

Dear Members of the Funding Model Review;

**Re: Improving Equity and Accountability –
Report of the Funding Model Review Panel 2018**

On behalf of the British Columbia Music Educators' Association (BCMEA), I am writing to provide an initial response to the *Report of the Funding Model Review Panel* that was released December 2018. The BCMEA Table Officers, Executive Members, and membership have reviewed the recommendations and have identified **many** areas of concern. These concerns are shared among teachers in the province, who teach both inside & outside of the timetable. For the purposes of this document, any classes that are taught before the start of the school day, during a lunch hour, or after the end of the school day (i.e. X Block, Outside-of-the-timetable, etc.) will be referred to as “Co-curricular” classes. All responses appear in the order as it is introduced in the “*Report of the Funding Review Model 2018*”.

Improving Equity

The overarching theme of this document is to reduce the cost of education and school district budgets at the expense of student learning conditions, educator working conditions, and specialized programs. Under the guise of *equity*, this report seems to indicate that students should be expected to take no more than eight courses, essentially placing focus on academic learning outcomes and not the *whole student* outcomes. By removing a *per-course-funding model*, all teachers that teach students in multiple grade courses (music, drama, dance, arts, athletics, leadership, work experience, etc.) have an increased risk of losing their positions. The amount of FTE that could be lost throughout the province is staggering. Is the Panel considering eliminating all co-curricular classes (i.e. fine arts, athletics, enrichment)? Ultimately indicating that all students should learn *within the block structure* of the school day actually takes away equity for students to have the opportunities that educators across this province can provide. Do we as a province only value academics or do we value a whole person that can function well in today's society?

Consultation

As stated on pg. 3 “*one-on-one meetings with sector partners and stakeholders, regional meetings with or written submissions from all 60 school district leadership teams, and over 100 written submissions from a range of other stakeholder and partner organizations*”.

How did the Panel consult all 60 school districts?

Many of the teachers in the province did not know about these consultations and were not informed about this review. While many stakeholders were consulted, the voice of music educators was not heard. Both the BCMEA and Coalition for Music Education in BC (CMEBC) are strong advocates representing music specialists across the province with significant and valid concerns regarding the effect this will have on music education in the province.

Executive Summary

On pg. 5, it was stated that *“This includes one-time funding announcements and new program add-ons in recent years, such as the Classroom Enhancement Fund and the Rural Education Enhancement Fund.”* It is reminded that the Classroom Enhancement Fund is in the restored language and is not considered additional support funding as it is eluding towards. Furthermore, *“Such adjustments have been exacerbated funding differences between school districts. This has not only led to service inequities to students...”*, which is incorrect. These funds are in place to combat service inequities, especially for those remote schools and districts.

Funding Model Process Review

In reference to p. 14 *“In addition, the Panel held meetings with individual stakeholders and partner groups to gain a better understanding of their perspectives (Appendix H) and received over 100 written submissions....”* How were these written submissions asked for? Who was given this opportunity to do so? As the Music Provincial Specialist Association, we are also a stakeholder and many of the recommendations affect our music departments. We were not consulted during this review.

Key Issues

In reference to p. 15, para. 2 *“During the Panel’s engagement process, stakeholders also raised concerns with how the current funding model works. Because it is based largely on ‘claiming’ students for funding through course enrolments and student counts, much of school district administrative effort is placed on identifying what qualifies for funding, at the expense of focusing on the services needed for individual students and educational outcomes. According to many of the stakeholders consulted, the current funding model has systemic issues that do not align with modern education pedagogy or the redesigned provincial curriculum and graduation requirements, which involves more blended and flexible learning environments, especially at the secondary level.”*

By moving to a *per-student funding* model, then the mentioned *“redesigned provincial curriculum and graduation requirements, which involves more blended and flexible learning environments, especially at the secondary level”* will not be met. The current *course-by-course funding* model allows students to be flexible as they are able to take co-curricular classes.

Observations & Recommendations

Recommendation no. 4 – *“The Ministry should consolidate and simplify existing geographic funding supplements, the Supplement for Salary Differential, and relevant special grants outside the block into a single supplement, with two components:*

Component 1 – The distance from communities containing schools to geographic centers containing basic services.” This recommendation will limit the number of teachers willing to teach in those smaller, isolated communities.

Recommendation no. 5 - *“The Ministry should replace all current supplements for enrolment decline and funding protection with a new, transitional, mechanism that allows school districts to manage the impact of enrolment decline over a three year rolling time period (i.e. allowing three years to manage the impact of decline, starting with no funding change in the first year, one-third funding reduction in the second year, two-thirds funding reduction in the third year, and fully implemented funding reduction in the fourth year).”* As enrollment changes every year, how will the school districts be able to budget over three years?

Recommendation no. 6 – *“The Ministry should create a single Inclusive Education Supplement that incorporates all of the following:”* – Combining together all of these distinct groups is not reasonable, nor educationally sound. Each of these groups all require specific resources and assistance to ensure that student success is achieved.

Recommendation no. 6 – Component no. 2 – *“the remaining inclusive education funds should be allocated to school districts through a prevalence-based model, using a comprehensive range of third-party medical and socio-economic population data.”* Why are these numbers already set? If the school has a change in population, how will these set numbers affect the funding?

Recommendation no. 7 - ***“Classroom Enhancement Fund...The restored language is unique for each school district thereby requiring the implementation of different class size and composition limits, as well as specialist teacher ratios, in each school district. The restored language is a source of frustration for many school districts, as are the changes enforced by the MoA, and the application and reporting requirements of CEF. While school districts welcome the additional resources provided by CEF, the prescriptive nature of the restored language means the resources provided by CEF may not be going to areas of highest need.***

As an example, one school district has language in their teacher collective agreement that restricts the number and type of students with special needs that can be in a classroom at any one time, while a neighboring school district has no such restrictions.

To manage this, the Ministry has introduced a highly administrative and complex, cost-based, funding process for the restored language through CEF, further complicated by the fact that government funding timelines and school district staffing timelines are not aligned. In order to ensure equity of educational opportunity, CEF should not exist in its current form and this funding should be part of regular operating grants for school districts. However, the restored language generates costs that cannot be avoided and differ from school district to school districts.

School districts also have different non-enrolling staffing ratios, which require different numbers of counsellors, librarians, learning assistance teachers and English Language Learning teachers. This means students in some school districts have access to greater supports than their counterparts in other school districts.”

Regardless of differences in collective agreement language from school district to school district, the province can *always* make the political decision to fund school districts properly so that equitable services can be available to students. The Classroom Enhancement Fund cannot be eliminated as it is part of our restored language.

Recommendation no. 8 – *“The Ministry should eliminate the Classroom Enhancement Fund and allocate this funding as part of school district operating grants. This will require negotiated changes to collective agreement provisions.”* To reiterate, the Classroom Enhancement Fund cannot be eliminated as it is part of our restored language.

The following is a statement from the Central Okanagan Music Educators Association, a Music Local Specialist Association.

The Central Okanagan Music Educators Association (COMEA) has unanimously supported the following statement:

The music educators of the COMEA have carefully reviewed Recommendation 8 in the BC Ed Funding Review. The current "course-based" funding model has opened up powerful learning opportunities for Senior music students including:

- creation of thriving courses in multi-grade senior choral and instrumental ensembles
- opening up cross-enrolment of high performing students between our schools, for best accessibility to all students
- offering of new courses where students can explore and/or specialize in music at all levels
- allowing flexibility for all students to best develop Competencies through engagement and enrichment across all courses, including arts, academics, trades/tech, languages, athletics, and leadership.

The proposed change to a *per-student funding model* would cancel many of these courses, causing inequities between schools and lost opportunities for students. Therefore, the COMEA urges the Minister to continue to support excellence in BC music education by preserving the current *per-course funding* model.

In reference to p. 25 - *“There was no consensus amongst stakeholders on whether per-student or course-based funding would be more desirable and the Panel explored a range of options from status quo, to per-student, to a hybrid approach. In general, funding based on student counts is considered less complex, more flexible, and aligns well with the objectives of learning transformation in BC. That being said, implementation of any changes should consider timelines associated with the implementation of the BC Graduation Program, which is set to be fully-implemented in the 2020/21 school year.”* This statement points out that “going the easy way out” is what the Panel has concluded to. By using the “*less complex*” approach, the Panel has made it more difficult for school districts to be “*more flexible*” with their course and service offerings. A *per-student funding* model would not allow course loads beyond eight blocks to be

funded as administrators would need to offer student prep blocks in the timetable to help counterbalance this issue.

Recommendation no. 9 – *“The Ministry should base funding allocations for school-age educational programming on the number of students, rather than on the number of courses being taken. The Ministry should phase out current course-based funding model by 2020/21 school year.”* Will students be able to take beyond eight courses? If a student transfer from one school to another or from one district to another, will the funding travel with them?

This recommendation could completely destroy many of the co-curricular classes that many Performing Arts, Leadership, and Enrichment Programs rely on. This approach would have far reaching effects on how administration approaches, promotes, and retains current school programming. Any outside timetable classes, despite the fact that they are credited classes, would be in jeopardy, as would senior classes that run with less than maximum enrolment. The resources are already spread thin, with this *per-student funding model*, the resources would be even less. This could jeopardize not only music programs, but also all specialized/senior programming throughout a school (Advanced Placement classes, International Baccalaureate classes, senior level science classes, for example). The larger picture for this kind of recommendation must include a plan to protect fine arts programs and school-based student opportunities, such as leadership classes, which often function outside of the timetable. Endangering these programs with these funding decisions is tantamount to endangering a school’s culture.

Recommendation no. 10 – *“With a shift to a per-student-based funding model.....”* This funding model, as mentioned before, would not allow co-curricular classes to operate under a teacher’s FTE. This could completely destroy the majority of Secondary School Music, Leadership, and Enrichment Programs in the province. Is it the Panel’s recommendation to only create schools and districts with no culture?

“Adult Learning, Continuing Education and Summer School

The K-12 public education system also provides services to adults interested in either completing their graduation or upgrading marks. These students are not typically full-time, so adopting a per-student based model for students who are taking a few courses would not make sense. Summer school provides an opportunity for students to complete courses or upgrade their marks for one or two courses, and is an important option for some students. Continuing to fund per course makes sense for these students as well.”

This also needs to be adopted for students who **chose** to take more than eight courses. As stated above, co-curricular classes need funding as well.

Recommendation no. 11 – *“Notwithstanding Recommendation 9, funding for the following programs should remain course-based;”* – Music, Performing Arts, Leadership, Work

Experience, Athletics, Enrichment Programs **need** to be part of this list of courses to remain on a *course-based funding model*. Do we not value any subject that is beyond the “traditional academic” courses?

Recommendation no. 12 – *“The Ministry should establish a provincial accountability and reporting framework for K- public education sector, including common principle templates. This framework should have three to five board, system-wide goals that are specific, measurable, and focused on student outcomes.....”* We are unsure of which “*student outcomes*” this is referencing. The new curriculum do not include “*student outcomes*”. How will a teacher measure “*student outcomes*”?

Recommendation no. 17 - *“...many stakeholders felt the overall quantum of funding was not enough, some indicated it was sufficient. While a review and recommendation on the total quantum of funding allocated to school districts was not part of the Panel’s scope, failure to recognize these costs can impact the ability to deliver educational programs effectively. The burden of these cost pressures, if not funded, should be distributed to school districts in a way that protects the equity objective described in Theme 1 (page 17).”*

When raising concerns about their ability to effectively deliver educational programs, if there is no funding to alleviate these cost pressures, districts will have to make the decision on how to use their funding so that it works so long as they protect what this report has identified as the “*equity objective*” (page 30, “Funding Pressures” paragraph 2), which is:

1) *Targeted funding for Indigenous Students*

2) *Operational costs unique to their school district (i.e. increased costs due to inclement weather, operational costs outside of “the norm” compared to school districts, and under- or over-population of schools)*

3) *Inclusive Education*

School programs, such as fine arts, applied skills, leadership, etc. will continue to be jeopardized and will run the risk of absorbing all of those budget cuts.

This points to a shift of focus that accompanies the funding changes being recommended. Instead of investing in educational programming and diverse educational programs/opportunities that benefit all students they seem to be focusing on individual at-risk students by moving to *per-student funding* model. In the name of equity, successful students will lose out on valued aspects of their education because they are able to be successful in the current model. While there needs to be greater support and funding for at-risk youth, the funding ideas put forward will result in the reduction of school district budgets, which is passed down to schools. Those will

result in programs being cut, causing a shift in school culture, and all students, regardless of their school success, will lose out.

Background : Current Funding Model

In reference to p. 45 *“Currently, funding is not directly linked to furthering student success, but rather, is largely based on inputs (numbers of students reported by school districts in specific categories). This approach leads to more time and resources being spent on counting and assessing students, as opposed to delivering educational services and driving student outcomes. B.C.’s K-12 education system must prepare students for the future by helping them successfully transition to post-secondary education and the workplace, and to thrive in a rapidly changing world. The funding model has not adjusted to 46 Improving Equity and Accountability | Report of the Funding Model Review Panel O 2018 4 reflect the changes noted above, with the same model having remained in place for more than 15 years.”*

This statement strongly suggests that funding be linked to student success and performance. What is meant by *“more time and resources being spent on counting and assessing students...”*?

In reference to p. 47 *“The funding model that has been in place since 2002 does not include any direct link between funding and student outcomes, and does not explicitly promote student success. However, there is no consensus amongst stakeholders on how to define meaningful, relevant outcomes either broadly or for individual students, and so this concern must be viewed in the context of a high-performing education system with graduation rates and other education outcomes at an all-time high.”*

The suggestion of performance-based funding **should not** be a part of any educational system. This should never be a part of public education, especially in BC. Considering that equity is the focus and direction of the new funding model recommendations, the suggestion that education moves to performance/success-based funding will inevitably lead to increased funding for successful school districts, and less funding for school districts who are not meeting *“student outcomes”*.

In reference to p. 51 *“Key Questions. The funding model review presents an opportunity to investigate whether there are more effective approaches to allocating funding for vulnerable students. Potential questions may include:*

- How can a new funding model contribute to improved equity of access to services, and improved outcomes for vulnerable students?*
- Should allocations for vulnerable students be combined with those for other students?*
- Should the funding model differentiate between the needs of different types of vulnerable students?*
- Are there data sources from other agencies that could be incorporated to better capture*

trends in vulnerable student populations in school districts?”

How does the Panel or the Ministry label a vulnerable student? Is this not undoing the work of a society trying to end stereotypes and embrace reconciliation?

In reference to p. 55 *“Key Questions. The current review is an opportunity to investigate whether different funding approaches could resolve some of the challenges faced by Boards of Education with respect to flexibility. Questions to explore through the funding model review could include:*

– Should the number of grants “outside the block” be reduced, or have fewer restrictions?”

Courses that run outside the block are still curricular. The bookends of the day have no relation to curriculum. If this is adapted as policy we would see an end to distributed learning, arts education, athletics programs, electives and distributed learning courses.

In reference to p. 56 *“Key Questions. The funding model review presents an opportunity to explore these issues further, and to strengthen financial governance and accountability in the education sector.*

Possible areas of focus and questions may include:

Should the funding model account for school district own-sourced revenues, ensuring equity of educational opportunities for all students, regardless of where they live in the province?”

A school board that generates their own funds should not be penalized for having the initiative to supplement their students’ education.

In reference to p. 60 *“The Chair of the Independent Review Panel will present a final report and recommendations to the Minister of Education in the late summer of 2018 for consideration, and the Ministry will work with the Technical Review Committee to model options going forward.*

Once a decision has been made by government, the key features of the new model will be communicated in the winter of 2018/19, with preliminary grant announcements issued under the new funding model in March 2019 (for the 2019/20 school year), including transitional measures (if required). Boards of Education are encouraged to work with their local stakeholder groups, including parents, to gather their views on how funds should be allocated for K-12 public education, and provide this feedback to the Independent Review Panel in writing. Written submissions and questions about the funding model review can be sent to: k12fundingreview@gov.bc.ca before the end of April 2018.”

The timeline of the submissions and questions, and the implementation of this proposed funding model is ludicrous and unrealistic. This report was sent out in December 2018, yet the “written

submissions and questions about the funding model....” was due for April 2018. Why was this report sent out seven months after the deadline for the submissions?”

Conclusion

As submitted above, the *per-student funding model* does not provide flexibility for schools and school districts to allow students to take more than their eight courses. If this model is implemented, many of the province’s Music, Musical Theatre, Dance, Leadership, Sports Leadership, Work Experience, Distributed Learning, Distance Education and Blended-Learning Programs will be dissolved. If the new BC curriculum is based around flexibility, student-centred individualized learning, and core competencies, the *per-student funding model* will take all of that away. It is also noted that the University of British Columbia now recognizes that Fine Arts Courses are part of the recognized Academic requirements for entrance.

If one of the goals of the new curriculum is to engage students to be life-long learners, per-student funding threatens the reduction and possible dissolution of programs that provide a model for practical and positive engagement with learning; programs that foster and develop lifelong learners; programs that provide many students across our province a safe place to explore, learn, develop, and grow.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mandart Chan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mandart Chan, MMus
President
BC Music Educators’ Association