

Board Development Topic: How Federal Students are Funded in the Provincial System

Date of Board Meeting:

December 14, 2023

Strategic Priority:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning
- Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities
- Effective Policy and Procedures
- Healthy, Sustainable Physical & Social Environments

Quality Indicator(s):

QI 4.5 Ensuring that all accounts adhere to policy and funds are used for the intended purpose.

QI 7.2 Keeping the Board informed about Division operations, challenges, and celebrations.

QI 7.4 Engaging with the Board in an open, honest, pro-active, and professional manner.

Presented by:

Quintin Robertson, Director of Education/CEO

Information for the Board (10 fast facts):

1. Funding for First Nations Students on Reserves
 - Jurisdiction: Managed federally by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).
 - Source: Direct federal funding.
 - Allocation: Based on factors like student numbers, often critiqued for being less than provincial funding per student.
 - Use: Covers educational expenses such as teacher salaries, school facilities, materials, cultural programs, and potentially Regulation 16 tuition for provincial schools.
 - Challenges: Notable underfunding, especially in infrastructure, maintenance, and transportation needs.
2. Provincial System Funding
 - Jurisdiction: Governed by provincial governments for students, including First Nations living off-reserve.
 - Source: Primarily provincial funds, supplemented by property taxes. Public schools receive operating grants without controlling education tax mill rates.
 - Allocation: Based on enrollment, special needs, and socio-economic factors of the school's location.
 - Use: Funds a broad range of needs including teacher salaries, infrastructure, resources, extracurricular activities, and transportation.
 - Challenges: Despite better funding than on-reserve education, issues include urban-rural funding disparities and inflationary pressures, with insufficient increases to match inflation.
3. Key Differences

- Jurisdiction and Funding Source: Federal for on-reserve First Nations, provincial for others including off-reserve First Nations.
- Funding Levels: First Nations on-reserves generally receive lower funding per student compared to provincial counterparts.
- Administration Variation: On-reserve funding and administration can significantly differ between communities.

4. Efforts to Bridge the Gap

- Government Initiatives: The Canadian government commits additional funds to narrow the funding disparity for First Nations education.
- Empowerment Moves: Discussions aim to give First Nations more control over their education systems and equitable funding models.
- Jordan's Principle: Addresses funding shortfalls, particularly for Educational Assistants. It helps provide resources for students with special needs where high-cost funding is unavailable.

5. Recommendations

- Further Investigate Transportation Issues: Especially in on-reserve education where it remains a significant challenge.
- Advocate for Inflation-Adjusted Funding: For provincial schools to better manage budgets without depleting reserves.
- Enhanced Coordination: Between federal and provincial bodies to ensure a more uniform and equitable funding mechanism across all systems.

6. Regulation 16 Tuition and Its Implications

- Examination: Assess if federal funds cover Regulation 16 tuition costs and transportation for students attending provincial schools.
- Equity in Funding: Ensure that First Nations receive comparable funding levels as their provincial counterparts, particularly for off-reserve education.

7. Administrative Consistency

- Standardize: Aim for a more consistent development and administration of Educational Services Agreements between GSSD and the local First Nations.

8. Enhanced Data Collection

- Gather Comprehensive Data: To better understand the nuances of funding disparities and address them more effectively.

9. Public Awareness

- Increase Awareness: Among stakeholders about the differences in funding mechanisms and challenges faced in both systems.

10. Ongoing Policy Review

- Regularly Review: Education funding policies to ensure they meet the evolving needs of all students, particularly those in First Nations communities.

Respectfully submitted,
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 Good Spirit School Division