



News Release

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SPECIAL ED FUNDING UP 54%—IS IT PAYING OFF?: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) Ontario's Ministry of Education spent 54% more on grants for special-education programs between the 2001/02 and 2007/08 school years, but the number of students in such programs rose by just 5% over the same period, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2008 Annual Report*, released today.

"Results of provincial tests show there has been progress in student outcomes since our last audit in 2001," McCarter said. "But the Ministry and school boards need to do more to ensure that the significant extra investment is improving the success of students with special-education needs."

The finding emerged from a value-for-money audit of the Ministry's special-education grants to the province's 72 publicly funded school boards. These grants, totaling \$2.1 billion in the 2007/08 school year, represent 12% of the Ministry's annual operating grants to school boards.

Among other things, the audit sampled Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which schools must complete for all students entering special-education programs. In 50% of cases, IEPs had been completed by the due date, compared to 17% at the time of the 2001 audit. However, the IEPs "varied in quality" with respect to setting learning goals and expectations for students to help assess progress.

Among the Report's other findings:

- In some cases, report cards for special-education students glossed over performance issues without giving parents a clear idea of how students were doing.
- School boards the Auditor visited were not collecting enough information about student needs, the programs supplied to them, or the results of those programs, to support effective planning and service delivery, program oversight, and the identification of effective practices.
- School committees make "significant decisions" regarding special education for students, "but do not adequately document the rationale for their decisions."

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For more information, please contact:

Andréa Vanasse/Joel Ruimy
Communications
(416) 327-2336