



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

December 17th, 2019

Hon. Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
Room 124 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Fleming,

RE: Funding Distribution Model

Dear Minister Fleming,

At the December 10th In-Camera Board meeting, School District 5 (SD5) Southeast Kootenay, carried the following motion:

That, consistent with the October 26, 2019 meeting of the BCSTA Provincial Council, that SD5 write a letter to urge the minister to consider piloting the implementation of the Funding Distribution Model for K–12 in urban and rural districts, to ensure a system that is equitable, predictable and fair for all school districts.

Like many districts across BC, our Board has serious concerns regarding the new Funding Distribution Model. While most districts have focused on the content of the Model, our Board is specifically concerned with the *process* by which government is choosing to implement the model.

As you are aware, budget projections are made based on a number of unknowns: overall student numbers and designations, grade configurations etc. These numbers can and do change.

Under the current funding model that Trustees and District administration are familiar with, our Board spends months reviewing information and stakeholder input. We begin the process in January and are often not satisfied with our final budget numbers until May or June.

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To implement a brand new, multi-year budget process in *March 2020* does not provide Boards with adequate time to exercise their due diligence to effectively project a *one-year* budget cycle. Yet, government will require Boards to complete a multi-year budget, under a new set of “rules”.

While our Board believes that the rollout date of March 2020 for the new Model has been poorly considered, our greatest concern is the proposed *province-wide* implementation of the Model. Blanket implementation will have a serious, negative impact on the public education system, its 60 districts, 1578 schools and approximately 545,805 students.

Our Board has no doubt that, after twelve years of neglect to the public education system under the previous government, the current government seeks to remedy some of that damage through a funding model that works for **all** students. While we applaud your efforts, we wish to caution your ambition.

The Funding Distribution Model is based on a *theory* of what the MoE believes will work. However, there is a huge difference between theory and practice; Theory *assumes an outcome*, while practice allows one to *test the theory and see if that assumption is accurate*.

In order to mitigate the variance between theory and practice, our Board would like you to *seriously consider* running a pilot program consisting of rural, urban and northern districts *in which parallel budgets are run to compare outcomes of the new and current funding models for efficacy*.

Overwhelmingly, research shows the benefits of running a pilot prior to implementation. These benefits include, among others, the following:

- Lowers risks associated with (areas of) failure.
- Limits resources spent on implementation of unsuccessful elements.
- Assesses performance of proposed model in controlled-but-live “experiments”.
- Confirms or disproves expected results and relationships *prior to* roll out.
- Identifies additional improvements needed in the model *and* its implementation.
- Increases confidence of stakeholders (Boards, administrators, parents and the public).
- Provides action.

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We hope you will consider our Board's concerns –and “solution”—regarding the new Funding Distribution Model planned for rollout in March 2020.

Our Board looks forward to your thoughtful and timely response to our request that the MoE pilot the new Funding Distribution Model in urban, rural and northern district.

Sincerely,



Frank Lento, Board Chair

Cc: John Horgan, Premier, BC
Carole James, Minister of Finance
Dan Davies, Education Critic, BC Liberal Party
Stephanie Higginson, President, BCSTA
Mike Roberts, CEO, BCSTA
Chris van der Mark, President, BCSSA
Patti Dundas, President, BCASBO

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