

## Student and Family Affordability Fund – Instructions to School Districts

March 22, 2024

The ministry is allocating \$20 million in funding to school districts and independent schools to directly support parents and guardians of K-12 students with costs associated with going to school that they may be struggling to pay.

District by district allocations have been shared with school districts. The online tables with all district allocations will be posted later this spring. This funding is being disbursed under section 115(1)(a) of the *School Act*, should be treated as a Special Purpose Fund on the school district financial statements, and should be fully spent by June 30, 2025.

The funding can be used to:

1. Directly offset costs to parents, guardians, and students, such as school supplies or other cost pressures they are facing using existing mechanisms such as hardship policies

### Spending on Family Assistance

- Spending by the district must directly offset costs for parents, guardians, and students and be **additional** to any planned or budgeted spending for hardship or family supports
- Funding use includes, but is not limited to:
  - Providing basic school supplies that might otherwise be purchased by parents, guardians, and students (e.g., pens, paper)
  - Waiving education-related fees (e.g., additional supplies for shop, culinary and craft classes, workbooks, camps, field trips, relevant cultural events, other student society meetings including those related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and instrument and equipment fees or other fees charged by school districts)
  - Supporting with clothing/footwear required for school sports and other school activities

### Local Processes

- School districts must engage with Indigenous rightsholders (e.g., through their Indigenous Education Council) to determine any unique needs of Indigenous students.
- School districts must use the funding in a manner that is as flexible, private and stigma free as possible, utilizing existing hardship fund processes with additional flexibility.
- District Parent Advisory Councils should be included in the process, and information on the support available should be communicated to all school staff (specifically counsellors) as they interact daily with students.
- Boards should also engage with equity-deserving communities to ensure that the unique needs of all diverse student populations are met.

### Reporting

- School districts will be required to return a completed report to the ministry by July 31, 2024 outlining how funds were spent in 2023/24 and plans for 2024/25.
- A high-level interim report will also be required in December 2024.
- Reporting will be required at the end of the school year, in addition to the reporting in the Amended Annual Budget and audited Financial Statements for 2023/24.
- A draft reporting template will be distributed shortly and will ask for actual and projected spending on family assistance:

- Total amount of parental costs offset by category
- Number of students helped
- Examples of the type of supports supplied
- There should be no staffing, administration, or overhead spending in this category
- School districts will also be asked to report on how students accessed the funding:
  - What processes were used to identify parents, guardians, and students who could benefit from this funding, including those from diverse communities where equity is a consideration?
  - Did you engage with your Indigenous Education Council (IEC or local equivalent) to identify the needs of Indigenous students?
    - If so, who did you engage with and how?
    - If not, what other engagement with Indigenous peoples did you undertake?
  - How did you support First Nations students living on reserve/off-reserve and other Indigenous students attending your schools with this funding?
    - Number of students
    - Amount of funding
    - Types of support