

Information and Analysis re: (Special) Education Funding 2012-13

by Marilyn Dolmage, May 4, 2012

This is the time of year – when some families are pressured to agree to segregated Placements, having been told there will be less money for the Accommodations their children require and may already receive, in regular class.

Such pressure contravenes the Supreme Court decision regarding Emily Eaton and the Ontario Human Rights Code, because school boards have an obligation to provide additional support in regular class – first, and to the point of “undue hardship”.

School boards do not give Identification Placement Review Committees the power to allocate additional resources such as educational assistants (although they may make programming recommendations). Neither, then, do IPRCs have the power to deny Accommodations. Many IPRCs take place before school boards even know how much money they can expect to receive from the province in the coming year.

Grants for Student Needs were announced at the end of March. It may be useful to know more about school board funding, especially because some boards will get more, not less funding next year – contrary to what the media sometimes reports.

School Board Funding Projections for the 2012–13 School Year can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1213/funding12.pdf>

It is helpful to consider the picture next year for the province and any school board - with respect to:

- special education grant projections
- total funding (excluding capital)
- total enrolment.

Comparisons can be made with “Revised Estimates” for this school year and “Actual” allocations since 2002-03.

The Ministry memo to all school boards about education funding is at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1213/2012_B5E.pdf

The **2012-13 Technical Paper** is at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1213/Technical12_13.pdf

Information can be found here about the criteria for, and amounts of all of the funding “envelopes” from which money is to be spent in specific ways.

The Ministry says that **Foundations Grants** have been adjusted so there will be:

- 580 more elementary specialist teachers to allow teachers to have an additional 10 minutes of preparation time a week.
- 260 more junior and intermediate teachers so grades 4-8 class sizes can go down from 25 to 24.5 students
- 220 more grade 7 and 8 Literacy Numeracy and Student Success teachers
- 215 more secondary school teachers
- 300 fewer non-teaching classroom consultants
- no across-the-board staff salary increases and no staff salary grid pay increases
- changes to sick leave and retirement gratuity plans
- next year is the third year of a 3-year plan to cut funding for Administration

There are many other “envelopes” affected by this year’s announcements- e.g.:

- Learning Opportunities and ESL Grants are adjusted to 2006 Census data
- \$25 million cut to funding for classroom computers
- \$21 million cut to funding for professional development

As in previous years, it is important to know:

- all Per Pupil grants are based on total school board enrolment (Average Daily Enrolment, or ADE), not numbers of students Identified, or numbers Placed in special education classes.
- Special Education grants must be spent only on students deemed to have special education needs (although that category includes very different proportions of students, as claimed by Ontario’s 72 boards)
- However, students with special education needs should benefit from most of the other funding “envelopes”
- Details about the money the government spends on its provincial schools are not provided through these links.

Special Education Funding is allocated to school boards in the following ways, each with its own acronym:

- **Special Education Per Pupil Amounts (SEPPA)**
- **High Needs per Pupil Amounts (HNA)**
- **Special Equipment Amounts (SEA)**
- **Special Incidence Portion (SIP)**
- **Facilities Amount (FA)**
- **Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA)**

The **Special Education Per Pupil Amounts (SEPPA)** for 2012–13 are:

- \$931.29 per JK to Grade 3 student
- \$715.34 per Grade 4 to 8 student
- \$472.92 per Grade 9 to 12 student

In 2012–13 the **High Needs Amount (HNA)** Allocation will be made up of:

- HNA base amount, including transitional HNA stabilization – \$931.7 million
- **Measures of Variability (MOV)** amount – \$50 million
- MOV Special Education **Statistical Prediction Model** –\$10 million

School Boards continue to report very different proportions of “students receiving special education programs and services”. (*However, there is no standard definition or criteria for this, across the province. Boards create their own. These are the students on whom special education funding can be spent.*) In 2010, the Ministry reported a range of from 5.47% to 24.4%, when the provincial average was 14.39%.

Thus, many boards claim that it is unfair to base funding special education only on per pupil amounts, and that proportions of needy students are increasing in spite of declining overall enrolment.

Measures of Variability have been created as complex calculations that compensate boards according to “need” and not just the number of students enrolled. In the past, such calculations have been called “surrogate statistics” – i.e. they don’t measure student needs or education costs directly, but measure other things that might relate to the “costliness” of their students.

As in previous years, Boards will continue to get more HNA \$ where:

- a. they report higher proportions of students “receiving special education programs and services”
- b. they provide accommodations for more students with special education needs in Grade 3 and 6 EQAO testing
- c. they exempt more students with special education needs from Grade 3 and 6 EQAO testing
- d. more Grade 9 and 10 students with special education needs earn fewer credits
- e. more grade 9 and 10 students with special education needs are enrolled in Locally Developed and Alternative, non-credit K courses
- f. they are small and rural
- g. they serve students from communities assessed as needy.

The **Statistical Prediction Model** uses 2006 census data to estimate the number of students *likely* to receive special education programs and services in the postal codes served by each school board.

The following demographic factors were used:

- Occupational structure,
- Median income,
- Parent level of education,
- Percentage of families below Statistic Canada's low-income cut-off data
- Percentage unemployed,
- Percentage of Aboriginal families,
- Percentage of recent immigrants,
- Percentage that moved in the previous year, and
- Metropolitan influence zone.

There will be 2 types of **Special Equipment Amount (SEA)** again next year:

1. for computers, related equipment, training, maintenance and repair, Boards receive \$10,000 plus an amount that is based on a per pupil amount multiplied by total board enrolment. Individual claims need not be made and there is no longer an \$800 “deductible”.
2. For non-computer equipment, individual claims must be made and the school board must pay the first \$800 of the cost, before the Ministry pays the remainder.

Special Incidence Portion (SIP) compensates school boards where students require (and boards *already* provide) more than 2 full-time staff per student, to address their health and safety needs. SIP Guidelines for 2012-13 – providing details about eligibility - do not appear to have been posted yet on the Ministry website. Last year, those details were posted at -

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1112/2011_12_SIP_Guidelines.pdf - and are not expected to change very much this year. A mathematical calculation relates to the amount of staff time allocated to students, and up to \$27,000 in additional funds per student (\$13,500 for kindergarten students) can be allocated to pay for that staffing. Several issues emerge from the criteria and process:

- Although Boards say that \$27,000 does not cover costs, use of SIP appears to be increasing and so it seems there is some financial incentive to apply for SIP.
- This is the one remaining element of special education funding that rewards school boards financially for providing negative documentation about student

- problems. This “diagnosis for dollars” is a vestige of the Intensive Support Amount formula that was discontinued in 2004, but which involved an increase in damaging documentation about students since 1998.
- It is more likely that boards will receive SIP funding for students in segregated class Placements, because special education classroom teacher time can be used in calculations, but not regular classroom teacher time.
 - After December 14, 2012, it will not possible for a school board to gain additional SIP funding for the rest of the school year. That could present problems for students transferring from other boards: their new board cannot access the funds, while their old board keeps the money.
 - The additional staffing must already be in place and there must be an Individual Education Plan, plus a Behaviour Support Plan and/or Health/Medical Management Plan, before Boards can apply for the money. *Perhaps the money can motivate Boards to provide staff and do the planning, rather than suspend or expel students.* However, the Ministry does not ask Boards to prove these students are attending school regularly.
 - Staff may play a variety of roles, but each staff member counted in the calculation must provide support for at least 10% of the student’s hours per week, regularly scheduled all year.
 - SIP provides only staffing: extra bodies, not other sorts of instructional support.
 - SIP documentation proves that additional staff are meant to be dedicated to supporting particular students, and should not spend their time on other duties.
 - There are some students who find that on-on-one workers impinge on their personal space, inhibit their connections with other students, limit their learning, etc. Sometimes two-on-one staffing is oppressive, not helpful at all in the long run.
 - Students deemed eligible for SIP are at risk of getting very “severe reputations”. That can make it difficult for families to hire people to support their sons and daughters at home and in the community.
 - Parents must be informed if application has been made, but they may want to review the information that has been submitted about their child’s needs and the supports the board says it provides.

Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA)

This is money allowing Boards to hire additional Applied Behaviour Analysis expertise – said to be “applicable to all students and have been found to be specifically effective in working with students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) where appropriate”.

Facilities Amount (FA) pays school boards for their provision of education and school transportation where children and youth are in care, treatment, custody and corrections programs operated by other government Ministries.

Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) provides funding for school boards to hire additional staff with Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) expertise. This is to increase capacity within the publicly funded school system to use ABA methods, which the Ministry says are applicable to any students but “found to be specifically effective in working with” students with autism. Boards receive \$84,233 + \$2.82 per pupil multiplied by total enrolment.

Special notes:

1. I compared provincial allocations as projected for the coming school year, with those projected last March for this school year. The Ministry refers to a 54.9% increase in special ed funding since 2002-03, without mentioning that it has cut the provincial allocation for next year.
2. I see that for 2011-12, the province projected that it would provide a total of \$2,518,071,108 in Special Education funding, to boards. Revised Estimates for the year are now said to be \$2,521,476,674 Thus \$3.4 million more has been spent than was budgeted.
3. In 1998, when the province established this funding envelope system, it was not anticipated that what was then called "Intensive Support Amount # 2 and 3" and what is now called "High Needs Amount" would be so high, taking almost half of the total special ed allotment.
4. The following chart compares each part of the special ed "envelope" allocation for this year and next, based on data provided on the Ministry website at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1213/Technical12_13.pdf and <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1112/technical11.pdf>

<u>ENVELOPE</u>	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2011-12</u>
Special Education Per Pupil Amt	\$1,281.1 m	\$1,286.0 m
High Needs Per Pupil Amt	991.7 m	998.1 m
Special Equipment Amt	81.4 m	81.5 m
Special Incidence Portion	50.5 m	41.0 m
Facilities Amt	100.2 m	100.1 m
Behaviour Expertise Amt	11.3 m	11.3 m
TOTAL Special Ed Funding	\$2,516.2 m	\$2,518.1 m – Projected \$2,521.5 m – Revised Estimate

This reveals that:

- a. SEPPA will be cut by \$4.9 million
- b. The High Needs Amount will take a smaller share of the special ed total allocations – \$6.4 million less next year.
- c. Thus, a smaller part of the provincial special ed funding allocation is dependent on total school board enrolment. (It has been politically advantageous to make special ed funding less susceptible to declining enrolment.)
- d. There are expected to be 8300 fewer students in Ontario's school system next year. This is a smaller decline in population than any of the previous five years.

- e. *It might be useful to know how much of the money allocated for claims-based (non-computer) SEA was spent last year. It would also be helpful to know whether boards have spent the money they received last year for computer equipment, and how much they have set it aside in Special Ed Reserves.*
 - f. *There is a large increase in SIP funding projected for next year - \$9.5 million. This is especially significant when enrolment-based special ed funding has been reduced. This must all be spent on support staffing, and is not available for other uses.*
 - g. *It would be helpful to know whether all of the money the Ministry allocates for SIP actually gets spent – and whether the students it is meant to support are being suspended or expelled.*
5. *Even before grants were announced, there were reports in the Toronto Star and Globe and Mail about the Toronto District School Board making drastic cuts in numbers of Educational Assistants. This discussion actually pertains to EAs in kindergartens, who have now been offered a chance to upgrade their qualifications to become ECEs, as required in Full-day Kindergarten. However, news reports are sometimes confusing; families often become alarmed that EAs and other support staff will also be denied to their children with disabilities. At IPRCs, parents may be told there is no money for EAs to support learning in regular classrooms (even before provincial grants are known) and pressure builds to force segregated class Placement.*

Some fact-finding can be helpful:

- a. *Funding for EAs required by students with special education needs should come from Special Education allocations, not Foundation Grants.*
- b. *Foundation Grants allow just \$17.61 per elementary school student for classroom EAs. Since 1998, there has never been enough money allocated from the provincial “envelopes” for TDSB to put so many EAs in kindergartens. Other boards have not done so.*
- c. *TDSB’s Special Ed funding has not been cut! The Ministry projects that TDSB will receive almost \$1 million more in Special Ed funding next year. (going from \$316,557,087 to \$317,480,492)*
- d. *Students with disabilities are entitled to additional supports to learn as members of regular classrooms, based upon their individual characteristics. Accommodation may sometimes involve additional staffing, although many other adaptations can be helpful. Some boards make very arbitrary decisions to provide additional staffing in segregated classes and not in regular classes. (And TDSB is one of only 6 boards in Ontario that still operate segregated schools; the other 66 either never operated them or closed them, most many years ago.) Those making Placement decisions cannot guarantee that additional staffing will be in place, but neither can they determine that it will not be provided. School boards face very difficult tests before they could ever prove that they cannot afford the accommodations students with disabilities require. This is especially true in a board like TDSB, which is opening an array of “boutique schools”.*