

Ministry of Education

Special Education Policy
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**2011: SB18**

MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Superintendents of Special Education

FROM: Barry Finlay
Director
Special Education Policy and Programs Branch

DATE: May 24, 2011

SUBJECT: Special Education Funding in 2011-12

Let me begin by once again thanking you and your staff for your continued efforts to improve the learning and achievement of students with special education needs in your schools. The continued improvement in achievement results for students with special education needs is a reflection of your work.

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify the changes in the Special Education Grant (SEG) for the 2011-12 school year. In 2011-12 the government will once again be increasing funding for special education, as the SEG is projected to increase to almost \$2.52 billion. This is an increase of \$196.4 million over 2010-11 and an increase of \$893.3 million or 55 percent since 2002-03. This memorandum will also provide some information regarding a special education review that is scheduled to occur this spring.

Special Education Grant (SEG) Update

As you know, regional and sector discussions on special education with major special education stakeholders were held in September and October 2010. I would like to thank all school boards for their participation and valuable input. The findings of these discussions were presented at a one-day session in February 2011 as part of the GSN funding formula review, and your feedback was considered as we developed the 2011-12 SEG.

Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA)

The 2011-12 SEG will include additional support for education assistants, as per Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) agreements, through the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA). As you know, the government is providing a \$120.2M enhancement in 2011-12 for education assistants, to support working conditions for education assistants and improve services and programs for students with special education needs. A total of \$110.1 million of this enhancement will be allocated through the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA), with the remaining \$10.1 million allocated through the Pupil Foundation Grant.

Additional supervision provided by education assistants through this enhancement may in some instances benefit the general student population rather than only students with special education needs. Therefore, the Ministry has to modify the original allocation approach that was described in the memorandum of August 18, 2008: ***B10 -Funding enhancements for peace and progress in education -2008-09 and future years.*** While the total funding commitment and the board-by-board allocation of resources for this initiative remain unchanged, the share of funding flowed through SEPPA has been reduced to ensure that initiatives that benefit the general student population are not accounted for in the special education envelope. As communicated in the memorandum of March 31, 2011: ***B3 - Education Funding for 2011-12***, this ensures that special education funding may only be used for special education purposes pursuant to the Restricted Purpose Revenues Regulation.

High Needs Amount (HNA)

The transitional stable funding approach for HNA will continue for declining enrolment boards in 2011-12 at 50 percent of the board's HNA stabilization amount. Boards with increasing enrolment will continue to see their HNA funding increase. The approximate cost of this 50 per cent stabilization strategy for 2011-12 will be \$27 million.

The HNA Measures of Variability (MOV) amount will continue to be funded at approximately 5 per cent of the total HNA allocation or \$50 million. All factors have been updated with more recent data. The HNA Special Education Statistical Prediction Model (SESPM) allocation, as part of the HNA MOV, has also been updated with more recent data and it will use special education data for the 2008-09 school year as reported by boards through the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS).

Special Equipment Amount (SEA)

As you are aware, beginning in 2010-11 the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) allocation will be made up of two components: SEA Per-Pupil Amount (SEA PPA) and a SEA Claims-Based Amount. A school board's SEA PPA allocation is influenced by its historical access to SEA funding, particularly the 2009-10 SEA allocation. The provincial 2009-10 SEA allocation demonstrated a significant increase over the 2008-09 school year, as this annual increase was much higher than projected and more than recent year over year growth rates.

The Ministry remains committed to the same projected provincial total for the SEA PPA allocation and the same provincial SEA PPA by 2014-15. As a result of the 2009-10 increase, it is necessary to adjust the projected yearly provincial increase of the SEA PPA allocation to 2 percent per year. As you know, this does not include the SEA Claims-Based Amount and process. In addition for 2011-12, vision support equipment required by a student which has a computer interface, but the primary function of which is to help address the vision support needs of the student, may be included in a SEA claim.

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), 2011-12.*

Facilities Amount (FA)

The Ministry will continue to support education programs for school-aged children and youth in Government-approved care and/or treatment, custody and correctional facilities operated by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and/or the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The FA Allocation is projected to be \$100.1 million in 2011–12.

Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA)

The 2011-12 BEA allocation will provide funding for school boards to hire board level personnel with Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) expertise to support principals, teachers, and multi-disciplinary transition teams. Personnel with ABA expertise will increase capacity within the publicly funded school system to use ABA methods by providing and coordinating training on ABA instructional methods and resources at the school and school board level. The BEA allocation is projected to be \$11.3 million in 2011–12.

Spring 2011 Special Education Review

With respect to the evolution of special education funding, the Ministry will continue to review and refine the components of the SEG. The Ministry will continue to consult with stakeholders to ensure that the evolution of the funding approach supports students with special education needs, improves student outcomes, and places less emphasis on the identification process of students with special education needs for funding.

In the Spring of 2011, the Ministry will initiate a review to examine reasons for variation in board reporting of students with special education needs. Among other things, this review will:

- examine reporting practices relating to students receiving special education programs and/or services
- examine SEA claims-based applications to ensure compliance with SEA guidelines, and
- engage in discussions with school boards regarding the SEA Per-Pupil Amount.

This review will be informed by your input during the February 15th, 2011 special education consultation and the Fall 2010 Special Education Discussions, and by the on-going work of the Special Education Funding Working Group (SEFWG).

As you know, the SEFWG was first established in 2008 and it is presently composed of representatives from the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), Council of Ontario Senior Business Officials (COSBO) and Supervisory Officers of Special Education. Over the last 2 years the SEFWG and Ministry staff have held a series of meetings to support the evolution of special education in Ontario. In 2011-12, the SEFWG will continue to support and inform the evolution of special education funding and other key initiatives such as the Spring 2011 review. Additional information on the sector discussions will be provided later this spring.

Once again, Ministry staff will attend regular stakeholder meetings such as Regional Special Education Councils (RSECs), and will address questions from individual boards

regarding their 2011-12 SEG allocation. This will ensure a consistent understanding of the current model and provide preliminary feedback.

Funding Details

Over the next few days I will once again be sharing with you by email your board's specific funding details for the 2011-12 HNA MOV and the SEA Per Pupil Amount.

Thank you once again for your work to support the learning and achievement of students with special education needs.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Barry Finlay
Director
Special Education Policy and Programs Branch

cc. Special Education Advisory Committees