

Ministry of Education

Special Education in Ontario

PAAC on SEAC

November 28, 2022

Ontario's Plan to Catch-up

- After two years of pandemic disruptions, in July the Minister announced Ontario's *Plan to Catch Up* for the 2022-23 school year. It is focused on the priorities of parents and includes five key components:
 - **Getting kids back in classrooms** in September, on time, with a full school experience that includes extra-curriculars like clubs, band, and field trips;
 - **New tutoring supports** to fill gaps in learning;
 - Preparing students for the **jobs of tomorrow**;
 - Providing more money to **build schools and improve education**; and
 - Helping students with **historic funding for mental health supports**.
- The full *Plan to Catch Up* can be found online [here](#).

Ontario's Plan to Catch-up (cont'd)

- On October 20, new supports were announced last month as a part of next steps for Ontario's *Plan to Catch Up*, including:
 - **Catch Up Payments for direct payments for parents**, offering \$200 per child (\$250 per child with special education needs), a total of \$365 million in direct financial relief for parents;
 - Building on the work to date and to support students to recover learning in math, a **new Math Recovery Plan** is in development, which will include:
 - access to more digital math resources;
 - an additional \$15 million for school boards to offer a digital tool aligned with the Ontario curriculum to support students, parents, and educators; and
 - working directly with school boards through the Math Action Teams, including board and school-based math coaches.
 - The ministry will require all students in publicly-funded schools **in year 2 of Kindergarten to Grade 2 to be screened for reading twice a year** using evidence-based early screening tools.
 - The second screening would be optional for students meeting or exceeding the benchmark.
 - The ministry intends to work with school boards and partners on recommended screening tools in the current 2022-23 school year, for use in the 2023-24 school year.
 - **Extension to the \$175 million tutoring** support program, previously set to expire on December 31, 2022.

Early Intervention in Math for Students with Special Education Needs \$8.32 M

- The funding is intended to support school boards in implementing **early interventions** in Math for students with special education needs.
- Funding may be used to support elementary students with a goal of increasing student engagement, preventing learning gaps, and supporting students to prepare for de-streamed Grade 9 math. Boards can use funding for staffing, professional development and math resources.
- This funding builds on the 2021-22 Math Pilot, also focused **on early intervention for students with special education needs**. This pilot provided funds to 14 school boards and the Centre Jules-Léger to provide math supports to students with special education needs in grade 4-6.

Ontario Human Rights Commission: Right to Read Report

- The government has taken immediate action to improve student literacy and is making longer-term reforms to modernize the way reading is taught and assessed in schools, with a focus on phonics, including:
 - Revising the elementary Language curriculum and the Grade 9 English course by 2023
 - Revising the elementary Français, Actualisation linguistique du français, Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants, and the Grade 9 Français curriculum by September, 2023
 - Releasing a guide for educators in spring 2022 to support effective early reading instruction
 - Collaborating with partners, including faculties of education, on professional development for educators
 - Beginning development of a French-language reading intervention program
 - Engaging with partners on a longer-term response and developing accessible literacy skills resources
- As part of its Learning Recovery Action Plan, the ministry announced \$25M to support evidence-based reading intervention programs and professional assessments – beginning immediately and into the 2022-23 school year.
- In preparation for the implementation of these new curricula in September 2023, school boards are encouraged to take a proactive approach to ensure that teachers are supported in this transition during the 2022-23 school year.

K-12 Standards Development Committee

- The Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, which has responsibility for leading the development of accessibility standards, and EDU continue to consider the more than 300 multi-part recommendations in the reports of the K-12 SDC and its sub-committee on transitions.
- The government's analysis of the recommendations involves several ministries.
- In February, EDU announced \$6M in funding, on a *by application* basis, for school boards to undertake projects to reduce barriers to accessibility (details on next slide).

Removing Barriers for Students with Disabilities

- A \$6M application based fund was **announced in February 2022** for school boards to **implement initiatives to prevent and remove accessibility barriers experienced by students with special education needs and/or disabilities.**
- Over the summer, the ministry carefully reviewed each project application against the application criteria after which, **37 projects were selected for funding.** The projects will be undertaken and completed in the 2022-23 school year, examples include:
 - Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board – A program to **assess and teach skills to young learners with complex needs.** Program staff will work directly with the school team to ensure generalization and maintenance of skills.
 - Bruce Grey Catholic DSB – A professional-learning focused initiative to **strengthen capacity to respond to an increasing number of students with vision impairments.**
 - Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario – **Conduct universal design for learning training, improve transitions for students** with disabilities and developing a multi-year accessibility plan.
 - Hamilton Wentworth District School Board – Create and pilot **an interdisciplinary studies course focused on disability and human rights.**
 - Rainy River DSB – Focus on **training on equity, ableism, accessibility and inclusion;** effective strategies for teaching and designing lesson plans; inclusive assessment and evaluation practices.

Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education

- The Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) is an advisory agency under the *Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive (AEAD)*. It is established by an Order-in-Council, a Memorandum of Understanding, and Terms of Reference.
- MACSE advises the Minister of Education on the establishment and provision of special education programs and services for students with special education needs, including the identification and provision of early intervention programs.
- MACSE has the following composition:
 - 18 members that represent an exceptionality (e.g. developmental disabilities, giftedness), or a profession (e.g., teachers, social workers);
 - one member that represents students and youth;
 - one member that represents an Indigenous community/organization; and
 - Of these appointed members, two are also representatives of the Francophone community and two are also representatives of the Roman Catholic community.
 - Three non-voting members representing Ministries with a key role for students with special needs (MCCSS, MCU, and MOH).
- MACSE usually meets three times each year, typically in February, June, and October.

Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education

- The Fall meeting of MACSE is **taking place tomorrow** (November 29). An updated version of the *Special Education Update* has been prepared for that meeting and will be available to stakeholders, from the MACSE Secretary, after the meeting and once it has been translated.
- The Minister's Office is **considering candidates for the existing vacancies** on the Council.
- The Public Appointments Secretariat **accepts applications on an ongoing basis which forms a pool from which appointments may be made.**
- From time to time, at the direction of the Minister, a **Call for Applications is issued to stakeholders.** When this occurs, the PAAC on SEAC co-Chairs will be copied on the Call.

PPM 81 Provision of Health Support Services in School Settings

- Earlier this year, the ministries of Education (EDU), Health (MOH) and Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) met with key partners and stakeholders across the province to inform the review of PPM 81.
- The ministry has heard that there are concerns with the draft revised PPM in its current form. We have also heard about where opportunities may exist to strengthen supports for students who require access to health and rehabilitation supports in order to attend and be successful in school.
- EDU, MOH and MCCSS are reviewing all feedback closely and it will inform our next steps. **No decisions on the final revisions have been made.**

Mental Health

- Student mental health and well-being is a top priority for the government. Each year, the ministry is allocating the mental health funding directly to school boards and they are using the funds to address needs locally.
- This year, the ministry is stabilizing and strengthening historic mental health funding made last year by securing most of it in the 2022-23 Grants for Student Needs (GSN) and providing an additional new investment of \$10 million in the GSN, to foster the continued learning and well-being of students. The over \$90M in total funding for **2022-23** is representing a **420 per cent increase, or approximately 5 times the amount, since 2017-18.**
- The new \$10M Student Mental Well Being Allocation is comprised of the following two components: Fostering the resilience and mental well-being of all students (\$5M) and Implementing evidence-based mental health programs and resources (\$5M). This investment will support the mental health and well-being of all students and will enable school boards to continue to assist students who are experiencing mental health challenges that are impacting their learning.
- The mental health investment of over \$90M in 2022-23 also includes the following:
 - \$25.8M in GSN funding for the Mental Health Workers in Secondary Schools program (i.e., social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists) implemented in 2018-19.
 - \$35.4M in GSN funding for Supporting Student Mental Health Allocation
 - \$10.8M in GSN for Mental Health Leaders (one in each school board)
 - \$3M in GSN for the Well-Being and Positive School Climates allocation
 - \$6.5M in PPF for the ministry's implementation partner for student mental health, School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON)

Mental Health

MOH, with the support of EDU, is currently **conducting a cross-sector consultation** that will conclude this month to support child and youth mental health and well-being programs, services and supports within the continuum of care for Mental Health services in Ontario. The consultations will help the ministries to:

- better understand the COVID-19 pandemic impact on the mental health of children, youth, and parents/families;
- address emerging mental health needs and gaps;
- determine what additional actions government, schools, community partners can take to improve the mental health of all children and youth; and
- build stronger connections between school-based, community-based, and primary health, including hospital-based mental health services.

Caring and Safe Schools

- The revision of *Caring and safe schools in Ontario: supporting students with special education needs through progressive discipline, kindergarten to Grade 12* is still under development. The ministry will communicate next steps once confirmed.

SEACs and School Board Financial Reports

O. Reg. 464/97 (Special Education Advisory Committees) under the *Education Act* sets out matters relating to the creation, purpose and administration of SEACs. This legal framework stipulates that school boards establish SEACs and ensure that they are given an opportunity to:

- Make recommendations to the district school board or school authority on anything impacting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services
- Participate in the **board's annual review of its special education plan**;
- Participate in the **board's annual budget process, as it relates to special education**; and
- **Review the financial statements** of the board, as they relate to special education.

More information on the roles and responsibilities of SEACs is available on the Ministry of Education website ([linked here](#)).

Guidance: use of Special Education Grant (special education expenditures) and flexibility in local decision making

- The Ministry of Education provides school boards with direction regarding the use of Special Education Grant (SEG) funding in various documents and regulations, such as:
 - Technical Paper - Balanced Budget, Enveloping, Flexibility, and Other Reporting Requirements Section
 - Code of Accounts
 - EFIS reporting instructions and forms
 - Regulations (Restricted Purpose Revenues; GSN Legislative Grants)
 - Memos where applicable
- These documents not only **provide overall guidance on special education expenses**, but also on how other GSN Grants are expected to cover certain expenditures. For example Pupil Foundation Grant funding covers some costs in self-contained classes.
- The **ministry does not intend to list all possible eligible and ineligible expenditures, but rather to provide adequate guidance** to ensure Special Education Grant funds are spent on eligible special education expenditures, while allowing for flexibility in local decision making.

Reporting: Use of Special Education Grant (special education expenditures) and flexibility in local decision making

- School boards **report to the ministry aggregate financial data, not itemized expenses or supporting documentation for each item.** This information (special education expenses) is reported through the EFIS financial reports in Data Form A2 and Schedules 10A and 10B.
- SEACs may want to **work with their local school boards in understanding their EFIS submissions,** specifically around the expenses being listed under Data Form A2 and Schedules 10A and 10B.
- Please note that **school boards sign off on EFIS submissions, and their Financial Statements submissions are audited annually.**
- Moreover, relative to other GSN enveloped allocations there is more **direction and clarity provided regarding special education expenditures** than there is for other GSN grants that contain enveloping provisions.
- Again, the ministry does not intend to list all possible eligible and ineligible expenditures, but rather to provide adequate guidance to ensure Special Education Grant funds are spent on eligible special education expenditures, while allowing for flexibility in local decision making.

Understanding Special Education Grant Enveloping & Other Allocations That May Be Used For Special Education

- The Ministry of Education **provides school boards with direction** regarding the use of Special Education Grant (SEG) funding in:
 - Technical Paper - Balanced Budget, Enveloping, Flexibility, and Other Reporting Requirements Section
 - Code of Accounts
 - EFIS reporting instructions and forms
 - Regulations (Restricted Purpose Revenues; GSN Legislative Grants)
- School boards report special education through the **EFIS financial reports** in Data Form A2 and Schedules 10A and 10B.
- While some **other GSN allocations may be used for special education** and / or other purposes, because they are not part of the Special Education Grant, they are **not subject to the same Special Education Grant enveloping provisions**.
- In other words, **boards determine which priorities they will address with these funds**, which may be only special education or not include special education at all. These other GSN allocations may or not have their own enveloping requirements.
 - E.g. COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund for the 2022-23 school year

COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund (2022-23 School Year)

- The **COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund is not part of the Special Education Grant, thus not subject to its enveloping provisions.**
- SEACs may want to **work with their local school boards in understanding their use of the COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund.**
 - What eligible priorities were addressed, is special education one of these priorities?
 - How much of the COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund, if applicable, was spent on special education.
- Funding must be spent on the priorities identified within this grant, but there is flexibility in how school boards may use the funds among any of these priorities based on local needs.
- The COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund priorities are:
 - learning recovery
 - the implementation of the first year of a fully de-streamed Grade 9
 - the delivery of remote learning
 - supports for special education
 - enhanced cleaning standards

Questions?

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