

Ministry of Education

Special Education Policy
and Programs Branch
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Ministère de l'Éducation

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2010: SB17

MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Superintendents of Special Education

FROM: Barry Finlay
A/Director
Provincial Schools Branch

Julie Williams
A/Director
Special Education Policy and Programs Branch

DATE: April 12, 2010

SUBJECT: Special Education Funding

First, I would like to thank you and your staff for your continued efforts to improve the learning and achievement of students with special education needs in your schools. As a result of your efforts we continue to see improved achievement results for students with special education needs – we are closing the gap and we are raising the bar. Your efforts are making a difference.

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify the changes in the Special Education Grant (SEG) for the 2010-11 school year. Despite a period of fiscal restraint the government will once again be increasing funding for special education. The SEG is projected to increase by \$65.5 million, to a provincial total of \$2.31 billion. This memorandum will also provide information on sector discussions that will occur in the Fall of 2010.

It should be noted that a regulation to govern grants to school boards in their 2010-11 fiscal year has not yet been made. The information in this memorandum is provided in the absence of such a regulation.

The initiatives and investments described herein must be implemented by, and are conditional upon, the making of such a regulation by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The Ministry intends to seek such a regulation and will advise you if it is made.

Special Equipment Amount (SEA)

Beginning in 2010-11 the SEA allocation would be made up of two components: a SEA Per Pupil Amount and a SEA Claims-Based Amount.

The new SEA Per Pupil Amount would be part of a 5-year plan to provide boards with greater flexibility and predictability by converting part of the SEA allocation (approximately 85% of funds) into a single SEA Per Pupil Amount for all school boards by 2014-15.

The SEA Per Pupil Amount responds to feedback the Ministry has heard from school boards regarding greater flexibility for SEA purchases, and to the results of a review of the SEA allocation that was conducted in 2009. The SEA Per Pupil Amount would allow school boards to seek efficiencies and optimize effectiveness in the purchase of all computers, software, computing related devices, and required supporting furniture, as identified for use by students with special education needs in accordance with the proposed 2010-11 SEA Funding Guidelines. This would give school boards the opportunity to make bulk purchases, acquire board licenses and to establish purchasing consortia. The new SEA Per Pupil Amount would help school boards in providing training for staff and students (where applicable), equipment set-up, maintenance, and repair as determined by the board for *all* SEA equipment, including SEA equipment funded through the SEA Claims-Based Amount. Technicians and training costs would no longer be submitted through the SEA claims process.

The calculation for the SEA Per Pupil Amount would transition school boards from a 2010-11 school board-specific per pupil amount that is based primarily on each board's historical access to SEA funding, to a single provincial per pupil amount by 2014-15. In 2010-11 each school board would receive the SEA Per Pupil Amount, comprised of a base of \$10,000 plus an allocation based on a board-specific per pupil amount. It is anticipated that by 2014-15 the SEA Per Pupil Amount would consist of a base of \$10,000 for each school board plus an allocation based on a provincial per pupil amount. Further details regarding each board's SEA Per Pupil Amount allocation would be shared with individual boards this spring.

It is intended that this 5-year plan to convert part of SEA into a single provincial SEA Per Pupil Amount would be used to ensure that total provincial funding for SEA is increased by approximately 7% per year. In addition, the SEA Per Pupil Amount would: provide school boards with greater flexibility to meet students' needs; phase-in a simpler funding process that reduces administrative burden; provide funding in a predictable manner; provide greater equity among all school boards; balance appropriate processes and documentation with less administrative burden; and maintain approximately 15% of all SEA funds on a claims-based process which ensures continued support for special equipment needs that are not computer/technology related.

The SEA Claims-Based Amount would continue to support the purchases of non-computer based equipment to be utilized by students with special education needs, including sensory equipment, hearing support equipment, vision support equipment, personal care support equipment and physical assists support equipment. This component of the SEA allocation would continue to be claim-based with an \$800

deductible.

As you know, SEA funding is intended to assist with the costs of equipment essential to support students with special education needs. It is still expected that boards would develop an internal process that allocates the SEA Per Pupil Amount, the SEA Claims-Based Amount and a board internal contribution to support student needs in an equitable and timely fashion. Details regarding eligibility for purchases with the SEA Per Pupil Amount as well as the SEA Claims Based Amount would be set out in the SEA Funding Guidelines, *Special Education Funding Guidelines, Special Equipment Amount (SEA)*, 2010-11.

Financial reporting to the Ministry would be changed to reflect the new SEA Per Pupil Amount. Expenditures related to the SEA Per Pupil Amount would be reported separately from all other special education expenditures. It would be required that any unused SEA Per Pupil funding must be placed in a SEA reserved fund/deferred revenue to support future spending on all computers, software, computing related devices and required supporting furniture identified for use by students with special education needs, as well as all training and technician costs for all SEA equipment.

Special Incidence Portion (SIP)

The Ministry will continue to fund claims approved through the process which will be set out in the SIP Funding Guidelines, *Special Education Funding Guidelines, Special Incident Portion (SIP)*, 2010-11.

It is intended that, beginning in 2010-11, approved health claims will be considered for a three-year renewal period in order to reduce administrative burden to school boards. In addition, in 2010-11, a new form will be introduced relating to SIP claims made on behalf of students with a safety or health and safety claim, as an information gathering process, in order to better understand the characteristics of these students. Finally, in order to reduce administrative burden the documentation requirements for all SIP claims would be reduced.

High Needs Amount

As a transitional strategy, for the past three years school boards declining in enrolment have been stabilized with respect to their HNA funding and boards increasing in enrolment have had their enrolment increase reflected in their HNA funding. This transitional stable funding approach would continue for declining enrolment boards in 2010-11, but would be based on 50 percent of the board's HNA stabilization amount. Boards with increasing enrolment would continue to see their HNA funding increase. The approximate cost of this 50 per cent stabilization strategy for 2010-11 would be \$23M.

Continuing in 2010-11 school boards would receive approximately 95% of their HNA base and the remaining 5% or approximately \$50M would be allocated based on the Measures of Variability (MOV). The MOV would be expanded to include 23 factors, using the most recent data available, to better reflect the variability of students' high needs and boards' ability to respond to these needs, without relying on a claims-based process.

The 2010-11 HNA MOV would continue to use factors related to student outcomes on EQAO assessments and access to EQAO assessments, which would now include students who are gifted. It would continue to address closing the gap strategies (eg. boys' achievement), to respond to challenges faced by smaller and rural boards, and to respond to boards with high prevalence rates for students with special education needs. In addition, this year's MOV would introduce secondary factors including credit accumulation and participation in locally developed and K courses by students with special education needs (grades 9 and 10 only).

For the 2010-11 school year the Ministry would enhance the HNA MOV amount by providing a \$10M new investment to support the introduction of a MOV Special Education Statistical Prediction Model developed by Dr. D. Willms, University of New Brunswick, Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy (UNB-CRISP). The logistic regression MOV prediction model drew from Ontario Ministry of Education anonymized student data merged with UNB-CRISP census indicators from the 2006 Canadian Census data and other data sources to predict the number of students likely to receive special education programs and services in each school board.

Further details regarding the 23 factors used to determine the allocation of the MOV Amount, weights, as well as an explanation of the MOV Special Education Statistical Prediction Model can be found in the 2010-11 Education Funding Technical Paper. Similar to the 2009-10 process, the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch will share details regarding each school boards MOV calculation with individual school boards this spring.

Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA)

Starting in 2010-11, it is intended that the BEA will be introduced as part of the Special Education Grant. This allocation will provide \$10.8M in funding to boards to build capacity by hiring staff with Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) expertise.

School board personnel with ABA expertise would provide and coordinate training on ABA instructional methods and resources at the board and school level to increase capacity within the publicly funded school system to use ABA methods. They will support deeper implementation of Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 140, Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The services provided by ABA expertise professionals would be applicable to all students and have been found to be specifically effective in working with students with ASD where appropriate. In addition, ABA expertise professionals continue to play a role in the successful implementation of the Connections for Students model for students with ASD.

Sector Discussions

In 2010-11, to encourage effectiveness and efficiency in the use of existing resources, the Ministry will initiate a discussion with the sector on the relationship among: special education funding, the delivery of programs and services, and student achievement. As you are well aware, a primary goal of Ontario's education system is to ensure that all students have equitable access to the programs and services they need to be successful as

students and as members of the community. Within the current economic and fiscal context and with more school boards seeing lower enrolment, Ontario's education system must adapt and evolve so that the important goal of improving educational outcomes for all students continues to be met.

After the release of the 2010-11 GSN, Ministry staff will attend regular stakeholder meetings such as Regional Special Education Councils (RSECs), and will address questions from individual boards regarding their 2010-11 SEG allocation. This will ensure a consistent understanding of the current model and provide preliminary feedback. Additional information on the sector discussions will be provided later this spring.

Thank you once again for your work with students with special education needs.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Barry Finlay
A/Director
Provincial Schools Branch

Original signed by

Julie Williams
A/Director
Special Education Policy and
Programs Branch

cc. Special Education Advisory Committees