



**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 46 (SUNSHINE COAST)**

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

July 5, 2016

7:00 p.m. at the School Board Office, Gibsons, B.C.

1. Call to Order
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Board Meeting Calendar for 2016/17
4. BCSTA Electoral Strategy Committee
5. Rural Education Fund
6. Questions and Enquiries from the Public Relating to the Board Meeting
7. Next Meeting
8. Adjournment



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Rural Education Enhancement Fund

1) What is the Purpose of the Rural Education Enhancement Fund?

- The Rural Education Enhancement Fund was announced on June 15, 2016. It is designed to recognize the significance of preserving schools in small rural communities (less than 15,000 population) for community viability and sustainability.
- Rural school districts can make application to the Ministry of Education to access ongoing funding to help keep schools open in these communities, as the Ministry works with its partners to undertake a review of rural schooling and rural school funding, with an aim to developing a Rural Education Strategy. An estimated \$2.5M has been set aside for this program for the 2016/17 school year.

2) Which school districts are eligible to make application to the Rural Education Enhancement Fund?

- School districts outside of the Lower Mainland, Greater Victoria, and Kelowna may make application to the REEF for specific schools, provided that the following eligibility criteria are met:
 - In a rural community or sub-community with a population of less than 15,000 residents;
 - School is at risk of closure, where the result would be loss of grades within that community or sub-community, and where the closure would threaten the ongoing viability of the community; and
 - Facility condition issues, extremely low enrolment (or extreme enrolment decline) are not the primary drivers for school closure.
- For the purposes of this Fund, a sub-community is defined as an area within a community with a distinct economic area, or an area that is physically separated from neighbouring schools by unique geographic features (i.e. major highway, railway, or body of water), posing accessibility issues for students. Combining schools/grades from two or more schools into one school, that serves the same community area, would not be eligible for funding.
- To be eligible for 2016/17 funding, the school must be at risk of closure for the upcoming 2016/17 school year. That being said, if a school district is presently in the process of considering a school closure in subsequent school years, school district staff are encouraged to make application to the Rural Education Enhancement Fund for this round of applications, so that the Ministry can provide guidance regarding eligibility for funding in future years, to facilitate local planning and consultation processes.
- Note that the Rural Education Enhancement Fund is not intended to reimburse school districts for any costs incurred as a result of a school closure process.



3) What if there is a school in my school district that meets the eligibility criteria, but was not included on the list attached to the news release?

- The list of schools included with the new release was based on an initial scan of available data within the Ministry and the eligibility criteria.
- There may be schools that were not included in that list because data was not yet with the Ministry. If a school district feels that an application should be made for a particular school based on the eligibility criteria outlined in this letter, then they are encouraged to make application for those schools.

4) How and by when should school districts submit applications to the Rural Education Enhancement Fund, and what information should be included in the application?

- Applications for the 2016/17 school year should be submitted electronically to the Sector Resourcing & Service Delivery Branch of the Ministry of Education at EDUC.SectorResourcingandServiceDeliveryBranch@gov.bc.ca no later than **June 24, 2016**
- It is up to each school district making application to the REEF to demonstrate that the school(s) in question is/are at risk of school closure in the 2016/17 school year.
- At a minimum, the following information is required as part of the application process:
 - School district name and key contact person (including contact information)
 - List of school(s) for which funds are being requested under the REEF
 - Overview of local community context (i.e. location of schools, community engagement/consultation processes, etc.)
 - Overview of school district and school context (i.e. current enrolment, historical enrolment trends, forecast enrolment, facility information, etc.)
 - Rationale outlining why the school is at risk of being closed (i.e. implications for students and community if school is closed)
 - Outline of expected savings from closing the school (see below)
 - Identification of the schools within the areas that have capacity to receive the students, the distance between schools and any unique geographic features for consideration.

5) How should school districts calculate expected savings from closing the 'eligible' school?

- Expected savings from closing the 'eligible' school should include savings estimates in the following categories:
 - Salaries and benefits of all staff that would not otherwise be redeployed to other locations within the school district
 - Supplies
 - Utilities
 - Grounds and maintenance

○ Transportation

- Please note that the Rural Education Enhancement Fund is intended to provide incremental funding to school districts, not replace other funding supplements already in place. Given this, these additional funds will not result a reduction to Funding Protection or Small Community Supplements.

6) Are incremental capital funds being provided in addition to the Rural Education Enhancement Fund (operating) to address ongoing maintenance of these facilities?

- The Rural Education Enhancement Fund provides operating funding only. School districts are asked to include information in their application outlining the estimated costs associated with general maintenance for facilities (i.e. the type of maintenance functions that are minor, for which operating funds would be required). Larger-scale maintenance activities that are typically capital expenditures should be routed through the School Enhancement Program, and school districts should indicate through their capital plans where specific projects are identified for schools that are either receiving or expecting to receive Rural Education Enhancement Funds. Details regarding the strategic significance of the school in its community should also be included as part of your school district's capital submission.
- It is important to remember that school closures due to poor facility condition are excluded from the Rural Education Enhancement Fund – school districts should consider this when determining whether to make application to the program.

7) If my application for Rural Education Enhancement Funds is approved, will this affect my school district's capacity utilization rate calculation, and therefore my school district's ability to get approval for capital projects?

- No – keeping these schools open should not adversely affect a school district's ability to qualify for other capital funding.

8) What is the evaluation process for Rural Education Enhancement Fund applications?

- Ministry staff will review applications to ensure that eligibility criteria are being met.
- If there are questions about the information included in a particular school district's application, follow-up conversations may be required with school district staff.
- Applications will be assessed with priority given to those schools with the greatest potential for community impact and greatest alignment with the criteria established.
- The Minister of Education will review the prioritized eligible projects and render final decision based on the availability of funding.

9) Are funds ongoing?

- Yes, schools that qualify will receive ongoing funding.



10) When will school districts know whether their applications have been approved?

- The Ministry of Education will communicate application decisions to school districts as soon as possible and **no later than June 30th, 2016.**

10) How will additional funds be provided to school districts, if applications are approved? Are there restrictions on how the funds can be used?

- The Ministry will issue a Special Purpose Grant under Section 115(1) of the *School Act*.
- Grants from this Fund would not meet the definition of a restricted contribution and therefore must not be reported on Schedule 3A but on Schedule 2A – “Annual Budget – Schedule of Operating Revenue by Source” instead.
- Additional funding provided through the REEF can only be used for the purpose of keeping the school in question open.

11) What is the Rural Education Strategy, and how will school districts be involved?

- The Minister of Education and Ministry staff will be working the newly-appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Education and the Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development to develop a longer-term Rural Education Strategy, which will consider a range of factors within the K-12 sector context, including (but not limited to overall impacts on community health, financial challenges/opportunities, and educational challenges/opportunities).
- School districts will have opportunities to provide input into the process as it moves forward – additional details will be provided by the Ministry of Education shortly.