

June 14, 2022

To members of the Special Education Advisory Committee,

We would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the WQSB Resource Allocation Committee to acknowledge receipt of the Recommendations from SEAC, as related to financial allocations for students with special needs.

The Resource Allocation Committee established a new consultation process and questionnaire to facilitate recommendations related to the:

- Objectives and Principles governing the annual allocation of revenues
- Resources and supports for students with special needs
- Complementary Services staffing plan

The Resource Allocation Committee met on May 9th, 2022, to read, review, consider and discuss all the recommendations put forth by SEAC. Some of the feedback was specifically relevant to the annual allocation of revenues, while other feedback was more qualitative in terms of how to best support students with special needs. Key points for each section were identified by the RAC which are highlighted below. RAC responses are in bold italics below each section.

Objectives and Principles:

SEAC's opening paragraph emphasizes the key objectives and principles, essential to the allocation process. Equity and accountability were the two primary principles identified by SEAC in the recommendation.

These objectives and principles align closely with our current models for distribution.

Promotion and Prevention:

Current allocations are provided by the MEQ for promotion and prevention initiatives. It is notably recognized that the considerations focused on diversity, equity, sensitivity, safety, training for staff and inclusive practices.

School considerations include both universal funding for the well-being of all students as well as specific funding that support the inclusion and integration of students with special needs. School initiatives allow for creative projects related to inclusive practices.

Early Intervention:

The feedback related to early intervention focused on the methods to support early intervention, timely interventions, a review mechanism, the addition of a professional (Occupational Therapy), support for vulnerable families and access to outside services.

Early Intervention professionals have been prioritized previously with RAC. These were in the areas of social, re-adaptation and speech and language services. Early intervention in regard to identifying students experiencing difficulty is the focus of remedial teaching and Complementary Services professionals. Ongoing professional development and training in research-based practices and

developmental continuums are integral in addressing academic difficulties in a timely and effective manner.

Remediation:

The feedback focused on the decentralized model for remedial funding allocations and methods to ensure staff have the resources and information necessary to support the diverse needs of students.

Enhancing our current platform through Office 365 (ex. Sharepoint, Teams) is one such way that information is and may be made available to all staff.

Professional Services:

Professional services support diverse needs which was addressed through the feedback. Notably, re-adaptation, psychology, specialists in particular needs, and guidance were included in the feedback. Access to professional services was also noted as a priority, ensuring equitable delivery models and addressing waitlists.

The WQSB monitors the needs of students and adjust practices and delivery of service based on the changing needs and available financial resources.

Inclusive Approach:

The feedback in this section focused on establishing an understanding of inclusivity, professional development, and adapting environments to ensure inclusion.

As inclusive practices are WQSB's priority, many grants are dedicated to support the inclusion of special needs students and the development and wellbeing of all students.

Specialized Programs, classes, services:

Increasing the number of specialized classrooms was prioritized with the addition of professionals to support these groups.

Currently the WQSB (21-22) has 3 enclosed special classes at elementary. At the secondary there are two Nurturing Support Centres in two of our schools. WQSB will evaluate the need, based on the specific needs of students within a region, school, or sector. Given that WQSB strives for inclusion, alternative or transitional settings and new models of support are providing for adapted and more specialized opportunities. Two additional special classes at elementary are planned for 22-23.

Transition Planning:

The recommendation included comments related to all transitions to, within and beyond the youth sector. Recommendations on how to improve the processes, advocating for the continuity of resources and services, with financial recommendations for ensuring quality monitoring and support for information development on available community resources.

As the WQSB engages multiple professionals within the context of transitions to, within and beyond the youth sector, this is an area of recognized importance and value.

Staff Training:

The recommendation identified broad basic training (specifically related to special needs) for all levels of employees as a priority, with continued professional development through current models (ex. RTN). Additional funding was recommended to provide additional training.

Continued initiatives to provide adequate and timely training and professional learning are ongoing, both at the school and board level. The Resource Teachers' Network (RTN) and the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) are examples of board supported professional learning, development and training. Opportunities are considered based on school and student need.

Complementary Services staffing plan:

This section included recommendations related to additional postings in the professional categories: speech and language, social services, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, counsellors. In addition, comments included online or virtual services and resources, and consideration for accessing alternative psychological services given the current need in psychological services.

All these recommendations inform the Resource Allocation Committee of SEAC's perspective on financial allocations and services related to students with special needs. As the RAC finalizes the budgetary recommendation for the Council of Commissioners' final approval, this feedback provides another perspective and noted priorities for students with special needs.

The committee has approved a staffing allocation model which provides for equitable distribution among schools. This includes staffing related to classroom teaching, support for students with special needs (At Risk and MEQ codes), remediation (Remedial and Supporting Teachers) as well as professionals who work at school and board level.

In terms of school and board accountability for allocations, the Ministry of Education requires annual reporting for all allocations. School Level Special Needs Committees (SLSNC) oversee school level distributions and monitor changing needs and support for students with special needs. These committees report to a board level Complementary Services Parity Committee (CSPC) where needs requests and reports are analyzed. The CSPC provides recommendations for specific allocations related to the teachers' Collective Agreement. In addition, each school is responsible to report on the budget to their respective Governing Board. The school board continues to implement and improve a resource (human resources) management tool that supports the allocation, distribution, and accountability for all related financial allocations (Resource Facilitator).

Sincerely,



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