

ASCA School Council Engagement Task Force – October 2020 RESULTS

22 Responses submitted (as of December 18, 2020)

Thank you for participating in the *School Council Engagement Task Force (SCETF)* for the 2020 – 2021 school year.

The feedback your school council parent representative compiles and submits to the ASCA is greatly appreciated by the Board to assist in their considerations on education issues in Alberta.

The Board utilizes information gathered to inform the advocacy work of the association. This may include advising at external committee meetings, sharing with appropriate Ministries or provincial education organizations, and the potential for Board sponsored Advocacy Resolutions.

Request for input regarding “**Weighted Moving Average Funding Model**”.

Background/context:

Alberta Education updated the K to 12 education funding model for the first time in 15 years to improve funding and accountability processes in meeting the needs of students.

The new model moves to a 3-year weighted average method rather than a one-year enrolment count after the school year has started to provide more predictability in funding. School authorities will know how much provincial funding is available by the end of March each year, instead of September.

The weighted moving average method for all K to 12 education grants started in September 2020.

This calculates average enrolment by assigning a larger weighting to the more recent year's enrolment than weighting on the previous year's enrolment.

The Ministry will work with school authorities on overall enrolment projections to calculate the weighted factor.

| School year | Weighted factor | Enrolment count |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Previous | 20% | Actual |
| Current | 30% | Estimates |
| Next | 50% | Projection |

[More information on the new K-12 education funding model.](#)

1) Has your school, school division, school board or trustee provided information to your school council and/or parents explaining the new *Weighted Moving Average* funding model, and how it differs from the previous (per student) funding model?

18 Yes (82%) 4 No (18%)

Comments:

- Unsure how it would be an advantage to student learning.
- This information was shared in detail during our school council meeting.
- When we first approached admin with the survey, they didn't really understand the model either. They sought out the info they needed to be able to explain it to SC the following month. This spurred on great conversation about how our principal creates her plans.
- It has been discussed and explained by both our school administration as well as our Division's Superintendent and Associate Superintendent of Finance.
- This has been talked about at CityWide when it was first proposed. Not a lot since.
- Our Principal is attending a meeting later in the month that might be discussing the model.
- It was explained by our trustee; he made it clearer than the document found online.
- We firmly believe that our division would have provided us with information and guidance regarding what the WMA means to our board and individual schools had Covid and timelines allowed. With information continually provided to boards at the same time as the general public it leaves boards scrambling to respond to family's inquiries. We are very curious what trends the government will be accessing when using the WMA formula. We are keenly aware that data is unendingly able to be manipulated and do not hold inherent trust that student best interest will be at the forefront of concern.

2) Does your School Council understand the *Weighted Moving Average* funding model?

16 Yes (73%) 6 No (27%)

Comments:

- This year is so unusual with virtual school options allowed in our District. The impact of this model will probably not be apparent for several years.
- It's quite long and complex. Not written for the general parent audience. Not clear how this will improve student learning.
- An opportunity to ask questions was provided and information was shared by Admin and we also had our Trustee in attendance during the meeting.
- Yes, the basic premise, but we feel the details are intentionally difficult for the public to understand.
- It was explained how the WMA works regarding the school and a bit regarding the division.
- It is a very confusing model - we only gained greater understanding after much research and a presentation from our trustee.
- We understand the % math, but we'd like transparency about HOW the data will be collected, manipulated and applied. We would like to know what trends are being used for data gathering. We have significant concerns regarding how high school credits in particular will be impacted. There is valid concern that this will limit our ability to offer work experience programs. There won't be funds to support the planning and implementation of the program. We further worry that this will decrease student's drive to get the credits.
- I think we understand it now. Our trustee and principal spent some time discussing it with us last night.

3) Has your School Council discussed how the *Weighted Moving Average* funding model will affect your school and school division?

17 Yes (77%) 5 No (23%)

Comments:

- It is too early to really tell.
- There is concern from parents regarding how funding will affect students, student needs and successes, and on both short- and long-term bases.
- Conversation surrounded the impacts this will have on our school individually as well as overall for our school division. Overall, this model will allow for more predictable and even funding on a year-to-year basis when considering the division as a whole.
- Negatively impact.
- We talked tonight about how it will impact our school and division.
- Our division's enrolment is steady, so it doesn't affect us negatively.
- It seems this will have a negative impact not only due to Covid (this year) but also for all coming years due to the fact that the greatest % in the model is based on a projection; this combined with the fact that many other grants have been merged together or cancelled.
- At the parent council meeting regarding wherein we discussed this task force request we discussed WMA. We found the information and infographic from SOS Alberta to be very informative and factual in its descriptions of how boards of varying sizes will be impacted. We are concerned that government will manipulate data to reflect their desires and plans. We've seen them do this already with data collected from ASCA relating to whether Albertans want their children back in school. Yes, of course we do, but they made it sound like we weren't concerned about health of students and staff.

4) Does your School Council believe the *Weighted Moving Average* funding model will be better or worse for school?

1 Better (5%) 10 Worse (45%) 11 Unsure (50%)

Comments:

- With this government and its direction around education, parents assume that it has been implemented to remove funding from the public school system.
- We believe this will be worse for schools as student supports will be triaged based on need or degree of need. Meaning some of the younger (kindergarten for example) students will not be getting the support they need at the most advantageous time for growth and it will be harder to catch them up, creating even more need for support in the long term. Students who are older may be seen as having greater needs and will be prioritized while younger students may be left behind and not have supports needed to succeed. We are also concerned whether the older students, who are more of a priority, will even have access to enough supports to succeed to full potential.
- For a new school it might be worse as enrollment in the first year might be lower. A weighted average should provide more predictability to a more established school. Less red tape usually improves efficiency. However, schools will have to wait three years to see change in funding if there is unexpected growth in one year.
- This weighted moving average funding model will negatively affect our school as we are a new school that is seeing continual growth. We are the only Catholic high school in the community and are a very new school so there is a lot of attraction based on location and course availability for students. This has resulted in careful consideration being exercised by our administration when it comes to applications for new students.

- It became apparent that the model will benefit divisions which are not growing (like those is rural Alberta - which also happens to be Kenny's voter base) while large and rapidly growing divisions will suffer.
- Individual schools may have funds allocated to them by their school districts differently. If it is better or worse can only be known on an individual school basis and we don't have information on other individual schools.
- It will depend on the year; will have to wait and see.
- We are unsure; we feel that seeing how the model plays out in the next couple of years will give us an answer.
- The school currently has dropping numbers, the WMA will be beneficial until the point where numbers start to rise again. As a district, numbers are rising, there will be less \$ overall.
- Better for our small school because we were in danger of closing before.
- For growing divisions, we lose funding per student.
- Difficult to judge based on Covid impacts. In general, we have a lot of late kindergarten enrolment in our school and the funding is lower than it would have been in the previous model.
- As a high school we are very concerned with how this will impact our credit courses. In particular, our ability to offer a wide range of electives and diverse class options.
- 2020 is not a normal year, so it is tough to know going forward how that will impact us.

5) Does your School Council believe the *Weighted Moving Average* funding model allows for sufficient resources and supports for the students in your school?

2 Yes (9%) 18 No (82%) 2 Unsure (9%)

Comments:

- It is too early to tell. So many COVID resources are funded through federal dollars this year and so it is difficult to understand the full impact of this change until the federal dollars run out.
- We feel that this model negatively affects schools that are gaining kids but benefits schools that are losing students. This is also problematic because the province has frozen funding so no matter how many new kids, the funding remains the same. Being held harmless applies due to losing kids this year due to the Covid-19 circumstances; if schools get those students back next year, we will lose funding as those students who return will get counted negatively towards those schools next year. The funding does not increase to match enrolment in a specific year. The changes in services from OT/SLP/PT etc. and reduction in support from government will not provide sufficient support for students. This model is complex to compare due to the fiscal reckoning approach, so it is difficult for the general population to understand and be able to comprehend and know how to decipher. There are so many details and variables which make it difficult to explain and understand and ultimately see how it will affect individual students' needs.
- Without a dollar-to-dollar comparison, we are unable to answer this. The school is already underfunded for its needs and appears that it will receive less funding going forward. The current government has repeatedly not sufficiently funded education and made many harmful cuts to educational supports.
- Our school board was prepared for the gaps that this funding model may present to various schools in the division and therefore some additional funding was set aside to be allocated to address schools and the situational needs within our division.
- Please note that our SC only selected yes because we could not submit without selecting something. We are unsure as it has only been a short time that the weighted moving average funding model has

been implemented. Our Trustees/school board has done an excellent job of allocating funds to school in a way that we don't see much of a difference from previous years.

- Not funded enough now.
- No - larger class sizes; less student support.
- The SC feels that the WMA will not allow for movement of \$ when students need extra supports.
- Neither this nor the previous model provided adequate supports for special needs. Cuts to programs like PUF probably impact this more than the base funding. Also, virtually every school is fundraising for things that are arguably essential like teacher supplies and library books. This, to our mind, suggests that supports are not sufficient and have not been for some time.
- We have no idea.
- The district had to help a bit to make ends meet.
- There has been a significant impact from the move to this funding model and the stop to PUF. These have had a cumulative impact to services in the school.
- We believe high school students will be more negatively impacted due to the differences in the way credits are funded.
- We are a school that keeps increasing enrolment. Since most of these students arrive last minute, we then lose that funding for the year as they would not be in our projected budget.

6) Has your school, school division, school board or trustee conveyed to your school council any concerns regarding student enrolment thorough Covid-19 and the resulting potential impact on the *Weighted Moving Average* funding it may receive in 2021-2022?

15 Yes (68%) 7 No (32%)

Comments:

- Our trustees have not discussed it at their public board meetings, nor has it been discussed in detail at school council meetings by either the principal or trustee to date.
- Yes, parents are aware that the federal funding is providing a buffer due to missing students and drop in enrolment due to home schooling. We understand that next year's funding will go down but potentially (and hopefully) more kids will be returning to in-school learning next year with change in Covid-19 circumstances that will increase needs again but decreased funding because of drop in enrolment from this year. This will directly affect students support, services, and success.
- No, funding has been adequate and there are no concerns that have been addressed from a division or administration level regarding student enrolment. Our division has not seen a significant shift in the number of students within our division and our schools.
- We noted that maintaining funding at its previous level would NOT be adequate. Additional funds will be required to find out what happened to the kids who opted for on-line schooling and went 'MIA' and cannot be contacted / located by admin. Further funding will be needed to bring those kids back up to speed when / if they are located.
- Our school and division didn't have much of a decrease in enrolment this year. Our division gave an option of on-line learning for those not wanting to attend in-person learning at the school.
- Conversations were had about how the reduction in \$ will impact our division and school - lower Covid numbers will mean lower \$ overall.
- Yes, district will lose dollars because of students who have headed to homeschool because of the pandemic. We are a smaller elementary school whose enrollment has been declining the past few years; this is problematic.
- We have seen rising enrolment in the last few years so this is not a great concern for us.

- Our enrolment has not changed.
- As an alternative program school, we potentially have the burden as our alternative program brings more students than we are funded for.
- Specifically, this year around Covid - and for future years - how it really is a disadvantage as the greatest portion is based on a projection.
- We had a discussion with our school level admin while discussing this task force request.

7) As a result of the *Weighted Moving Average* funding model, were there changes to school fees in your school or school division?

2 Yes (9%) 20 No (91%)

Comments:

- To the best of our understanding there hasn't been a change to school fees.
- We understand fees are calculated quarterly. This year there have been no field trip fees due to Covid-19 situation, but supervision fees and other fees have remained the same. Out-of-school learners are not paying school fees, but the school still requires the same number of noon hour supervisors, so this has caused some decrease in fees collected for these services that have remained the same.
- Changes in school fees currently seem to be due to decreased funding and loss of grants rather than directly from the WMA at this point.
- There were no direct changes to school fees or from the division as a result of this funding model.
- The ONLY reason there has not been an increase in fees is because the kids are not going anywhere, participating in team sports or engaging any supplementary educational activities where fees would normally be incurred. Our admin has partnered with some generous organizations and companies to deliver lunches (and food 'hampers' to families in need) which ensures students are getting a nutritious lunch even if families can't provide one for them.
- Our school doesn't have school fees. We are a public school.
- Not this year but next year and moving forward in the future fees will increase as a result of WMA.
- There were no changes to the school fees due to the WMA changes.
- Not to our knowledge.
- The changes that occurred were due to Covid.
- Not this year but cannot say for future years. Do not see how reduced funding can support current levels of offerings. We believe that fees for high school electives may have to increase. Our school has also lost tens of thousands of dollars in rental fees this year alone.