SEAC BUDGET CONSULTATION
QUESTIONNAIRE - 2022-23

As per the Education Act (s.193.3), the Resource Allocation Committee has established a consultation process related to budgetary allocations. The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain recommendations from the Special Education Advisory Committee, in regards to the allocation of financial resources to the services intended for students with special needs (s.187.1).

Please submit the committee's recommendations through this Form. One response should be submitted on behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee.
The Resource Allocation Committee seeks to establish an equitable delivery model, based in individual student success. Models for equitable delivery are established with consideration of:

● Flexibility
● Transparency
● Proactive approach
● Safe and secure environments
● Student-first perspective
● Inclusion
● Population growth
● Demographics
● Special education support
● Respect for Collective Agreements
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Objectives and Principles

As the RAC is mandated to make recommendations to the school board's Council of Commissioners, with a view to establishing objectives and principles governing the annual allocation of revenues in accordance with section 275, please provide feedback on the key objectives and principles in allocations related to students with special needs.

1. Do you have any recommendations related to the objectives and principles used to govern the allocation of funds (specifically as they pertain to equitable delivery for students with special needs)?

SEAC advocates for the success of students with special needs, defined as individuals meeting their full potential in a supportive environment. Through diverse and inclusive academic and social learning opportunities, students should feel engaged, enjoy school, be challenged academically within reason, develop confidence, a sense of competence and independence. Success for students with special needs requires the learning communities to value empathy, equity, accountability, early intervention, flexibility and a student-first approach.

SEAC is recommending a sustained focus on improved equity and accountability through development of a system that is:

● Reportable and measurable- Improvements in auditability, reporting, accountability with respect to how the funds are allocated for special needs requirements/support areas to all schools
● Transparent- Increased transparency in regards to coding that indicates where funding meets the needs of special needs students and their relationship with the SEAC recommendations.
  ➢ Coded funding would also allow stakeholders to understand where and how the needs are being met and where gaps might exist or emerge that require reconsideration in allocation of funding.

● Trackable- Tracking and analysis of trends related to gaps and needs with a view to improve overall equity.

SEAC is looking for implementation of mechanisms that significantly raise the level of transparency and accountability at every level of resource allocation decision making (Board level to individual schools). This is to ensure that the Board and relevant stakeholders have a grasp on what real progress is being made in meeting the needs of exceptional students and that SEAC recommendations in particular are trackable. We would like to understand which of our recommendations are being integrated and to what degree, in order to inform future recommendation exercises.

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Resources and Supports
Please provide SEAC's perspective, feedback or recommendations on the following services and supports available to students with special needs. Note that many of these services are decentralized and subject to local (school) based distribution and delivery of service. Promotion and Prevention services/approaches

2. This area of delivery of services relates to universal approaches that impact the overall development of students. These are proactive approaches that foster well-being, healthy habits, strategies for academic success, differentiation within an inclusive classroom, and prevention programs that inform and guide students. Some examples of promotion and prevention services are Drug and Resource Team classroom initiatives, re-adaptation and self-regulation strategies, SLP services that support the understanding and screening of early language development, guidance services, mental health approaches and whole group initiatives on positive well-being, differentiated instruction to promote inclusive practices and individual academic success.

We recommend that resource allocations be increased or be established for:

● Increasing all staff & students' education/knowledge related to Human Rights and the rights of persons with disabilities including sensitivity training about children with disabilities for educators and students;
https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html
● Program changes to ensure social well being, inclusivity and diversity are embedded and considered in all aspects of social and leisure activities and programs, including but not limited to outdoor play structures, adaptive play equipment, inclusive field trips etc.
➢ This includes training on how to include all children with physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities in all school aspects; and
➢ Annual training provides training for all staff on self regulation and emotional coaching strategies and techniques. As well as crisis and trauma intervention training.
● Elementary school guidance counselling services for all schools.

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Early Intervention

3. This area relates to early intervention in terms of two different contexts. The first implies early intervention in terms of the early educational years of a child's

development - preschool and cycle 1 elementary in particular. As we know, intervention in this crucial period of time has a significant impact on academic success in the longer term. Intervention may be in the form of services such as language development, early learning skills (literacy and numeracy), self-regulation,... The second implies that at the early onset or observation of difficulty (academic or social), schools intervene with strategies to support, remediate, adapt, and minimise or eliminate barriers to learning and social development. Classroom teachers may implement a variety of strategies, or involve remedial services (resource teachers) or other staff to support students during a period of difficulty.

We recommend that resource allocations be increased or be established to:
● Include resource teachers when meeting new students with special needs.
● Ensure established communication systems are in place at the start of each school year (ex. Visuals, AAC, PECS); continuity between grade levels should be facilitated by placing materials in the Confidential (red) file.
● Ensure early assessments if they have not already been done before a student comes to school, so that support can be provided as early as possible.
● Develop a common intake or assessment observation tool or checklist for establishing services/framework for interventions.
● Adaptations - get them early, have them follow students throughout their scholarly where needed and do reassessments with the aim of identifying continued or additional needs/supports (instead of trying to reduce support/funding).
● Ensure ATHs/Resource Teachers/Techs have training in social emotional regulation and frustration management.
● Ensuring that educators use a self-regulation or collaborative problem solving approach to discipline.
● Addressing the covid gap - language development, social adaptation skills, mental health aid/social well being.
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Remediation

4. This delivery of service relates specifically to what WQSB refers to as 'resource'. Remedial and Supporting Teachers work directly with students and support and collaborate with teachers within the context of inclusive environments. They can support differentiation, assist with the development and implementation of a student's Individualised Education Plan, and assist with team meetings for students with special needs. Financial allocations for Resource Teachers are decentralised to schools and based on enrollment at the school level.

The following recommendations are aimed at improving and expanding on the remediation services available in the WQSB:

● In a decentralised context which depends on funding/enrollment, it is important and useful where practicable to use online settings and to assign personnel from across the Board to support students. Resources should be allocated to developing this type of staff support and flexible learning environment.
● Also, where there are knowledge/skill gaps among school staff, resources and practices need to be put in place to ensure a minimum working understanding about the less well-known health and learning difficulties that teachers and support staff may encounter.
● Resources should be allocated to create an accessible platform with background information, best practices and suggested classroom adaptations for less well-known or understood physical, health and learning difficulties (e.g. Dysphasia, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy).
● More free tutoring resources (public or private) made available to special needs students

who should have priority or have a set of resources of their own.
● Encourage schools to make efforts to create/provide space for outside resources to come and provide services at schools where the budget to support certain students is limited or not available.
● More funding or a new funding structure needs to be created, so that schools aren't left pulling money out of other grants and funds to be able to provide what is lacking.
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Professional Services

5. These services may be provided either from the school or board level. Professional services are intended to provide assessment, consultation, counseling, therapy and support for the particular and special needs of our students. Priorities are defined within the four Complementary Services Programs, and the needs of our schools' populations. Within the context of the educational system, the Professionals support the individual needs of students as well as the objectives and principles within the Commitment to Success Plan for WQSB. Guidance and Academic Counseling services are provided at the secondary, Adult and Vocational levels within the school context. Speech Language services, psychology services, social work services and Re-adaptation services are examples of board level professional services. Further details are available within the Complementary Services staffing plan.

We recommend that resource allocations be increased or be established to:

● Reinforce re-adaptation services focused on early intervention, which are working, but perhaps need to happen at every transition phase to ensure students don't fall through the cracks.
● Meet the need for a specialist in different areas (i.e. Autism, CASP-Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disability).
● Support students with hearing impairments (i.e. through Montreal Oral School for the Deaf)
● Reimagine the framework for obtaining psychological assessments, which seem to be limited to extreme cases, in order to make them more widely available and reduce waiting lists..

If application to or negotiation with the Ministry is necessary with regard to funding or adjusting standards for psych assessments (e.g. English language psychologists from ON), then the Administration should seek Council's support to begin those efforts alone or in concert with other Boards. Since communication disorders can be identified at school level but not diagnosed without psychologists:

● Provide guidance counselors for emotional and psychological needs at the elementary level.
● Make identification tools readily available for professionals/teachers to fill out when needed or requested, although they will not be interpreted by teachers or parents who are not encouraged to try to make a diagnosis.
● Develop a reliable system to refer parents to community agencies such as Connexions or publish lists of available English professionals (private or public).
● Provide additional information to help guide parents as to what types of professionals may be recommended.

● Given the significant difficulty in the area of recruitment and retention of psychology, funding to support alternative solutions.

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Inclusive special needs support

6. WQSB prioritizes and aims to provide an inclusive model of educational programming. To ensure students have the opportunity to develop within this context, services and support are necessary to foster the true educational and social inclusion of students with special needs. This principle of inclusion requires services are available for students regardless of what classroom or school they attend. This creates an increased need for resources for teaching, remediation, support staff and professional service delivery (ex. itinerant services, Complementary Services).

The following recommendations are aimed at improving and expanding on the inclusion model of programming in the WQSB, while empowering and affirming special needs students with regard to their own agency.

● Systemic changes to ensure social well being, inclusivity and diversity are embedded and considered in all aspects of social/leisure and academic activities and programs, including but not limited to accessible outdoor play structures, adaptive play equipment, inclusive field trips, inclusive classrooms and environments, etc.
  ➢ This includes training on HOW to include all children with physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities in all school aspects; and
  ➢ Developing a variety of activities within elementary classes to ensure options are available that allow for truly inclusive group interaction and adaptive play.
  ➢ Inclusive learning materials, accessible formats and accessible software, technology and websites.
● Strongly recommend resources are directed to supporting inclusive and bias aware ABAV plans that need to be strategic and specific about teaching self-advocacy and prevention skills explicitly to students with special needs. Including but not limited to engaging in outside experts/consultants.
● Need for universal understanding of the variety of special needs within an inclusive Classroom and inclusive practice consultant - and to teach other children about respect, kindness in recognition of differences.
● Need for recreating and maintaining community building activity days for special needs (ex. Project Active).

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Specialized programs/classes/services

7. A small number of specialized classrooms have been created to provide services for students with more complex needs. Specific funding is allocated for school boards to facilitate the implementation of specialized programs and classes. Students with complex special needs (intellectual, medical, physical, developmental, behavioral, psychiatric) require more direct intervention which is provided within the context of these specialized programs, classes, or services.

The following recommendations are aimed at improving and expanding on the WQSB's specialized programs/classes/services already in place:

● Create more specialized classes with greater options for students to choose from.

● Hire more professionals to support the enclosed groupings (enclosed group consultant), who would be better trained and have more opportunity to get to know the student and their needs.
● Create specialized classes for coded kids across schools, primarily at elementary level where you don't have a critical mass of students within the school to warrant a class. These classes can convene at a frequency that builds consistency, growth, learning, and relationships, while being mindful of the time spent out of class.
● Create mentoring programs through a corps of special needs students with codes, helping with the succession of younger generations of special needs students (not a buddy program). Establishing these programs would require staff support to coordinate and support students.
● Consider cultivating volunteers from the community that are either active or retired professionals for outreach programs.
● Ensure that students keep supports in place until they graduate, following the child through the school system without gaps from the start of receiving accommodations.

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Transition planning

8. Transitions occur at various points in a student's educational path. The transitions to, between, and beyond school are crucial periods of time when coordinated efforts are made to ensure smooth transitions and connections are made between the different contexts. For children transitioning to school, schools and professionals collaborate with parents and outside organizations or daycares to plan for school entry of students with special needs. The transition between schools, in particular between elementary and secondary, is important to ensure academic observations and strategies are shared between schools. The transition beyond secondary school may require collaboration with outside or MSSS services. Schools and professionals support these transitions on a case by case basis.

In order to facilitate the transitions that occur at various points in a student's educational path, we recommend implementation of the following mechanisms and procedures, which may have accompanying financial implications:

● To support the transition of incoming students with IEPs from French school boards, the form (template) for transition notes should be translated into French and sent to the sending school for them to provide an overview of the child's needs, best practices to support, and effective strategies. (The English template should also be sent to other English boards.);
● To support the transition between grade levels, direct resources to ensure established communication systems are in place at the start of each school year (ex. visuals, AAC, PECS);
● To support the transition between elementary and secondary, parents should be notified when the Transition Meeting Notes are finalised; guardians should also receive a copy of the transition meeting notes to ensure a smooth integration of special needs students;
● Continuity between grade levels should be facilitated by placing materials in the Confidential (red) file;
● Provide funds for dedicated staff to help schools make a paradigm shift in their approach to AVAB policy: promoting a non-punitive, self-regulation/emotional coaching approach; managing behaviour through collaborative problem-solving that considers circumstances and environment.

● In regards to transition beyond secondary school, investment in resources and support for students with significant special needs (e.g. physical and intellectual) should be Increased.

➢ Families should have access to lists of public services and private organizations that provide activities, help with transportation and respite care for families of graduating students.

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Staff Training

9. This relates to essential training for teachers and support staff in relation to their role in the service they provide. This is achieved through the Resource Teachers' Network, which supports the resource teachers and, as needed, colleagues; through CPI (Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training), and through board and school training based on the needs of the community or a particular child. On occasion, health and social services training is provided when a particular need arises.

The following recommendations are aimed at improving and expanding on the staff training programming in the WQSB:

● Develop clear and consistent requirements for *All staff training* in relation to disability inclusion, various special needs, sensitivity/awareness, and realities of working with children at risk and with disabilities.

➢ Mandatory training could be scheduled for PD days and extended to all staff (including teachers, ATHs, admin, recess monitors etc);

● Provide skills development training to school staff on how they can adapt the school environment and implement a bias aware, inclusive approach to AVAB to ensure that all students feel safe and included rather than relying on fear and punishments.

● Develop a system that ensures business continuity training and transfer of knowledge acquired from outside professionals (e.g. La Ressource for physical disability, speech language pathologists working with students on a regular basis), especially for attendants who may follow a child throughout their schooling, is passed on to other staff;

● Maintain and enhance on the concept of the Resource Teacher Network and Technician Learning Network which is a great way to share lessons and experiences.

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Complementary Services staffing plan The Complementary Services Department provides additional services to support student development. The Complementary Services Department provides support in four programs: learning support services student life services assistance services promotion and prevention services.

10. After reviewing the current Complementary Services staffing plan, please provide recommendations or areas for further consideration.

We strongly recommend the following resources aimed at improving and expanding on the services already being provided by the Complementary Services Department at the WQSB:

● Request access to psychologists and paid travel for students to access professionals externally (Ontario or Montreal) to fill the void to reduce wait times.

● 1 Additional FTE Speech and Language pathologist to ensure that no child falls behind or is left behind and regresses without needed resources.

● 1 Additional FTE Social Services officer for early intervention.

- 1 FTE Occupational therapist is required
- Physiotherapy services or easy access to these services as per recommendations by the Board or a medical provider.
- More specific professional/resources services to support physical disabilities or impairments.
- Counselors for social, emotional and mental health/wellness needs.
- Development and adaptation of online school resources required.
- Investments to be made to provide stable positions in support staff posts (attendants, technicians) in order to reduce staff turnover.
- Given the shortage of English professionals, consider hiring French resources.

Google Form
Survey Results In Order of Priority

1. Professional Services
2. Staff Training
3. Transitions
4. Specialized Programs/Services
5. Inclusive Educational Services
6. Early Intervention
7. Remediation
8. Promotion/Prevention Services