either. Because districts are not required to have these designations to get extra funding, they expend less resources and time helping children get these designations. As a result, you may see statistics that suggest learning disabilities or giftedness is on the decline in our society, but the only thing it truly shows is that lack of incentive to seek these designations because they offer no financial support to a district. What is missing is the true picture of learners for the province and what is missing are supports and knowledge for students with these disabilities/gifts.

We see in your proposal a move to de-link designations with funding and a move to a more needs based model. We think you want to do this to help stop the problem in the primary years, but It creates many more problems that will have a negative impact. When you move to a needs-based model (that seems to involve no more funding than what was offered before) people will have to compete and spend time and energy finding a way to prove their need. We saw this same thing play out when the Learning Improvement was in place. It became inequitable and unfair and hard to manage. We see the same thing happening with your proposed plan. We also believe you will see less designations as they will prove unhelpful for districts to secure funding, but what will be missing are the true statistics for the province and most importantly, the knowledge and support articulated in that designation process that informs teachers, parents and students about conditions and ways to support learning for the entire school career and perhaps life of that child.

We hope you will re-consider your plan, and the BCPTA respectfully submits the following recommendations for improvement so that school districts are provided with adequate and stable funding:

- 1) Special needs funding must be connected to designations.
- 2) Special needs funding needs to be improved to match the reality and cost of services required for educational staffing and resources to support children with those designations.
- 3) There should be an additional funding category created for those children not yet designated who are going through the lengthy process of being designated.

After sixteen years of funding issues and cuts, it is time to make improvements. We hope you will take time to consider our response and recommendations. We have also attached our belief statement of special education in the primary years that connects to this funding review and our recommendations.

Respectfully yours,

Janine Fraser
BCPTA President

Special Education in the Primary Years...

"Inclusion is a process, not a place."

We believe that...

- Learning is developmental. Children grow like rings on a tree, and not all children reach benchmarks at the same time and at the same rate.
- In a primary classroom, there is a broad range of children's needs. They learn at different rates and in different ways. They bring different knowledge, experiences, & interests.
- Teaching enhances and supports children's development. Scaffolding is a key to learning. The "I do, we do, we do and you do," model is foundational to learning.
- Early identification and intervention for children who are experiencing learning difficulties is critical.
- Extra staffing and support for students should not wait until a formal diagnosis is reached. For this reason, the BCPTA believes Special Education support must be a priority in the primary years to screen and then provide support services to early learners.
- Current special education funding is not adequate in meeting the needs of designated students. This must change (for example, most students with autism need a full day of support but funding for autism is only for half a day of support).
- Every child has a right to be safe at school and have the opportunity to learn in a safe environment but not necessarily in the same room at the same time all the time.
- We believe in having high expectations for all learners. This may not look the same for all children. Children should be given remediation in the belief that they can learn with time, extra support and different strategies.
- Teachers, parents and children are a team in a child's special education. They work together to create a climate of respect, success, and joy necessary for lifelong learning. These parties need time, resources, and support provided in a timely manner in order to communicate effectively with each other to help create an individual education plan for the child.
- Individual education plans should be as diverse as the learners they represent and as the educators who are helping to create them.