

Media Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2020

RE: 2020/21 Budget

Dedicated to offering the best education Rocky View Schools (RVS) can afford its students, the Board of Trustees approved its 2020/21 budget, May 21, 2020, targeting Board budget priorities of direct classroom funding to maximize student success, providing school-based supports for students with complex needs, wellness supports and literacy/numeracy skill development.

With total revenue of \$281.4 million and expenditures of \$282.6 million, the budget directs 76.6 per cent towards instruction for Pre-Kindergarten to Gr. 12 students, 14.1 per cent to operations and maintenance, 6.5 per cent to student transportation, and 2.8 per cent to governance and administration.

Anticipating RVS' student population will increase by 857 students next year (3.9 per cent), with operational funding from government to rise by 1.4 per cent, the Board will redirect funds and use \$1.3 million in operational reserves to support classroom instruction, limit fee increases to parents and balance the budget.

"To support our budget priorities and the feedback heard from stakeholders during our budget consultation process, the Board made the difficult decision to redirect over \$2 million from governance, system administration and centralized learning budgets and \$1 million from technology and learning commons to the classroom", said Board Chair Fiona Gilbert. "This enabled the addition of 28 school-based teaching staff to maintain class sizes and increase school-based supports for students.

"Also consistent with our priorities, RVS allocated \$15.6 million to schools for inclusive education services and other wellness initiatives, reflecting an increase of \$500 thousand to the portfolio."

According to Gilbert, in an effort to reduce further financial pressure on families during current uncertain and difficult times, increases to school fees were kept to a minimum, with schools directed to not increase existing course fees, refrain from implementing new school-wide fees and eliminate some program fees such as lunch supervision.

In the area of operation and maintenance, Gilbert said RVS will receive an increase of \$1.8 million from the province, providing the jurisdiction the opportunity to increase attention towards preventative maintenance projects and facility upgrades to enhance learning environments.

To help offset the continued escalation of inflationary costs in the area of student transportation, the budget reflects an increase in ridership fees from \$308 to \$375 for students attending their designated school or school of choice.

"Our Board extends its thanks and gratitude to the entire learning community for its feedback into our budget consultation process, which ran between February 10 to March 30 of this year," said Gilbert. "As always, the feedback was invaluable and used to help shape our budget and services for next year."

Rocky View Schools' 2020/2021 budget will be posted to the jurisdiction's website under "Publications" shortly.

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2020/21 Budget Backgrounder

Board Budget Priorities

Rocky View Schools' annual budget is driven by the goals and strategies of its Four-Year Plan to foster innovators in their learning journey, while addressing the operational needs of the jurisdiction. Recognizing that the Superintendent will demonstrate fiscal responsibility by continuing to pursue efficient and effective services, the Board of Trustees has identified the following key priorities to guide the 2020/21 budget process:

- Student success through targeted funding to classrooms;
- School based supports for students with complex needs;
- Wellness supports; and
- Literacy and numeracy skill development.

Budget Overview

- Projected enrolments to increase by 3.9 per cent
- Government operating revenue to increase by 1.4 per cent
- Overall revenue is projected to be \$281.4 million
- K – Gr. 8/9 schools will add the equivalent of 16 new classes
- Gr. 9/10 -12 schools anticipate adding approximately 12 teachers
- Inclusive Education Services funding increased by \$500 k
- Central learning department reduced by \$1.6 million (7.3 per cent) while governance and administration budgets reduced by \$400 k (4.8 per cent)
- Balanced budget achieved through use of \$1.3 million from reserves, maintaining operational reserves at 3.97 per cent, which is within the range recommended by the Auditor General.

Student Success through Targeted Funding to Classrooms:

- Allocating 87 per cent of instructional resources directly to schools
- Adding 28 school-based teaching staff and maintaining class sizes
- Maintaining divisional programs such as The Farm, Building Futures, Community Learning Centre's and RVS On-line
- Redirecting over \$2.0 million to schools from central learning, governance and administration allocations
- Maintaining resources and opportunities for student learning without new or significant increases to student fees

School-Based Supports for Students with Complex Needs:

- Providing a total of \$15.6 million for direct school-based services, includes a \$500 k increase from Board reserves to support enrolment growth
- Supporting Pre-K services by maintaining four Pre-School Intervention Program classrooms
- Targeting \$1.3 million to support learning support teams, contracted medical specialist and one divisional program for complex learners
- Staffing 69, K – Gr. 12 learning support teachers

Wellness Supports:

- RVS maintains many relationships with external service providers to provide diagnosis and referral services related to mental health and addictions that supports both staff and students.

Student supports:

- 39 K – Gr. 8/9 child development advisors
- 5 Stepping Stones for Mental Health staff
- 8 family school liaisons
- 9 psychologists
- 13 high school counsellors
- \$480 k for elementary/middle/multi social-emotional learning supports

Staff supports:

- Funding at no cost to the employee, a comprehensive suite of health and wellness benefits for staff, including an Employee Assistance Program
- Providing sick leave at 100 per cent for 90 days

- Covering appointment leave for medical and dental appointments
- Mentorship program for new teachers

Literacy/Numeracy Skill Development:

- Supporting a divisional team of six learning specialists to focus on literacy, numeracy and instructional design practises
- Maintaining funding for 12, K – Gr. 9 literacy teachers
- Providing \$570 k in direct support to K – Gr. 9 schools for literacy initiatives
- Allocating over \$150 k in resources for teachers to attend division-wide learning opportunities related to literacy, numeracy and design learning

Operations and Maintenance

- Increasing expenditures in our caretaking department
- Enhancing support for preventative maintenance through contracted services and the addition of one maintenance staff member
- Maintaining grounds service levels at prior year levels
- Increasing IMR funding by \$500 k to target larger maintenance projects in school facilities

Student Transportation

- Maintaining the same service levels as 2019/20 while adding routes to address ridership growth
- Increasing the transportation fee to \$375/student to help offset the continued escalation of operator and other inflationary costs
- Supporting special education transportation for students unable to ride regular school buses with \$770 k of instructional dollars

School Fees

- Increases to school fees kept to a minimum in order to reduce financial pressure on families during these difficult times
- Budget draws \$800 k from reserves to limit fee increases to families
- No increase to existing course fees, no new school-wide fees and elimination of some program fees such as lunch supervision.

New Provincial Funding Framework

- In effect starting for 2020/2021 school year
- Framework impacts how provincial grants are provided to RVS; however, it is up to RVS' Board to determine how to allocate those funds
- Many government grants are now based on Weighted Moving Average (WMA) instead of actual student enrolment numbers
 - In 2020/2021, RVS projects to have 25,470 full time equivalent (FTE) students in kindergarten to grade 12 (not counting online students or students from one small rural school which is block funded)
 - Under the new WMA calculation method, RVS will receive base instruction grants for 24,679 FTE students (not counting online students or students from one small rural school which is block funded)
 - RVS will receive no base instruction grants for 791 K-12 students, yet we will be educating those students
- With the elimination of Regional Collaborative Service Delivery grants, RVS will now need to cover the costs of some services formerly provided directly by Alberta Health Services
- Significant restructuring of former grants related to inclusion supports
- No fall budget update will be required from government