



*Serving members by supporting effective leadership in education
through representation, advocacy and leadership development.*

a submission to the
K-12 Public Education Funding Model Review

from the
BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Reimer', is written over a faint, light purple oval background.

Respectfully submitted, May 2, 2018
Kevin Reimer, President, BCPVPA

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The B.C. Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) represents the professional and employment interests of school-based administrators in the K-12 public system. Although membership is voluntary, our approximately 2,450 members represent more than 95% of the eligible members. Principals and vice-principals work daily at school sites. Nearly 50% hold teaching duties in addition to their responsibilities to provide organizational leadership, educational leadership, relational leadership and moral stewardship in their schools. (*Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in British Columbia*, 2016)

The Funding Review has received submissions organizations representing school trustees, business officials and superintendents (district senior staff). As managers at the district level, they deal with issues such as transportation, facilities, labour relations, reporting and accountability requirements, and other matters that are not routinely the responsibility of principals and vice-principals.

The BCPVPA is familiar with the views of our partners and supports their recommendations calling for predictability, transparency and flexibility in funding. We support their shared view that the funding model continue to be responsive to the geographic and demographic diversity of the province by providing for grants beyond the basic, per-pupil grant to reflect costs related to climate, isolation, transportation and other variables. We also support the request that targeted funding for Aboriginal students be maintained or enhanced and view this as a moral imperative to address the Aboriginal student achievement gap and fulfill the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Recommendation 1

That the funding formula maintain equity through:

- 1. A common per pupil grant for each student in the public school system.**
- 2. Additional grants to reflect unique student characteristics (special needs, vulnerable, ELL, indigenous) that require additional human and material resources.**
- 3. Additional grants to reflect the geographic and demographic diversity of the province.**

The remainder of this submission will focus on aspects of the funding framework or formula from the perspective of a school leader. School leaders manage the human and material resources provided by the district to the school or schools for which they are responsible. (**Note:** Approximately 15% of the province's administrators have responsibility for more than one school site.)

Districts assign teaching and support staff to schools. Principals, who, as stated earlier, provide organizational, educational, and relational leadership and moral stewardship to their schools, also deploy the staff to their various teaching, non-teaching and support tasks, build the schedule, and coordinate the delivery of educational programs for students and assignments of staff to meet their responsibilities to ensure optimal learning conditions for all students.

With this preamble, the BCPVPA recommends the following:

Recommendation 2

That the per pupil allocation be retained and that the block reflect that actual costs of providing educational programs to students in a manner that aligns with the goals of the K-12 system and the Ministry



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of Education.

The K-12 system has undergone a radical transformation since the last funding review. The school population is more diverse and inclusive, and the number of students with identified special needs has soared. Enrolment has declined significantly in many northern and rural districts. New technologies have transformed learning and the learning is increasingly personalized. The calculation of the basic student grant should align with the expectations held for students and educators.

The costs of operating the K-12 system should include total compensation for teachers, support staff, leadership at both the school and district level, learning resources, technology and governance.

Recommendation 3

That the funding formula reflect the obligations incurred to districts as a result of collective bargaining and the terms of collective agreements.

There is a disconnect between the terms of collective agreements and the extent to which those responsible for managing districts and school are able to direct resources in ways that are responsive to the needs of individual students.

The collective agreement is the major driver of costs in the K-12 system. Increased costs have been generated by both negotiated collective agreements and the restoration of previous language following the 2016 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. The funding formula must provide sufficient resources for both costs generated by collective bargaining and by the requirement to meet obligations, such as governance, leadership and managerial functions, learning resources and information technology that are part of the educational infrastructure but not subject to the terms of collective agreements.

Recommendation 4

That funding be provided to support initiatives beyond the staffing required to meet contractual obligations related to class size, class composition and non-enrolling ratios and support staff for students with special needs. Funding should be provided for:

- 1. Staffing of exempt staff (leadership) at the school and district levels;**
- 2. Fair and appropriate total compensation differentials between managers and the personnel they manage;**
- 3. Purchase and maintenance of technology required to sustain the transformation agenda.**
- 4. Professional learning opportunities for both exempt and unionized educators to ensure that educators maintain currency and are able to sustain quality and innovation in the K-12 system;**
and
- 5. Initiatives that will inform practice and sustain a future-oriented school system.**

Related considerations

1. The primary purpose of schools is to engage students in learning. If students are to be successful



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learners, the educators and support staff must also be learners and maintain currency. There is a need for educators to keep abreast of changes in areas such as pedagogy, the effective use of new technology, and neuroscience. Presently, the major investment in learning by the Ministry of Education is made by providing six non-instructional days during which teachers and sometimes other employees, engage in professional development activities. This is a 40-year-old model and it would serve the sector well to review other sectors to determine the most effective ways to promote learning communities for employees. **The BCPVPA recommends that to promote a culture of learning for professional employees, the funding formula should fund professional learning.**

2. The Ministry of Education asserts that the province's school system should be "future oriented." This requires that schools, which have traditionally been stable institutions preparing students for a somewhat certain future, become more innovative and visionary. The current funding formula provides few resources to support innovation. A short-lived initiative (2015-17) known as the Innovation Partnership provided modest funding to 35 initiatives over two years. **The BCPVPA recommends that the funding model supports innovation and the sharing of programs that could be replicated in other school communities.**
3. The role of school leaders has increased in both volume and complexity, reflecting the more diverse student population, the increased expectations that every student achieve success, increased engagement by parents, greater need to liaise with other agencies that are involved in the lives of students and their families, and increased demands for accountability. **The BCPVPA recommends that the Ministry consult with BCSTA, BCSSA, BCASBO and BCPVPA to determine the appropriate allocation of staffing to school leadership.**
4. The per pupil grant is supposed to fund the basic education program for students. From the grant, districts are to fund leadership, administration, professional development, exempt staff compensation, communications and more. The challenge posed by the current formula is that the costs imposed by the collective agreement with the BCTF represent an increasing share of the total costs of operating districts and schools. The stresses have been magnified by the imposition of cuts to encourage administrative efficiencies, increases in the unfunded costs for compensation for exempt staff, and by increased costs for utilities, WCB premiums and other expenses not reflected in changes to the per pupil grant. **The BCPVPA recommends that the per pupil block reflect the actual costs of delivering educational programs to students.**
5. One way to ensure that expenditures are used for intended purposes is to target funding. The most recent iterations of the funding formula have eschewed targeting and permitted districts to make decisions about how funds should be expended. The exception is in the area of Aboriginal education, where both historic wrongs and the significant achievement gap require that funds be targeted. The BCPVPA sees merit in expanding the use of targeted funds, but concludes that targeting does not enable districts to respond to the unique needs of students and communities. **The BCPVPA recommends that school districts retain considerable discretion in how funds allocated are expended within the system.** (Note: Unless the funding recognizes the actual costs of delivering required programs and services, particularly with respect to the impact of collective agreements, the flexibility given districts is of little value.)



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Conclusion

The BCPVPA appreciates the opportunity to participate in the funding review and to provide the unique perspective from those charged with managing and leading the public schools of our province. The challenge is to design a funding formula that provides equitable opportunities for students in a large province with a diverse student population. An equitable funding formula may fail to provide equitable opportunities if the various collective agreements do not allow for the equitable allocation of resources in the province.

The funding review is being conducted as an activity entirely independently of the collective bargaining process, but it is clear that the two domains are inextricably linked. It is the BCPVPA's hope that the panel undertaking the review will urge government to forge a nexus between these two critical pieces. 