

## PAST/PRESENT SPECIAL NEEDS FUNDING FACTS

### Special Needs Definition

*A “student with special needs” means a student who has a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural nature, has a learning disability or has exceptional gifts or talents”.*

Ministerial Order 150/89 Special Needs Students Order

Students with special needs fall into two broad categories:

1. **Low Incidence special needs** – though a cluster of very different disabilities (e.g. deafness; autism; physical disability), what is common about them is they occur relatively infrequently (low incidence), they are typically “visible disabilities”, the incidence of such disabilities may not be equal across school boards, and they generally require greater resources to serve. (Now in funding category – Levels 1, 2, and 3.)
2. **High Incidence special needs** – though a cluster of very different special needs again (e.g. learning disabilities, behaviour disabilities, gifted), what is common about them is they occur with relative frequency (high incidence), they are typically “invisible disabilities” – language often used in the disability community, the prevalence of these special needs is fairly stable and constant across school districts, and they are generally less expensive to serve. (Now in base funding allocation.)

### Assessment Process

The assessment process usually involves a range of professionals both inside and outside the education system, such as doctors, pediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, physiotherapists and speech and language pathologists. Some children, such as those with physical disabilities or profound intellectual disabilities, have been assessed by a professional using a standardized test before they enter the school system.

For most students, the identification/assessment phase begins in the classroom. The teacher observes the child in the classroom, refers the student to the school nurse for vision and hearing screening, and discusses with the parent the possibility of a referral to a physician. If this is not enough, the teacher, may then go to the school-based team, which normally includes an administrative officer, a learning assistance or resource teacher, a classroom teacher and a counselor. The team looks at ways to address learning problems. The student may then undergo a formal assessment and be tested by a professional using a standardized test. This process may occur at any time during the school year.

### Special Needs Categories

The ministry has a standard manual (Special Education Services: A Manual of Policy, Procedures and Guidelines) that describes each special needs category. School staff verify the professional assessment and the impact on the children’s learning ability and identify the children into the appropriate category in accordance with the Ministry criteria. This information is then reported to the ministry.

This information identifies the district's needs for funding for students with special needs and it is also collected for accountability, to track student achievement. School districts report on total special education spending in their annual audited financial statements (received by the ministry Sept. 30 for the previous school year). Every school district employs an external auditor whose function is to express an opinion on the validity of the school district's financial statements.

### **Enrollment Audits**

The Ministry of Education also conducts compliance audits for randomly selected districts each year to ensure their enrollment information is correct. Last year, there were audits concerning students with special needs in four districts that verified the number of students with special needs, the programs in place and the students with individual education plans. These audits include a psychologist (or similar professional) who may question such things as the way a test was administered or the way the data was interpreted. These audits take place throughout the school year from late November to March every year.

In February 2005, the Province announced that it would provide a projected \$1.5 million in additional funding to school districts for any additional special needs students who transferred into a district or who had been identified after the Sept. 30 enrolment report. Districts with a decline in special needs students after Sept. 30 see no change in funding.

### **Special Needs Funding History**

The Province has a long history of identifying students with special needs using a categorical system. Boards identify students, according to Ministry criteria, in one of twelve categories, ranging from “deaf/blind” (a low incidence category) to “gifted” (a high incidence category). This has not changed – school boards continue to report all students with special needs, according to the disability category that reflects their needs.

Changes to the funding system in 2002/03 mainly affected the way in which financial support for high incidence students is allocated to boards.

Historically, the province provided supplementary special education funding for high incidence students, based on the number of students claimed by boards – to a limit of 4% for learning disability and moderate behaviour disability enrolments combined; to a limit of 2% for gifted students identified by boards; and, without limit for the number of students identified as having mild intellectual disabilities. High incidence supplementary funding, together with funding for general services such as learning assistance, speech therapy, and school psychology services totalled about \$230 million in 2002/03. (This funding remains in the base allocation.)

## **New Special Needs Funding System**

With the new funding system, these high incidence/special education services funds were rolled into the per pupil allocation. These funds (about \$230 million) have remained in the system to support students with special needs – the per pupil allocation would be significantly smaller without these funds. Boards have not reported growth in the numbers of high incidence students in recent years – in fact, they have declined from 48,021 students (8%) in 2001/02 to 40,393 (7%) in 2005/06. The base funding allocation for all students has grown from \$3,400 in 2001/02 to \$5,753 in 2005/06.

In the new funding system, only funding for low incidence students has continued to be provided as supplementary funding to school boards, based on specific enrolment patterns each year. This funding is on top of the increased base funding allocation provided to all students. In 2001/02, funding for low incidence students (now categorized as Level 1, 2 or 3 special needs funding), totalled \$195.2 million, and it has climbed to \$270.7 in 05/06, an increase of \$75.5 million.

## **Supplemental Funding for Students with Special Needs**

The current funding system provides supplemental funding for students with the most severe special needs. The funding is based on three categories:

- **Level 1:** Children who are classified as “dependent handicapped” (*those who are totally dependent on someone for normal daily functioning*) and children who are both deaf and blind are now entitled to support of \$32,000 per student.
- **Level 2:** Children who have a moderate to profound intellectual disability, who are physically disabled, have a chronic health impairment, are visually impaired, deaf or hearing impaired or autistic are now entitled to support of \$16,000 per student.
- **Level 3:** Children with an intensive behaviour disorder or serious mental illness (*professionally diagnosed and under treatment*) are entitled to support of \$8,000 per student.

## Funding Comparison

Level	Old Funding System (2001/02)	New Funding System (2002/03)	2005/06 Funding
<b>Level 1</b>  A: Dependent Handicapped B: Deaf/blind	\$31,910 per student <u>\$ 3,400</u> basic allocation \$35,310 total per pupil  793 FTEs in Level 1  \$26 M funding for SN level 1 students in 01/02	\$30,000 per student <u>\$ 5,308</u> basic allocation) \$35, 308 total per pupil  805 FTEs in Level 1  \$24.1M funding for SN level 1 students	\$32,000 per student <u>\$ 5,753</u> basic allocation \$37,753 total per pupil  742 Est. FTEs in Level 1  \$23.7M est. funding for SN level 1 students.
<b>Level 2</b>  C: Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability D. Physical Disability/ Chronic Health Impairment E: Visual Impairment F: Dear/Hearing Impaired G: Autism	\$12,460 per student <u>\$ 3,400</u> basic allocation \$15, 860 total per pupil  10,104 FTEs in Level 2  \$130.4 M funding for SN level 2 students in 01/02	\$15,000 per student <u>\$ 5,308</u> basic allocation \$20,308 total per pupil  10,465 FTEs in Level 2  \$157 M funding for SN level 2 students in 02/03	\$16,000 per student <u>\$ 5,753</u> basic allocation \$21,753 total per pupil  11,892 Est. FTEs in Level 2  \$190.3 M est. funding for SN level 2 students in 05/06
<b>Level 3</b>  H: Intensive Behaviour Interventions/ Serious Mental Illness	\$6,014 per student <u>\$3,400</u> basic allocation \$9,414 total per pupil  6,422 FTEs in Level 3  \$38.7 M funding for SN level 3 students in 01/02	\$6,000 per student <u>\$5,308</u> basic allocation \$11,308 total per pupil  6,539 FTEs in Level 3  \$39.2M funding for SN level 3 students in 02/03	\$8,000 per student <u>\$5,753</u> basic allocation \$15,753 total per pupil  7,103 Est. FTEs in Level 3  \$56.8M est. funding for SN level 3 students in 05/06
<b>Total 1,2,3 Funding, FTEs and % of SN students in public schools</b>	<b>\$195.2M for Levels 1,2,3</b> <b>\$ 58.9M basic allocation</b> <b>\$254.1M Total</b>  <b>17,319</b> total FTE level 1,2,3  <b>3.0%</b> of students in public schools	<b>\$220.2M for Levels 1,2,3</b> <b>\$ 94.5M basic allocation</b> <b>\$314.7M Total</b>  <b>17,809</b> total FTE level 1,2,3  <b>3.1%</b> of students in public schools	<b>\$279.1M for Levels 1,2,3</b> <b>\$118.6M basic allocation</b> <b>\$397.7M Total</b>  <b>19,737</b> total FTE level 1,2,3  <b>3.5%</b> of students in public schools

There are an additional 1,500 students (Levels 1, 2, and 3) in independent schools this year who will receive full funding.

## **Current Funding**

Supplementary funding for students with special needs at B.C. public schools has increased to \$279 million. Level 1, 2 and 3 students with special needs also receive the base funding allocation of \$5,806 for a total of \$118.6 million.

Starting this year, the Province has added \$7.5 million to fully fund Level 1, 2 and 3 students with special needs at **independent schools** for a total of \$15.6 million. Previously, independent schools received half of the funding provided to public schools for students with special needs.

About \$1 million will go to school districts for any students with special needs who have transferred into a district or who have been identified as a student with special needs after the September 30 enrolment report.

In addition, there was funding provided in the Ministry's 04/05 budget that was to be spent by the end of the school year:

### **\$1.2 million for more speech equipment**

The Province provided the funding to Special Education Technology B.C. to provide up to 110 young adults with speech generating devices. The technology allows the user to push a button and have the computer speak for the person. This equipment is available for students who are either completing or have completed secondary school within the last four years to help them with their transition into adulthood.

### **\$1 million for other special needs equipment**

The Province provided school districts a total of \$1 million for special equipment grant. The grant is provided to districts each year and may be used to provide extraordinary equipment such as lifting devices, Braille writers and closed caption machines to students with varying degrees of special needs.

**Total funding** for students with special needs is now more than half a billion dollars: (\*= estimated)

- \$279 million - Supplementary funding for levels 1, 2, 3 (public system)
- \$118.6 million - Base funding for levels 1, 2, 3 (public system)
- \$230 million\* - Base allocation for students outside of levels 1, 2, 3 (public system)
- \$ 26.6 million – Provincial Resource Programs (public system)
- \$ 15.6 million - Funding for special needs in independent schools
- \$669.8 million\***

## Students with Special Needs Included in Base Allocation

Report of High Incidence Enrolment 2001-02 to Present							
		2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Net Change 2001/02 - 2005/06
		Enrolment	Enrolment	Enrolment	Enrolment	Enrolment	
<b>Learning Disability</b>		14802	15233	15665	16163	16699	1,897
<b>Moderate Behaviour Support/Mental Illness</b>		12,422	9574	9140	9559	9356	(3,066)
	Totals	<b>27224</b>	<b>24807</b>	<b>24805</b>	<b>25722</b>	<b>26055</b>	(1,169)
	%	4.48	4.14	4.22	4.42	4.53	0.05%
Historically, Province funded above, aggregated, to a cap of 4%. Now funding is per student/no cap.							
<b>Gifted</b>		16935	15720	13839	13088	11538	(5,397)
	Total:	<b>16935</b>	<b>15720</b>	<b>13839</b>	<b>13088</b>	<b>11538</b>	(5,397)
	%	2.79	2.62	2.36	2.25	2.01	(0.78%)
Historically, Province funded above to a cap of 2%. Now funding is per student/no cap.							
<b>Mild Intellectual Disability</b>		3862	3562	3276	2971	2751	(1,111)
	Total:	<b>3862</b>	<b>3562</b>	<b>3276</b>	<b>2971</b>	<b>2751</b>	(1,111)
	%	0.64	0.59	0.56	0.51	0.48	(.16%)
This category above was historically not capped							
<b>Total High Incidence Special Needs</b>		<b>48021</b>	<b>44089</b>	<b>41920</b>	<b>41781</b>	<b>40344</b>	(7,677)
	%	7.91	7.35	7.14	7.18	7.01	(0.9%)

## Summary of Students with Special Needs Included Only in Base Allocation

Year	Total Number	Percent of Pop.
2001/02	48,021	7.91
2002/03	44,089	7.35
2003/04	41,920	7.14
2004/05	41,781	7.18
2005/06	40,344	7.01

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