



The Ministry of Education's K-12 Public Education Funding Allocation System Review

School District No. 41 (Burnaby)

April 2018

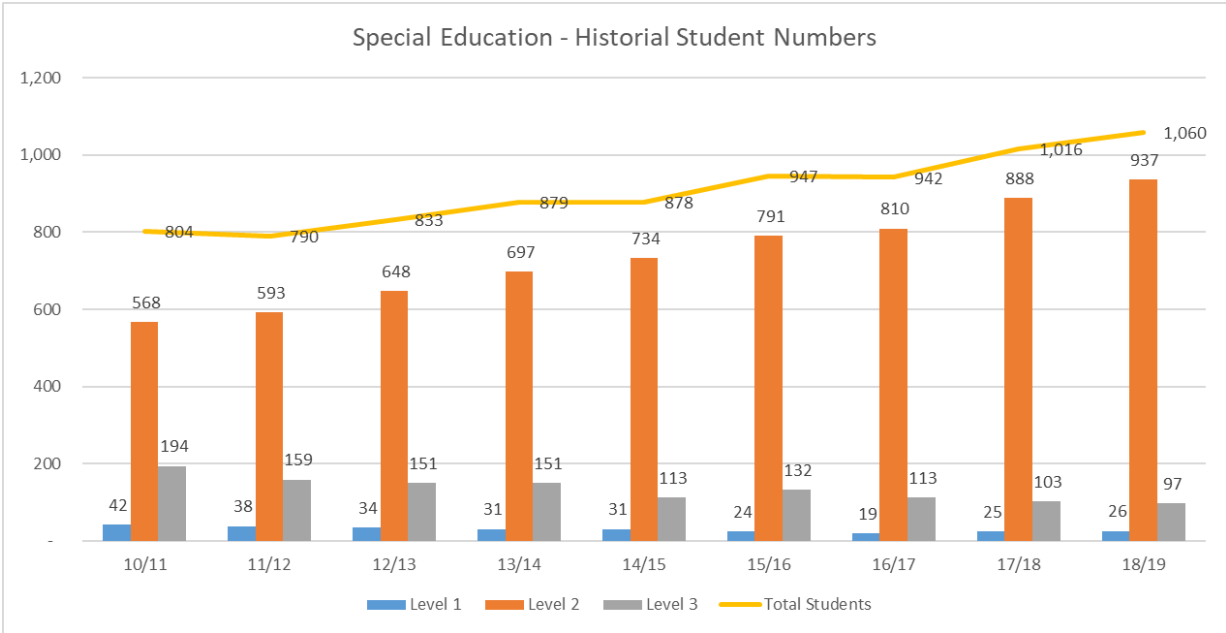
The Burnaby School District has the fourth largest student population in the Province of B.C. and boundaries are coterminous with the City of Burnaby. Serving approximately 24,500 K-12 students, 1,440 International fee paying students, and a large Continuing & Community Education program, the District operates a large and complex learning environment. Approximately 63% of the residents of the City of Burnaby are visual minorities, 2% First Nations, and 35% European Canadian. The School District projects steady enrolment growth in the next 10 years, which will surpass the District’s ability to accommodate the growth in existing building infrastructure.

Special Education Supports

The Burnaby School District has experienced a significant increase in the total number of Special Education students over the past number of years. A downward trend in the number of Level 1 and 3 students has occurred, while a significant increase in Level 2 students existed.

Table 1 – Burnaby School District Special Education Historical Student Count indicates the past actual figures, plus projections for the 2018/19 school year.

Table 1 – Burnaby School District Special Education Historical Student Count



The District believes that the nature and complexity of Level 2 students has changed since the current funding model was developed. Individual students with special needs are placing higher demands for personalized supports on the school system, resulting in increased labour costs, pressure on human resource recruitments, and pressures on individual classroom teachers. Most recently, individual district collective agreement language restored by the Supreme Court of Canada and implemented through the Memorandum of Agreement has added further complexities.

The District believes that current funding for Special Education students is not adequate to address the complexity of each student. Educational strategies and parental expectations to fully integrate students with special needs into the regular classroom were not sufficiently contemplated when the existing funding formula was created. The true cost of Special Education that is transformative, innovative and inclusive requires consideration in the revised funding formula. Transformation and innovation of the entire K-12 education system require adequate resourcing.

The reinstatement of the teacher collective agreement provisions (i.e. class-size, composition, inclusion, non-enrolling ratios), which has been stopgap funded through the Classroom Enhancement Funding, has placed unplanned demands on all staff and school buildings.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

Recruiting specialized teachers and Education Assistants to support the increased number of Special Education students has been challenging. Insufficient casual staff has resulted in a significant number of vacancies not being filled, which places further pressures on schools to cope with the increased complexity. Creative strategies have been implemented to retain qualified teachers and to train Education Assistants; however, these strategies come with a cost that is not considered in the new funding formula.

The Burnaby School District must recruit staff in an environment that is substantively unaffordable to most employees. Housing and transportation costs prohibit most staff members from being able to reside near our facilities; rather, they are required to travel from remote lower mainland communities whose living costs are reasonable. The added cost

incurred by the school district to recruit and retain staff is not adequately recognized in the current funding formula. The Board's inability to manage compensation, allowances, and benefits affects the District's ability to hire and retain existing and future staff.

Technology – Total Cost of Ownership

The Burnaby School District has recently completed a series of information technology reviews to support the development of an updated Education Technology Plan. As part of this review, professional consultants were engaged to conduct an operational review, an infrastructure / security study, as well as an overall district Enterprise Risk Management assessment. The integration of each study has allowed for the development of a multi-year technology plan.

The total cost of ownership for all technology costs is approaching \$400 per student per year, which translates into an average annual cost of \$9.4 million for the Burnaby School District. The required technology to meet the increasing demands of administration, teachers and students has grown significantly over the past many years. The provision of technology is no longer optional for districts, and it is our experience that the current funding formula does not adequately fund these costs.

International Education Programs

International Education programs provide an important cultural and educational opportunity to school districts. Significant investments made by the Burnaby School District allow our program to operate on an international scale. While cultural diversity is an important benefit derived from international student programs, the City of Burnaby is already highly diverse.

The Burnaby School District operates an International Education program with over 1,440 fee-paying students, generating more than \$23 million in gross revenues. Net revenues generated are invested to support all students (specifically non-enrolling teachers), and are supplemental to the current funding formula grant calculation. The District believes that International Education programs should remain outside the revised funding formula. If International Education program funding is considered in the revised funding formula and net

revenues lost to the School District, and the District only retains managing home stays and finding classroom space, then the probable outcome is program termination. There would be no net value to the District to operate the program.

District Flexibility

The Board believes that boards should be allowed to make budget decisions through a highly collaborative process that meets the local needs. The funding formula should respect the value of locally-elected boards and empower Trustees to align financial resources with the organizational vision. Special Purpose Funds and grant targeting should be limited only to those grants with specific program outcomes. However, boards should be held accountable based on agreed student/system outcomes – linking funding to outcomes is ineffective and has a high administrative burden.

Funding Protection

The existing funding framework provides “funding protection” to school districts to ensure that no district experiences a decline in operating grants greater than 1.5% when compared to the previous September. Despite funding protection having no application to the Burnaby School District, the District supports the concept. We fundamentally support the notion of stable, predictable and fair funding for all districts, as we understand the direct impact funding has on any board’s ability to provide a quality education and meet all students’ needs. It is our belief that the implementation of the revised Funding Formula resulting from this review should contain some form of funding protection.