

## **Budget 2019-20 Questions & Answers**

*(Please refer to the Budget 2018-19 Questions & Answers for more information.)*

**Q: What are we doing to improve numeracy levels in our division? Can we do more?**

A: Divisional staff (Assistant Superintendent and Curriculum Facilitators) are meeting with schools three times this year to review numeracy achievement and to assist schools in developing plans to improve numeracy levels. In addition to our divisional numeracy plan, individual schools have developed plans to improve numeracy levels based on their school's data and student profiles.

**Q: Is there a possibility for the IITV teachers to move locations to give different students in different buildings a physical teacher?**

A: Currently, the two divisional IITV teachers each deliver one course per semester. The other four blocks per day, these teachers have other teaching responsibilities in their schools. They could move to other locations but this would add the cost of travel and substitute teachers while they are in transit.

**Q: Can we add more accentuated learning environment resources?**

A: The division had a pilot to develop accentuated learning environments in our schools. This involved additional funding for flexible seating, tables and work areas. Unfortunately, this pilot was discontinued two years ago as a result of funding cuts. Schools still have the ability to use existing furnishing budgets to develop accentuated learning environments.

**Q: Was the vocational program worth keeping? Is it being utilized?**

A: Last year the division contemplated eliminating the four divisional vocational programs in the draft budget. The final decision was to sustain the programs for 2018-19 with the hope that enrolment levels would increase. The total current year enrolment for all four programs is 35 students, 8 of which are non-high school students. 2017-18 enrolment was 42 students, 5 of which were non-high school students.

**Q: Where possible can two schools be moved into one in a community?**

A: It's the division's perspective that the current moratorium on school closures includes restrictions regarding combining of schools. Additionally, during previous community consultations, all communities with two schools clearly stated that they were not supportive of combining two schools into one building.

**Q: If schools combine, what happens to playgrounds?**

A: The playgrounds could stay in their current locations for community use or they could be moved to the combined location. As noted above, the division is not presently considering combining schools.

**Q: Is there a possibility to add support staff into IITV classrooms to help students or into classrooms of stronger students?**

A: Yes. Future models of online learning (which will be known as "distributed learning") will include plans for in-school supervision and support of students. Our new plan for distributed learning will replace our current model of instruction through Interactive Instructional Television (IITV).

Q: Is there any way that the division can partner with 4-H, conservation, Brownies/ Guides/ Scouts, junior achievements and rec. programs to utilize the school and offer after school programming.

A: Yes. Our division welcomes any support from the community in offering extra-curricular support for students.

Q: Is the Fibre Co-op working, and is it worth it?

A: Yes. We have significantly increased our connectivity and improved learning opportunities for students without significantly increasing our costs.

Q: If bus services are not being used by a student is the mileage still being paid to the bus driver?

A: Yes. The bus driver is paid for the entire route every day regardless of which students are on the bus any given day.

Q: Can administrative staff be reduced?

A: The proposed budget includes the removal of the divisional Assistant Superintendent position and 0.5 FTE K-8 Literacy/Numeracy Facilitator. The Assistant Superintendent is our division's lead on managing human resources, staff professional development, student curriculum and assessment, and monthly meetings of our principals. The Literacy/Numeracy Facilitators provide direct support to classroom teachers, provide professional development through grade group meetings and in-class support, and support principals in evaluating their literacy and numeracy data to determine how best to provide further support to students. Maintaining both these positions would be in the best interest of our students, but this is not possible due to our fiscal realities.

The 0.5 FTE Literacy/Numeracy Facilitator will return to a classroom teaching position. Our Assistant Superintendent accepted a position as the new Superintendent at Swan Valley School Division next year and we wish him every success in his new role. His departure next year provides an opportunity to cut this position through attrition. This decision is consistent with the division's goal to minimize the impact of cuts on K-12 classrooms. The responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendent position will be allocated to the Superintendent, the Student Services Director and the Curriculum Coordinator next year. It is likely that next year our division will be the second largest school division in the province without an Assistant Superintendent.

Q: Will the positions which are taking on responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendent receive an increase in pay?

A: Two new positions will be created: Director of Student Services and Curriculum Coordinator. These positions will have greater responsibilities than the current positions that they will replace: Student Services Coordinator and K-8 Literacy/Numeracy Facilitator. These new positions will receive an increase in pay. The increased cost of the new positions will be approx. \$12,000, or 6% more than the cost of the current positions. The Superintendent will take on some responsibilities currently performed by the Assistant Superintendent. The Superintendent will not receive an increase in pay.

Q: Will music be on the elimination list?

A: We're examining possible reductions in all areas including programs and services. This included discussions regarding elementary music and high school band. After considerable deliberation, neither of these programs is impacted in the proposed budget.

**Q: Could all classes have a minimum enrollment? (Pre-Cal, ELA, Band)**

A: Yes. We frequently monitor class sizes to help inform timetabling and course decisions. For example, our new plan for distributed learning will eliminate small classes in high school mathematics while providing access to all high school math courses for all high school students.

**Q: Can we disregard the Province's direction and raise local taxes by more than 2%?**

A: PWSD asked all other school divisions in Manitoba about their plans shortly after the February 8/18 provincial education funding announcement. We received responses from 32 out of 37 divisions. All but one respondent indicated that they would comply with the Province's 2% limit, or would recommend to the board that they should comply. One division indicated that it was considering up to a 3% increase to the special requirement but that it would be consulting with the public. This year the province made it clear that the taxation cap was not simply a recommendation. It is a directive. We will be complying with the provincial directive.

**Q: Are there efficiencies to be found in transportation if we purchased smaller school buses or vans to transport students on low volume routes? Would purchase price and/or maintenance of smaller buses be less expensive?**

A: The standard Type C school bus that the public sees on the road is built to the most stringent construction standards for commercial passenger vehicles, and the combination of these buses with professionally trained and licensed school bus drivers results in these school buses being the safest vehicle on the road (literature references up to 16 times safer than a family car per passenger/kilometre of travel). Smaller Type A school buses and large capacity passenger vans are not built to these same construction standards, and therefore, don't have the same safety record or expected service life. In fact, the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) recommends that school divisions do not use 15-passenger vans at all for student transportation.

Safety considerations aside, smaller Type A school buses provide capital cost savings (about 30% based on this year's pricing), and some operating savings can also be expected. However, there is available literature that suggests that since these types of school buses are of a lighter duty design, it appears likely that they would have slightly shorter anticipated lifetimes than Type C school buses. A shorter service life requiring additional bus purchases offsets a portion of the potential capital and operating cost savings.

Another consideration with smaller Type A school buses is that these buses are not flexible in a bus fleet. These buses can only be used on low passenger routes and are not interchangeable with other larger capacity Type C school buses, which are required for bus routes and field trips with more passengers.

**Q: Is there a savings to contracting bus routes instead of the school division buying buses?**

A: Park West School Division efficiently utilizes a combination of contracted and Division-operated bus routes. According to the latest available Actual FRAME (Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education) report, PWSD's average transportation cost per kilometer is the second lowest in the province. (Source: Tab 34 of the "Actual" spreadsheet, which can be viewed at [https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/frame\\_report/.](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/frame_report/)) Comparing the costs of contracted and Division-operated bus routes, historical cost data indicates that there has been a cost savings for

Division-operated bus routes. However, factors including bus replacement schedule and the increasing cost of repairs may impact the cost comparison in future years.

**Q: Could we contract more bus routes so that the division doesn't have to bear the capital cost of bus purchases?**

A: There are no net savings for the Division if contractors purchase school buses instead of the Division. Although the Division does not pay an initial capital cost for contracted school buses, the rate that the Division pays for each bus route contract includes the depreciation costs of school buses that the contractors incur. In summary, the Division will pay for the capital cost of the school bus in either scenario, either as an initial capital cost or as an ongoing depreciation cost.

**Q: Can we offer teachers nearing retirement an incentive to retire early so that they can be replaced with teachers lower on the pay scale?**

A: An early notice incentive is available for all teaching staff on a permanent contract that provide early notice to the Division regarding retirement. Those who provide notice on or before March 31st receive \$600 while those who provide notice on or before April 30th receive \$300. Within the past two years, PWSD asked other school divisions about their early notice incentives. While some divisions had offered more significant incentives, they discontinued these practices because they were ineffective both in terms of cost and implementation. The recommendation from several divisions was that early incentives for early retirement did not realize expected savings and were not worthwhile.

**Q: Why is the budget for Student Services increasing by \$46,066 (page 22 of Feb 21 budget presentation) if \$50,000 was cut from this budget?**

A: Clinicians, guidance counsellors and resource teachers were budgeted at actual cost in 2019-20 vs average teacher cost in 2018-19. Also 0.15 FTE Speech Language Pathologist and 0.15 FTE Psychologist were returned to the budget 2019-20. They were removed from budget 2018-19 due to maternity leaves.

**Q: Can people make donations to schools within Park West School Division through the Park West School Division Foundation and receive a charitable receipt for tax purposes? Can these donations be for a specific school's projects and/or programs?**

A: Yes. The aims and objectives of the Park West School Division Foundation include providing financial support to students wishing to pursue post-secondary education and training programs, as well as providing a framework for individuals or groups wishing to promote worthy projects of a charitable educational nature (as approved by the directors).

**Q: How many staff are there in Division Office and what are their roles?**

A: There are currently 13.5 FTE with office space at Division Office who are paid for by PWSD:

Superintendent (1.0 FTE)

Assistant Superintendent (1.0 FTE)

Executive Assistant to Superintendents (1.0 FTE)

Secretary-Treasurer (1.0 FTE)

Payroll Administrator – teaching and contract staff (1.0 FTE)

Payroll Administrator – support staff (1.0 FTE)

Accounts Payable Administrator (1.0 FTE)  
Student Services Coordinator (1.0 FTE)  
Maintenance Supervisor (1.0 FTE)  
Transportation Supervisor (1.0 FTE)  
Executive Assistant to Student Services, Maintenance & Transportation (1.0 FTE)  
Student Records Officer / ICT Support (1.0 FTE)  
Literacy/Numeracy Facilitators (1.5 FTE)  
The proposed budget removes the Assistant Superintendent position as well as 0.5 FTE  
Literacy/Numeracy Facilitator.

**Q: What programs and services are included in the budget for Early Childhood?**

A: The Early Childhood Budget is used to: support programming in communities in partnership with the Assiniboine North Parent Child Coalition, provide resources and programming that aid children in the transition to Kindergarten, and to provide resources for the *Welcome Baby* and *Getting Ready for School* programs.

**Q: Could our maintenance crew work evenings and weekends to avoid disrupting classes? Wouldn't this allow them to be more efficient in their work? Maybe this would result in savings for the division?**

A: Our maintenance crew makes efforts to minimize classroom disruptions when completing maintenance work. A change to work hours would need to be agreed upon by representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees as well as Park West School Division. The division does not recommend such a change as it may result in difficulty in retaining and recruiting maintenance crew positions. Another challenge to having our maintenance crew work outside of class time is that much of our maintenance crew's time is spent responding to urgent issues (water and sewer) – these matters cannot wait until evenings or weekends. Also, costs would be incurred to run lighting/heating/cooling systems in evenings and weekends. Finally most hardware stores are not open in the evenings – this would leave only weekends for our crew to buy parts and supplies they require, which would be impractical.

**Q: Could the Community Schools' Connector position be eliminated?**

A: This position is funded entirely by a grant from the Province. If we did not have the position we would not receive the grant. We have received feedback from our schools that they find this position valuable in connecting students with the history of Indigenous people, our region and our country.