
BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 22, 2018

The Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Re: K-12 Public Education Funding Review in British Columbia

Dear Minister Fleming,

This letter, on behalf of the New Westminster Board of Education, is a response to the current review process of British Columbia's public education funding model. We appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback with the independent review panel on April 10, 2018 and the recent summary report provided, however, we feel it is important to summarize our key concerns.

The Ministry of Education, within its March 2018 discussion paper, provides a statement of principles co-developed by the Ministry and the BCSTA. Our Board fully supports these principles to "ensure the new funding model focuses on distributing available funding in an equitable manner that supports the continuous improvement of student outcomes." Using these same principles, we have provided additional context for our school district as it relates to making any changes to the current funding model.

Stable, Predictable & Transparent

As we engage to develop our multi-year strategic plan focused on enabling each student to learn in a safe, engaging and inclusive environment, the need for a funding model to support our future long-term planning is essential. Like many school districts, we accumulate surplus funds to ensure we maintain an ability to respond successfully to any unanticipated budgetary demands at the provincial level. The reason is simple, as we do not want to jeopardize the ongoing supports toward the continuous improvement of student outcomes. The ability for a future funding model that can provide stability and predictability would allow our Board to minimize budget reserves and re-direct resources to our students.

Equitable

As one of the smaller school districts in the Lower Mainland, we possess similar traits to some rural school districts while operating with a 'one-size fits all' funding model. One example is seeking greater clarity to the formula used when allocating funding based on geographical factors. We also want to recognize our current Community LINK funding as an excellent example of providing a more flexible and equitable method which takes into account unique characteristics of our school district. We are in the process of making a decision to implement a district-wide school nourishment program to address food security and healthy eating working towards the goal of ensuring that no child is hungry and that every child eats healthy. The key financial driver for the successful implementation of this program relies on the ongoing stable Community LINK funding we receive on an annual basis.

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Responsive, Flexible & Accountable

A funding model review is long overdue, and moving forward, a timeline on a consistent review process is requested. It is our view that a Board of Education should have the flexibility to develop programs and services, which support the implementation of the K-12 redesigned curriculum. For example, our current funding model towards supporting students with special needs, creates a system where administration, assessments, paperwork and reporting measures come at the cost of providing responsive and timely support to students with special needs and their families. While a funding model needs to be accountable, we support further investigation into an alternative, non-diagnosis model.

Throughout the discussion paper, the question “should there be a more explicit link between funding and closing educational gaps for students” emerged as a theme. A funding model should enable improving student achievement recognizing this is a shared responsibility of our Board and educators. A commitment to implementing our redesigned curriculum including eliminating further delays to our revised graduation program is how we will continue to close educational gaps and successfully equip our students for success. A more flexible funding model that allows our school district to respond to our unique program needs will yield better results.

Finally, with any potential reorganization to our existing funding model, we do not want to see any school district in British Columbia face a decrease in overall funding.

Sincerely,



Mark Gifford
Chair, New Westminister Board of Education

cc: New Westminister Board of Education
Karim Hachlaf, Superintendent of Schools