

DATE: June 22, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Michael Janz

SUBJECT: Referendum Questions – 2021 Municipal Election Ballot

REFERENCE: [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)
[Local Authorities Election Act](#), Sections 35, 44, 95
[Local Authorities Election Forms Regulation](#), Schedule 1

ISSUE

The Board of Trustees has the opportunity to put forward a plebiscite question to the October 18, 2021 municipal election. This has the unique opportunity to inform, engage, and galvanize support for public education. Once we determine the questions, a campaign could be generated to mobilize and engage support on these issues.

BACKGROUND

Edmonton public schools will be receiving 2700 new students next year without one additional dollar to educate them. While we have been making this point repeatedly, misinformation and misdirection from the provincial government, including MLAs, continue to obfuscate the negative impacts of the UCP equalization funding formula for Education, the Weighted Moving Average (WMA). This is especially concerning as Edmontonians are paying more and more education property taxes, yet not seeing any additional funding to our classrooms. We are not asking for a special deal, just a fair deal.

Our advocacy has fallen on deaf ears. The province has refused to either amend the WMA or withdraw and rewrite the terrible K-6 draft curriculum. While posing referendum questions may be unprecedented, so is the outcry against the draft ideological curriculum and the \$120 million and thousands of jobs that we will continue to lose through the impacts of the WMA this term.

Finally, Edmontonians will have a chance to have their voice heard.

RELATED FACTS

- School board could put forward the request to the Returning Officer on their own.
- There would be a cost incurred by Edmonton Public Schools (estimated at a minimum of \$1 per capita, as outlined in Section 3(2) of the Referendum Payments Regulation) if the questions went ahead. These costs would be in addition to what we are contracted to pay the City to run our election.
- A final decision on the questions would have to be made by the second week of July (i.e., it couldn't be carried over to the next Board meeting in September if there were questions or requests for more research).

RECOMMENDATION

That Edmonton Public Schools request that the City Clerk/Returning Officer add the following two referendum questions to the 2021 municipal election:

1. Do you support the UCP education equalization funding formula (Weighted Moving Average) that provides less funding per student to Edmontonians than students in any other school board?
2. Do you support the K-6 draft curriculum?



OPTIONS

1. Approve the recommendations.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendations for approval.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of these recommendations, the Board Chair would write to the City Clerk/Returning Officer requesting the addition of two referendum to the October 18, 2021 municipal election.

ATTACHMENTS

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|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ATTACHMENT I | Impact of the Weighted Moving Average for Edmonton Public Schools |
| ATTACHMENT II | Letter to Minister of Education requesting halting piloting and implementation of the K-6 curriculum |

DATE: April 28, 2020

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Impact of the Weighted Moving Average for Edmonton Public Schools
(Response to Request for Information #064)

ORIGINATOR: Todd Burnstad, Chief Financial Officer

REFERENCE: [Interim Funding Manual for School Authorities 2020/21 School Year](#)

ISSUE

At the March 10, 2020, public Board meeting, Trustee Estabrooks requested Administration provide a detailed explanation of the impact of the Weighted Moving Average (WMA) for Edmonton Public Schools. The information requested is to include:

- How the Division will receive funding allocation through grants now based on the WMA
- The funding gap under the new model (assuming per pupil funding from 2019-2020)
- The impact of this formula on our students

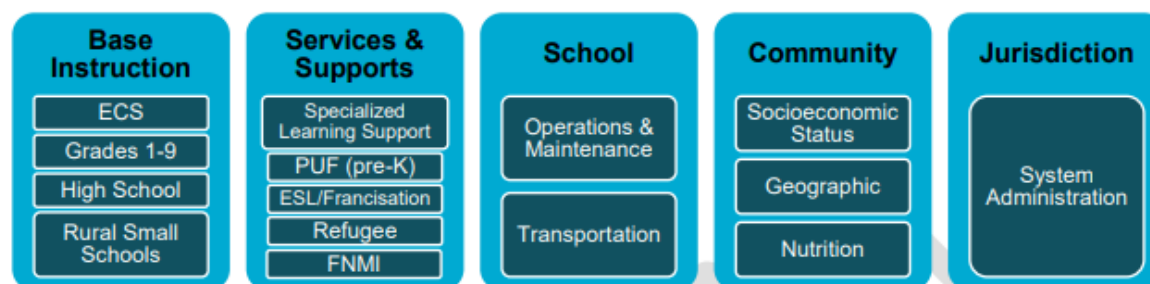
BACKGROUND

Provincial Funding

Since elected, the government has consistently communicated that funding for education would be frozen for the next three years at approximately \$8.223 billion and, beginning in 2020-2021, a new funding and assurance framework would be developed. The new framework, where possible, would support the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon panel as well as those of the Auditor General. Taking its commitments and recommendations into consideration, the 2020-2021 provincial budget was tabled on February 27, 2020, and a new *Interim Funding Manual for School Authorities 2020/2021 School Year* was released.

2020-2021 Interim Funding Manual highlights

- The new provincial funding model consists of 15 major grants (compared to 36).



- With the exception of the Rural Small School grant, our Division qualifies for all remaining grants.
- Out of the grants the Division will receive, with the exception of the Transportation and the Geographic grant, all other grants are either fully or partially calculated using the new Weighted Moving Average (WMA) enrolment approach introduced by the province.
- The WMA model captures the number of funded students across three school years and does not allocate funding per individual student.
- For the 2020-2021 school year, the WMA calculation is based on the following formula:

School Year	Weighted Factor	Enrolment count (FTE)
2018-2019	20%	Actual
2019-2020	30%	Estimates**
2020-2021	50%	Projection***

**Estimates are based on the frozen funded enrolment counts and are not usually finalized until the end of March in any given school year.

***There will be no in-year adjustments if the projected enrolment count is different from the actual count. The difference between the projected count and actual student count will be adjusted for in the calculation of the WMA for the subsequent school year. If the projected count is higher than the actual count, the WMA for the next year will be adjusted down, and if the projected count is lower, the WMA for the next year will be adjusted up to account for the difference.

CURRENT SITUATION

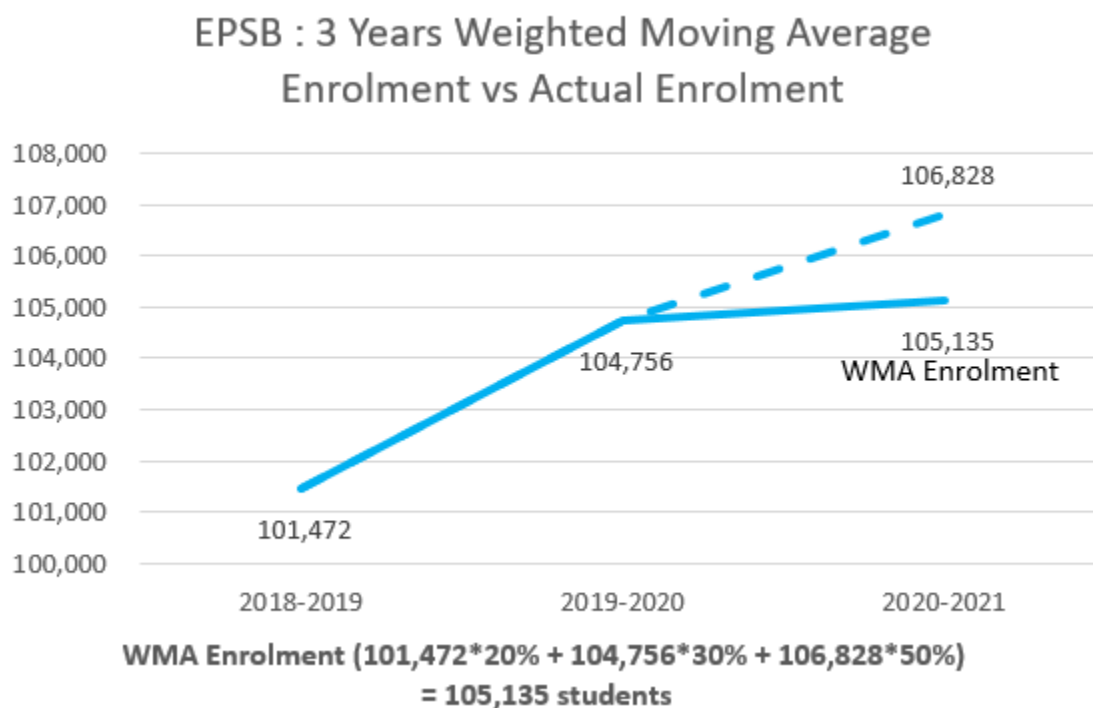
In recent years, the Division has been experiencing an average year-over-year enrolment growth of three per cent and is projecting an increase in enrolment of two per cent between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 (based on enrolment projections at March 2020).

School Year	Funded Enrolment Count	Enrolment Growth (Year over Year)
2018-2019	101,472	3%
2019-2020	104,756	3%
2020-2021	106,828	2%

Under the WMA model (next page), our Division funding for 2020-2021 will be based on 105,135 students. Our projected funded enrolment is 106,828 for 2020-2021, an anticipated additional 2,072 students. However, our funding will be based on 105,135 (WMA) students, or an increase of 379 students from the 2019-2020 funded enrolment count of 104,756.

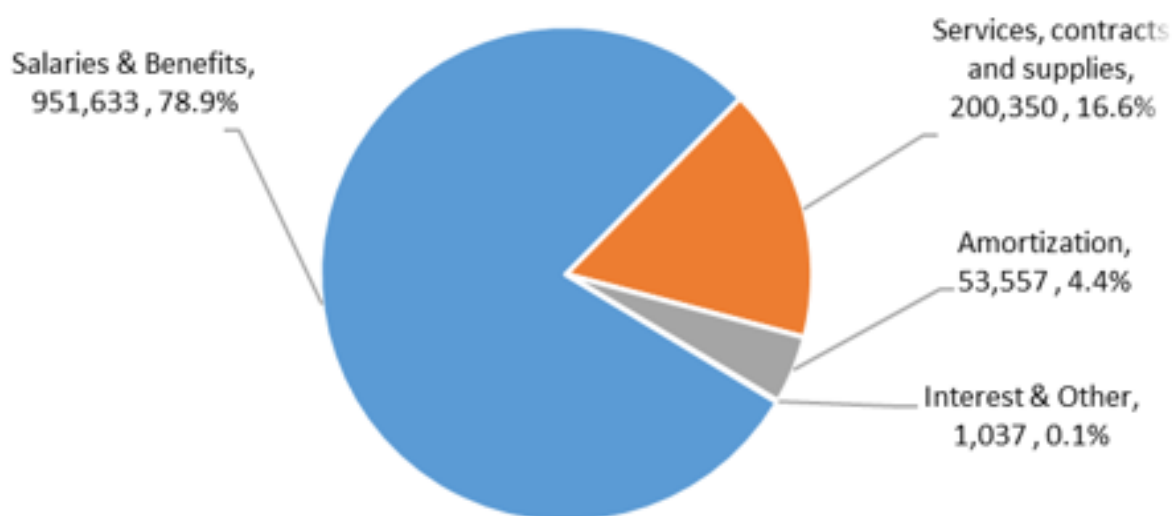
School Year	Weighted Factor	Enrolment Count
2018-2019	20%	101,472
2019-2020	30%	104,756
2020-2021	50%	106,828
WMA Enrolment (FTE)		105,135

The difference is further illustrated in the graph below:



The difference between our projected enrolment and the WMA enrolment is 1,693 students (106,828 – 105,135). It is very challenging to make direct comparisons between the current funding model and the new model that will be implemented for September 2020. As previously stated, the new funding model uses a weighted moving average, while the current model is based on a per student allocation. Using a very high-level calculation, based on our most recent 2019 Audited Financial Statements, the total Government of Alberta Revenue divided by the number of funded students equals \$11,103 per student. Applying this same per student figure to the difference between our projected enrolment and the WMA enrolment number of students translates to \$18.8 million (\$11,103 x 1,693). Therefore, if the funding model remained equal to 2018-2019, we would have received approximately \$18.8 million in additional funding based on our enrollment increases. (Note: as our 2019-2020 year is not finalized and as a result of the reduction of funding in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, per student funding for 2018-2019 was used in this analysis).

2018/19 Expenses by Type (in \$ thousands)



As a Division, the majority of our funding is spent on salaries and benefits (78.9 per cent); therefore, the decrease in funding will have a direct impact on the classroom and the supports that we are able to provide for our students.

TB:ja

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WARD A *vacant*
WARD B Michelle Draper
WARD C Shelagh Dunn
WARD D Trisha Estabrooks
WARD E Ken Gibson
WARD F Michael Janz
WARD G Bridget Stirling
WARD H Nathan Ip
WARD I Sherry Adams

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Darrel Robertson

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May 20, 2021

Honourable Adriana LaGrange
 Minister of Education
 204 Legislature Building
 10800 – 97 Avenue
 Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister LaGrange,

Request to halt piloting and implementation of the draft K-6 curriculum

As a former school board Trustee, you would be aware that the role of a Trustee does not include oversight or drafting of the curriculum, but that it does include ensuring students have a modern, up-to-date curriculum. The job of Trustee also involves speaking up on behalf of parents when they express either support or concerns on issues pertinent to education.

The Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees is hearing, loudly and clearly, from parents (and 56 other school boards to date) that there are significant, well-founded concerns with the draft curriculum.

It has errors, examples of plagiarism, and content that is not age appropriate or reflective of Alberta's diversity. First Nations and Métis leaders, curriculum experts, educators, and parents agree that the current proposed curriculum is unsuitable for today's classrooms. Put simply, this assignment receives a grade of "incomplete."

We were encouraged to hear that your Ministry will be accepting comprehensive feedback from all school divisions, regardless of their decision to pilot the draft curriculum. As you are aware, EPSB has a long history of providing robust and meaningful feedback on different iterations of the curriculum. While the work of reviewing the current draft of the curriculum is underway within our Division, initial feedback from curriculum experts with Edmonton Public suggest there are significant areas of concern including:

- The outcomes reflecting the skills to support critical thinking and evaluating are not strongly represented across the draft curriculum and there is a lack of clear connections between historical events (e.g., the enslavement of African peoples, the KKK, residential schools) and the present.
- Content within the draft curriculum is often developmentally inappropriate. For example, Pascal's triangle is currently taught in high school and has been moved to Grade 2 in the draft curriculum, and division by a fraction is currently taught in Grade 8



and has been moved to Grade 6 in the draft curriculum. Furthermore, in the draft mathematics curriculum, students in Grade 3 are required to convert commonly used units of measure between metric and “Canadian” (imperial) units within 100; in the current mathematics curriculum, this is a concept addressed in Grade 10.

- The progression of content through grade levels in the draft curriculum is frequently problematic. For example, in the draft social studies curriculum in Grade 2, there is a focus on complex and specific topics such as global migration, ancient Greek culture and world religions. In the current social studies curriculum, students’ learning is contextualized in the world that is closest to the student (family, neighbourhood, community) and builds out into more complex topics and concepts as the grades progress.
- The draft curriculum lacks strong Indigenous perspectives. Concerns have been expressed from the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and Rupertsland Institute that the draft curriculum presents a predominantly Eurocentric perspective and a minimized Indigenous perspective.

Given the concerns voiced by students, educators and parents across the province, our Board along with Evergreen Catholic School Division will be bringing forward the following emergent position statement for discussion at the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Spring General Meeting:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, The ASBA shall formally and actively lobby the provincial government to delay the proposed K-6 curriculum to allow for further review and a rewrite to address the shortfalls that have been identified:

1. Having sufficient and meaningful consultation with primary stakeholder groups.
2. For the government to work with school boards and educational partners to create a first-class curriculum with suitable implementation dates for students and teachers.

We are calling for a rewrite of the curriculum given the numerous and valid concerns raised and the lack of support for it as demonstrated by the 56 boards who have chosen to not pilot the draft. We believe the only acceptable solution is to begin the process again, this time with full transparency and up-to-date education experts.

We agree that the current curriculum being used in schools does need updating and acknowledge that revisiting the development will cause a delay. However, given the lifespan and reach of curriculum, it is imperative that we get it right. Due to the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the next year is also not an appropriate time to introduce a wholesale



change in curriculum. We must allow teachers and students to focus on re-establishing relationships and school practices and recover from the stress of the last year.

Students, staff, and families will not tolerate their first-rate education system being subjected to anything less than a first-rate curriculum redesign. There is material in the previous draft curriculum, much contributed through the expertise of our staff, that could be used, thereby saving time and money in development. Let's work together to design a curriculum that will continue to make Alberta the gold standard in public education and give our students the skills and knowledge they need for success.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

KM/mj

- c. Lorrie Jess, President, Alberta School Boards Association
Ron McKay, Board Chair, Evergreen Catholic School Division

