

Rural Education Advisory Committee
April 27, 2018

Chris Trumpy, Chair
Funding Model Review Independent Panel

Dear Mr. Trumpy,

Re: Rural Education Advisory Committee Submission

The Rural Education Advisory Committee is pleased to provide a submission to the Funding Model Review Independent Panel. The Rural Education Advisory Committee was established in 2011 through the Office of the Eleanor Rix Professor of Rural Teacher Education with a goal of providing a forum for dialogue and planning for rural school districts, the Ministry of Education and universities which train teachers to serve in rural settings.

Our submission is attached: Given the history, purpose and scope of the Rural Education Advisory Committee, we request an opportunity to address the panel. If this is a possibility, please contact one or both of us through the information provided below.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely,

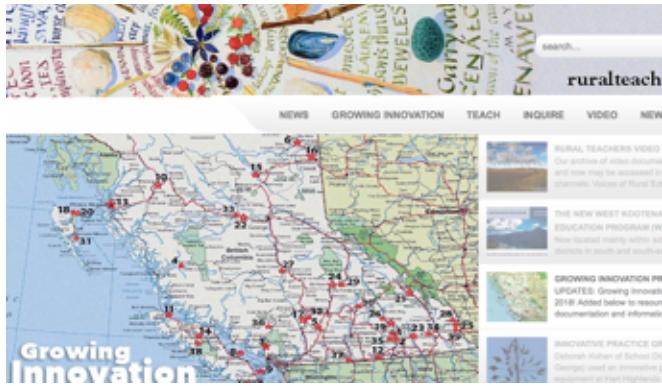
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Dooley". Above the signature, there are two small red "Text" labels, one on each side of the "P".

for:

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Co-Chairpersons, Rural Education Advisory Committee

Rural Education Advisory Committee Funding Review Submission - April 2018



The Rural Education Advisory Committee designed and supports the Growing Innovation in Rural Sites of Learning initiative featured at rural.teachers.com, which shines a light on grassroots innovation in rural schools and districts. The Rural Teachers website is supported by REA and documents innovative educational practices throughout rural BC, connecting rural educators across the province, with many followers worldwide.

The Rural Education Advisory Committee is a structure established to focus and sustain conversations about rural education with the goal of enhancing educational experiences and opportunities for students attending rural schools.

Founded in 2011, through UBC's office of the Eleanor Rix Professor of Rural Teacher Education, The Rural Education Advisory Committee includes representatives from **16 rural school districts, 5 post-secondary institutions, and the Ministry of Education.**

Dr. Leyton Schnellert, UBC, and Patricia Dooley, retired Superintendent, Co-Chair REA.

CONNECTIONS TO 2017 RURAL EDUCATION REPORT

As clearly identified in the 2017 Rural Education Report's Key Findings and Recommendations, **there is an imperative to address the inequitable access to quality education for rural students.** The Rural Education Report cites:

Key Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">There is “a gap between educational outcomes for rural and urban students.”The gap is even larger for rural Aboriginal students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop targeted strategies to close the urban-rural gap in educational outcomes for studentsSupport rural schools to build on local strengths, develop innovative programming tailored to the surrounding community, and share promising practices provincially
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rural students do not have the same level of access to educational programs and extra-curricular activities as their urban counterparts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure equitable access to educational programs, services and extra-curricular activities for students, and professional learning opportunities for staff regardless of where they live

I. SUPPORT QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In reviewing the Funding Allocation System, the Rural Education Advisory Committee has three recommendations to support and enhance quality educational outcomes for rural learners:

1. **Change the calibration of the funding formula** which is currently weighted for all districts at 20% geographic factors and 80% enrolment, instead to **85% geographic factors and 15% FTE enrolment for rural and remote districts and schools** to better support the complexity of multi-age classrooms, diverse learners, Indigenous learners, and schools located a significant distance from services, transportation centres and infrastructure. In essence, **provide a Regional or Adjustable Funding Formula**, responsive to unique school, district or regional needs and address the inequities for rural in the current FAS.
2. Acknowledge the higher costs of providing quality education to small rural and remote schools by implementing **base funding to schools under 100 students in remote and rural locations** to include costs of teachers, principal/vice-principals, support staff, student transportation, and other base costs. **Additional funding for schools under 50 students** beyond the 100 student base funding should be provided given higher costs.
3. **Strengthen the use of Unique Geographical Factors** to better support rural and remote schools and districts. Although current geographic factors help address the additional costs of providing education in rural and remote schools and districts, further refinement and targeting is needed.

In some districts which are primarily urban, there may be one or more schools that are rural. In some rural districts, there are one or more schools which are remote. And some districts are entirely rural and remote in nature. Costs to provide access to quality education is highest in districts with both rural and remote schools, but all rural schools have higher costs. Access to quality education should be equitable as stated on p.17 of the Funding Model Review Discussion Paper:

"Many stakeholder survey respondents felt that factors unique to their school district were not captured by the current geographic supplements, particularly in remote and rural areas. Rural districts emphasized factors such as higher costs of providing transportation in geographically-dispersed areas, especially where travel through"

The Rural Education Advisory recommends that the following Key Geographic Factors be considered for increased funding due to increased rural and remote school and district operating costs:

- ❖ Size of community < 5000 people
- ❖ Regional airport a distance of more than 100 km from the School Board office
- ❖ Distance of more than 100 km to a city of 8,000 population
- ❖ School located more than 40 km from Board Office
- ❖ Secondary school located more than 100 km from the nearest post-secondary institution (impacting the school's ability to offer ACE-IT or other career programs)

- ❖ School Board Office located more than 100 km from nearest post-secondary institution which offers Masters degrees in education (limiting professional learning opportunities)
- ❖ Student's home address more than 5 km from the nearest rural school
- ❖ Use a multiplier effect of the geographic factor to support increased costs for Special Education services including psychologists and consultants and lack of community-based health care or support services in rural and remote places

II. PROVIDE PROVINCIAL STRUCTURES USING TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING

In addition to the first three recommendations, the findings in the Rural Education Report corroborate our own experiences in rural and remote schools and districts and identify that rural and remote schools and districts face significant barriers to

1. equity in providing choice for students in diverse pathways towards graduation a cornerstone of quality educational programs and key to the redesigned curriculum
2. building professional learning capacity for our educators

The following table includes the relevant findings and recommendations from the Rural Education Report that align with the Rural Education Advisory findings and recommendations:

Key Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many innovative ways to deliver quality educational programs in addition to brick and mortar facilities, including virtual, facilitated and experimental options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that rural educators and administrators are well-supported to provide quality educational programming within complex learning environments (ie: multi-graded classrooms)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative programming and solutions to educational challenges are being implemented in schools across the province, however, the effectiveness of these programs and solutions is not being explored systematically and successes are not being shared widely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase supports to students to ensure that they are prepared for post-secondary, career, and life transitions within and outside of their rural community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching in a multi-grade classroom environment can be difficult; many teachers in rural and remote areas are new, and they often have limited access to classroom support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to technological tools, software and supports that encourage innovative educational programming, including opportunities to collaborate between schools and districts across the province

Two Illustrative Examples of Provincial Structures for Student and Professional learning to Address Inequities for Rural Student and Professional Learners:

1. Enhance Rural Student Learning Options, Choice and Equity Through Blended Learning Offered Province-wide

- ❖ Create multi-disciplinary provincial teaching teams from across the province to connect each week with student learners through synchronous and asynchronous digital platforms.
- ❖ Assemble teams of teachers with specialist disciplinary expertise that is challenging to find in rural schools given small numbers of teachers and students.
- ❖ Focus on integrated Grade 10-12 curricular areas such as Forensics/Social Justice/Psychology or Comparative Cultures/Literature/Geography or Environmental Science/Tourism/Entrepreneurship
- ❖ Support a project-based learning and inquiry focus for learners to follow their passions.
- ❖ Enhance opportunities for Trades and Career Life curriculum to be integrated into vibrant cross-province examples and opportunities. Eg: ACE-IT classroom modules offered virtually and real life examples from industry and career areas not represented in rural communities to be shared with students
- ❖ Local schools provide teacher mentors and facilitators to support student learning while challenging specialist content areas are provided through a provincial network team.

2. Professional Learning Offered in a Series of Multi-session Reflective Practice Webinars or Video conferences across the province in key Pedagogical Areas to improve Student Success

Examples of Pedagogical Frameworks for Student Success:

- ❖ Indigenous teaching and learning pedagogies
- ❖ Growing Place-conscious Learning
- ❖ Deepening Student Self-regulated Learning
- ❖ Fostering and assessing the impact of Socio-emotional Learning in the classroom
- ❖ Enhancing formative assessment and assessment for learning practices
- ❖ Supporting student Self-assessment of Core Competencies K-12.
- ❖ Integrating cross-curricular Balanced literacy approaches

Teachers gather in their rural school districts with their school teams to share, learn and interact with external experts and colleagues across the province, growing their professional capacity.

The Rural Education Advisory Committee recommends that the Ministry provide support for provincial structures and initiatives that foster:

- 1. quality student learning experiences shared virtually and in face-to-face sessions for rural and remote schools and districts especially to enhance secondary learning experiences and create greater equity and access for rural students.**
- 2. quality professional learning shared virtually and in face to face sessions for rural and remote schools and districts which includes sharing strengths and innovative practice.**

III. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR RURAL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STAFF

The issue of recruitment and retention of rural educators was highlighted in the 2017 Rural Education Report, and since the implementation of the MoA, has become an even more heightened issue.

Inequities in the quality of educational outcomes for students are integrally connected with the quality of teachers, their willingness to stay in rural schools and communities and to serve the needs of learners. Recruitment and retention of other educational professionals is also paramount. Our most vulnerable learners need attachment to high quality caring and dedicated teachers and school leaders. They are highly impacted by staff turnover, short term teachers, school counsellors, Learning Resource teachers, and principals and vice-principals, and educators lacking the calibre of skills and training to support their diverse learning needs.

The Rural Education Advisory recommends that a comprehensive Rural Recruitment and Retention Strategy be developed as soon as possible. This may include:

- ❖ Support such as the successful Rural and Remote WorkForce Sustainability Fund
- ❖ Greater collaborations with Teacher Education Programs and financial support for rural teacher practicums
- ❖ Student Loan forgiveness programs in underserved areas similar to those in Health Care
- ❖ High quality teacher professional learning which may include post-secondary certificate or diploma programs using online and blended learning pedagogies
- ❖ Other incentives for teachers to choose to teach in rural and remote areas of the province

Thank you for considering our submission on behalf of 16 rural school districts in the province - over 25% of BC's school districts.

Rural Education Advisory remains committed to working side by side with the Ministry, our post-secondary partners and one another to support quality education for rural and remote schools and school districts across our vast province. We would be happy to discuss our recommendations further with the Independent Review Panel and to work in partnership on implementation of any of these recommendations.