

Ministry of Education
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Ontario

August 24, 2016

Ms. Angela Kennedy
Chair of the Board
Toronto Catholic District School Board
80 Sheppard Avenue East
Toronto ON M2N 6E8

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Dear Ms. Kennedy,

Thank you for your letter of June 8, 2016, originally addressed to my predecessor, the Honourable Liz Sandals, on behalf of the Toronto Catholic District School Board about special education funding. Please know that your sincere commitment to students with special education needs is appreciated, and I am pleased to respond.

Our government is committed to ensuring that every student has access to the supports they need to succeed in school, including students with special education needs. We are making changes to be more responsive to the needs of all students and to increase our focus on supporting their achievement and well-being.

The Ministry of Education provides Ontario's 72 publicly-funded district school boards with additional funding through the Special Education Grant (SEG) for students with special education needs to support the incremental costs of the additional programs, services, and equipment required to meet their educational needs and to support positive outcomes. This enables equity for all students with special education needs.

Special Education Grant funding is incremental to the Foundation Grants and other special purpose grants of our ministry's education funding model, the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). School boards have the authority and flexibility to use other GSN funding, as well as the Special Education Grant SEG, to meet their responsibility to support students with special education needs.

The SEG is projected to increase to approximately \$2.76 billion in 2016-17. This represents an increase of approximately \$43.2 million or 1.6 per cent over 2015-16; and \$1.14 billion or 70 per cent since 2002-03.

In the case of Toronto Catholic District School Board, its total Special Education Grant funding allocation is projected to be nearly \$121.2 million in 2016-17. This represents an increase of nearly \$42.4 million or 53.8 per cent since 2002-03.

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As you know, the new DSENA allocation (formerly the High Needs Amount) was introduced in 2014-15 to better reflect the variation among boards with respect to students with special education needs, and boards' ability to meet these needs, thus making the DSENA allocation more fair and equitable.

The new DSENA allocation uses three components to reflect this variation: the Measures of Variability, the Special Education Statistical Prediction Model and a Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration. Similar to the geographic adjustment factor that accounts for variations in need for capital construction, 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* students across Ontario in each school board, and considering long form census factors, such as parent level of education, family income, unemployment and recent immigration to Canada.

Ministry staff have been consulting with stakeholders on the evolution of the DSENA allocation, including meeting with the Special Education Funding Working Group since 2008, and we will continue to work with stakeholders on the evolution of the DSENA funding allocation over the 2016-17 school year.

While this transition to a more fair and equitable DSENA model is provincially fiscally neutral, it will have redistributional impacts among boards, such as the Toronto Catholic District School Board. To mitigate this impact the new DSENA model is being phased in over four years (2014-15 to 2017-18), and despite projected enrolment declines the ministry is holding the provincial DSENA total allocation at \$1.05 billion over the four year transition.

Thank you for writing to share your concerns and recommendations with me. Please be assured that I understand your concerns, and will keep them in mind as we move forward. I trust this information is helpful to you.

Sincerely,



Mitzie Hunter, MBA
Minister