



NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SPECIAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING

INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: May 19, 2021
 TO: Business Committee
 FROM: Secretary-Treasurer Mark Walsh
 SUBJECT: 2021/22 Budget

Background:

At the Business Committee meeting of May 12, 2021, the committee passed the following motion:

The Business Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) direct staff to review the budget allocation for primary classroom teaching supplies and resources and provide the Board with recommendations to be considered in the 2021/2022 budget deliberations.

This memo addresses the issue and provides the Board options to consider in order to meet the intended goal of supporting classrooms.

Discussion:

On its face, the issue appears simple – a new teacher has less teaching resources available to them. The obvious solution would be to add financial support and the issue would be addressed. The issue, however, is more complex and may be worth gathering additional information prior to taking action.

The current process:

The District funds approximately \$20,000 per new classroom (not per new teacher). These funds are used for the purchase of desks, bookshelves and other general infrastructure. In addition, there is a \$1,000 provided for learning resources. Further, elementary schools are provided an average of \$110 per student, per year, for supplies and services. At the school level, staff committees have the ability to provide input on how school funds are spent. While we note that classrooms are typically provided with a set limited amount of resources (depending in the school), there are no guidelines that would prevent additional supports for a specific classroom. Many schools and classroom initiatives are also supported by their PAC. Other funds are available to schools, however often those funds are targeted to specific purposes such as Indigenous Education and French Programs. Further, the District funds supports for technology such as teacher laptops, projectors and document cameras centrally.

We note that every year the funds provided to elementary schools are underspent. The last three years the underspends are as follows:

2017-2018	\$ 87,609
2018-2019	\$ 68,391
2019-2020	\$274,114

It should be noted that during the 2019-20 school year we froze spending in the Spring to prevent unnecessary spending to preserve resources for the current year prior to being aware of additional COVID support funds.

We are anticipating that the amount for this year will be approximately \$125,000. This estimate is based on typical expenditures during May and June in previous years.

We also note that in 2016-17, the Board allocated \$147,757 to elementary schools as a one-time supplement to the schools' budget for resources.

Issues to explore:

In addition to the potential resourcing issue, there are a number of logistical issues to consider including:

1. What is the obligation of a new teacher who receives funding for supplies to not change schools or grade levels? This is rhetorical as we cannot limit the mobility of our teachers but if resources are focused on a specific grade level they may not translate to a different level. It is the classroom/grade level that the resources are purchased for, not the individual teacher?
2. If resources are purchased, is the purchase done centrally with an approved list? If so, does this limit the efficacy for teachers who would like to choose their own resources? Teachers have professional autonomy in "determining the methods of instruction, and the planning and presentation of course material in the classes of students to which they are assigned" as long as their practice is "consistent with effective educational practice".
3. Would teachers be allowed to source the resources? Are there purchasing policy implications? Centralized bulk purchasing is the most cost-effective manner to procure resources, however in many cases this would be very difficult to facilitate.
4. Do teachers in temporary contracts receive support when they are unaware of their long-term assignment?

Given the many challenges, staff is recommending the following motion:

The Business Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) request that the Superintendent review the issue of access to resources to classrooms, including consulting with school based staff, and report back to the Board in September. If additional funds are required to support access to classroom resources, to present alternative solutions, including the use of any potential surplus, and to resolve any issues associated with resources.

Should the above motion pass, it would supersede the motion made at the Business Committee on May 12, 2021.