

**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 71 (COMOX VALLEY)**

**Regular Board Meeting (Public) Agenda**

**Tuesday, January 24, 2017**

**7 pm**

Pg

**1. ATTENDANCE**

***The Board of Education acknowledges that we are on the traditional territories of the K'omoks First Nation.***

**2. CALL TO ORDER**

**3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Circulated earlier in draft form for Board approval.

**1. Adoption of the Regular Meeting Agenda**

Recommendation:

**THAT THE Board adopt the January 24, 2017 Agenda**

**OR**

**THAT the Board waive the 48-hour notice period required under the Procedural Bylaw in order to consider additions to the Agenda, and adopt Agenda as amended, the amendments consist of...**

**4. CONSENT AGENDA**

a. The minutes from the December 13, 2016 Board Meeting will come forward to the February meeting.

b. Human Resources Report, Retirement

Recommendation:

**THAT the Board approve the Consent Agenda items.**

**5. REPORT ON IN-CAMERA MEETING**

In-Camera Minutes of December 13, 2016

*School Act* Section 72 (3) In-Camera Meeting Record:

1. Personnel

2. Budget

3. Governance

6. **PRESENTATION/DELEGATION**

- a. EDAS/Chantel Stefan

7. **EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Committee Chair: Ian Hargreaves

- a. Minutes of the January 17, 2017 Education Committee Meeting are attached for board information.
- b. The next meeting of the Education Committee will be on February 14, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at Glacier View Secondary Centre.

8. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

**Strategic Priority 1 – Education Evolution – To Strive for Educational Excellence for All**

**Strategic Priority 2 – Community Engagement – Cultivate Community Engagement in Public Education**

**Strategic Priority 3 – Organizational Sustainability – To Ensure that our Financial, Human, Physical Resources Support Student Success**

1. **Superintendent’s Report**

- a. **District News, Dean Lindquist, Superintendent**
  - 1. CommunityLINK Funding, Briefing Note, Superintendent, Dean Lindquist.
  - 2. Nutrition and School Meal programs, Briefing Note, Superintendent, Dean Lindquist.

2. **Assistant Superintendent’s Report**

- 1. Supreme Court Decision – Assistant Superintendent Tom Demeo
- b. **Alignment and Coherence/Process, Dean Lindquist, Superintendent**

9. **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

1. **Finance Committee**

Committee Chair: Peter Coleman

- a. Minutes of the January 16, 2017 Finance Committee meeting are attached for Board information.
- b. Busing RFP – verbal report by Acting Secretary Treasurer, Sheldon Lee.

**Recommendation:**

***THAT School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) Amended Budget Bylaw for 2016/17 in the amount of \$86,367,000.00 receive its first reading.***

***THAT School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) Amended Budget Bylaw for 2016/17 in the amount of \$86,367,000.00 receive its second reading.***

***THAT the Board unanimously agree to suspend the requirements of the School Act and Board's Procedural Bylaw 2015.2 to have the third reading of the Amended Annual Budget Bylaw at a subsequent meeting.***

***THAT School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) Amended Budget Bylaw for 2016/17 in the amount of \$86,367,000.00 receive its third and final reading.***

10.

**BOARD BUSINESS**

- a. Seismic update at G.P. Vanier – Director of Operations, Ian Heselgrave
- b. Minutes of the November 28, 2016 Ad Hoc Transportation Committee meeting are attached for board information.

**Motions:**

**THAT the board approve the following two motions to be sent on behalf of School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) to the BC School Trustee Association annual general meeting:**

***1. THAT B.C. Ferries be required to consult with local school districts and the Ministry of Education when planning any route changes before implementing them to determine if there is any significant impact those changes will have on students attending island schools.***

***2. THAT the Ministry of Education be required to fully fund all new capital and ongoing operational costs that will be incurred by School Districts as they implement the recent Supreme Court of Canada ruling with hiring additional teachers.***

11.

**PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD**

12.

**ADJOURNMENT**

# Education Committee Meeting—Minutes

Date: Tuesday, January 10, 2017

Location: Mark R. Isfeld Secondary School - Library

Address: 1551 Lerwick Road, Courtenay

6:30 pm

Committee Chair, Janice Caton, City of Courtenay  
Trustee, Tom Weber, Area B/Lazo North  
Vice Chair, Ian Hargreaves, Puntledge, Black Creek  
Trustee, Sheila McDonnell, Baynes Sound (Denman/Hornby Islands)  
Trustee, Clifford Boldt, City of Courtenay  
Trustee, Peter Coleman, Town of Comox  
Trustee, Vickey Brown, Village of Cumberland  
Superintendent of Schools, Dean Lindquist  
Assistant Superintendent, Tom Demeo  
Director of Instruction (Elementary Curriculum) Allan Douglas  
Director of Instruction (Student Services) Esther Shatz



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## Members:

## AGENDA

1. Mark R. Isfeld Secondary School update – Jeff Taylor, Principal
  - Jeff Taylor has been principal of Mark R. Isfeld Secondary for five (5) years.
  - This school has excellent exam/scholarship results
  - September opened with a full complement of volunteers and coaches and had no decrease in teachers coaching.
  - Closed down smoke pit and vaping pit. No noticeable push backs.
  - Good feedback regarding school culture. People are blending in very well.
  - Lots of participation in the Terry Fox run.
  - Checking to see if the Grade 8 students are fitting into the school. (\*Grade 8 teams are often coached by senior students).
  - Grad fashion show – 85% of grads involved.
  - French Immersion banquet was run for the first time by Grade 12 students.
  - 45 families sponsored for the Christmas hampers.
  - Interact club supports small village in Honduras.
  - Lots of volunteers at this school.
  - Hosts more tournaments than any other school on the North Island.
  
2. Presentation on Differentiated Instruction Fridays.

- A, Highland Secondary School – Dean Patterson, Principal
- Different path to get to Friday.
  - Offered staff some Literature to review prior to the start of the year.
  - Started slowly. Began with traditional approach. (4 shorter blocks on Friday).
  - By October, staff approached Dean and they wanted to explore a differentiated model for Fridays.
  - Friday: two regular blocks in the a.m. then a flex block (transition).
  - Did lots of work with parents and students ahead of time
  - Using AG for plans to identify what students are doing during the flex block.
  - Attendance very good – similar to any other Friday p.m.
  - Allows students to manage a small amount of time.
- B. Georges P. Vanier Secondary School – Darren Freeman, Principal
- See handouts\*.
  - Principal Darren Freeman indicated “Best thing I have seen in Education”.
  - Very positive comments from students.
  - Staff realize the benefits, staff engagement at different levels
  - Staff like this and see it as an opportunity to engage students in something in depth
  - Allows students to take responsibility for something they would like to learn.
- C. Mark R. Isfeld Secondary School – Jeff Taylor, Principal
- Began discussion with staff last February.
  - Fridays need to be looked at differently than the other days!
  - Went through a variety of different templates.
  - Needed to get kids into the flow.
  - Energizing the student with learning will enhance their retention.
  - Gave Example that we have really not prepared students for the future. And described how the differentiated model will help students with planning and self-direction
  - Layers for Friday: (This is the guide that students use)
    - PRIORITY – class assigned by teacher (teachers want student to attend)
    - CURRICULAR – like X block catch up (Student choice)
    - ENHANCEMENT – school community projects (Independent Directed Study/Work Experience)
  - Fridays give students a measure of control over their own learning, and also makes them accountable for it.

Overall, in all 3 sites some early indicators of success with the differentiated Fridays. The structure of the day continues to develop. Still growing and developing

# School District No.71 (Comox Valley)

607 Cumberland Road  
Courtenay, B.C., V9N 7G5  
Fax: (250) 334-5552  
Telephone: (250) 334-5528

Office of the Superintendent

## **Briefing Note** **CommunityLINK Funding**

### Background Information:

CommunityLINK funding plays a critical role in providing ancillary supports for students in schools. Provincially, \$52 million in funding is provided to 60 school districts. SD71 will receive \$600, 980 for 2016/17. How the funds are dispersed is left to local decision making. The committee assigned to make decisions regarding distribution of the funds is a Superintendent of Schools chaired committee (committee membership noted below).

Historically, schools across SD71 apply for available funding. To ensure that the funding available is distributed in a fair and equitable manner and is based on District priorities, the committee has established the following:

### Purpose

The CommunityLINK funding supports academic achievement and social functioning of vulnerable students through the provision of meals and snacks, academic supports, counselling and after school programs.

### Terms of Reference

CommunityLINK funding should:

1. Distribute funding in a manner that supports the greatest number of students possible.
2. Support the physiological, psychological and emotional needs of students before other needs are addressed.
3. Provide for school – community based programming where other program alternatives are not available to students.

To access CommunityLINK funding, schools are required to undertake the following requirements:

1. Complete an annual application for funding including a program description which identifies goals, strategies, targets and measures for the program to be offered.
2. Provide to the CommunityLINK Funding Committee a program year end evaluation that includes relevant information as to program efficacy in relation to established goals, targets and measures.

3. Return any funding that was not spent on the project for re-distribution in the following year.

#### Membership

- Superintendent of Schools
- Assistant Superintendent
- Secretary Treasurer
- Director of Finance
- 1 Board Member
- District Principal of International School Program

#### Meeting Frequency

The committee will meet as required, but at minimum will meet for the following:

- At the beginning of each year to review the funds available, terms of reference for the committee and application procedures;
- To review the applications and select applications to be funded; and
- At the end of each year to review the school performance/evaluation reports submitted by schools for each approved project.

#### Recommended Motions:

Information Only

# School District No.71 (Comox Valley)

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## Briefing Note

### Nutrition and School Meal Programs

#### Background Information:

The Breakfast Club of Canada states that "1 child out of 5 is at risk of missing out on breakfast." Missing out on breakfast or being hungry at school impacts on student learning. If we consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s\\_hierarchy\\_of\\_needs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs)), which indicates that the most fundamental needs (e.g. physiological) must be met before higher order levels will be reached. In essence what this means is if we do not provide for the basic needs, it will be more difficult for children to learn as motivation is impacted. Furthermore, the impact that nutrition has on learning is not new. The link has been recognized for some time through anecdotal evidence and, more recently, through controlled research studies. (ERIC Identifier: ED369579)

School administration and staff have recognized the need to provide a wide variety of supports for students in order to enhance learning opportunities. Student meal and snack program is one of the many examples that is readily used in all schools across the district. Meal programs provided at schools are healthy and provide students with nutritious alternatives.

Trustees requested information on the various student nutrition programs offered at schools across the district. For the purpose of this report, nutrition at school will mean offering a healthy breakfast, lunch or snack program for students.

Funding of the nutrition programs varies from school to school. The following are examples of how schools fund and or provide breakfast, lunch and snack programs:

1. CommunityLINK funding
2. School budgets
3. Teacher and Support Staff
4. Breakfast Club of Canada
5. Community agencies
6. Community clubs
7. Community donations

The programs offered at schools are diverse and dependent upon student need. All but a few of our schools provide breakfast, lunch and snack programs. Some schools also send food hampers home.



The purpose of this report is to provide overall information of the magnitude of programs offered across the district and to not provide individual school information. Hence the following totals are for the various programs offered across the district:

- Breakfast Program – 220 students
- Lunch Program – 316 students
- Snack Program – 277 students

Recommended Motions:

Information Only

# Finance Committee—Minutes

Monday, January 16, 2017  
School Board Office, Seminar Room  
3 pm

<b>Members</b>	<b>In Attendance</b>
Peter Coleman (Chair)	Yes
Vickey Brown (Trustee Representative)	Yes
Dean Lindquist (Superintendent)	Yes
Tom Demeo (Assistant Superintendent)	Yes
Sheldon Lee (Acting Secretary Treasurer)	Yes
Candice Hilton (Director of Finance)	Yes
Ian Heselgrave (Director of Operations)	Yes
Carol Snead (Recording Secretary)	Yes

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## AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. **Month-End Year to Date Finance Report (Candice Hilton)**

Director of Finance Candice Hilton spoke to the month-End Year to Date Finance Report. A copy of this report will be attached to the public agenda.

### 2. **Busing RFP (Ian Heselgrave)**

Director of Operations Ian Heselgrave spoke to the busing RFP procedure and advised that 4 companies expressed interest, however only one bid was received. It was discussed by the committee and recommended that, subject to Board approval, the bid be accepted.

### 3. **Enterprise Risk Management Update (Sheldon Lee)**

Acting Secretary Treasurer Sheldon Lee provided an update regarding the Enterprise Risk Management process and informed the committee that KPMG will be overseeing this process.

### 4. **Rural Education Engagement (Peter Coleman and Sheldon Lee)**

Trustee Peter Coleman provided a report on Rural Education Engagement and a copy will be attached to the public agenda.

### 5. **2017/18 Budget Planning (Sheldon Lee)**

Acting Secretary Treasurer Sheldon Lee spoke to the 2017/18 budget planning process and will also seek approval for the amended final 2016/17 budget at the January 24, 2017 board meeting.

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 71 (COMOX VALLEY)  
- Financial Comparison -

11/01/2017

	2015/16		% Spent or Collected	2015/17		% Spent or Collected	Notes
	Amended Budget	Actual Dec 31/15		Annual Budget	Actual Dec 31/16		
<b>REVENUE</b>							
PROVINCIAL GRANTS							This report does not include any outstanding commitments  Budgeted in SPF Fund 5
Operating Grant	70,002,897	28,626,691	40.9%	68,693,766	28,216,663	41.1%	
Other MOE Grants-Reduction for LEA				-174,538			
Other MOE Grants-Ed Guarantee							
Other MOE Grants-Fed French	326,318	0		0			
Other MOE Grants-Pay Equity	451,831	45,183	10.0%	451,831	0	0.0%	
Other MOE Grants-Labour Settlement							
Other MOE Grants-Misc	81,785	14,250	17.4%	35,866	298,796	837.8%	
<b>TOTAL MINISTRY OF ED GRANTS</b>	<b>70,862,831</b>	<b>28,686,124</b>	<b>40.5%</b>	<b>69,006,725</b>	<b>28,515,459</b>	<b>41.3%</b>	
OTHER REVENUES							
Other SD/Ed Authorities							
LEADirect Transfers from First Nations	157,950	-18,479	-11.7%	174,538	69,815	40.0%	
Offshore Tuition	3,779,250	3,754,765	99.4%	3,797,500	3,932,585	103.6%	
Miscellaneous other	502,867	53,006	10.5%	850,000	175,024	50.0%	
Rental and Leases	150,000	92,825	61.9%	201,508	76,728	38.1%	
Investment Income	187,000	62,771	33.6%	87,000	72,935	83.8%	
<b>TOTAL OTHER REVENUE</b>	<b>4,777,067</b>	<b>3,944,888</b>	<b>82.6%</b>	<b>4,610,546</b>	<b>4,327,086</b>	<b>93.9%</b>	
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>75,639,898</b>	<b>32,631,012</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>73,617,271</b>	<b>32,842,546</b>	<b>44.6%</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>							
SALARIES AND BENEFITS							\$2.9 was unearned from 15/16
Teachers	31,241,392	12,202,398	39.1%	30,138,224	12,155,433	40.3%	
Principals and Vice Principals	4,368,159	2,222,228	50.9%	4,008,022	2,148,006	53.6%	
Educational Assistants	5,257,685	1,946,198	37.0%	5,085,339	1,880,888	37.0%	
Support Staff	6,704,195	3,265,810	48.7%	6,926,860	3,065,226	44.3%	
Other Professionals	1,704,536	895,803	52.6%	1,890,146	937,678	49.6%	
Substitutes	2,595,426	1,096,237	42.2%	1,629,020	902,921	55.4%	
Benefits	13,164,404	4,849,678	36.8%	12,778,516	5,229,332	40.9%	
<b>TOTAL SALARIES AND BENEFITS</b>	<b>65,035,797</b>	<b>26,478,152</b>	<b>40.7%</b>	<b>62,456,127</b>	<b>26,319,484</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	
Benefits as a % of Total Salaries	25.4%	22.4%		25.7%	24.8%		
SUPPLIES AND SERVICES							
Services	3,554,302	1,558,451	43.8%	3,315,697	1,579,275	47.6%	
Student Transportation	1,905,816	623,447	32.7%	1,898,915	614,274	32.3%	
Training and Travel	297,205	173,560	58.4%	296,500	155,059	52.3%	
Dues and Fees	56,617	47,511	83.9%	57,117	42,288	74.0%	
Insurance	193,790	155,933	80.5%	193,790	35,605	18.4%	
Supplies	3,805,130	1,875,754	49.3%	3,694,547	1,837,854	49.7%	
Utilities	1,225,000	365,361	31.5%	1,554,578	341,301	22.0%	
<b>TOTAL SUPPLIES AND SERVICES</b>	<b>11,038,860</b>	<b>4,820,117</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>11,011,144</b>	<b>4,605,656</b>	<b>41.8%</b>	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>76,074,657</b>	<b>31,298,269</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>73,467,271</b>	<b>30,925,140</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	
<b>NET REVENUE (EXPENDITURE)</b>	<b>-434,759</b>	<b>1,332,743</b>		<b>-350,000</b>	<b>1,917,406</b>		
Prior Year Surplus					585,862		
Transfers from Special Purpose Funds							
Transfer to Capital							
Transfer to Local Capital				150,000	-150,000		
Prior Year Surplus (Deficit) Carry-forward School Grants (New or Performance Based Learning and Arts Grants) (Note 15)					-12,833		
Prior Year Surplus (Deficit) Carry-forward School Supply Supplies (Note 15)					-31,251		
Prior Year Surplus Appropriation	434,759	434,759					
<b>Unappropriated Surplus (Deficit), for the Year</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,767,502</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2,189,186</b>		

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 71 (COMOX VALLEY)  
- Financial Comparison -

11/01/2017

	2015/16			2016/17			Notes
	Amended Budget	Actual Dec 31/16	% Spent or Collected	Annual Budget	Actual Dec 31/16	% Spent or Collected	
<b>INSTRUCTION</b>							
Regular Instruction	36,640,164	14,537,833	39.7%	33,452,485	14,747,136	44.1%	
Career Programs	865,944	265,202	30.6%	828,160	347,387	41.9%	
Library Services	1,516,695	582,448	38.4%	1,471,113	603,649	41.0%	
Counselling	1,569,968	679,147	43.3%	1,834,343	631,983	34.5%	
Special Education	11,674,367	4,189,866	35.9%	11,402,815	4,138,421	36.3%	
English as a Second Language	124,644	54,915	44.1%	127,624	49,332	38.6%	
Aboriginal Education	1,366,173	464,125	34.0%	1,234,963	472,468	38.3%	
School Administration	6,143,845	2,791,959	45.4%	6,216,469	2,637,805	42.4%	
Off Shore Students	3,261,982	1,445,855	44.3%	3,378,063	1,565,621	46.0%	
Other	562,229	320,030	56.9%	611,926	300,954	49.2%	
Function 1 - Instruction	63,726,011	25,331,360	39.8%	60,558,161	25,514,756	42.1%	
<b>DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION</b>							
Educational Administration	570,166	292,053	51.2%	670,656	278,606	41.5%	
School District Governance	217,149	117,969	54.3%	233,875	119,802	51.2%	
Business Administration	1,013,427	626,403	61.8%	1,032,857	543,913	52.7%	
Human Resources	464,274	211,730	45.6%	446,025	198,344	44.5%	
Function 4 - District Administration	2,265,016	1,248,155	55.1%	2,383,413	1,140,665	47.9%	
<b>OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE</b>							
Operations and Maintenance Admin	429,968	258,429	60.3%	439,948	134,671	30.6%	
Maintenance Operations	2,910,522	1,511,593	51.9%	2,943,155	1,339,777	45.5%	
Custodial	3,307,967	1,688,679	51.0%	3,343,280	1,579,767	47.3%	
Maintenance of Grounds	69,000	39,325	57.0%	69,000	68,982	100.0%	
Utilities	1,600,000	658,656	41.2%	1,929,678	572,454	29.7%	
Function 5 - Operations and Maint	8,317,457	4,157,682	50.0%	8,724,961	3,695,651	42.4%	
<b>TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING</b>							
Transportation and Housing Admin	84,091	28,495	33.9%	86,522	29,553	34.2%	
Student Transportation	1,682,062	532,557	31.7%	1,714,214	544,515	31.8%	
Function 7 - Transportation and Housing	1,766,173	561,052	31.8%	1,800,736	574,068	31.9%	
<b>TOTAL FUNCTION 1-7</b>	<b>76,074,657</b>	<b>31,298,269</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>73,467,271</b>	<b>30,925,140</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
<b>Typical 10 Month Educational Year:</b>													
Amount	0	0	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1,000
% of Year	0%	0%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	100%
YTD % Spent	0%	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%	
<b>12 Month Operational Year:</b>													
Amount	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1,200
% of Year	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	100%
YTD % Spent	8.3%	16.7%	25.0%	33.3%	41.7%	50.0%	58.3%	66.7%	75.0%	83.3%	91.7%	100.0%	

## RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN B.C.

### PRESENTATION BY SD 71

#### SUMMARY

Rural school districts in B.C. have been suffering significant relative underfunding since the Provincial government took control of district budgets in 1984. The main reason for this is that successive governments of the day assumed, wrongly, that small districts were inefficient. Appropriate policy changes are necessary, easily made, and relatively inexpensive. They could correct historic inequities in funding, and hence open up educational opportunities for rural students.

#### INTRODUCTION

Small and rural school districts (almost all rural districts are also small, and vice-versa) have been a significant problem for British Columbia for at least 100 years. For many years the Governments of the day has attempted to control costs by district consolidations, knowing that local control of schools was bound to be a casualty of such changes.

In 1925, Putnam and Weir recommended that

Consolidation of assisted schools be carried out wherever it seems educationally or financially desirable, with the approval of local boards if possible, but in the face of their disapproval if necessary (p. 32).

There have been 4 other Royal Commissions on Education since (King, 1935, Cameron, 1945, Chant, 1960, and Sullivan, 1988); all have had the same objectives, controlling costs and equalizing educational opportunities, and the same attitude to local school boards. Most resulted in school district consolidations. There were 650 districts as recently as 1945. In 1984, the last year of local control of budgets, there were 75 districts; only 14 had more than 10, 000 students; the mean size was 6380. Today, there are 60 districts; 17 have more than 10, 000 students, and the mean size is 8800. So consolidations (together with urban growth/rural depopulation) have only slightly increased mean size, **but have dramatically reduced local control.**

All these reports suffered from the same error, the belief that district size predicts per student costs. But in fact it is **school** size that predicts costs, not **district** size. (See Coleman and LaRocque, 1990, and Coleman, 1987, 1991, for full analyses.) In fact, in every jurisdiction where the issue has been studied, large school districts are **more costly**, in per student terms, than the average-sized district (Coleman, 1972).

So these district consolidations have significantly reduced local control, which is positively associated with student achievement, according to the latest PISA analyses,

(OECD, 2016), without significant gains in cost control.

## STUDENT DISPERSION

The real problem for cost control is student dispersion, **which is signaled by small schools**. This creates both educational and financial problems. For at least the last 50 years (see Coleman, 1972; 1987; 1990) school districts throughout Western Canada have tried to deal with these issues by **school** consolidations; closing small schools and transporting students to larger but more distant schools.

Every district that studies the problem of small schools arrives at the conclusion that they are financially ineffective, (although they may be educationally successful). Despite frequent media claims, school closures are driven, not by the desire of school trustees to infuriate their parents/voters, but by the need to provide broader educational opportunities, and **simultaneously** to control costs.

Significant problems caused by student dispersion can be illustrated by two vignettes that are circumstantially accurate, but do not describe not real people:

**John** is a Grade 8 student (the only one in the school) on Hornby Island, where members of his family have farmed for over 100 years. One of his ancestors was a School Trustee on Hornby in the 1880s when it was one of the first school districts in the Province. He is one of 40 students in this K-8 school. The school has a part-time Principal, 2 teachers, and a clerk librarian, administrative assistant, community school coordinator, and a custodian (all part-time). A bus driver tours the island each morning to pick up almost all the students.

John has already taken on-line courses, provided through a very expensive hard-wired connection in the island school. Hornby has poor wi-fi and cell signals; the recent comment from the CRTC Chair that “High quality and reliable digital connectivity is essential for the quality of life of Canadians and Canada’s economic prosperity” is a bad joke on Hornby. The school has recently adopted blended programming, some on-line, some face-to-face, in order to provide programming something close to equivalent to that in city elementary schools (the district is fortunate in having a DL program which has won an international award for its blended programming).

Next year John will travel to a city secondary school for Grade 9; his school day will start at 6.50am when he boards the bus (2 bus rides, and 2 ferries get him to school in just over 2 hours), and end at about 5.30pm when the bus drops him off again. He is not looking forward to the change from his village school where he knows everyone, to a secondary school with 1200 students, where he will know only 2 or 3 Island kids, who are in senior grades anyway. He was hoping to play on school teams, as he is a fine athlete, but bus connections rule that out. They also rule out playing in the school jazz band (he has played guitar since he was 8 years old, and performed in public since he was 10).

**Jean** is a Grade 7 student at Valleyview Elementary, in East Courtenay. Her father owns a small company, and her mother is a realtor. She lives 10 minutes walk from her school, and knows every other student in her neighborhood (even the ones who go to the nearby French Immersion school). Next year they will all be together at the Secondary school (across the parking lot from her elementary school). She is very much looking forward to Grade 8, because she will be joining the Improv Club, and hopes to make the Junior Improv team. The senior team was the best in Canada the previous year, and she is aching to be a part of that. Since she hopes for a career in Broadcast Media, this extra-curricular activity is very much curricular for Jean.

Valleyview is a fairly typical city elementary school, with 360 students in 8 grades, and a full-time Principal and Vice-Principal, 16 classroom teachers, and 9 support staff (Administrative Assistants, Educational Assistants, and Library Clerks) and 2 custodians.

#### FINANCIAL REALITIES AT HORNBY AND VALLEYVIEW SCHOOLS

Hornby's 40 students "earn" ( $\$7,218 * 40$ ) \$289,000, and the school qualifies for a small school grant of \$249,000 and \$9,000 Rural Supplement. Staffing costs, at \$351,000, are by far the largest expense. Transportation costs are heavy: \$348 per day to bring the k-8 students to the school (entire cost of the bus route for all students).

In summary it costs about \$13,700 per student to operate Hornby Island Elementary School; a total cost of \$540,000. The school "earns" a total of \$547,000. (Refer to Appendix A - Hornby Island Notional Analysis.) This suggests that the supplementary grants roughly cover the extra costs of this school.

But note that when Hornby Island students are attending secondary school in Courtenay, the enrollment counts are captured at that secondary school. The school district is losing out on supplementary funding for "Small Community and Student Location Factor". Based on the Ministry of Education's funding estimator tool, the school district is being short-funded approximately \$18,644 per fte student in this situation.

For an average of about 5fte students attending secondary school in Courtenay from Hornby Island, this amounts to approximately \$93,220 in grants foregone. Theoretically, these funds could be earned by registering these 5 students at Hornby Island School for secondary schooling (via blended learning), even though they were in fact travelling to a city school for most of their coursework.

Valleyview's 360 students earn ( $\$7,218 * 360$ ) = \$2,598,000. The school also generates approximately \$350,000 for students with Unique Student Needs, and \$95,000 Rural and

Student Location Supplements grants. Staffing costs, at \$2,416,000, are by far the largest expense. There are no transportation issues.

In summary it costs about \$8,360 per student to provide education at Valleyview Elementary School. (Refer to Appendix B - Valleyview Notional Analysis.)

Costs per student at these two schools differ very significantly. School-level revenues per student, because the small school grants, are roughly similar. Every district that contains small schools suffers significant financial penalties, as they have for many, many years. These penalties are at the moment largely offset by the special rural grants. For districts with a large proportion of rural (small) schools, these grants are vital to service provision.

### PROGRAM REALITIES AT HORNBY AND VALLEYVIEW SCHOOLS

In an era when the dominant concerns are for personalization of educational provision, and career preparation, the distinctions between curricular programs and co-curricular or extra-curricular school activities are quite meaningless. Students are able to make careers in music, or outdoor activities, or sports, as easily as in mathematics or sciences. So the program opportunities available to Jean are far superior to those that John can access. Improved transportation options would help John. The recent shift in transportation funding, to recognize the needs of small schools, is certainly a small step forward.

However, the extensive use of on-line learning in rural areas represents a major shift in equalizing opportunity; the fact that both urban and rural students are enrolled in these course offerings suggests that the on-line courses have won wide acceptance, and are not seen as a second-class option by students. A commitment to ensuring that all small schools had access to on-line learning, and to developing teacher expertise in this mode of teaching, would signal a real commitment to equalizing opportunity. Equalizing per student spending in rural/urban schools is certainly an important step.

However, student needs differ sharply, because of school size and location. **When needs differ so much, equality is far from equity.**

### EQUITY FOR SMALL SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

The intention of the “funding protection” policy was to provide support for small and shrinking districts. It is a recognition that such districts are in a particularly difficult situation, having to manage enrolment declines with declining financial resources.

The policy in effect acknowledges that the existing formula for funding school district operating costs in B.C., based on pupil head-count, is discriminatory. It creates winners and losers amongst school districts; those with small and/or shrinking enrolments cannot provide equal educational opportunity. This problem is of long standing (as noted above),



is true in many provinces, and has been reported on many times by Statistics Canada. The recent ASBO Report on school district administration used recent data from the Federal agency and arrived at the following conclusions (amongst others):

In 2013/14, BC continued to spend 30% less on district administration per pupil than the other provinces with BC spending \$306.95 per pupil on district administration and Alberta at \$395.47, Manitoba at \$402.58 and Saskatchewan at \$500.52. □

Smaller enrolment districts will have greater per pupil expenditures due to the fixed cost of doing business-this is comparable to other provinces. □

There is a requirement for basic administration services in all entities and in a number of instances districts may be under resourced in administrative support. Axford, 2015.

The first point is even more important now than when the Federal report was published, since administrative budgets have been sharply reduced in many small and declining districts since 2013. In SD 71 in the current and next budget years alone, per pupil spending on administration has declined by about \$20 per student.

The last point in the ASBO report is particularly relevant to the situation of small/shrinking districts. An enrolment-driven formula discriminates against small rural districts with a dispersed population, because **fixed costs are never taken into account and are a far higher proportion of total budget in small districts than in medium and large districts.**

#### POLICY SOLUTIONS TO THE EQUITY ISSUE

In other jurisdictions, in educational and other public sector services, the classic administrative solution to the problem of small units has always been the “establishment grant”. Such a grant could offset fixed costs that are unavoidable (Supt., Secretary Treasurer, Clerical Support, School Board operations), in small and rural districts.

A related instance is the issue of Ministry “designations” for special needs students. After student needs have been assessed (by specially trained district staff) Ministry policy provides financial support for school districts in providing services to the students. This is essential because the services required by these students, and provided by school districts, can be extremely expensive. But for small districts with limited specialist staff, long delays in testing for designations can occur; yet the services must be still be provided.

The implementation of a system of **temporary designations** could be helpful. Districts could “designate” special needs students, and be given appropriate funding, on a temporary basis, pending Ministry confirmation of these designations. (Obviously, if the designations were not subsequently confirmed, the temporary funding would be repaid.)

This measure would allow districts to provide much-needed services without excessive strain on budgets.

Such policy solutions would make an enormous difference to some districts in the Province, while being of little significance to large districts, or to overall spending on K-12 education.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The small and rural school districts contain most of the small schools in the Province, and are discriminated against by the current funding formula. The districts encounter very high per student costs to operate small and remote schools. Special rural school grants have offset some of these additional costs, and constitute **recognition in principle that funding schooling through pupil head-count is flawed**. Fixed costs in small districts are unfunded by this head-count system, and form a relatively high proportion of the total operating budget of these districts.

Policy shifts that would recognize the relatively large fixed costs of small districts, in addition to the additional costs of operating small schools, could easily be implemented. Furthermore, **recognition that equal funding does not constitute equitable treatment for students in remote locations is essential**.

The provision of broader educational opportunities through technology could help students in small and remote schools, and address these equity issues. Such an initiative requires very significant government action.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We make three linked recommendations, two concerning the funding of rural education, and the third concerning educational opportunity.

First, with regard to funding: rural school districts (i.e. those containing a high proportion of small schools, those with fewer than 5 students per grade) are encountering very high per student costs, which are not offset by the rural school grant system. Although this added funding helps to cover most in-school costs, it does not provide for central office services to small schools (administrative, personnel, financial, special student needs, and IT/operations services). That is evident from the Axford report cited.

We have suggested an "establishment grant" system, but there are alternatives. In any event, we recommend

**That grants to small rural schools be increased to allow the provision of these essential services to the schools that are not presently affordable.**

Second, with regard to transportation services to students in these schools, the problem goes beyond getting students to school for regular school hours. Much that is valuable to students about the public school system occurs outside the regular school day; this has always been true (the reader can recall her own school experience for confirmation). However, in an era when personalization of the school experience is strongly valued, the extra- and co-curricular elements take on even greater significance.

Given this consideration, we recommend

**That transportation grants to rural school districts include a very significant allowance for extra-curricular travel.**

Finally, with regard to educational opportunity for students in rural schools, it is imperative that all rural students have access to on-line learning, and that their teachers be skilled mentors and advisers in blended learning. We recommend

**That the Ministry encourage the teacher training institutions in the Province to provide specialized pre-service and in-service training for teachers teaching in (or hoping to teach in) rural districts.**

Perhaps the final thought should be that with regard to special needs students, educators and the educational system acknowledge that “equal treatment is not equitable treatment”. Exactly the same applies to rural students, who cannot easily access educational opportunities that are routinely available to urban students. Yet rural students have talent too, and can also enrich the economic and cultural life of our province, given an equitable (not equal) opportunity to do so by public education.

(Note: time constraints over the Christmas break prevented the development of this Recommendations section for the original submission; it is added here for discussion at the meeting to be held in the Comox Valley in February.)

*CODA: JOHN, at Hornby Island, was not able to develop his musical talent by playing in a school band; he is earning a living by farming and odd-jobbing. JEAN at Valleyview had a successful Improv career in secondary school, got a degree from BCIT's Broadcast Program, and now works in the Television industry. These two students were regarded as highly talented and industrious by all those who knew them.*

#### LIST OF REFERENCES

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- Coleman (1990). Struggling to be "Good Enough": Administrative practices and school district ethos. London: Falmer Press.(with L. LaRocque).
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# Transportation Ad Hoc Committee—Minutes

Monday, November 28, 2016

School Board Office, Seminar Room

3:00 pm

<b>Members</b>	<b>In Attendance</b>
Vickey Brown (Chair)	Yes
Janice Caton (Trustee Representative)	Yes
Ian Hargreaves (Trustee Representative)	Yes
Candace Hilton (Director of Finance)	Yes
Ian Heselgrave (Director of Operations)	Yes
Ramona Simard (DPAC Representative)	Yes
Donna Graves (DPAC Representative)	Yes
Carol Snead (Recording Secretary)	Yes
Sheldon Lee (Acting Secretary Treasurer) – Guest	Yes

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

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## AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. Value Statement Regarding Bus Transportation

The cost to run buses for students is \$1,800,000.00 per year. It was suggested that a statement needs to be made to the public regarding busing costs. It is important for us to affirm that busing is required as it provides socially equitable access to education. It also reduces economic barriers and provides access. The committee formed around the discussion of charging for bus passes, however the government has given us a supplemental funding for transportation that precludes the ability to charge for bus passes.

### 2. Route Efficiency Measures

A Request for Proposal has been sent out for the 2017/18 school year. The company that will be providing our busing must commit to operate in the most efficient way possible, considering reasonable pick up times. The maximum time a student should be on the school bus is no more than one hour. We do not subsidize for transit passes unless the family is financially unable to purchase a pass. Some of our bus riders that live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods likely would not be able to attend school without busing. This is a continual process.

### 3. Courtesy Rider Protocols

Courtesy riders must wait until all catchment riders have their passes, and, if room is available on their bus route, they will receive a courtesy pass in late September/early October. We also give courtesy passes to students that go to a day care after school.

**4. Bus Stop Modification Process**

If a parent would like to request that a bus stop be added, they are required to send an email to Carol Snead, who then forwards it to Ian Heselgrave (Director of Operations) and Dorothy Palmer (Manager, First Student). If necessary, they will drive to the requested location to determine if there is a safe place for the bus to pull off the road, and to determine how this may impact on the bus route timing. Once a decision has been made, Ms. Snead advises the parent.

**5. Transportation Policy**

Tweaking and updating this policy is required and this will go to the policy review committee.

**6. Committee**

This will be the final meeting of the Ad Hoc Transportation committee.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.