

the torch



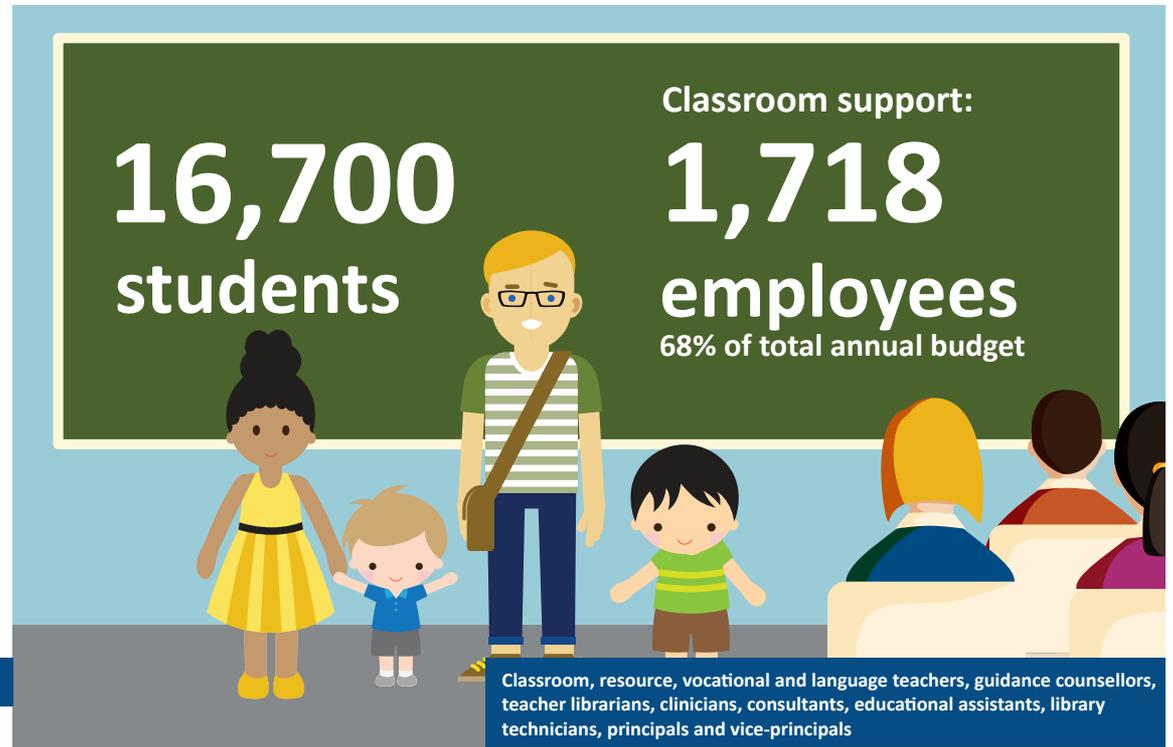
Planning for student success in the face of reduced funding

It takes a village to raise a child and this is true in the administration of quality public education. Many people make it possible for our students to enter a classroom and learn. Everyone knows the essential role of teachers, who are one-on-one with students. However, there are so many other critical groups of employees who all contribute to public education, including: educational assistants who provide vital student support; custodial staff, whose work intensified to keep schools safe during the pandemic; and the bus drivers, library technicians, principals, vice-principals, clerical and information technology staff, superintendent's team, and support staff who all work together to make our classrooms a place to create student success.

“So much goes into running a school, from staffing to infrastructure,” said Jerry Sodomlak, board chair. “As trustees, we consider the needs and priorities of our community along with the factors that make a school function when we start planning a new budget, realizing that 85 per cent of the budget covers the salaries for these essential employees.”

People are the heart of the classroom

Public education has been top of mind recently because of Bill 64 (the Education Modernization Act) that would have removed local voice and choice. Thankfully, the provincial government dropped the bill. It's unclear what may replace it; however, your board of trustees will keep a close watch while they start planning for the 2022–23 budget and how to maintain the programs offered by schools in the face of provincial funding that has not kept pace with actual costs. Just as groceries and other household expenses have risen, the costs to run schools—such as fuel for buses, books, maintenance, and more—also have increased.



So many people make our classrooms possible and most of the division's annual budget covers the costs of RETSD employees. After all, it's our employees who help create student success.

Provincial funding covers 64.5 per cent of the division’s annual operating costs, with approximately 35 per cent coming from school taxes in your municipal assessment (property) taxes. As the bar chart—*Provincial funding falls short*—illustrates, provincial funding is not increasing to match ever-higher costs to operate our schools. This year, provincial funding for education across the province was

cut by \$4.2 million, a 0.3 per cent reduction—the first absolute dollar funding cut in 15 years. Since provincial revenue provides the majority of RETSD funding and we have to cover 100 per cent of our operating costs, the division is faced with large deficits without the ability to generate additional revenue through taxation. It’s a situation that will have dire consequences.

“The provision of quality public education requires adequate and sustainable funding, and we are doing our best with what is available to us. However, as government funding decreases, we are deeply concerned about the impact to education,” said finance, facilities, and transportation committee chair, Brianne Goertzen.

RETSD already operates on the lowest per pupil spending among the six metro school divisions. The funding cuts put the division in a vulnerable position, especially with enrolment going up, requiring more staff and resources.

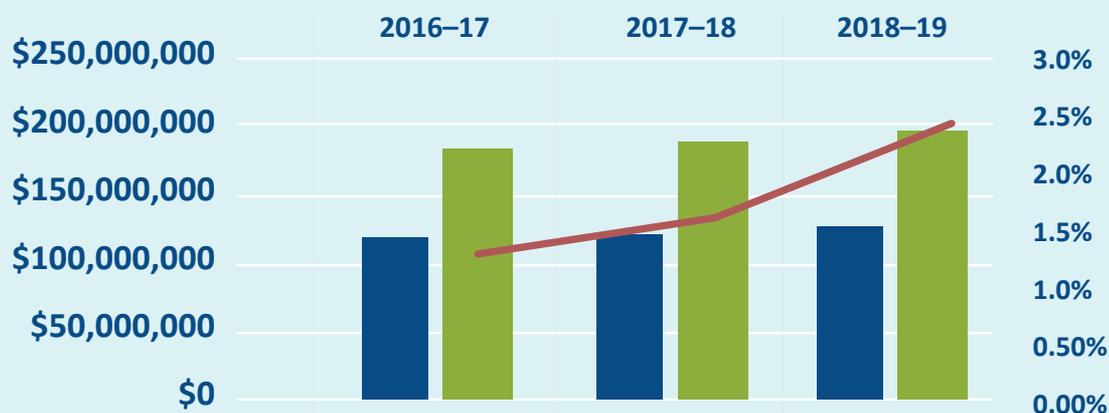
As the board prepares for budget planning in the new year, it wants to hear from the community about their priorities in education. The board is facing difficult decisions and the voice of the community will help it identify what matters most.

“We know we are not in a position to offer new programs and we are struggling just to maintain existing ones,” said Sodomlak. “Every dollar matters and that is why we are seeking input from the community.”

The division will issue a ThoughtExchange survey asking you: *As a community member of River East Transcona School Division, what do you value in our public school system?* Parents will be invited to participate via an email that includes the ThoughtExchange link. The link will also be made available to all community members on the division’s website or by [clicking here](#).

Your comments and feedback will assist and help direct the board in its planning and we will share a summary of your responses. Early in 2022, the board will host a town hall for another chance to speak about public education. All of the feedback will help the trustees in setting the new budget.

Provincial funding falls short



Shortfall in provincial funding over expenses

\$2,082,241

\$3,659,524

\$2,601,924

■ Provincial funding (64.5% of annual budget, including tax incentive grant and tax credit) ■ RETSD operating expenses — Consumer price index

1. 2019–2020 is not included because it was unique in having one-time pandemic-related funding and costs; 2020–2021 figures were not yet available
2. Operating expenses include salaries and benefits, infrastructure, utilities, maintenance, fuel, etc.
3. Consumer price index percentages are for the City of Winnipeg

Provincial funding covers 64.5 per cent of the division’s annual operating costs with approximately 35 per cent coming from school taxes through municipal assessment (property) taxes. Cost of living has risen; provincial funding has not kept pace. The division needs to cover 100 per cent of its operating costs, yet the board no longer is allowed to raise municipal school taxes to make up for the shortfall from the province, leaving the division in a growing deficit situation that will have significant impacts throughout the division and, most importantly, on teaching and learning in the classroom.

Your River East Transcona School Division Trustees

Ward 1

Colleen Carswell
204.222.1486
ccarswell@retsd.mb.ca
Jerry Sodomlak (chair)
204.999.1409
jsodomlak@retsd.mb.ca

Ward 2

Rod Giesbrecht
204.661.5984
rgiesbrecht@retsd.mb.ca
John Toews
204.663.0475
jtoews@retsd.mb.ca

Ward 3

Brianne Goertzen
204.955.6782
bgoertzen@retsd.mb.ca
Keith Morrison (vice-chair)
204.795.3357
kmorrison@retsd.mb.ca

Ward 4

Peter Kotyk
204.668.4181
pkotytk@retsd.mb.ca
Susan Olynik
204.661.6440
solynik@retsd.mb.ca

Ward 5

Currently Vacant

For more information about the board of trustees, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca/BoardofTrustees