

**DATE:** September 22, 2020

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Distribution of Federal Funding  
(Response to Request for Information #078)

**ORIGINATOR:** Todd Burnstad, Chief Financial Officer

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Angela Anderson, Geoff Holmes, Terry Korte, Coreen Moccia, Amanda Wong, Chris Wright

**REFERENCE:** September 8, 2020 Board meeting

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**ISSUE**

On August 25, 2020, the Federal government announced \$2 billion dollars in funding to support schools across this country with re-entry during a global pandemic. Referred to as the Safe Return to Class Fund, Alberta's share is \$262.8 million, with \$37.4 million being directed to support Edmonton Public Schools.

Board Chair Estabrooks requested that Administration outline how these funds will be distributed to support student learning and the health and safety of students and staff during COVID-19.

**BACKGROUND**

This federal funding is intended to allow school authorities to address:

- staffing
- learning space adaptations
- procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- cleaning and safety considerations for schools and buses
- supports for students requiring specialized supports
- online learning and teacher training.

Funding will be provided in two equal installments; the first payment has already been received by the Division and the second payment will be made later in the school year. In order to receive the second part of the grant, school boards are required to submit a completed financial template to Alberta Education by November 30, 2020, showing how the funds have been spent to date and/or committed. This includes all eligible staffing/contracting that was put in place for the entire school year and any related committed facility upgrades. The template requires the reporting by specific categories including: additional learning supports, adaptation of learning spaces, testing (temperature checks/swab tests), facility alterations/utility costs, PPE, cleaning supplies and sanitation, additional cleaning and custodial, health and safety training, online learning and teacher training, supports for students requiring specialized supports and transportation (cleaning and routing).

**CURRENT SITUATION**

The total financial impact of COVID-19 and our re-entry strategy is difficult to estimate. We anticipate an increase in staff costs associated with offering families the choice in how their children will receive instruction, and the ability to alter their choice during the year. In addition, we anticipate a significant increase in staff sick time as we strongly encourage staff who are feeling unwell to not come to school.

In preparation of welcoming our students back to school, we have already spent just under \$4 million on PPE, sanitation and cleaning supplies and we anticipate these expenses to continue throughout the school year.

Because of all the unknowns, it will be a challenge to operate within our existing budget. As such, the Division welcomes the additional federal funding and has rolled out a plan to direct these funds to best support our students during the 2020-2021 school year. Highlights of the plan include:

**Staffing**

We are committed to giving schools as much flexibility as possible to address their local needs and support students as much as possible. We will be providing \$20 million of these federal funds directly to schools on a per-student weighted enrolment allocation.

The Division will pay for the cost of supply staff to cover certificated and non-certificated school staffs' sick time and also additional staffing costs required to support the quarterly model for online temporary staff that were not previously included in the Division's budget.

**Equity Fund**

We are adding an additional \$6 million to the existing \$7.8 million in the equity fund. These funds will be used to address hotspots in schools. The Equity Fund was established by the Board to enhance opportunities for all schools in the Division and to support the Division's Cornerstone Values: Collaboration, Accountability, Integrity, and Equity.

The existence of the Equity Fund allows principals to reach out to their Assistant Superintendent for financial assistance when unanticipated needs arise and school budgets are not able to absorb the costs (staffing, supports for students, etc.).

**Infrastructure needs**

Approximately \$4 million will be directed towards infrastructure needs. This includes the rental and maintenance of portable sinks to support our commitment to good hand hygiene which helps to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Division is also increasing the amount of time ventilation systems are running, which will result in an increase in utility costs.

**Technology**

The Division will also use approximately \$2 million to support technology needs for online teachers and students. This will include purchasing a limited number of Chromebooks along with other technology supports.

**Mobile testing**

The Division is partnering with a medical company to provide same-day mobile COVID-19 testing for any Division employees who have COVID-19 symptoms. This will help shorten the amount of time it may take to receive a test and the amount of time staff are required to be away from the worksite. The cost of this contract is based on the number of tests performed. The current estimate is between \$0.5 million and \$1 million.

**Curriculum resources**

In response to COVID-19, the Province and Division moved to distance and online delivery of teaching and learning in March 2020. In conjunction with the 2020-2021 budget, the Division directed \$4 million to support online delivery of K to Grade 9 curriculum including online instructional videos, and accompanying plans and resources for subjects across the grade levels.

Utilizing the federal funding, an additional \$2 million will be applied to the development of high school online lesson plans and resources.

**Transportation**

To support the quarterly school re-entry strategy, additional routes will be required along with additional cleaning and sanitizing of the buses. The Division is currently working with our transportation service providers to determine the financial impact.

**Personal protective equipment**

The balance of the Safe Return to Class Fund will be held centrally to continue to manage and supply all the necessary PPE, sanitization and cleaning supplies to ensure quality, consistency and the safety of products being used at our schools.

**KEY POINTS**

- In order to maximize the benefit to our students, the majority of the federal funds will be allocated directly to our schools.
- The distribution of the federal funds plan was communicated to our principals within two weeks of the announcement, thereby providing support for our students as quickly as possible.
- An information report will be provided to the Board on December 8, 2020, with a copy of the completed financial template that will have been submitted to Alberta Education by November 30, 2020, reflecting the costs incurred and/or committed to date.

TB:ja