

2016-17 Education Funding:

A GUIDE TO THE SPECIAL EDUCATION GRANT



support every child
reach every student

 Ontario

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Special Education in Ontario	1
Overview of Students Receiving Special Education Programs and/or Services	3
How Funding is Structured	4
Grants for Student Needs	4
Special Education Grant	5
1. Special Education Per Pupil Amount	6
2. Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (formerly High Needs Amount)	6
Special Education Statistical Prediction Model	7
Measures of Variability	7
Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration	8
3. Special Equipment Amount	8
4. Special Incidence Portion	9
5. Facilities Amount	9
6. Behaviour Expertise Amount	10
Education Programs – Other (EPO) Funding	10
Accountability for Special Education Funding	11
Additional information	12

Section 234 of the *Education Act* authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations governing the making of grants. Such regulations, as they relate to the 2016-2017 fiscal year, have not yet been made. The information set out in this paper would come into effect only if such regulations are made that coincide with this document.

The information included in this document is provided for information purposes only and is not binding.

It is anticipated that the funding regulations for the 2016-2017 fiscal year would be entitled: *Grants for Student Needs – Legislative Grants for the 2016-2017 School Board Fiscal Year; Calculation of Average Daily Enrolment for the 2016-2017 School Board Fiscal Year; and Calculation of Fees for Pupils for the 2016-2017 School Board Fiscal Year.*^[1]

[1] Should there be any discrepancy between details in this paper and the regulations, the regulations prevail.

INTRODUCTION

Special Education in Ontario

This guide provides an overview of special education and how it is funded in Ontario. The goal is to provide a clear explanation of the funding model for parents, the public and other partners in the education sector.

Ontario is widely recognized as having one of the world's best elementary and secondary school systems, and works constantly to improve it. While all students need support from educators, classmates, family and friends in order to thrive and gain the full benefits of their school experience, some students may require additional supports to meet their learning needs. Support for students with special education needs may include additional programs, services and/or equipment.

The core of Ontario's education success is its focus on a consistent vision with goals that partners know and embrace. *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* outlines four key goals for the education system:

- **Achieving Excellence:** Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship. Educators will be supported in learning continuously and will be recognized as among the best in the world.
- **Ensuring Equity:** All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- **Promoting Well-Being:** All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.
- **Enhancing Public Confidence:** Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.

In support of this renewed vision, the Ministry of Education allocates funding to Ontario's 72 district school boards¹. In addition to the Pupil Foundation Grant and other Grants for Student Needs funding, the ministry allocates funding for students with special education needs through the Special Education Grant. School boards have the ability to use other allocations of the Grants for Student Needs to support students with special education needs. The goal is to ensure equity in access to learning for all students with special education needs.

The *Education Act* mandates all school boards to provide special education programs and/or services for students with special education needs. This includes students receiving special education programs and/or services who have been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and students receiving special education programs and/or services who have not been identified as exceptional by an IPRC.

All students receiving special education programs and/or services, whether identified as exceptional or not, should have an Individual Education Plan. An Individual Education Plan is a written plan describing, among other things, the special education programs and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs.

There are five categories and twelve definitions of exceptionalities, as follows:

- **Behaviour** – behaviour
- **Intellectual** – giftedness, mild intellectual disability, developmental disability
- **Communication** – autism, deaf and hard-of-hearing, language impairment, speech impairment, learning disability
- **Physical** – physical disability, blind and low vision
- **Multiple** – multiple exceptionalities

These five categories of exceptionalities are designed to address the wide range of conditions that may affect a student's ability to learn, and do not exclude any medical condition, whether diagnosed or not, that can lead to particular types of learning difficulties. All students with demonstrable learning-based needs are entitled to appropriate support in the form of special education programs and services, including classroom-based accommodations.

¹ There are also 10 School Authorities, consisting of four geographically isolated boards and six hospital-based school authorities.

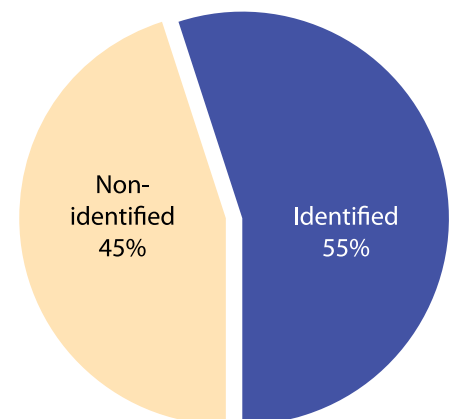
Overview of Students Receiving Special Education Programs and/or Services

Data from the Ontario School Information System showed that in 2013-14, 16.6 per cent of students in Ontario's publicly funded school system were receiving special education programs and/or services. This amounted to 334,311 out of the total of 2,015,385 Junior Kindergarten to grade 12 students. Approximately 55 per cent of students with special education needs had been identified through the IPRC process. In addition, school boards reported that more than 80 per cent were in regular classrooms for more than half the instructional day.

OVERVIEW OF STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND/OR SERVICES 2013-14

Students formally identified as "Exceptional" by an IPRC*

	Number of students	Percentage of panel	Percentage of all students
Elementary	88,148	6.5%	4.4%
Secondary	94,343	14.2%	4.7%
Total	182,491		9.1%



Students NOT formally identified as "Exceptional" by an IPRC*

	Number of students	Percentage of panel	Percentage of all students
Elementary	106,549	7.9%	5.3%
Secondary	45,271	6.8%	2.2%
Total	151,820		7.5%

*IPRC – Identification, Placement and Review Committee

In 2013-14 school boards reported a total of 334,311 or 16.6 % of all students as receiving special education programs and/or services.

HOW FUNDING IS STRUCTURED

Grants for Student Needs

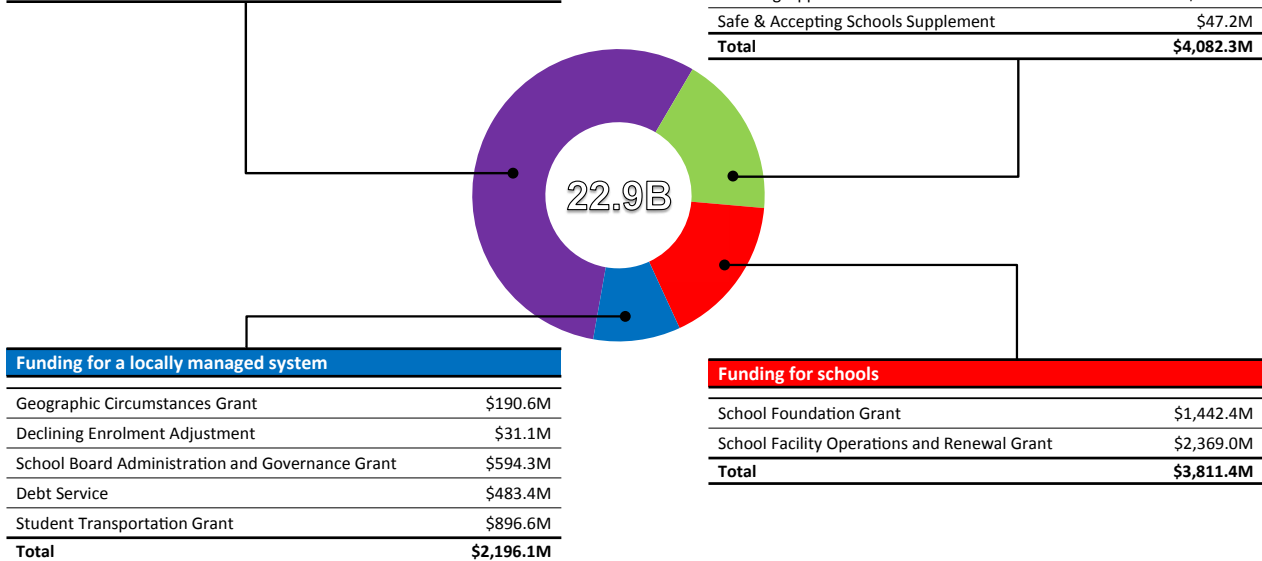
Ontario provides its 72 district school boards with operating funding, including special education funding, through the annual Grants for Student Needs.

The Grants for Student Needs supports all students, including students with special education needs. The *Guide to the Grants for Student Needs*, produced by the ministry, organizes funding into four categories: funding for classrooms, for specific education priorities, for schools, and for a locally managed system.

WHAT DOES THE GSN SUPPORT

Funding for classrooms	
Pupil Foundation Grant	\$10,546.6M
Continuing Education and Other Programs Grant	\$165.5M
Cost Adjustment & Qualifications and Experience Grant	\$1,966.6M
Total	\$12,678.7M

Funding for specific education priorities	
Special Education Grant	\$2,762.0M
Language Grant	\$677.0M
First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Supplement	\$64.0M
Learning Opportunities Grant	\$532.1M
Safe & Accepting Schools Supplement	\$47.2M
Total	\$4,082.3M



Note: School authorities funding and funding not yet allocated are included in the total, but not in the pie chart.

- **Funding for classrooms** focuses on providing classroom resources. It includes the basic Pupil Foundation Grant, which provides funding for every student of every school board, including students with special education needs.
- **Funding for specific education** priorities speaks mainly to the *Achieving Excellence* goal of Ensuring Equity. Special education funding accounts for the largest proportion of funds in this category.
- **Funding for schools** provides the resources to ensure schools have the leadership they need and are clean and well-maintained.
- **Funding a locally managed system** aims to ensure school board leadership carries out focused activities to help schools and students, including students with special education needs, strive to achieve excellence.

The [Guide to the Grants for Student Needs](#) provides further background on all grants and how they are calculated. As well, more detailed information on the funding formula appears in the [Education Funding Technical Paper 2016-17](#) and in the annual regulation under the [Education Act](#).

Special Education Grant

In addition to the Pupil Foundation Grant and other Grants for Student Needs funding for classrooms, schools and the system as a whole, the ministry provides school boards with the Special Education Grant. This grant supports positive outcomes for students with special education needs. It is for the additional costs of the programs, services and/or equipment they may require.

School boards may *only* use Special Education Grant funding for special education programs, services and/or equipment. Any unspent Special Education Grant funding in a given year must be put aside and spent on special education in the future. School boards have the authority and flexibility to use other Grants for Student Needs funding, as well as the Special Education Grant, to meet their responsibility to support students with special education needs.

Special education funding is allocated to school boards by provincial regulations. School boards in turn use their special education funding to implement their own local policies and priorities. As noted above, school boards are also able to use other funding to support students with special education needs.

School boards are given flexibility to use special education and other funding to support their special education policies and priorities because they have the greatest knowledge of their students and communities. They are best positioned to respond to local needs when setting budget priorities and determining what

special education programs, services and/or equipment to provide. This means, for example, that individual school boards make such decisions as classroom placement, classroom programming and staffing.

The Special Education Grant is made up of six allocations:

1. Special Education Per Pupil Amount
2. Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (formerly the High Needs Amount)
3. Special Equipment Amount
4. Special Incidence Portion
5. Facilities Amount
6. Behaviour Expertise Amount

The Special Education Grant is projected to be approximately \$2.76 billion in 2016–17.

1. Special Education Per Pupil Amount

The Special Education Per Pupil Amount provides funding to every school board to assist with the costs of providing additional support to students with special education needs. It is allocated to school boards on the basis of total enrolment of all students, not just students with special education needs.

This allocation provides all school boards with a foundational amount of funding for special education.

The Special Education Per Pupil Amount allocation is projected to be approximately \$1.43 billion in 2016–17.

2. Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (formerly High Needs Amount)

This allocation 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. The ministry announced that beginning in 2016-17, its name would be changed to the Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount to better align with its purpose.

The Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount allocation is projected to be approximately \$1.05 billion in 2016–17.

In March 2014 the ministry announced a new funding approach for this allocation, to be phased in over four years starting in 2014-15. Under this new approach, the model includes three components:

- Special Education Statistical Prediction Model
- Measures of Variability
- Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration.

Special Education Statistical Prediction Model

The Special Education Statistical Prediction Model estimates the likelihood of students in a school board needing special education programs and/or services. The model does this by taking into account neighbourhood profiles for all students across Ontario and in each school board. This generates predicted percentages for the population likely to have special education needs in each school board, which are used to allocate Special Education Statistical Prediction Model funding.

These neighbourhood profiles, which are anonymous, use data from the federal government's long-form census and other similar sources. This includes long-form census factors such as parent level of education, family income, unemployment, and recent immigration to Canada.

Measures of Variability

The Measures of Variability uses five categories of information that reflect differences in each school board's population of students with special education needs and in the school board's ability to respond to these needs.

Three of the categories use data to develop a school board profile of special education needs. This is done by looking at different data sets and comparing a school board to the provincial average. These three categories are: students reported as receiving special education programs and services; participation and achievement in Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments by students with special education needs; and credit accumulation and participation in locally developed and alternative non-credit courses (K-Courses) by students with special education needs.

This comparison is used to determine the amount of funding that each school board should receive. For example under the “credit accumulation, locally developed and K-courses” category, a component of this allocation generates more funding for school boards that report having more students with special education needs whose accumulation of curriculum credits is below the provincial average.

The remaining two categories address each school board’s ability to respond to its population of students with special education needs. This is done by recognizing external factors that affect the school board’s ability to meet these needs. These two categories are: Remote and Rural Adjustment and a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) Adjustment. For example, under the Remote and Rural Adjustment, a component of this allocation generates more funding for school boards whose schools are further apart.

For more detailed information on the five categories and how they are calculated, please refer to the [2016-17 Special Education Funding Memo](#).

Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration

The third component, the Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration, provides each school board with base funding of \$450,000. Its purpose is to explore collaborative and integrated approaches to serving students with special education needs.

For more detailed explanations of these three components, as well as all other allocations of the Special Education Grant, please refer to the ministry’s [Education Funding, 2016-17](#) page.

3. Special Equipment Amount

This funding supports the purchase of equipment that may be required by students with special education needs. There are two components to this allocation:

- A per-pupil amount that allows the school board to purchase computers, software, computing-related devices and required supporting furniture, as well as all Special Equipment Amount training and technician costs, maintenance and repairs. This allocation consists of a base amount for each school board plus a per-pupil amount reflecting the school board’s average daily enrolment of all students.

- A claims-based process that supports the purchase by the school board of other, non-computer-based equipment required by students with special education needs. This may include hearing and/or vision support equipment, personal care support equipment and/or physical assists support equipment.

Eligibility requirements for both the per-pupil amount and claims-based amount are outlined in the [Special Education Funding Guidelines: Special Equipment Amount \(SEA\), 2016-17 Spring 2016](#).

The Special Equipment Amount allocation is projected to be approximately \$96.9 million in 2016–17.

4. Special Incidence Portion

The Special Incidence Portion 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. Funding is based on claims submitted by school boards. The ministry provides guidance on eligibility in the [Special Education Funding Guidelines: Special Incidence Portion \(SIP\), 2016-17, Spring 2016](#).

The Special Incidence Portion allocation is projected to be approximately \$82.3 million in 2016–17.

5. Facilities Amount

This funding 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. Eligible facilities include hospitals, children's mental health centres, psychiatric institutions, detention and correctional facilities, community group homes, and social services agencies. A school board provides these services under a written agreement between the school board and the facility.

The funding, which must be approved by the ministry based on established guidelines, goes toward recognized costs that include teachers, educational assistants and classroom supplies. Further details can be found in the [Guidelines For Educational Programs for Students In Government Approved Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional \(CTCC\) Facilities 2016-17](#).

The Facilities Amount allocation is projected to be approximately \$96.1 million in 2016–17.

6. Behaviour Expertise Amount

The Behaviour Expertise Amount provides funding to hire professional staff at the school board level who have expertise in applied behaviour analysis. Applied behaviour analysis is an instructional approach that has been shown to be helpful for many children with [autism spectrum disorder](#), as well as students with other special education needs.

The main roles of the board-level professional are to:

- Support principals, teachers, educators and other school staff through applied behaviour analysis coaching, training and resources;
- Strengthen and facilitate collaborative working relationships among schools, parents, community members and agencies; and
- Support the [Connections for Students](#) model as the first contact for Autism Intervention Program (AIP) providers and family when a child is ready to begin the transition process.

The funding is made up of a fixed amount for each school board plus a per-pupil amount that reflects the school board's average daily enrolment of all students.

The Behaviour Expertise Amount allocation is projected to be approximately \$11.7 million in 2016–17.

Education Programs – Other (EPO) Funding

Each year the ministry provides school boards with Education Programs – Other funding, which is additional funding outside the Grants for Student Needs. It is targeted to support the core goals and priorities of *Achieving Excellence*. Some of this funding is allocated to school boards to support students with special education needs. Details on the Education Programs – Other funding can be found on the [Ministry of Education website](#).

Accountability for Special Education Funding

The province, through the Ministry of Education, is accountable for the public education system as a whole and the policy decisions that determine funding for school boards. Given the key role of school boards in providing services at the local level, they have important accountabilities to students, parents and others with a stake in outcomes, as well as to the ministry.

School boards have a responsibility to ensure the effective stewardship of resources. Thoughtful, transparent budgeting, aligned with a focused strategy, is vital and integral to this goal.

A robust accountability framework for the Grants for Student Needs has been developed between school boards and the province. It recognizes that accountability to the ministry must be balanced with the need for school board flexibility to address local conditions.

As noted earlier, to support accountability and the mandated role of school boards, special education funding is enveloped for special education expenditures only. If a school board does not spend all of this funding in the year, it must hold the unspent amount in a reserve account to be spent on special education in future years. School boards are required to report to the ministry on their special education expenditures three times a year.

School boards are also able to use other Grants for Student Needs funding to support students with special education needs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This guide focuses mainly on the approaches and calculations underlying special education funding. More details on the policy process and on the allocation of other education grants are available from:

[2016-17 Education Funding: A Guide to the Grants for Student Needs](#)

[School Board Memo: Grants for Student Needs Funding for 2016-17](#)

[Education Funding Technical Paper 2016-17](#)

For more information on special education policy, programs and/or services generally, please consult:

[Ministry of Education website](#)

For more information on a schools board's specific special education policies and approaches, please contact the school board superintendent responsible for special education. Alternatively, you may contact a member of the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee for more information on the overall delivery of special education programs and/or services within a school board.

USEFUL TERMS TO KNOW

Special education services: Facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program.

Special education program: An educational program that is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation, and that includes a plan containing specific objectives and an outline of educational services that meet the needs of the student.

Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC): School boards are required to establish an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). The IPRC is made up of at least three people, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the school board. The IPRC is responsible for deciding whether a student should be identified as exceptional. It identifies the exceptionality according to the categories and definitions set out by the ministry, decides the placement and reviews the identification and placement generally once in a school year.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): A written plan describing the special education programs and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs. It documents the accommodations, modifications and/or alternative expectations needed to help the student achieve. It outlines the specific knowledge and skills to be assessed and evaluated for the purpose of reporting student achievement.

Accommodations: Special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required to enable a student to learn and demonstrate learning. The provincial curriculum expectations for the grade are not altered for a student receiving accommodations.

Modifications: Expectations that differ in some way from the regular grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. For students with an Individual Education Plan, these changes could include: expectations from a different grade level; significant changes (increase or decrease) in the number and/or complexity of the learning expectations; and measurable and observable performance tasks. At the secondary level, a credit may or may not be granted for a course, depending on the extent to which the expectations in the course have been modified.

Alternative Learning Expectations: Alternative learning expectations are developed to help students acquire knowledge and skills that are not represented in the Ontario curriculum expectations. Because they are not part of a subject or course outlined in the provincial curriculum documents, alternative expectations are considered to constitute *alternative programs* or *alternative courses* (secondary school courses).

For more information, please visit the [Ministry of Education website](#).