



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

March 8, 2022

The Honourable John Horgan
Premier
PO Box 9041, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

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

The Honourable Selina Robinson
Minister of Finance
PO Box 9048, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Premier Horgan, Minister Whiteside and Minister Robinson:

RE: STUDENT SERVICES FUNDING IN SCHOOL DISTRICT 5 (SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY)

School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay) notes that there are several services that are required to be provided for all students in addition to their education in a regular classroom. These services include things such as access to counselling, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, school psychology, and speech-language therapy. In addition to these services, students with special needs require case management by student services teachers, supports by education assistants, and youth care workers. Our Indigenous population is also served by our Aboriginal Education Support workers.

The current Ministry of Education funding model is insufficient to provide for the varying needs of our diverse and different ability students in School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay). We are provided with targeted level 1, 2, 3 funding for special education (high cost/low incidence) but this is insufficient to meet the needs of all students and classrooms. We are also aware that some funding sources were moved out of the high incidence/low funding categories to the Basic Allocation with deregulation of funding in 2003. The needs of all students in our district have significantly outpaced the funding provided.

In province-wide research, the BC Teacher's Federation indicates "only 65.35% of the actual special education operating expenses were covered by special education operating grant funds" in 2019/2020.

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In 2019/2020, our district received \$8,182,750 in targeted special education funding and expended \$13,396,202. Therefore, **only 61.1% of the actual special education operating expenses were covered by targeted special education operating grant funds.**

In 2020/2021, our district received \$9,679,230 in targeted special education funding and expended \$16,006,348. Therefore, **only 60.5% of the actual special education operating expenses were covered by special education operating grant funds.**

We also wanted to bring your attention to the following 2021 facts about our district:

- The number of students being claimed in Level 1 and 2 are the **highest** they have historically been, totalling 343.
 - Category A = 12
 - The funding provided does not cover the cost of a 1-1 education assistant for these physically dependent students.
 - Category G = 205
 - A high percentage of these students need significantly more support than is provided with current funding.
- The number of students being claimed in Level 3, Category H are the **highest** they have historically been, totalling 215.
 - Approximately 57% of these students require support through most of the school day and all have connections to additional services in our communities.
 - Our district has always been viewed under a microscope over the number of students we have in Category H according to provincial standards.
 - It's becoming more common to make sure that we have enough support staff in schools that understand how to work with students while coping through trauma. The community services that used to support these students are only serving students who have a life-threatening mental illness.
 - Mental illness is becoming the next crisis, caused by financial and social strain. Targeted grant funding for mental health is \$50,000 annually. For 2021/22 \$74,000 more was provided. This has not been identified in the funding for 2022/2023.
- The number of students not in level 1, 2, 3, and whom have diverse learning needs and different abilities are the **highest** they have historically been.
- We have not been able to provide learning assistance to students who require a minor amount of support to make a difference in their educational journey.

Approximately 15.4% of the School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay) student population (899/5836) require additional support to meet their needs and graduate with dignity and purpose. Our district requests that the Ministry of Education adequately fund all our students

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and schools. **Targeted funding for all students with needs would work best for our District.**

More support services funding is required to properly consider the needed support and to increase the Southeast Kootenay School District 89% graduation completion rates. We can not ignore the remaining 11%. Lastly, adequate funding is the moral and ethical thing to do.

We look forward to hearing your collective responses.

Sincerely,



Frank Lento, Board Chair

cc: BCSTA for distribution to members Boards of Education
Shelley Balfour & Chris Kielinski, CFTA Co-Chairs
CUPE Local 4165
Stephanie Higginson, President, BCSTA
Teri Mooring, President BC Teachers' Federation
Tara McKee, DPAC Chair
Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East BC

*This correspondence is public and transparent. Please feel free to share and/or respond with comment.