

# special education

Fewer students are on waiting lists for special education services this year, and student-to-teacher ratios have improved.

A number of schools commented on improvements in their special education programs, but for every one school that reported their special education services had improved, there were two that reported their school had more special education needs and fewer supports.

## 2007 survey results:

- ❑ The average ratio of special education students to special education teachers is 30.4 to 1 in elementary schools, a number that is much higher than the ratio of 22.4 to 1 reported in 2000/01, but lower than it has been for the last three years.
- ❑ In secondary schools, the ratio of students to teachers is 51.2 to 1, down from a ratio of 58 students to 1 teacher in 2003, but still higher than the ratio in 2001.
- ❑ The percentage of students receiving any special education support has remained relatively stable for the last four years, with an average of 15% of elementary students and 16% of secondary students receiving support.
- ❑ One third of elementary schools report they have identified students who are not receiving recommended support.

Some principals and parents report there are more high needs students entering in kindergarten. Others comment that they are being asked to integrate more students into regular classrooms, which they agree is a laudable goal, but is difficult without sufficient support for the classroom teachers.

## Students waiting for support

The province added one-time funding last year to cover the costs of psychologists, in an effort to reduce waiting lists for special education identification and services.

As a result, the number of students waiting for special education services has been reduced by 6%. But there are still many students going without needed services.

Province-wide there are approximately 36,000 elementary students and 4,800 secondary students waiting for special education support. In one third of elementary schools, not all identified students are receiving the support that was recommended for them.

## Provincial funding in transition

The province has begun a process to change the way special education is funded. It is moving away from funding linked to individual students with high needs and moving to a funding model that focuses more on supporting programs that have been shown to improve student achievement. But it remains difficult to find an appropriate way to measure boards' special education needs.

During the transition, most special education funding is being granted to boards on a per-pupil basis. Boards will receive a fixed amount per student based on their total enrolment as well as an amount based on the percentage of high needs students in the board in 2005/06.

**Q.** How can we ensure that special education programs respond to the vastly different needs of each special education student?

**what schools told us...**

“Our resource teacher gives support in the classroom and assists all teachers in developing their programs so that all students are included and their needs met without withdrawal from the class into a segregated area.”

*An elementary school in Kawartha-Pine Ridge DSB*

“In our school there are more private psycho-educational assessments being done, with parents paying.”

*An elementary school in Upper Grand DSB*

“We are a primary school. Often we know there are difficulties in JK, but the student can’t be identified until Grade 3 after an assessment.”

*An elementary school in CDSB of Eastern Ontario*

“Although the number of students requiring Special Education support has remained fairly constant, the severity and intensity of these needs has dramatically increased.”

*An elementary school in Toronto DSB*

“More special needs students entering our school in the primary grades.”

*An elementary School in York CDSB*

