

STUDENT SERVICES ADMINISTRATORS' ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA



SSAAM Survey: School Divisions Implement Special Needs Block Funding

In order to get a provincial perspective on the transition from low incidence categorical funding to students with special needs allocated by the Department of Education, on a student by student basis, to a process where each school division receives a block allocation of funds from the province, SSAAM sent a questionnaire to all school divisions in the province. The following information is based on the results of that survey.

The primary contact for Student Services in each division received the survey. Of the 37 school divisions in the province 14 returned the survey, a 38% return rate. Provincial SSAAM has been focused on assisting its members make this transition and over the course of the last four years SSAAM has looked at many aspects of this process from leadership, managing change, resource allocation, best practices for inclusion, and how to use curricula for meaningful learning for all students.

Although the response rate was low, there was a consistency in the data collected.

When asked the primary focus and process for making the decisions to allocate resources to schools there were some clear trends:

- 86% of the school divisions responding explicitly stated that school & class profiles are key to the allocation of resources, this includes literacy and numeracy data.
- Another key factor was historical data, 50% of school divisions reported that students who were previously funded are part of the consideration for resources at the school. Some school divisions are using a 5 year average as part of their formula. Students who were previously funded would be part of the school and class profiles but longitudinal data provides baseline information.
- The benefits of Student Services consultation and collaboration with the school teams was highlighted as a benefit in the process and one school division stated that they will do a review meeting with the school team every six weeks.

In response to the question on whether the process was voluntary, pilot or mandatory it was clear that school divisions have moved beyond the voluntary and pilot stage as 100% of the responding school divisions indicated that the process for allocating resources was mandatory in all schools.

School Divisions were asked what was working and what was their greatest challenge.

What is working:

- The most common statement (38%) across school divisions was the shift in thinking. Schools are focusing on student programming needs without the need of labels.

IMPORTANT DATES

SSAAM
Annual
Conference
2018
November 28,
29 & 30 in
Brandon

SSAAM AGM
25 & 26 April
2019 Portage
la Prairie

SSAAM
Annual
Conference
2019
November 27,
28, 29 in
Brandon

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- The second most common response was improved communication between schools and senior administration regarding student needs and school profiles. This on-going dialogue was seen as valuable in understanding the needs across the division.
- Other comments included a better match between student need and staff expertise. Divisions have used funds to hire professional staff and clinicians for assessing for programming (as opposed to assessment for funding).

Challenges:

- One significant challenge school divisions are facing (38%) is the level of student transiency during the school year. Resources are allocated at the beginning of the year but students move throughout the year and although retention of a 2% contingency fund was mentioned, meeting student needs throughout the year is difficult.
- Although mind sets regarding funding and supports to students with special needs are changing it is still an area of concern, 38% of the respondents identify this as an area that still needs work.
- The amount of the block funding from the province is also a concern, 23% of school divisions stated that needs are increasing and although school divisions supplement special needs funding significantly the block funding has been static.

The final question on the survey asked school divisions what was their next step.

- 36% of the respondents cited continuous and formal review of the process as their primary focus going forward. One student leadership team is reviewing the research and will use this information to inform their process.
- Other comments included a commitment to lobby the province for clear direction regarding a funding formula and more funds. There is also a commitment to working on changing minds sets and giving more autonomy to schools.

Recognizing that the sample is small, this snapshot provides a glimpse of how school divisions are changing practices related to funding students with special needs. Student Services Administrators across the province have supported the funding changes and continue to work with their school teams to provide inclusive, supported learning environments for all students.

If anyone would like additional information regarding this article, please email ssaamexec@gmail.com.

Please check out our website at www.ssaam.mb.ca. It is best viewed in the Chrome browser. If you are a member and do not have your member login information, please go to https://ssaam.mb.ca/forgot_password.php and enter in your email address.



Message from the President

SSAAM has entered the fourth decade of working collaboratively throughout Manitoba to ensure the vision and voice of our organization remains strong - all students have the right to appropriate educational programming in an environment that is safe and respectful.

With the current changes in funding structure to our school divisions and the pending provincial education system review it is important that Student Services Administrators keep the philosophy of inclusion in the forefront of practice and planning.

November 2017, Dr. Gordon Porter, a leader in inclusive education in Canada, provided SSAAM members with valuable information and insights on how to bring about transformational change so that inclusion becomes an intrinsic feature of school policy, culture and practice. November 2018, Shelley Moore, a Canadian inclusive education researcher will provide the SSAAM leadership group with further evidence-based practices to guide continuous improvement and commitment to inclusion. Inclusive practices for all students continues to grow and develop in our system and as Moore writes in *ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER Stories of Unity Through Diversity and Inclusion*, "Inclusive education relies on the diversity of its ecosystem, to not only promote coexistence and tolerance, but to thrive on the learning and interaction of each person in the community...to view inclusion as not something we simply do; instead it becomes something that just is."

As a provincially established association, we gather and continue to seek input from our members and from all of our SSAAM regions. We, the executive of SSAAM, encourage your continued participation and interaction as we put effort toward providing support and tools to encourage and foster collaboration with multiple service systems, offering and facilitating professional learning and partnering with other provincial groups in our efforts to support appropriate education opportunities for all learners.

Louise Duncan
President, SSAAM

SSAAM Executive

2018-2019

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Prairie Rose

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Corbett, River East Transcona

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River East Transcona

Advocacy and Public Policy Co-Chairs:

Verland Force, Seven Oaks and Terri
Otto, Lakeshore

REGIONAL REPS:

SEICA- Lars Feilberg, Sunrise

Northern – Jolene Brown, Mystery
Lake

DSFM – Jeanne Remillard, DSFM

Metro – Elaine Solinski, Louis Riel

South Central - Lesley Nichol, Pine
Creek

Parkland Westman – Bonnie Kiliwnik



Strategic Plan 2017-2022

In the fall of 2017 SSAAM began the process of creating a new strategic plan for our organization. As a province wide professional organization that has provided leadership to educators for 40 years we felt it was important to articulate who we are, what we believe, and set a clear direction by which we can measure and weigh every course of action that we undertake.

Strategic Plan 2017-2022 was developed in consultation with the SSAAM membership and approved at the 2018 AGM. The key areas of the plan are:

- 1) Vision
Although SSAAM has always had a mission statement, there was a need to create a vision statement and review our belief statements. These shared foundational statements will be the compass that directs our work. More to come on this at the November Conference.
- 2) Collaboration
SSAAM members work closely with many partners and felt that it was important to strengthen these partnerships and work collaboratively in the pursuit of common goals.
- 3) Evidence-based Practices
SSAAM exists for the benefit of its members. As such, SSAAM strives to assist school divisions in the process of making educational decisions in the support of student achievement and well-being, based on valid research and quality data.
- 4) Professional Development
SSAAM has always seen professional development as a main focus for the organization. As we continue in this role, SSAAM plans to partner with like educational partners in the delivery of professional learning in data management, strength-based learning and resource allocation.

SSAAM membership will be involved and updated as the strategic plan committee further develops and implements actions. We will continue this work at the November 2018 conference.

Strategic Plan

Committees

Vision: Rochelle Rands,
Lesley Nichol, Barb
Melnychuk, Brenda Hill-
Yaschyshyn, Jeanne
Remillard

Collaboration: Louise
Duncan, Verland Force,
Bonnie Kiliwnik, Jolene
Brown

Evidence Based Practices:
Kendra Gowler, Lars
Feilberg, Shannon Corbett,
Elaine Solinski

Professional Development:
Geri Harder-Robson, Trish
Glass, Terri Otto, Elaine
Lochhead

New Members

If you are new to SSAAM please contact your regional rep to find out the dates, time and location of your regional meetings.

Welcome to SSAAM!