



**The Board of Education of
School District No.5 (Southeast Kootenay)
MINUTES - STUDENT SERVICES MEETING**

**February 22, 2022, 10:30 a.m.
Virtual Meeting as per SA and Board Procedures By-law**

Committee Members in Attendance: Co-Chair Trustee Krista Damstrom
Co-Chair Trustee Doug McPhee
Trustee Chris Johns
Trustee Kathryn Kitt

Regrets: Trustee Trina Ayling
Trustee Wendy Turner

Board/District Staff in Attendance: Chairperson Frank Lento
Trustee Bev Bellina
Trustee Patricia Whalen
Superintendent Silke Yardley
Secretary Treasurer Nick Taylor
Director of Student Learning and Innovation Diane Casault
District Principal of Transformative Learning Jennifer Roberts
Director of Student Learning and Aboriginal Education Jason Tichauer
District Principal of Student Services Darcy Verbeurgt
Executive Assistant (recorder) Laurel Giesbrecht

1. COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

1.1 Call to Order

The Student Services Committee meeting of February 22, 2022 was called to order at 10:32 a.m. by Trustee Damstrom.

1.2 Approval of the Agenda

Moved/Seconded by Johns/Kitt:

THAT the agenda for the Student Services Meeting of February 22, 2022, be approved as circulated.

1.3 Approval of the Minutes

Moved/Seconded by Johns/Kitt:

THAT the minutes of the Student Services meeting of January 24, 2022, be approved as circulated.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

2.1 Update on Counselling Services (Diane Casault)

Mrs. Casault gave an update on counselling services in our district as per attached presentation. Counsellors are doing a lot of crisis management right now, teaching in classrooms and supporting social emotional programs. They are the liaison between all mental health services for students and have the added responsibility of ensuring graduation requirements. Counsellors provide individual student support as well as contacting parents to provide support and resources. Counsellors feel like they are only triaging. They need hope to have access to clinical supervision and further professional development. Amy Reid set up professional development this past fall on suicide prevention with Darian Thiera. We are looking at a second session.

CHEQ data from September 2021 was shared. Parents struggled with access to consistent childcare. The level of stress has increased within family units. Reliable tools and resources were available for children and their families, but many found it difficult to understand or to know what to do with the resources.

We did find that our counsellors are feeling stretched, and parents are reaching out more. Counsellors are struggling to support the staff that are coming to them. All our counsellors attended our meeting this past week. They needed the time to share and be heard. We need to support them and ensure they are taking care of their mental health.

1 counsellor to 693 students in secondary is our contract ratio, but we are at 1 to 460. Ratio is richer than our contract language from 1993 as we have different needs now.

We have heard that the counselling staff need more access to professional development. Funding is not the issue but finding and coordinating the time to access professional development while supporting people is the difficulty. We have been working with the designations of category H and category R on how to fit it into the role of the district.

Space is an issue in most of our buildings. Some of the older schools do not have the space for the support services needed. Private space for counsellors and Youth Care Workers (YCW) is an issue. They often need to share space with other staff. Sometimes privacy is needed, and space is not available. We are looking into this.

YCWs focus is on providing basic needs and social emotional supports. We added 14 YCWs last year. Hungry kids are not a new issue but a bigger issue. They wish they had more time and a wage that compared to Aboriginal Education Support Workers (AESW) who are at 8 hours a day. Our wages are comparable to outside agencies.

The Cranbrook Fernie Teachers Association brought to our attention that counsellors, YCWs and CUPE support staff feel like they are drowning. In the interim, we have increased the counsellors time for those that were not at full FTE. We have teachers that are working on their Masters program currently. We have had to post for some positions several times. no responses to our postings for because of unqualified counsellors. Counselling time is important. Students with intensive mental illness are best supported by counsellors- We need to post early. A counsellor in each building needs to be planned for next year.

We cannot think that we can solve it all at once. No one could have predicted how covid would have hit. We have a need and must extend ourselves to be prepared. We have been advertising but are in a competition for counsellors across the province. We must make sure to include these topics, as we have in the past, and put together a proactive presentation to the select standing committee. Are all students aware of the counselling services and are their parents aware?

2.2 Report on Special Education Budget in Southeast Kootenay (Darcy)

The Report on Special Education Budget in Southeast Kootenay was compiled from the minutes of the November 2022 Student Services Committee and includes a table that identifies the funding gap between targeted special education funding the Ministry of Education provides and what our school district spends in the area of student services.

The second page shows our school level funding. High incidence students and those needing extra supports. 2017 line shows our spending that year using funds Ministry gave us and is comparable to the charts in the BC Teacher Federation research document in 4.1 highlights information from 2017. It references the broad array of supports; specialized teachers, educational assistants, learning resources, specialized equipment and more. We do not know how far they went to include the “more” piece.

Mr. Verbeurgt looked at what the district spends on special education. 62% of funds spent were received from the Ministry of Education.

Budget year	Targeted Special Education Funding (level 1,2,3)	School Special Education Spending* (all students)	District Special Education Spending* (all students)	Gap	Funding/ Spending
2017	\$ 6,079,000	\$ 7,754,127	\$ 2,020,549	-\$ 1,675,127	62.2%

If we add counsellors and aboriginal education support workers to the total figure, we would be closer to the 50% mark.

3. PRESENTATIONS

4. REPORTS

4.1 BC's inclusive education funding gap (Shelley Balfour)

Ms. Balfour will speak to those who created the report and get specifics. We have continued to support kids when others have not. Our concern is looking ahead. The Prevalence Model has not been discussed for years, due to covid. If the funding gap is related to the Prevalence Model funding, we are concerned. Trustee Johns stated that we need to be ahead of the Select Standing Committee and feels we are not getting enough funding in special education. We need to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

From the 2018 proposed funding model, the only piece that went ahead was the piece on distributed learning. We have heard nothing about the other funding changes and particularly the Prevalence Model since well before covid. The last document stated that they would consider information on what was claimed in districts plus medical information, then give out funding to districts in their Basic Allocations. There was a proposed category called one-to-one support, in addition to the Prevalence Model portion.

Ms. Balfour and Mr. Verbeurgt were thanked for the work done on the reports. It is getting tougher, and the problem is getting worse. In the Select Standing Committee report, we talk of the deficit. What is the loss if we spent what we were given instead of what was adequate? If we took the additional funding away, our expenses exceed what was given to us and something would have to disappear.

RECOMMENDATION A:

THAT the board write a letter to the Ministry of Education outlining our profound concerns around special education funding.

We only get a certain amount of money. We are looking at district staff and class size. We currently have a fairly low class size, but it comes at a cost. A conversation we will begin forward to the board. If we increase class size in intermediate or secondary, we will find money. There are a lot of moving pieces.

5. NEW BUSINESS

6. ACTION ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

6.1 Update on Transition Activities - April

6.2 Update on Social Emotional Learning Centre (SELC) - April

7. CORRESPONDENCE

8. ADJOURNMENT

Moved/Seconded by Johns/McPhee

THAT the meeting of the Student Services Committee adjourned at 11:31 a.m.