

## Research Note

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### Recent Trends in BC Public Education Operating Funding

This document provides a general overview of trends in operating funding for BC's public education system from 2012–2013 to 2024–2025.

#### Where operating funds come from

In general, the largest source of funding for public education operations comes from the general operating grants that the Ministry of Education and Child Care provide to school districts each year. The amounts for each district are determined by the government's funding allocation system formulae.<sup>1</sup>

However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of targeted supplemental operating grants to provide additional funds to the public education. In 2012–2013, the general operating grant accounted for about 96% of the operating funds transferred from the Ministry to school districts. The same grant accounted for only 86% of operating funds during the 2024–2025 school year.<sup>2</sup>

#### Trends in operating funding

Shifts in how operating funding is provided means that it is necessary to consider both general operating grants as well as supplemental operational grants when analyzing public education funding over time.

Between 2012–2013 and 2016–2017, both general operating grant and total operating grant funds were essentially flat after inflation adjustment (-0.3% and 0.7%).<sup>3</sup>

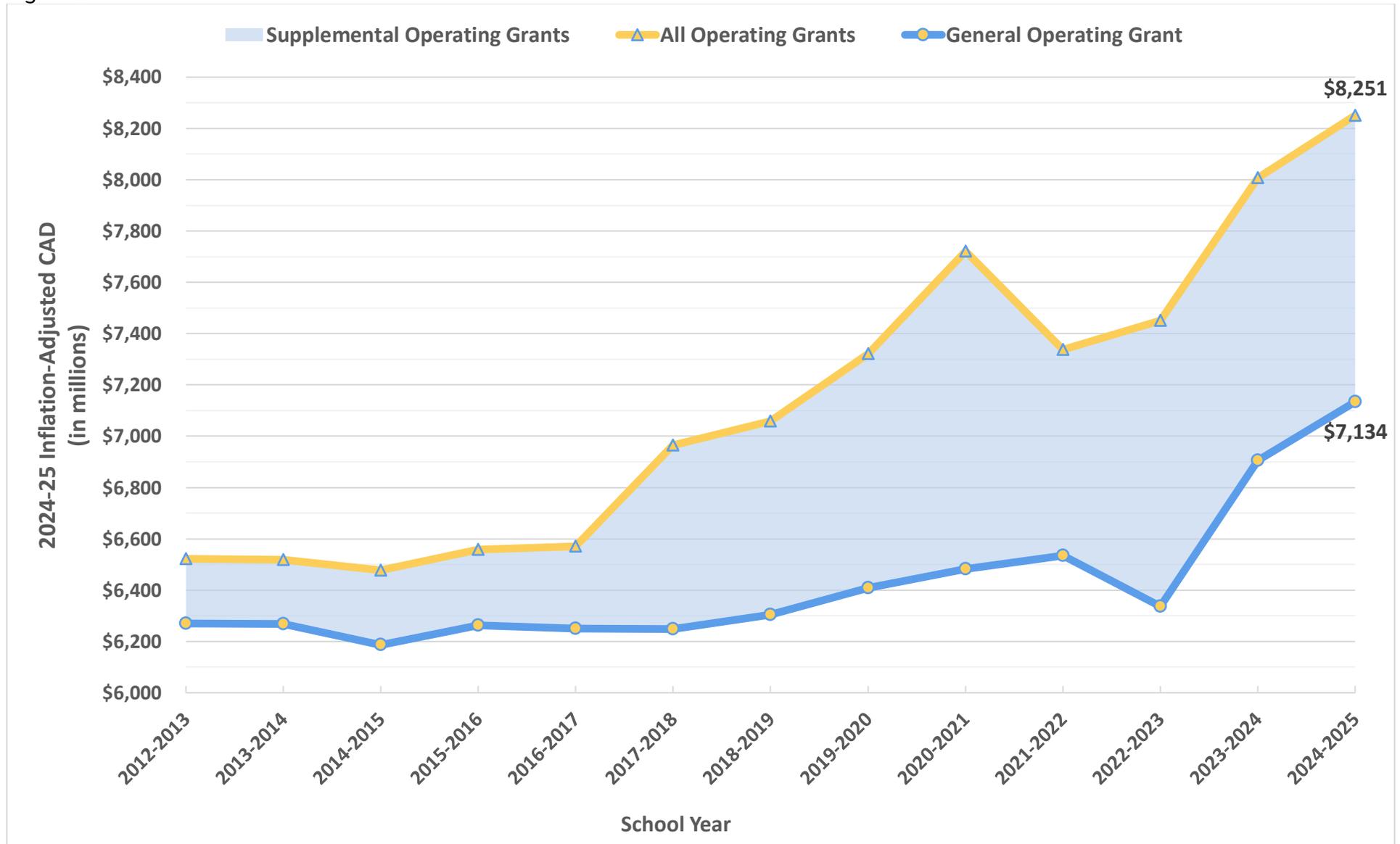
The turning point came with the BCTF's 2016 Supreme Court win, and the resulting increase in operating funding by the Ministry to come into compliance with the restored collective agreement language on class size and composition. The Classroom Enhancement Fund (CEF) was included as a new supplemental grant starting in the 2017–2018 school year, adding about \$450 million (unadjusted) to the total operating funds for that year.<sup>4</sup> The CEF remains the largest supplemental operating grant to this day, adding about \$800 million to the public education system in 2024–2025.<sup>5</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic—and the years immediately following—were a period of relatively volatile operating funding.

- In 2020–2021 total operating funding spiked as result of relatively low inflation (1.3%) and the addition of new supplemental grants associated with addressing the pandemic. Overall, the Safe Return to School Grant and the Federal Safe Return to Class Fund added \$260 million to public education 2020–2021 operating funding.<sup>6</sup>
- In contrast, in 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 both the general operating grant funding and the total of all operating grants lost significant real value through a combination of high inflation (2021–2022 – 4.9%; 2022–2023 – 6.0%), the removal of most of the COVID-19 grants present in 2020–2021 and a freeze in funding formula allocations for the 2022–2023 school year.<sup>7</sup>

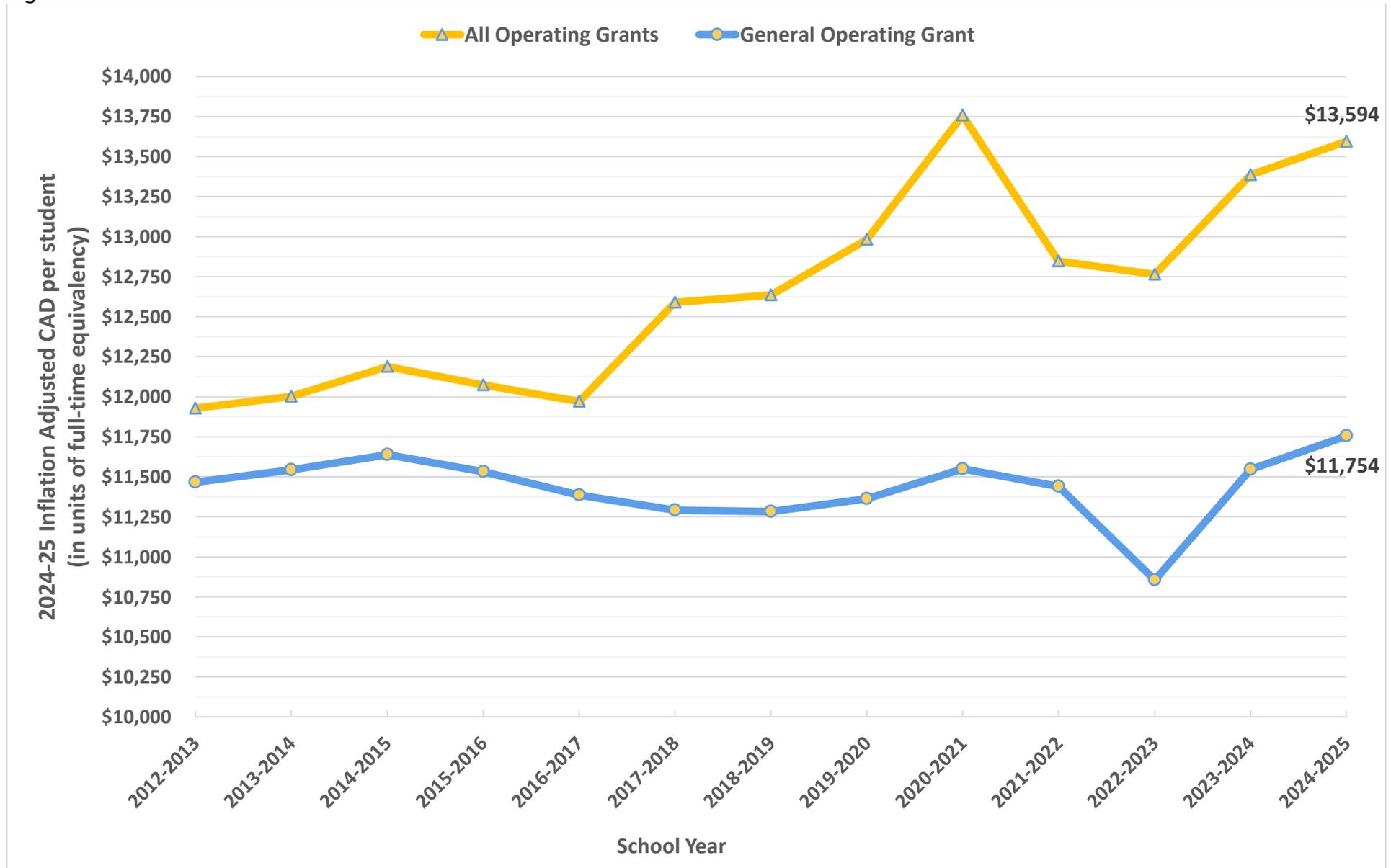
However, since 2023–2024, both the general operating grant and the overall total of all operating grants have seen notable increases and are now at their highest points since 2012–2013 (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1



Sources: BC Ministry of Education and Childcare (2012-2025).<sup>8</sup>  
 Note: Inflation adjustment calculated using school year (July to June) average CPI.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 2



Sources: BC Ministry of Education and Childcare (2012-2025).<sup>10</sup>

Note: Inflation adjustment calculated using school year (July to June) average CPI.<sup>11</sup>

## Total operating funding over time (per student FTE)

Increased enrollment is the key driver of increased funding through the general operating fund. This means that if you look solely at the general operating grant, per pupil funding has remained relatively flat for the past 13 years, increasing only 2.5% after inflation adjustment (\$11,465 in 2012–2013; \$11,754 in 2024–2025).<sup>12</sup> However, when considering the total operating grants over time, funding per-student FTE in BC has increased by 14% (\$11,928 in 2012–2013; \$13,594 in 2024–2025).<sup>13</sup>

## Increases to funding do not equal adequate funding

Overall, total operating funding has grown in recent years, exceeding increases necessitated for inflation adjustment and enrolment growth. However, increased funding is not equivalent to adequate funding. This can be illustrated by focusing on areas where there are substantial funding gaps, such as inclusive education services. Every year, school districts spend more on inclusive education than they receive in inclusive education funding,<sup>14</sup> creating pressure to ration inclusive education staff and services and redirect funding from other operational areas.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the ministry's operating grant procedures: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/financial-management/k-12-funding-and-allocation/operating-grants>.

<sup>2</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2012). "Summary of Grants to Date, 2012-2013." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/k12funding/12-13/12-13-summary-of-grants.pdf>;

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<sup>3</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2012). "Summary of Grants to Date, 2012-2013." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/k12funding/12-13/12-13-summary-of-grants.pdf>;

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Note: Inflation calculated using school year average CPI – July to June – using BC Consumer Price Index figures.

<sup>4</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2018). "Summary of Grants to Date, 2017-2018." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/k12funding/17-18/17-18-summary-of-grants-updated-june-2018.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2025). "Summary of Grants to Date, 2024-2025." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/k12funding/24-25/24-25-summary-of-grants-june-2025.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2020). "Summary of Grants to Date, 2019-2020." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/k12funding/19-20/19-20-summary-of-grants-updated-june-2020.pdf>;

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Note: Inflation calculated using school year average CPI – July to June – using BC Consumer Price Index figures.

<sup>7</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2020). "Summary of Grants to Date, 2019-2020." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/k12funding/19-20/19-20-summary-of-grants-updated-june-2020.pdf>;

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Note: Inflation calculated using school year average CPI – July to June – using BC Consumer Price Index figures.

<sup>8</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2012-2025). "Summary of Grants to Date, [2012-2013 to 2024-2025]." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/financial-management/k-12-funding-and-allocation/operating-grants>;

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<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. (2025). "Table 18-10-0004-01 – Consumer Price Index, monthly, not seasonally adjusted." Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1810000401>.

<sup>10</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2012-2025). "Summary of Grants to Date, [2012-2013 to 2024-2025]." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/financial-management/k-12-funding-and-allocation/operating-grants>;

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<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. (2025). "Table 18-10-0004-01 – Consumer Price Index, monthly, not seasonally adjusted." Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1810000401>.

<sup>12</sup> BC Ministry of Education and Childcare. (2012). "Summary of Grants to Date, 2012/13." Table A. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/k12funding/12-13/12-13-summary-of-grants.pdf>;

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Note: Inflation calculated using school year average CPI – July to June – using BC Consumer Price Index figures.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> BC Teachers' Federation Research (2026). *BC's inclusive education funding gap*. Retrieved from <https://www.bctf.ca/news-and-opportunities/news-details/2026/01/20/bc-s-inclusive-education-funding-gap>

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