

## **Budget Guidelines**

### **2025-2026**

#### **Philosophy of Budgeting Process**

Buffalo Trail Public Schools is a school system and not a system of schools. Allocation of available dollars will be made for the betterment of all students. The purpose of this process is to be predictable, open, and transparent with regard to the dollars received and dollars allocated. The system needs to be able to secure funds to conduct day-to-day operations and to meet our financial obligations on a long term basis.

#### **A. School-Based Allocations**

##### **1. Base Allocation Per Student:**

###### For 2025-2026 Allocations

Weighted Moving Average (WMA) allocations for schools are based on the higher of:

- a) Three (3) Years:
  - 20% Prior Year
  - 30% Current Year
  - 50% Projected Next Year
- b) Two (2) Years
  - 30% Current Year
  - 70% Projected Next Year

For 2026-2027 Allocations: it is expected that starting 2026-27, all schools will use the Two (2) Years method per “b” above.

Each school is grouped within group rates and categories for school funding with the exception of Hutterite colony schools and the Learning Hub (Vermilion Outreach).

Early learning students (Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten) are considered at 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) and returning funded high school students are allocated at 50% (4th year) and 25% (5th + year)

Schools with similar per student costs are grouped into a cost per student grid. The determination of which group a school is placed is as follows:

###### 1.1 Group 3: \$9,000 to \$11,000

Those schools considered “Rural Small Schools” by Alberta Education are in Group 3. While there will be variance in per student allocations in Group 3, the overall BASE ALLOCATION of dollars to support these schools collectively will be pooled for all schools in Group 3 calculated at:

###### 1.1.1 PLUS: Rural Small Schools grants

- 1.1.2 PLUS: School portion of the SLS grant, by student (WMA, all schools)
- 1.1.3 PLUS: School portion of the Community Grants, by student (WMA, all schools excluding Learning Hub and Colony Schools)
- 1.1.4 LESS: Dollars for shared services, by student (WMA, all schools excluding Learning Hub and Colony Schools)
- 1.1.5 Group 3 schools may still participate in mitigation allocations consistent with other schools.

The rate per school will be determined by the Superintendent based on need.

- 1.2 Group 2: \$8,000
  - 1.2.1 Schools less than 225 students (WMA)
  - 1.2.2 Schools that shift to another threshold (Group 3 or Group 1) are frozen for at least the first year and must be greater than five (5) students variance (e.g. 220-230 variance); subject to Superintendent determination.

- 1.3 Group 1: \$7650
  - 1.3.1 Schools greater than 225 students (WMA)

## **2. Teacher Staffing Supports**

- 2.1 Dollars provided by Alberta Education for teacher compensation increases will be allocated to schools based on their teacher FTE and the teacher FTE for all schools.
- 2.2 Amounts for the PROJECTED budgets are based on teacher FTE submitted in the previous Fall.
- 2.3 Amounts will be readjusted in FINAL (Fall) budget based on actual staffing.

## **3. Indigenous Learning Supports**

Schools will receive the following to support their self-identified Indigenous students and all students.

- 3.1 Self-Identified Students: provided to schools based on their WMA Self-Identified students at 50% of the rate provided by Alberta Education for direct supports to self-identified Indigenous learners.
- 3.2 All Students: remaining dollars (after self-identified students and central supports) will be provided on a WMA for all students (excluding Hutterite colony schools) to address supports for both self-identified students and to support initiatives for all students that respect truth and reconciliation.
  - 3.2.1 Dollars allocated to "All Students" is net of a 0.5 FTE position in Learning Services to support division-wide Indigenous Learning Supports.

## **4. Early Learning**

- 4.1 Dollars received from Alberta Education for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten severe needs (per the funding manual) will be allocated to Inclusive Services and allocated to schools on an assessed needs basis, as determined by the Director of Inclusive Services, net of assessment and other programming expenditures.

## **5. English as an Alternative Language (EAL)**

- 5.1 Dollars provided by Alberta Education for EAL students will be allocated to schools based on the WMA for EAL students.

## **6. Nutrition Supports**

- 6.1 Includes in the "Base Allocation" is \$75 per student to support nutrition for students, excluding Hutterite Colony Schools and the Learning Hub.

## **7. Mitigation Dollars**

- 7.1 Dollars remaining for instruction after all other allocations are considered may be distributed to schools by the Superintendent on a needs basis, in consultation with individual schools.
- 7.2 Dollars provided must be considered temporary or one-time to the school receiving the dollars, and the allocation and methodology for distribution would be shared with schools for transparency.

## **B. Other Allocations:**

### **1. Learning Hub (Vermilion Outreach School)**

#### **1.1 Allocations Based on Students and Site**

PLUS: Base Allocation (WMA)

Rate per student is established as follows:

PLUS: Base Grant (Gr 1-9), same as Hutterite Colony Schools

PLUS: School portion of the SLS grant, by student (WMA, all schools)

PLUS: Teacher Staffing Supports

PLUS: Indigenous Learning Supports

PLUS: English as an Alternative Language (EAL)

PLUS: Home Education

PLUS: Distance Learning

PLUS: Outreach Site Grant

#### **1.2 Allocation Based on Program: Learning Hub Supplement**

1.2.1 To provide learning supports to students in other division schools, a supplement equal to two (2) teaching positions is provided.

1.3 Regular schools may give permission for their students to access programming through the Learning Hub when it is determined by the school that it is in the best interests of the student.

1.4 If a student wishes to access programming through the Learning Hub without the permission of their priority school principal, guardians (or where the student is an independent student) will be responsible to pay a fee of \$50 per credit.

### **2. Hutterite Colony Schools**

2.1 Allocations to Hutterite Colony Schools is made directly based on the revenues received from Alberta Education as follows:

PLUS: Base Allocation (WMA)

Rate per student is established as follows:

PLUS: Base Grant (Gr. 1-9), same as Learning Hub

PLUS: School portion of the SLS grant, by student (WMA, all Schools)

PLUS: Teacher Staffing Supports

PLUS: English as an Alternative Language (EAL)

PLUS: Hutterite Site Grant

## 2.2 Recovery for Services

- 2.2.1 Shortfalls between available funding and education services would normally be addressed by the Hutterite colonies, the calculation of which would be determined in consultation with Hutterite colonies' representatives.
- 2.2.2. The Superintendent may also, on an exception basis, use available dollars to reduce the shortfall where it is determined in the best interest of Buffalo Trail Public Schools to do so.

## 3. Fees

- 3.1 Buffalo Trail Public Schools will collect student fees for all students as per 201.5AP Fees for School and Transportation.
- 3.2 Fees collected for Technology Supports will be first considered towards network infrastructure evergreening needs in the following year through reserves.
- 3.3 Fees collected for Specialized Supports will be first considered towards supporting Inclusive Services needs in the following year through reserves.

## 4. Distributive Learning

- 4.1 Distributive Learning is an integral part of the Buffalo Trail Public Schools' model for the education responsibility of the schools to provide resources for their students in these courses. (Residual course material from the Learning Hub may be made available)
- 4.2 An annual amount to support distributive learning will be determined by the Superintendent based on historical and planned activity.
- 4.3 Schools who deliver distributive learning content will be provided with funding equal to 0.0625 FTE for each 5 credit course, or as otherwise determined by the Director of Technology Services provided dollars are allocated fairly and equitably.
- 4.4 Allocations to schools to support distributive learning is done by the Director of Technology Services in consultation with schools.

## 5. Shared Services

In a school jurisdiction, there is a need to establish common funding pools to offset unforeseen school-based expenditures, the efficiency for the operation of a school system, and to support costs for jurisdictional activities.

- 5.1 Staff absence due to leaves in excess of five (5) days (sick leave, maternity leave, etc.). The funds held in this account will be determined based on historical and planned activities. The purpose of this fund will be to hold the money of schools collectively and account for these unforeseen expenditures.
- 5.2 Strategic Initiatives that speak to progress in the programs offered to benefit student learning across the school system. Priorities are established by the Superintendent through a collaborative model. These initiatives will support learning for all students in all schools.

- 5.3 A contingency will be put in place for the hiring of Educational Assistants to support unforeseen circumstances that may arise throughout the school year using the “Classroom Complexity” grant from Alberta Education.
- 5.4 Shared Services will also address costs that are common to the school division that are more correctly considered system responsibilities, such as insurance, division software, and instruction legal fees.

## **6. System Administration**

Funding is provided in a separate allocation to school jurisdictions for expenses related to board governance and administration of the jurisdiction. This includes administration buildings, Board Governance, general services management, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and the Secretary-Treasurer.

## **7. Technology Funding**

- 7.1 Technology is in place to support student learning. In order to ensure that we have funds available each year for this purpose, technology funding to support instruction will be allocated funding from the instructional grant.
- 7.2 Funds in this category will be directed to support technology infrastructure, evergreening and provide technical support to the schools and Central Services.
- 7.3 Decisions regarding the expenditures in this fund will be made by the Director of Technology in conjunction with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources.

## **8. Learning Services**

- 8.1 Learning services provide support in instruction, learning and curriculum across the school division.
- 8.2 Funds in this category include support for Leadership Meetings, Learning Coaches, Off-campus programs, division learning days, and professional development.
- 8.3 Learning Services will have a learning coach provide 0.5 FTE support to schools to support their Indigenous learning initiatives including capacity building.
- 8.4 Discussions regarding the fund will be made with the learning services team, senior team in conjunction with the Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services.
- 8.5 Dual Credit: Dollars generated from the summer work experience program will be used to enhance dual credit opportunities for high school students, including the continued efforts to find grant opportunities.

## **9. Inclusive Learning**

- 9.1 Inclusive learning provides systemic support across the school division. The majority of Student Learning Support dollars are allocated in the WMA allocation. Some services are better delivered as a school system.
- 9.2 Centralized services include inclusive learning staff, inclusive learning service team, pre-K severe, kindergarten severe, assessed services, and crisis response.
- 9.3 Discussions regarding the fund will be made with the Director of Inclusive Learning, and in conjunction with the Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services.

## 10. Professional Learning Allocation

- 10.1 School-based funds are included in the WMA Allocation Model.
- 10.2 Schools must develop a professional learning plan and submit by September 30<sup>th</sup> and January 30<sup>th</sup> to the Superintendent.
- 10.3 There are funds included with the Inclusion and Learning Services budgets for system-wide professional learning.
- 10.4 An amount determined by through the collective agreement with teaching staff will be established to support professional learning opportunities for teaching staff.

## 11. Assistant Principal Designated Criteria

The allocation for instructional leadership time includes an allocation for schools over 200 students that recognizes the addition of time for the purposes of shared leadership. An average of 200 students (based on WMA) will serve as the indicator that an assistant principal may be put in place or continue in the school. Funding is provided through the WMA Allocation Model. This is reviewed during spring staffing by the Assistant Superintendent of Human Services with a recommendation to the Superintendent.

## 12. Administrative and Instructional Leadership Guidelines

- 12.1 The role of the school-based leader is essential to maximizing student learning to support effective teaching. It is vital to the successful operation of a school that an appropriate amount of administrative and instructional leadership time is allocated.
- 12.2 Assigned instructional leadership time requires school-based leaders to include time in their daily work to address the duties of the instructional leader.
- 12.3 There is also a necessity for administrators to be directly connected to teaching and learning in their schools. All school-based leaders will have a minimum of 0.2 of their FTE as face-to-face teaching where they are involved in actively planning, delivering, and evaluating course content.
- 12.4 Time away from instruction for school-based leaders will be prorated to a portion of their time involved in face-to-face instruction.
- 12.5 Funding is provided through the WMA Allocation Model.
- 12.6 Minimum Guidelines, as outlined below, have been developed to assist school-based leaders in ensuring appropriate time is available for these tasks. Schools do have the autonomy to go above the minimum should it work into their budget and schedule.

Minimum Guidelines for School Leaders				
September 30th Enrolment	Minimum Admin Time for Principals	Minimum Admin Time for Assistant Principals	Minimum Instructional Time for Principals	Minimum Instructional Time for Assistant Principals
1 to 175	0.5 FTE		0.2 FTE	
176 to 400	0.75 FTE	0.25	0.2 FTE	0.4 FTE

- Minimum administration time is inclusive of Instructional Leadership, staff supervision/evaluation, and the day-to-day management of the school operations.
- Instructional time is defined as the responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating

curricular course content to an entire class or group of students.

- If a Principal or Assistant Principal also has Inclusive Learning as part of their assignment, only time spent directly working with students and/or teachers should be considered Instructional time. The remainder would be considered either Administrative or School Directed Time Away from Instruction
- If a school is unable to make the Minimum guidelines work, please ensure you discuss this with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources ahead of time.

### **Guidelines for Instructional and Assignable Time**

- For the 2025 -2026 school year, BTPS expects Instructional time for all teachers to fall between 880 and 917 hours (pro-rated to their FTE).
- For the 2025-2026 – no assignable time guidelines and Human Services will gather more information to inform practice in the future.
- If a school has teachers whose instructional time falls outside these guidelines, schools will review this with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources.

## **13. Staffing Expenditure**

Staffing costs are a major component of overall expenses. Dollars must be available to support school and department operations.

13.1 Schools are charged an average cost per teacher and per support staff as determined by the Secretary-Treasurer in consultation with the Superintendent.

### **13.2 Staffing Guidelines**

13.1.1 Schools should seek to align overall staffing costs to 94% (as a guideline) for overall expenditures, which can include or exclude casual staffing costs; the Superintendent may direct schools to adjust staffing plans where it is in the best interest of the school and students.

13.1.2 Casual staffing budgets must be reasonable to actuals in prior years, and can be adjusted based on specific information where reasonable.

13.3 Specific ratios for staffing costs of 94% (as a guideline) shared between teacher and support staff are reviewed annually with the Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer.

13.4 Schools should be aware when scheduling teaching staff the maximum instructional hours and assignable time hours for the teachers' FTE, and consult with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Services as requested.

## **14. School Donations**

Donations made to specific schools will be allocated to that school.

## **15. Reserves**

Ending school reserves shall be no more than:

15.1 The greater of \$25,000 or 5% of their Alberta Education allocations

15.2 Schools that are in excess of the above or less than 0% of their annual allocations shall provide a plan and obtain approval from the Secretary-Treasurer.

15.3 Schools above their guidelines at the year-end may see their allocations reduced by the same amount without specific approval from the Superintendent; the Superintendent will normally consult with the school principal and Secretary-Treasurer prior to approving adjustments to school reserves.

## **16. School Generated Funds**

16.1 Annually, schools must provide a plan for each fund holding school generated funds and share the purpose of the fund and uses for the year to the Secretary-Treasurer.

16.2 Dollars not held for a capital purpose must be refunded, used, or offset costs for families in the following year, unless there is an identified need and purpose. One purpose can be to have starting dollars for the following year's activities (see next guideline).

16.3 Generally, schools should aim for no more than 15% ending balances of the revenue activity for carryforwards, excluding capital planning and scholarships/bursaries.

16.4 Where a separate SGF fund is in a negative balance will require a plan provided to the Secretary-Treasurer for how the negative balance will be addressed.

16.5 Schools must report annually to their school council SGF dollars, including the planning and purpose of carryforwards.