2017-18 Education Funding Engagement Guide

**EQUITY IN EDUCATION**

**Special Education Grant**

**Context**

The Special Education Grant (SEG) provides additional funding, beyond the foundation grants, to support positive outcomes for students with special education needs i.e., for programs, services, and/or equipment required to meet their educational needs. The goal is to ensure equity in access to learning for all students.

The SEG was a key area of focus for the 2016-17 Education Funding Engagement Sessions. Informed by these discussions, the ministry:

* Developed the *2016-17 Education Funding: A Guide to the Special Education Grant*, to provide an overview of special education and how it is funded in Ontario for parents, the public and other partners in the education sector; and
* Announced that beginning in 2016-17, the former High Needs Amount name would be changed to the Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA). This new name better expresses the allocation’s purpose, to better reflect the variation among boards with respect to students with special education needs and boards’ abilities to meet those needs.

**Special Education Resources**

The ministry is updating the special education guide for educators. *Special Education Kindergarten to Grade 12: A Policy and Resource Guide* is targeted for release in fall 2016 and provides integrated, comprehensive, and updated information about legislation, regulations, policies and programming pertaining to the education of students with special education needs. This update will also include current information about special education funding and links to the recently released ministry resource for parents entitled *2016-17 Education Funding: A Guide to the Special Education Grant*. This is an opportunity to review and align the information and several ministry resources that support special education programs and services, including individual education plans (IEPs), transition planning and early identification.

**Students with Greater Special Education Needs**

The number of students reported to be receiving special education programs and/or services continues to increase each year. School boards report an increase in the numbers of students with greater special education needs and their challenges meeting the needs of these students. Some school boards have indicated challenges related to availability of community resources and/or funding.

The SEG currently uses the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Allocation to support pupils with greater needs. This allocation funds those who require more than two full-time staff to address the health and safety needs of both the students who have extraordinarily high needs related to their disabilities and/or exceptionalities and of others at their school. The SIP Allocation is projected to be $82.3 million in 2016-17.

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**Funding Framework**

The SEG is projected to increase to approximately $2.76 billion in 2016-17 and is made up of the following six allocations:

* Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) Allocation – $1.43 billion, provides funding to every school board to assist with the costs of providing additional support to students with special education needs;
* Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA) Allocation – $1.05 billion, addresses the variation among school boards with respect to their population of students with special education needs and school boards’ ability to support these needs;
* Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Allocation – $96.9 million, supports the purchase of equipment that may be required by students with special education needs;
* Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Allocation – $82.3 million, supports students with extraordinary high needs who require more than two full-time staff to address their health and/or safety needs, and those of others at their school;
* Facilities Amount (FA) Allocation – $96.1 million, supports school boards’ provision of education programs to school-aged children and youth in care and/or treatment centres, and in custody and correctional facilities; and
* Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) Allocation – $11.7 million, supports the hiring of professional staff at the school board level who have expertise in applied behaviour analysis.

**Accountability**

The purpose of the SEG is to provide supports to students whose educational needs cannot be met through regular instructional and assessment practices. To ensure special education funding is focused on supporting the needs of these students, boards may only use the grant for special education (in-year or use unspent funding in a future school year). School boards have the authority and flexibility to use other GSN funding, as well as the SEG, to meet their responsibility to support students with special education needs. The ministry recognizes that boards need flexibility to address local needs, therefore there is some flexibility to use funding across individual allocations within the grant. The ministry will continue to monitor reporting and feedback from the sector to determine if adjustments are required.

**Considerations**

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What accountability measures should the ministry consider using to assess outcomes for students with special education needs beyond EQAO assessments?

1. What internal processes does your board use to ensure it evaluates and allocates its resources in the best possible way to support students with special education needs?

2. What other GSN allocations are boards using to complement their Special Education Grant? Should the ministry consider changes to financial reporting to reflect this spending from other areas?

3. In the updating of special education resources, what clarification would be recommended in the development and implementation of IEPs?

4. How might we maximize the impact of the IEP and increase educator’s ability to support students directly?

5. Presently SIP measures greater special education needs in terms of staff support received by the student.

a. How can we improve SIP for funding students with greater special education needs?

b. How could we better define students with greater special education needs?

c. How could we better report students with greater special education needs?