

Budget feedback – 2020/2021 Preliminary Operating Budget

- Effects on funding reductions in Program Unit Funding (PUF) - Research indicates that a child's early years are a pivotal time for his or her physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Early intervention helps close the gap and provides equitable opportunities to all children to access learning. In Lethbridge School Division, we are currently revising our early intervention programming within the new funding framework, but our priority continues to be supporting children with identified needs in Early Education Programs (EEP) and kindergarten. Although the new framework does not provide the same level of funding for program delivery, we remain committed to providing a continuum of supports and services based on individual needs. This may include therapy services, behaviour support, additional assessment, psychologist consultation, contracted services, learning support, and the allocation of Educational Assistant time, if required.
- Teaching Staff – The Division attempted to maintain reasonable class sizes. In so doing, there was limited reduction to teaching staff. The teacher salaries and grids are negotiated between the Province and the Alberta Teacher's Association; therefore, this is not in the control of the Division. The estimated average teaching cost has increased for the Division from the prior year with the grid movement for teacher salaries.
- Educational Assistants – The Division completely agrees on the importance of Educational Assistants. Educational assistants are allocated throughout the Division based on student needs with the available funding for the Division. Although there is a reduction in educational assistants in Early Education Programs (EEP) and kindergarten as an outcome of the funding structure changes in the Program Unit Funding (PUF), Inclusive Learning allocated additional educational assistants into elementary schools.
- Funding Available –The Division does has limited funding available and has to make hard decisions on allocation of funds. The Division uses the Board Priorities and a collaborative approach with the schools through the Instructional Budget Committee to support allocation decisions to optimize funding distribution.