



March 15, 2019

Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education

Email: educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Fleming,

The West Vancouver Board of Education, with the assistance of our senior staff, has carefully reviewed the report "*Improving Equity and Accountability | Report on the Funding Model Review*" that was released this past December. As the current funding model can be cumbersome, and does not always best serve the needs of our students, we are pleased that the Ministry has undertaken this review. We appreciate the work of the committee and the efforts to include stakeholders from around the province and applaud the focus of the report on equity in education for all our students. We are also pleased that you elected to send the report out for a second round of consultation. These are important decisions, and we need to get them right.

We are pleased that there are a number of themes in the report that address issues that our Board, and we know Boards around the province, have discussed for many years. These themes include the need for a focus on equity and accountability for boards to ensure money is being spent to best improve student learning, local flexibility that allows Boards to make decisions with money that are best for their community, and a commitment to allow Boards to generate and maintain local revenue, ensuring autonomy of the Boards in this area. Further, we were pleased to see specific measures related to Indigenous Education and the ongoing commitment to improving the graduation rates of our Indigenous students. Finally, allowing a transition plan to bridge districts from the current funding model to any new finalized model will ensure districts can make thoughtful decisions as we adopt the changes.

We do want to highlight that we have very serious concerns about Recommendation 9 - that moves funding for grade 10-12 students away from course-based funding, and returns it to student-based funding. We do not understand what problem this change is meant to solve? We do note, in reviewing the report, that the Review Panel actually made no recommendation in this particular area (page 25), citing there was no consensus.

Over the last dozen years since adopting the per-course model at grades 10-12 we have seen students in West Vancouver taking more courses and achieving at higher levels, and like districts across the province our graduation rates have improved. While we appreciate the nuances in any funding change, this one change could directly lead to fewer teachers and fewer course offerings for our students. We know that since moving to per-course funding, the average student in West Vancouver in grades 10-12 takes 8.3 courses, compared to less than 7.5 before the change. We know that intended or not, funding does drive behaviour.

In situations where students are limited to taking no more than 8 courses, it is often the elective courses, and those which are most innovative and create a breadth of experience, engaging and challenging the students, that are first to disappear. We saw 12 years ago that a change in funding changed practice for the good – we have more students taking more courses, with greater diversity of offerings and being more successful. We appreciate the time and effort the Ministry is putting into the Learning transformation and fully support the Vision for Student Success and we feel very strongly that eliminating the per-course funding will lead to poorer student outcomes.

We also know that the changes proposed for special education funding are generating discussion around the province. While we appreciate that there are examples in other provinces of this being successful, we would like to see it modeled before it is implemented so we can better understand how this will change the delivery of education to some of our most vulnerable students.

The work on the funding model review process has been very informative and we believe this next phase is crucially important. There is a lot to be proud of with our student success and equity in British Columbia, and we want to ensure any changes only enhance these accomplishments.

Our Board and Senior Staff would be happy to meet with you, your staff and those involved with this phase of the review in-person so we can better explain our positions and also better understand the modelling for the proposed way forward.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Broady, Chair
West Vancouver Board of Education

cc: BCSTA Member Boards of Education
West Vancouver Board of Education
West Vancouver Schools District Leadership Team
West Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council
West Vancouver Administrators' Association
West Vancouver Teachers' Association
West Vancouver Municipal Employees' Association