



# News Release

## The Board of Trustees approved Budget 2020-2021

***For immediate release – May 28, 2020***

On Tuesday, May 26 the Board of Trustees approved the 2020-2021 school year budget at their regular meeting. While Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools strives to maintain a balanced budget, the main goal is to have the least impact to the classroom and continue to give students a quality faith-based education.

On February 18, Alberta Education announced a new funding model for 2020-2021. Alberta Education mandated that School Boards deliver a balanced budget for the upcoming school year and restricted access to operating reserves. The provincial budget also mandated that School Boards must seek the approval of the Minister of Education in order to use their reserves.

The new funding framework is comprised of three grants:

- The base instruction grants, encompassing students from Kindergarten to Grade 12:
- Services and support grant, which covers specialized learning supports for students with complex needs.
- School grant, which includes transportation, operations and maintenance.

A new formula will be implemented to fund school divisions which will be based on the weighted moving average of the student population from the previous three years. The division cannot move funds in and out of operations and maintenance to support other areas of need, as had been the case in the past.

# News Release

Senior Administration and the Board of Trustees collaborated to ensure 2020/2021 budget decisions were reflective of the Education Plan, Strategic Plan, RDCRS' Principles of Practices and the areas of focus provided by Alberta Education.

The main areas that will reflect change in the 2020-2021 school year in order to balance the budget are:

- Removing embedded professional development Mondays each week in our Red Deer, Sylvan Lake and Blackfalds schools. Instead, there will be an extra five professional development days throughout the year.
- Closing the Discovery Learning Centre at River Bend in Red Deer, which was used for professional learning for the past two years for early learning (Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten).
- The way that distance learning is funded has changed, so that a fully online school may no longer be a viable option for Red Deer Catholic. As part of the development of the 2020/2021 division budget, the Board of Trustees will consider closing St. Gabriel Online School and move the online courses to its two Red Deer high schools, École Secondaire Notre Dame High School and St. Joseph High School, as well as St. Dominic Catholic High School in Rocky Mountain House. For more information, please see <https://www.rdcrs.ca/schools/closure-of-st-gabriel-learning-centre>. The final decision on closing St. Gabriel Online School will be made at the Board's regular June meeting.
- Eliminating full-day/everyday Kindergarten at three schools.
- Changing some staffing allocations, such as reducing faith coaches full time equivalencies.

The Board of Trustees chose to retain the [Mental Support Team \(MS2\) Model](#), as the mental health of students and staff is a high priority. In addition, they chose to continue offering a robust Pre-Kindergarten program.

# News Release

## Background (2019-2020 School Year):

- This school year (2019-2020) our division saw a \$2.75 million dollar unanticipated shortfall in October 2019 due to the Classroom Improvement Fund, Class Size Initiative and School Fees Grants being eliminated.
- We addressed this \$2.75 million shortfall by:
  - Pulling \$2 million from our reserves
  - Reducing \$350,000 in direct services from our school's budgets
  - Reducing \$100,000 in our transportation budget
  - The Inclusive Learning Department reduced services and purchases of \$150,000
  - And we reduced spending of \$150,000 in software and materials
  - Our reserves are like a savings account for a rainy day. To date, we have only \$2.5 million in reserves.
- In addition, due to COVID-19, our division lost an additional \$1.3 million in funding for the 2019-2020 school year.

"We were faced with a funding cut in October 2019 and since we were in the midst of the school year, we chose to use reserves to maintain our programming. But that essentially delayed the difficult decisions we have now had to make with this 2020/2021 budget. This was not an easy budget, but I am proud that the Board of Trustees has chosen to fund priorities, such as Pre-Kindergarten and our successful mental health program," said Board Chair, Anne Marie Watson at Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools.

"The feedback we've received from families and staff regarding the elimination of early-dismissal Mondays (used to provide professional development for staff) has been positive. The Board is confident that staff will be better served with the new full-day professional development opportunities beginning in the 2020/2021 school year."

*Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools serves over 10,480 students in 21 schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, and Olds. It also supports the learning of over 600 students in a Home Education Program. The Division is committed to serving*

## News Release

*children and parents with a complete offering of learning opportunities delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and within the means of the Division.*

**For more information, contact:**

Communications Department

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools

P: 403-343-1055 Ext. 310147

E: [communications@rdcrs.ca](mailto:communications@rdcrs.ca)

W: [www.rdcrs.ca](http://www.rdcrs.ca)

--- 30 ---