

Summary of the Funding Model Review

By Richard Obayashi

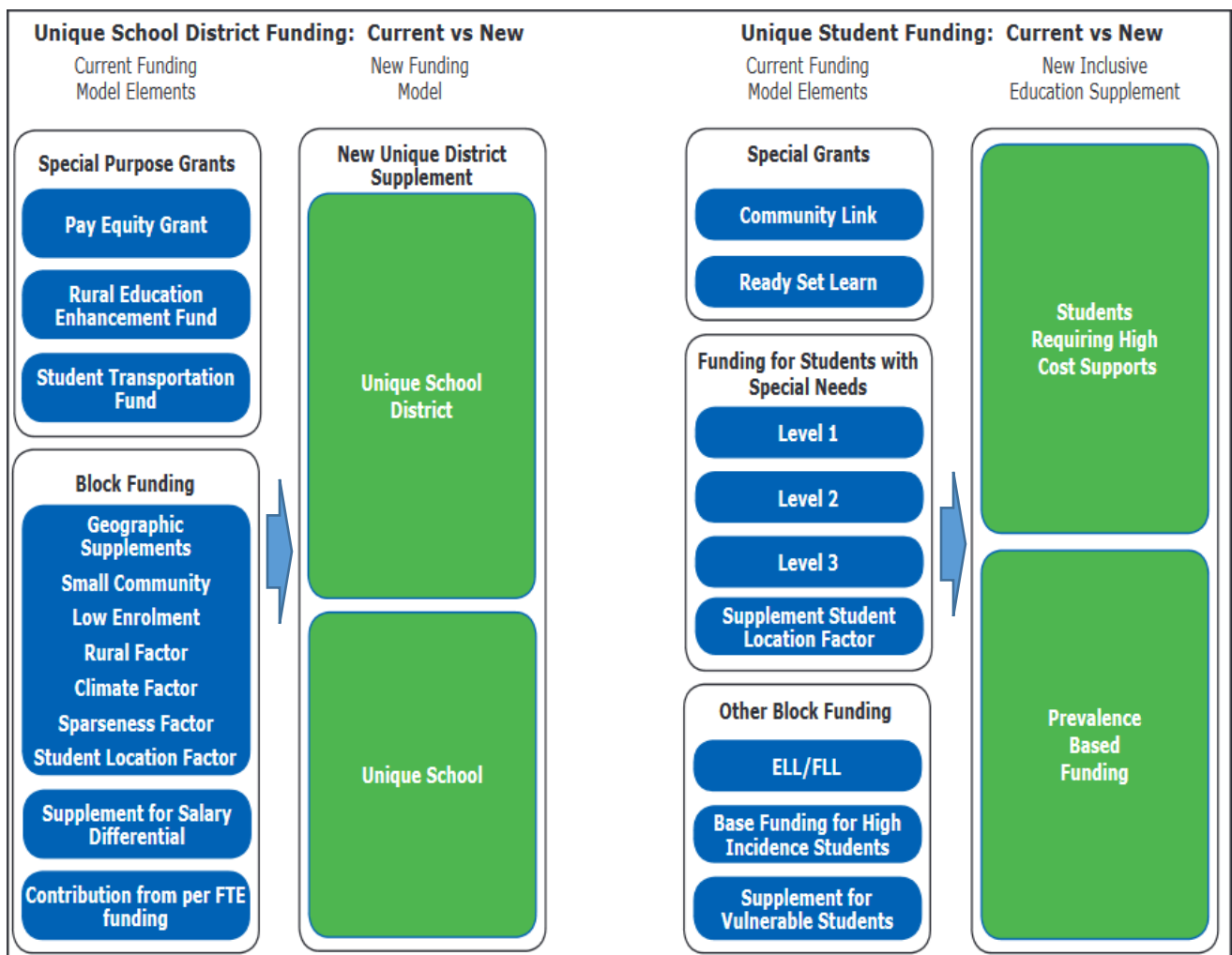
Timeline

- 1) The current funding model has been in place since 2002.
- 2) Since 2002 the government has reduced spending on education by 1% of the GDP (Statistics Canada). 1% of the GDP currently represents approximately 2.8 billion dollars a year.
- 3) A new funding model is being proposed. A committee was formed to do a funding model review. Teachers were not included as it was deemed a conflict of interest.
- 4) An independent company was hired to review our current funding model and they produced a document advising different funding models. The models closely resembled the “Prevalence” model or models that are being used in the United States.
- 5) The BCTF and the public were displeased that they released the findings of the report. Personally, I think the models were about saving money not on how to properly fund an education system. This pushback forced the government to delay the implementation of a new funding model. They delayed the implementation by over a year in which they said they would consult with educators including the BCTF.
- 6) Within this year the government has produced a few long reports (Found on the website). There was also a document that was leaked by the government which provided detailed plans on how to address the public and how they were going to implement the new funding model. This document was quickly taken off the government website. All documents show that they have not consulted with educators, as all of our original concerns have not been addressed.
- 7) A full detailed description or an example of the new funding model has not been given. Educators and school boards are becoming frustrated as they do not know how they will operate their school districts. Although some school boards fear consequences from the government they are also starting to join the fight as they understand the significant impact the new funding model may have on the BC education system.
- 8) The BCTF and local teacher unions have put together committees in order to inform the public and hopefully make a strong push back against the new funding model. These committees were formed at the second half of the last school year. For the Langley Teachers Association (LTA) we wanted to make one strong push in order to make the government reconsider this new funding model.

9) The new funding model if to be implemented on the 2020 BC provincial budget will need to be finalized in the last quarter of 2019. This means that the new funding model will be finalized in October or November 2019.

10) This does not leave a lot of time, but we need to make a final stand. One last push to have this government reconsider a funding model that does not take more money out but put money back into the education system.

Overview of the funding model



This graphic was produced by the LTA, but is a copy from two images proved in the 70 page document released by the government on what the new funding model may look like. The 70 page document can be found on the website.

These pictures summarize the most important aspects of the new funding model. The government has used words such as “simplify”, and now “modernize” to describe the new funding model.

How are they going to simplify the funding model?

- 1) Instead of having different streams of funding that would fund the school, district, or special need student to their unique needs, the new funding model will funnel them all into 2 streams.
- 2) Not in this diagram but more problematic is the way they will distribute this money. The “Prevalence” model is using statistical analysis in order to distribute money. In this model we could see lump sums of money given to school districts, which would have to then distribute lump sums of money to schools within those districts.

Possible problems with the new model

Without knowing exactly how they will fund the education system we will not know the exact impact it will have, but we can look at places that have similar funding models such as some United States school districts and now the Ontario school district.

- 1) One of the main problems with using statistical analysis instead of funding the individual is that there is a loss of accountability. Being a mathematics teacher we teach in the new Workplace 11 course how statistics can be manipulated to show what you want. For instance, margins of error can be used to significantly change numbers. When trying to track down where and why the money is going to certain districts or certain schools the statistics can be manipulated to show what they want. Currently the individual is being funded, so the school gets the money for that individual. If there is a special needs child, a parent or guardian can advocate that the school spend money to properly support their child. With the new system, the money does not belong to that child but just a number in a larger system.
- 2) The other problem with statistics is that it could be used to shift money to where they want. There are two instances that can see significant changes. First in smaller districts and smaller schools, statistics can be used to underfund them and push the money to larger districts and larger schools. Using special needs funding as an example we can clearly show how this can happen. Special needs funding can be quite substantial depending on the student’s particular needs. The number of special needs students in each school will depend on demographics, but for the purposes of this example I will use 10%. The maximum number of students a resource teacher can have is 15 students. If your school has 150 students, statically speaking your school would have 15 students who require extra support, which would require the hiring of one resource teacher. What if that school actually had 25 special needs students? Statistically, that

school will not get any more funding but the one resource teacher would have to deal with almost double her maximum workload. What if we view rural schools who have under 150 students, they will not get the funding to even hire one resource teacher?

Second there is a divide between rich and poor districts/schools. Lower income communities tend to have a higher amount of students that require extra support. Statistically speaking, however, that school could be provided with the same amount of money as any other school its size, without regard for their unique set of needs and challenges. These are major issues happening in some United States school districts with underfunding of smaller or lower income schools.

I am using special needs funding as the example, but the same will be done with all funding. All specialty programs cost extra money, including outdoor, workplace, fine arts and computer programs. This money can be shifted towards certain schools so that they can offer these programs but other schools will not be able to afford them. All BC students, without prejudice related to socio-economic or geographical considerations, should have the opportunity to receive a first-rate education, regardless of the school they attend.

3) The greatest impact of the new funding model will be seen over time as there will be less funding in the future. At first special needs funding will be significantly impacted but it will eventually impact all of education funding. To properly identify a student as special needs, the government needs funding for significant testing from specialized educators, which can cost thousands of dollars. The wait list is already quite long in each school and it can take up to a few years for a student to get properly identified in the current system. In the new system, with even less funding, students may never be identified. Especially in the small schools, which will have barely enough funding to hire resource teachers, let alone have the extra funding to identify students. With less students being identified, this means statistically the entire system requires less money. This means there will be even less support in the following years. Over time, less supports mean even more students are left unidentified, which in turns means less money. This is a vicious cycle, which will continue until each district has the minimal amount of money to work with for all students.

This vicious cycle will be seen in regular funding as well, especially with speciality programs. With less specialized funding, these programs will need to be cut, which in turn means that the next year there will be less specialized programs to fund. With funding in speciality and special needs programs decreasing, it will mean that all school districts will have less money to allocate and will need to make difficult choices. When you add up all of BC together this can mean million, or tens or maybe even hundreds of millions out of the system. How will we properly run our education system? Will we have to increase

classroom sizes, hire less support, close specialty programs, close fine arts programs, or computer programs? The new funding model will have a significant impact on the special needs programs first but will inevitably start to impact all of the BC education system.

Why is this important to everyone?

- 1) For teachers, I understand that we are in bargaining right now. This is probably why most teachers have not heard much of the new funding model. This will impact BC education more than bargaining. Ontario has adopted this model, and compounded with Mr. Ford, their school system is having to make difficult choices because of the lack of funding. They have made significant changes, including increasing classroom sizes, which has led to thousands of teacher layoffs. This is **NOT** a bargaining issue and therefore the BCTF and your local unions cannot do anything without your help.
- 2) For parents, the large narrative is that this will have the largest impact on special needs funding. Of course I do agree, but more importantly is the impact that it will have on the entire education system. With large changes in special needs funding we will inevitable see less support in the classroom. This will put extra pressure on teachers, who will need to spend more time helping those that need extra support. This will mean that all students will receive less support from their teachers. Also with less funding we could see much like the United States that schools will require large amounts of private funding to operate any speciality programs such as music or sports.
- 3) For everyone, I understand that education is not the most important issue for you because there is no immediate impact and as such does not make headlines like the billion dollar laundering scandal. But studies have shown that a strong education system can help reduce poverty, unemployment and the division between classes. Also that this effect goes beyond individuals but into future generations. Parents with better education tend to have better jobs and their children are less likely to be in poverty. A strong education system can help the entire system and create a stronger economy. I know some will say that if we increase funding to the education system this will just help the teachers get a raise. Remember that 1% of GDP, means 15 years ago we had over 2.8 billion dollars more per year and the teachers were getting paid less than we are now. The funding will go to hire more supports for the system, whether that means classroom supplies, more EA's, more speciality teachers, more speciality programs, and much more. This new education funding model will play a significant role in how the BC education system will operate.

Over the last 15 years the government has reduced education by 1% GDP and if take even more money out of the education system, it will be impossible to put that money back without taking from somewhere else or taxing more heavily.

What can you do?

As pointed out before there is not a lot of time, so I am hoping that you take immediate action.

- 1) Learn more about the new funding model
- 2) Spread the word to as many teachers, students, parents, grandparents, and friends as possible.
- 3) If you agree with me and are concerned for the future of BC education system, please send an email to your local NDP MLA. If your local does not have a NDP MLA, please send your letter directly to John Horgan. It does not hurt to send your letter to non-NDP MLA's, as it may show the other political parties how important education means to BC. But for immediate change we have to put pressure on the current NDP government.

Please advocate for them to reconsider the new funding model and to have them put more money back into the education system.