

A SHARED COMMITMENT:

Review of the Special Education Programs and Services in the
Upper Canada District School Board.

Reviewers: Shirley Rocque and Moira Sinclair

May 2019

Executive Summary

Overall, the purpose of the review is to provide recommendations to modernize Special Education program delivery within the school district, that is aligned with local needs and board resources.

This review considered the school district's current approach for delivering Special Education programs and services, examining the current practices and use of resources at the school and district level since 2014.

The external review of Special Education Programs and Services was requested in January 2019 by the Director of Education for the UCDSB and took place during the period of January 2019 and March 2019. The Reviewers conducted thirteen (13) school visits and seven (7) focus group consultations involving staff, parent representatives, Trustees representatives, Labour Executives, and members of the Board's Special Education Advisory Committee.

The review found that while there was a decline in the overall student enrolment in the UCDSB of 630 students between 2014 and 2019, only minor fluctuations were noted in the number of UCDSB students accessing Special Education services. The number of students receiving special education programs or special education support in the Upper Canada District School Board amounts to approximately 25% of its overall student population. During the 2018-2019 year, 6678 students in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 program had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), providing access to special education programs and services provided by the board at the school.

The Board has gone to extraordinary lengths to support its Special Education Plan and its commitment to students with special needs. The review noted that the Board devoted the full amount of its Special Education funding to resource its commitments in this area, as well as subsidizing a growing gap in Special Education funding that commenced in 2014. As a result, the Board directed an additional \$8.6M in support of Special Education in 2018-2019, beyond what the province has allocated in this particular budget line, for a total investment of \$50.4M. It is also evident from the 2018-2019 operational year that the Board is experiencing significant and extraordinary financial hardship due to a variety of factors outside of its control as it relates to Student Transportation costs. Compounding these circumstances is how the UCDSB has also experienced limited success in achieving applications that secure revenue through the Special Incident Portion (SIP) within the provincial Special Education funding model. As well, a dramatic increase in the number of requests for Educational Assistants (EA), escalating to 444.86 personnel in 2018-2019, added to the significant operational costs associated with this program commitment.

The Upper Canada District School Board provides a wide range of programs and services to students with special needs. The review confirms that the vast majority of students with special needs in the UCDSB are receiving instruction and supported in regular classroom settings by the classroom teacher and educational assistants. There is a noted increase in the number of elementary students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) that were being provided Special Education services, from 110 to 310. The increase in the number of secondary students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder has risen from 10 to 150. Concurrently, the number of elementary-aged students who were identified as having "learning disabilities" decreased from 750 to 380 and from 1180 to 850 at the secondary level.

While Mental Health support and services are not an exclusive domain for a Special Education Department within any school district, there is a unique connection between students with behaviour exceptionalities (or with suspected behavioural exceptionalities) receiving support through Board resources that are also committed to supporting child / youth mental health. The increasingly complex social-emotional needs that some children present increase the risk that they are unable to fully engage or address their learning and responsibilities as students.

This review of Special Education programs and services resulted in a number of key findings that differ significantly from the last extensive review completed in 2012. The report presents 16 findings, 15 recommendations, and two alternative models for program delivery as implementation considerations for the future.

The Reviewers wish to extend their sincere appreciation to the Board, its staff, and all stakeholder groups for their participation and feedback during the review. Their commitment and dedication to the well-being and success of all students in the Upper Canada District School Board was evident throughout the process.

1.0 Overview

The Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory. Covering an area of over 12,000 square kilometres, this school board is one of the largest publicly funded school boards in Ontario. Approximately 4,200 staff welcome nearly 27,000 students to its 79 schools in the counties of Lanark, Leeds-Grenville, Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, and Prescott-Russell. The Board also has 12 campuses offering Alternate and Continuing Education.

The external review of the Special Education Programs and Services was requested in January 2019 by the Director of Education for the UCDSB. The review took place during the period of January 2019 and March 2019, comprised of stakeholder consultations, visits to schools operated by the school board, meetings with staff, and a review of key documents related to the delivery of special education programs within this district. *Overall, the purpose of the review is to provide recommendations to modernize Special Education program delivery within the school district, that is aligned with local needs and board resources.*

2.0 Scope of the work

This review was initiated as a result of a number of changes that the Upper Canada District School Board experienced in the past few years that have consequences for the district's approach to the delivery of Special Education programs and services:

- an increase in the number of students receiving Special Education programs and services;
- a significant turnover in the number of school leaders who oversee the administration of these programs within the schools;
- an increased focus on child and youth mental health at the provincial and local levels, resulting in a 3-year plan for supporting mental health in 2017-2018;
- a decrease in funding since 2014 within the high-needs amount (HNA) provided by the annual legislative grant to the Board, resulting in the Board subsidizing the Special Education budget line using other resources, and;
- an escalation in the number of requests for educational assistants that exceeds annual allocation of these resources.

This review considered the school district's current approach for delivering Special Education programs and services, examining the current practices and use of resources at the school and Board level since 2014. Three essential questions guided and directed this review:

- Question 1: How do the schools and the board address the needs of the exceptional pupils with regard to programs, services, resources, and available funding?
- Question 2: What steps, if any, should the schools and the board pursue to enhance programs, services, resources to ensure a safe, supported and successful environment for the exceptional pupils in the board within the parameters of financially sustainable options?
- Question 3: What steps, if any, can the schools and board implement to modernize its service delivery?

The Reviewers offer responses to these questions by drawing upon information garnered during thirteen (13) school visits, seven (7) focus group consultations, observations and data analysis, resulting in this report. The report contains a series of recommendations on the continued implementation of Special Education in the UCDSB which the reviewers believe will revitalize and modernize the current service delivery model to better respond to the changing circumstances and realities that the Board faces in this program area.

Given the complexity of program delivery in Special Education, the Reviewers encourage an incremental approach for addressing the challenging task of realigning programs, services and resources. It is vitally important that in any decision to move forward on any (or all) of the recommendations found in this Report, that all partners in this work agree that a student's educational journey is a shared commitment in schools throughout the Board and not solely the responsibility of certain staff, specific programs or designated schools. This reflects an essential position found within the Board's Special Education Plan (2018), stating that "Special Education cannot stand alone."¹

3.0 How do the schools and the Board address the needs of our exceptional pupils with regard to programs, services, resources and available funding?

In general, the Upper Canada District School Board's Special Education Plan offers guidance and direction for the program model used throughout the school district. The Board has gone to extraordinary lengths to support its Special Education Plan by devoting the full amount of its Special Education funding to resource the Plan's commitments, as well as subsidizing a growing gap in Special Education funding that commenced in 2014 when the province revised its approach for calculating the "High Needs Amount" funding for school boards.² As a result, the Board directed an additional \$8.6M in support of Special Education in 2018-2019, beyond what the province has allocated in this particular budget line.³

3.1 The Role of the Board's Special Education Plan:

The Upper Canada District School Board's philosophy and service delivery model for Special Education begins with its mission statement: "We prepare all students for a successful life."

It is clear to the Reviewers that this mission - and the shape of the Board's Special Education Plan - is in compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the

¹ Upper Canada District School Board. (2018). *Special Education Plan: 2018*, p. 10. The plan is located at: http://www.ucdsb.on.ca/programs_initiatives/special_education/our_special_education_plan_and_documents

² Ministry of Education "B" Memo: 2014 B:04, Grants for Student Needs Funding and Regulations for 2014-15 (March 27, 2014) , p. 10. The memo states "In 2014-15, we will begin eliminating both the legacy HNA per-pupil amounts and the transitional HNA Stabilization support. Funding from these changes will gradually be repurposed and redistributed to increase the proportion of funding that is allocated through both the HNA Measures of Variability Amount (MOV) and the Special Education Statistical Prediction Model (SESPM)." The memo is located at: https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2014/B4_EN_AODA.pdf

³ As a result of the change in funding models from the High Needs Amount to the Measures of Variability Amount within the Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA) Allocation, Special Education funding for the UCDSB declined by \$5.8M (from \$22.1M in 2013-14 to \$16.3M by 2017-18).

Education Act and other relevant regulations. The Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is fully engaged in the process of reviewing and revising the contents of the Special Education Plan for the Board’s consideration. The detailed audit of Special Education completed in the Spring of 2016 by the Regional Internal Audit Manager – Ontario East, noted that “it is clearly evident from a review of a sample of the Special Education Advisory Committee minutes that the Committee is active in the development of the special education plan.”⁴ The UCDSB Special Education Plan also states that:

“Special education is an integral part of the programming provided to students within the school setting, not a separate system. To this end, every effort will be made to maintain an inclusionary and flexible approach to meeting the needs of those who require additional support and/or challenge.”⁵

Consequently, the review confirms that the vast majority of students with special needs in the UCDSB are receiving instruction and supported in regular classroom settings by the classroom teacher and educational assistants. At other times, Learning Resource Teachers and itinerant staff with expertise in various areas assist in planning modification of curriculum and/or accommodations to the regular classroom learning environment.

Through its Special Education Plan, the Board also confirms that there are a wide variety of “placements” that are at the disposal of the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) beyond what appears to be the current and predominant choice of a “regular class” setting:

Placement	Description
A regular class with indirect support	The student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialized consultative services.
A regular class with resource assistance	The student is placed in the regular class for most or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from a qualified special education teacher.
A regular class with withdrawal assistance	The student is placed in a regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom for less than 50 per cent of the school day, from a qualified special education teacher.
A special education class with partial integration	The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class where the student-teacher ratio conforms to the standards in O.Reg.298, section 31, for at least 50 per cent of the school day, but is integrated with a regular class for at least one instructional period daily.
A special education class full time	The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class, where the student-teacher ratio conforms to the standards in O.Reg.298, section 31, for the entire school day.

[Source: UCDSB Special Education Plan, 2018, p. 29]

⁴ Regional Internal Audit Manager – Ontario East. (2016). Special Education Audit Report – for the period of September 1, 2014 to January 31, 2016 – Upper Canada District School Board: March 2016, p. 6.

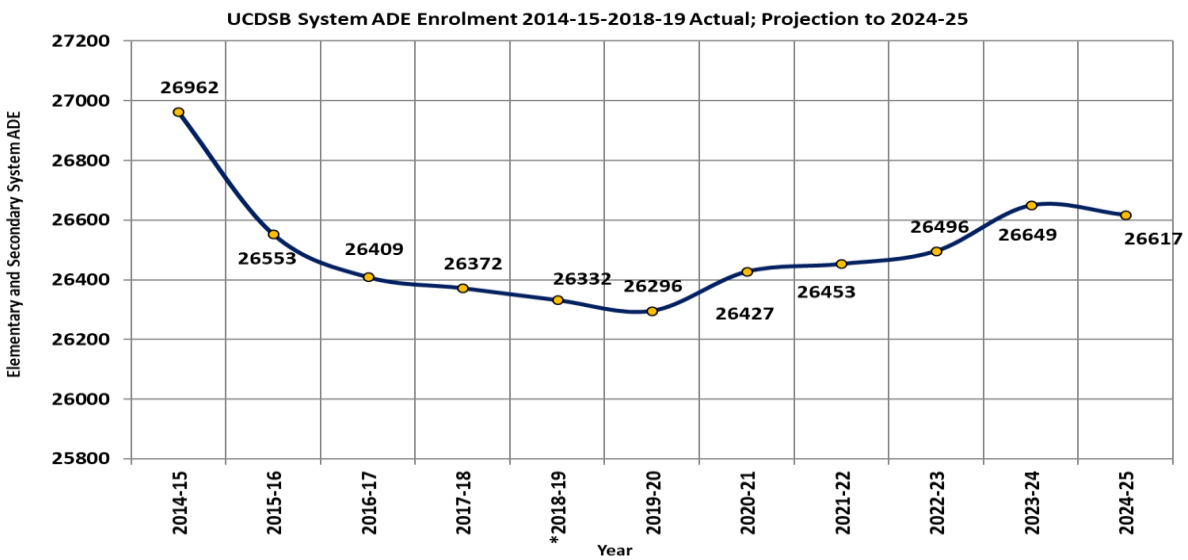
⁵ Upper Canada District School Board. (2018). *Special Education Plan* p. 8. The plan is located at: http://www.ucdsb.on.ca/programs_initiatives/special_education/our_special_education_plan_and_documents

The Special Education Plan, in many ways, acknowledges the diverse and complex communities served by the school board. There are no schools / school communities without the characteristics outlined by Census Canada 2016 data, as evidenced by the School Information Profiles that the UCDSB has assembled and shares on its public website.⁶

3.2 Student Enrolments in the UCDSB & Students Identified Receiving Special Education Support / Services:

As far back as 2009 when studies conducted by the Ministry of Education examined declining enrolment in Ontario schools and concluded that the majority of Ontario school boards have smaller student populations than they did a decade ago (and that there would continue to be a decline in the overall student enrolment in the future). The Upper Canada District School Board has also experienced its own decline in student enrolment.⁷ Much of these developments were confirmed in an extensive pupil accommodation review that the UCDSB completed in 2016–2017⁸.

The good news is that the overall decline in student enrolments in Upper Canada is projected to stabilize until 2024-2025, ranging between nearly 27,000 to nearly 26,600 students, as illustrated in the following graph:

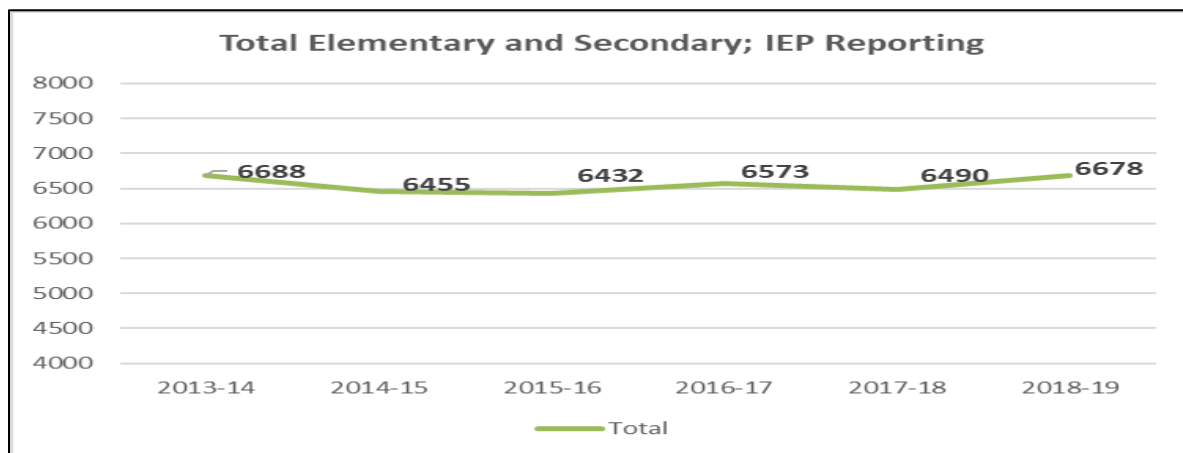


⁶ See the demographic information provided at http://www.ucdsb.on.ca/for_families/ucdsb_schools/school_information_profiles

⁷ See the report of Declining Enrolment Working Group, *Planning and Possibilities* (2009) authored by former MPP Dave Levac and Eleanor Newman, former Director of Education at Renfrew County District School Board. The report is located at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/DEWG.pdf>

⁸ Findings and recommendations of the Board’s pupil accommodation review from 2016-2017 can be found at: http://www.ucdsb.on.ca/community/pupil_accommodation_review/accommodation_review

While there was an decline in the overall student enrolment in the UCDSB of 630 students between 2014-2015 and 2018-2019, only minor fluctuations were noted in the number of UCDSB students accessing Special Education services:



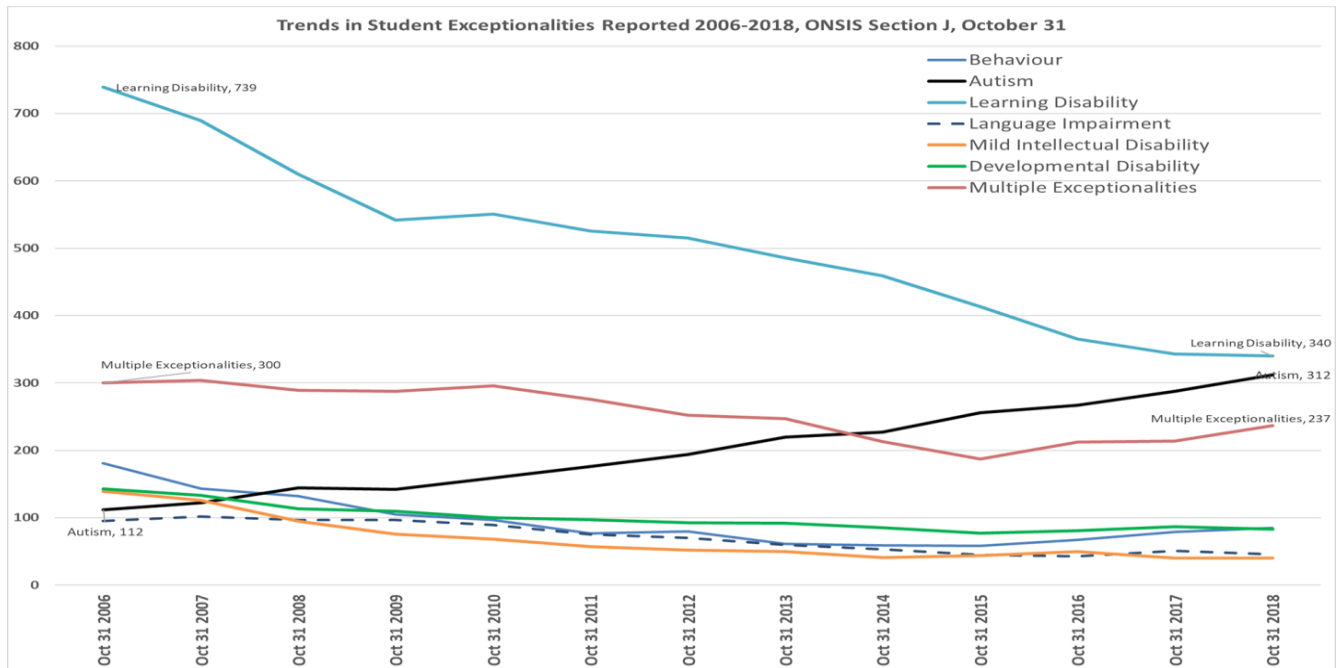
The number of students receiving special education programs or special education support in the Upper Canada District School Board amounts to approximately 25% of its overall student population. This number is higher than the provincial average last reported by Ministry of Education in 2014-2015, where it was indicated that “17 per cent of students in Ontario’s publicly funded school system were receiving special education programs and/or services.”⁹ During the 2018-2019 year, 6678 students in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 program range had an Individual Education Plan (IEP)¹⁰, providing access to special education programs and services provided by the board at the school.

Using the different categories of special needs, or “exceptionalities” as they are termed by the Education Act¹¹, the UCDSB noted a trend in serving the different exceptionalities. The chart shown below identifies the trend in the different exceptionalities for students in the elementary school (K – Grade 8) program:

⁹ Ministry of Education (2017). 2017-18 Education Funding: A Guide to the Grants for Student Needs, p.3. The Guide is located at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1718/2017_18_special_edu_grant_en.pdf

¹⁰ In general, the Ministry of Education defines an Individual Education Plan (IEP) as “...a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the strengths and needs that affect the student’s ability to learn and to demonstrate learning.” Further details about IEPs are found in the Ministry of Education publication *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide* (2017), p E6. The Guide is located at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os//2017/spec_ed_content.html

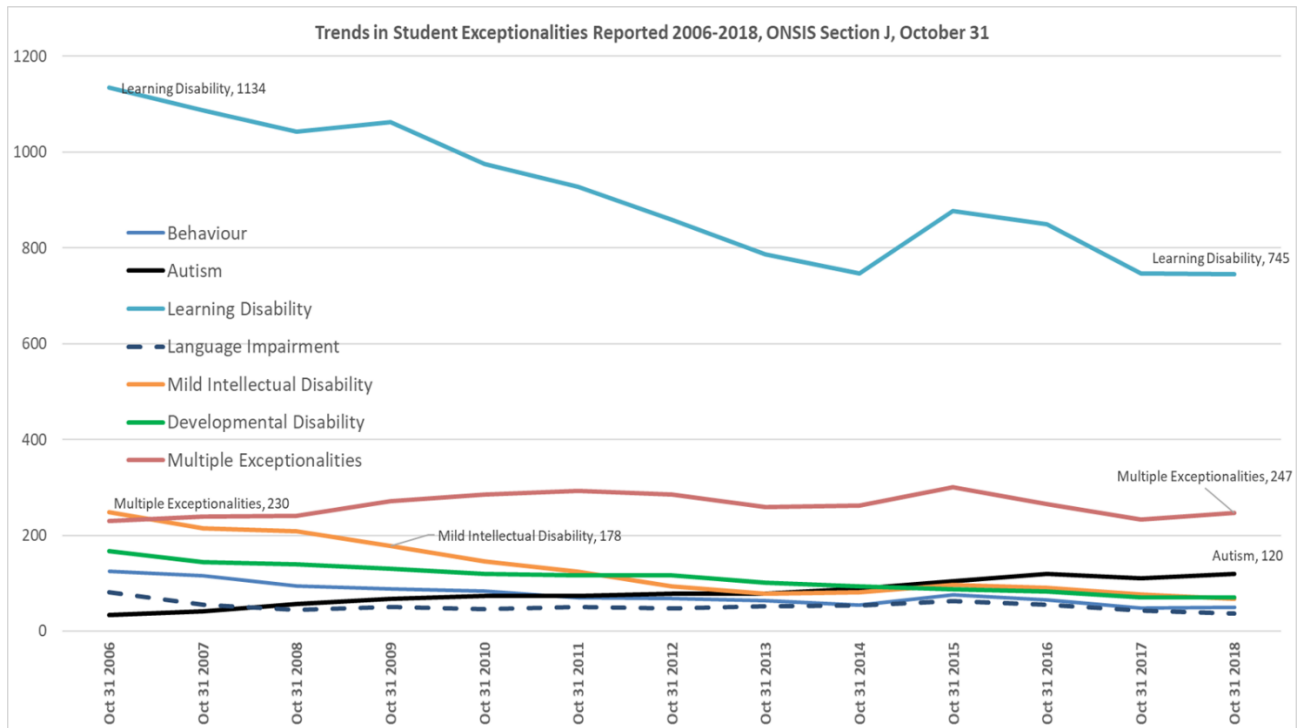
¹¹ The *Education Act* identifies five categories of exceptionalities for exceptional students: behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical, and multiple. These broad categories are designed to address the wide range of conditions that may affect a student's ability to learn, and are meant to be inclusive of all medical conditions, whether diagnosed or not, that can lead to particular types of learning difficulties. A detailed description of each exceptionality in *Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12. Policy and Resource Guide* (2017), Section B10. See http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os//2017/spec_ed_content.html



For the period shown, there was a decrease in the number of elementary-aged students who were identified as having “learning disabilities”, from 750 to 380. During the same period, there was a noted increase in the number of elementary students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) that were being provided Special Education services, from 110 to 310. The latter is a trend reported to be taking place throughout Canada, where ASD prevalence has increased such that “approximately 1 in 66 children and youth are diagnosed with ASD in Canada”.¹²

The trends in serving secondary school students with special needs in the UCDSB notes are similar. Again, the school district experienced a decrease in the number of students it served with a learning disabilities exceptionality from 1180 to 850 students. The increase in the number of secondary students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder has risen from 10 to 150. Of note is the potential for an exponential increase in this number driven by the influx of students on the Autism Spectrum at the elementary level:

¹² Public Health Agency of Canada (2018) Autism Spectrum Disorder among Children and Youth in Canada 2018: A Report of the National Autism Spectrum Disorder Surveillance System, p. vi. See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/autism-spectrum-disorder-children-youth-canada-2018.html>



3.3 Types of Programs and Services

The Upper Canada District School Board provides a wide range of programs and services to students with special needs. The Board’s Special Education Plan (2018) provides a clear overview of these programming commitments. Its essential characteristics are cited in the Plan as:

- “The vast majority of students with special needs are receiving instruction in regular classroom settings by the classroom teacher through modification of curriculum and/or accommodations to the learning environment. Programming for students is the responsibility of a classroom teacher. Programming for these students may include intervention and support delivered by Learning Resource Teachers assigned to each school, as well as itinerant personnel with expertise in various areas, e.g., speech and language, blind-low vision, behaviour, social skills, developmental issues and enrichment.
- If students require more intensive instructional intervention this may include withdrawal from the regular classroom to a small group or individual setting in their home school. When students are challenged with more profound needs, the board provides specialized congregated programs to respond to their unique learning needs.
- In all areas of exceptionality, the regular classroom in the home school is considered as the placement of first choice when such a placement meets the needs of the student, is in accordance with parental wishes and allows for the continuation of a positive learning

environment. The programs and services within special education are broadly aligned with the various exceptionalities and definitions provided by the ministry.”¹³

As well, the school district has a three-year Mental Health Plan to support all students.¹⁴ While Mental Health support and services are not an exclusive domain for a Special Education Department within any school district, there is a unique connection between students with behaviour exceptionalities (or with suspected behavioural exceptionalities) receiving support through Board resources that are also committed to supporting child / youth mental health. This is the case in the Upper Canada District School Board. Anecdotal data collected through stakeholder feedback sessions for this review report identified a high demand in this area due to the increasingly complex social-emotional needs that some children present in a way that they are unable to fully engage or address their learning and responsibilities as students. The latter is not unique to the UCDSB but instead, is reflective of a provincial trend in the demand for professional services to respond to child and youth mental health needs identified by organizations such as *People for Education* in their annual report on Ontario’s schools.¹⁵

Currently, throughout the Board, the first choice considered in placement options for students brought before the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process is always in a regular class. This practice congregates high needs students and support staff in the classrooms raising the question whether this practice serves the best interest of all students.¹⁶ The Reviewers heard that staff in some classroom settings may not necessarily be equipped to support the numbers and complexity of these special need students in a classroom setting.

3.3.1 The Development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to Support Student Learning

Notwithstanding these trends surrounding specific learning exceptionalities confirmed by the IPRC process within the UCDSB, the school board also has students who have been provided with Individual Education Plans (commonly referred to as an “IEP”) without an IPRC. As noted by the Ministry of Education “...an IEP may also be prepared for students who require accommodations, program modifications and/or alternative programs, but who have not been identified as exceptional by an IPRC.”¹⁷

The following chart highlights the current trend in developing IEPs within the school district’s elementary programs (K to Grade 8). In this case, the trending is that there are more IEPs developed for students without a formal identification of having a special need or a diagnosis of “exceptionality”:

¹³ Upper Canada District School Board. (2018). Special Education Plan: 2018. p.9. Located at:

http://www.ucdsb.on.ca/programs_initiatives/special_education/our_special_education_plan_and_documents

¹⁴ UCDSB Mental Health Strategy Overview 2017-2020. Located at:

http://www.ucdsb.on.ca/our_board/district_plans/mental_health_plan

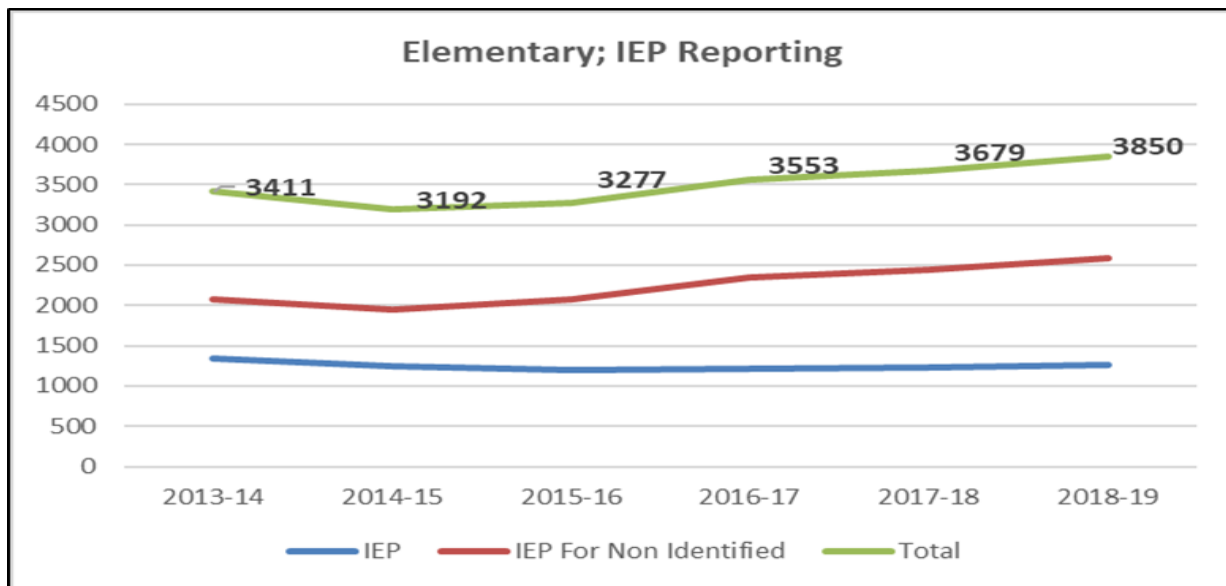
¹⁵ People for Education. (2017). Competing priorities: People for Education annual report on Ontario’s publicly funded schools, 2017. pp. 6-8.

¹⁶ Several regional and national media reports surfaced during the period of this review, outlining the types of experiences that some district school boards encountered in serving students with high needs. See:

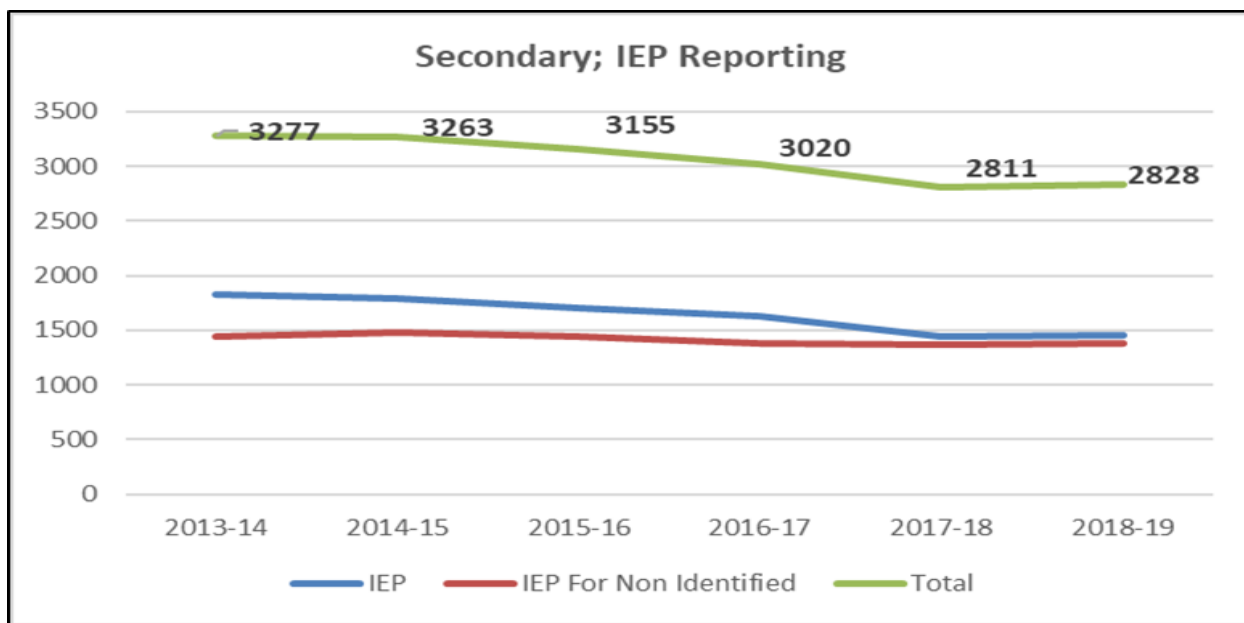
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/education/article-educating-grayson-are-inclusive-classrooms-failing-students/>

¹⁷ See the Ministry of Education’s website on *The Individual Education Plan Process*, found at:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/individu.html>



A different pattern is noted in the development of IEPs for students in the UCDSB’s secondary school program. In this case, there are nearly the same number of IEPs developed for students without a formal identification of having a special need or a diagnosis of “exceptionality” as there are for students with a formal diagnosis or an IPRC determination of having a learning exceptionality:



While the Education Act permits the development of Individual Education Plans for students without an IPRC determination¹⁸, this is a practice that the Reviewers thought deserved closer attention within the school district. The reviewers could not identify during the review a clear consensus about how schools

¹⁸ According to the Ministry of Education, 48 per cent of students with special education needs in Ontario had not been formally “identified” the IPRC process. Ministry of Education (2017). 2017-18 Education Funding: A Guide to the Grants for Student Needs, p.3. The Guide is located at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1718/2017_18_special_edu_grant_en.pdf

decide when an IEP should be issued for a student who does not have an IPRC determination or when the student lacks formal documentation confirming a learning exceptionality.

All children will encounter some type of difficulty with classroom learning as part of their maturation, intellectual growth, and as a result of the general challenges presented by learning the complex provincial curriculum. To what extent, however, does the school or school district require confirmation that a series of classroom-based interventions and the use of differentiated instruction was attempted before issuing the IEP? Do schools have an internal capacity for such practices?¹⁹ Do all schools engage in a process of case-conferencing, as an intermediate step, to set specific goals to address student needs which may influence a final decision about whether or not an IEP is necessary?²⁰ Have schools in the UCDSB established an internal capacity for such practices as part of their in-school Improvement Planning Teams for each school's Student Achievement and Well Being (SIPSAW) or through the in-school Student Success Team's process (as detailed in the Board's Special Education Plan)?²¹

There is a need to confirm how educators actually conceptualize and come to understand the meaning of a special educational need. Moving forward, district and school staff (including school administrators) are highly encouraged to further their current internal capacity through planned staff development on this focus and establish greater clarity as to when an IEP may be considered where there is no IPRC. Prompting a closer look at school and system-wide practices in IEP development is an essential step in ensuring the necessity of the IEP and limiting the unnecessary draw on the school's Special Education resources.

3.4 What steps, if any, should the schools and the board pursue to enhance programs, services, resources to ensure a safe, supported and successful environment for the exceptional pupils in our board within the parameters of financially sustainable options?

3.4.1 Observations regarding the Deployment of Programs and Staff Expertise: The Board has purchased and implemented numerous programs to support the staff in their commitment to meet the needs of the exceptional students. The highly effective Empower, Lexia, Kinder programs are but a few of these programs. The Board has received presentations in the past testifying to their success in serving

¹⁹ Over the past decade, the Ministry of Education in Ontario invested a significant amount of attention in this area of instructional practice. Materials posted on EduGains is particularly useful in the area of differentiated instruction. See the Differentiated Instruction Educator's Guide (2016) at http://www.edugains.ca/resources/DI/EducatorsPackages/DIEducatorsPackage_2016/DI_EducatorsGuide_AODA.pdf

²⁰ K. Steel. (2017). Personalized Learning for All. *Education Canada*, 57, 3, pp. 9 -12. See also the advice offered by the Ministry of Education that encourages the use of an in-school review team model. "An in-school team can collaboratively review instructional strategies and interventions that have been implemented, as well as the student's responses to them, and assess their effectiveness. The team may also consider whether and how to incorporate recommendations made by out-of-school professionals. An in-school team may also be involved in referring a student to an IPRC or developing an IEP, including the transition plan." See *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide* (2017), p C22 – C25. The Guide is located at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os//2017/spec_ed_content.html

²¹ Upper Canada District School Board. (2018). Special Education Plan: 2018. p.15. Located at: http://www.ucdsb.on.ca/programs_initiatives/special_education/our_special_education_plan_and_documents

student needs.²² While these programs provide evidence-based approaches to support students, they appear to be limited to the select few benefitting from the programs. Research suggests that these resources are helpful for all students and that these strategies are transferable to a wide range of learners within the classroom. As noted in the Ministry of Education publication *Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2013)*“ The notion that assistance targeted at a specific group can help everyone, bolstered by evidence from research, found its way into the field of education. Educators began to realize that a teaching strategy or pedagogical materials that respond to the special needs of a specific student or group of students can also be useful for all students...”²³

The Reviewers found limited evidence during the review to suggest that the effective strategies associated with these resources are widely transferred to the regular classroom setting. This would suggest that the application of such resources are not well understood beyond their current deployment in the school district. Given the positive responses from staff and students currently engaging these resources and strategies, what further steps should schools pursue to more fully extend the implementation of these resources / strategies into the regular classroom? The Reviewers encourage the UCDSB to expand its approach to professional development with these resources, including a wider-range of teachers in the training of the transferable approaches. In doing so, the school district will move beyond some current limitations imposed on the delivery of such programs and increase the benefit to students.

The Reviewers also observed inconsistencies in the deployment of Special Education and Learning Resource Teachers (LRT). The Special Education Plan states that: “The Learning Resource Teacher is meant to be a teacher who works along-side other teachers to support students through the use of differentiation, IEP accommodations and modifications.” The Reviewers noted how, in several cases, the benefit of the LRT’s expertise was limited when a school chooses to allocate the majority of the Learning Resource Teacher’s daily schedule to interaction with small groups of students. This presents as a practice inconsistent with the Special Education Plan, confirming that the best use of in-house staff expertise has not been fully realized at this time or, in other cases, the deployment of staff is misaligned with the District model defined within the Board’s Special Education Plan.

3.4.2 Observations about the Implementation of Key Strategies that supports all Learners, including Learners with special needs:

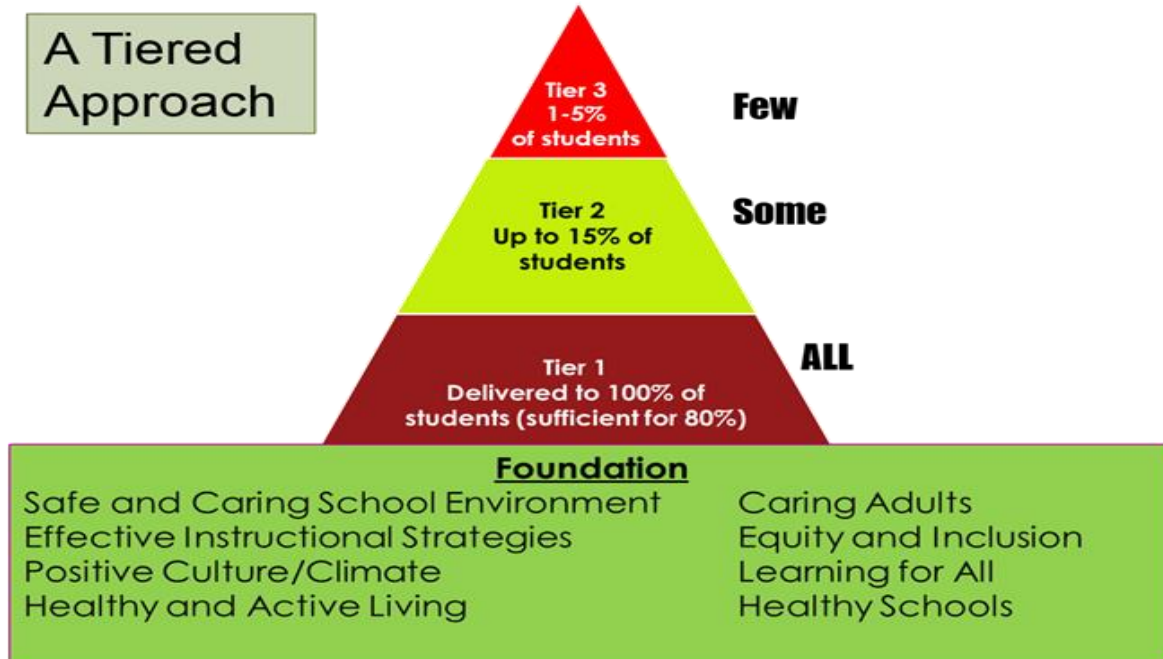
Differentiated instruction and a tiered approach to interventions was referenced during many school visits and several focus groups. The Reviewers noted a wide-level of awareness of the concept in UCDSB schools, which is promoted through the Board’s own Special Education Plan.²⁴

²² For example, the Empower Reading Program Update Report to the UCDSB Board of Trustees, March 9, 2016. See the report on Board Docs at <https://go.boarddocs.com/can/ucdsb/Board.nsf/vpublic?open#>

²³ Ministry of Education. (2013). *Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. Located at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/learning.html>

²⁴ Upper Canada District School Board. (2018). *Special Education Plan: 2018*, p. 10.

A Tiered Approach



[Source: UCDSB Special Education Plan, 2018, p. 10]

Learning for All (2013) offers a clear indication about the value and potential for the use of Differentiated Instruction:

“Differentiated instruction is based on the idea that because students differ significantly in their interests, learning styles, and readiness to learn, it is necessary to adapt instruction to suit these differing characteristics. The “tiered” approach to prevention and intervention is a systematic approach to providing high-quality, evidence-based assessment and instruction and appropriate interventions that respond to students’ individual needs. It is based on frequent monitoring of student progress and the use of assessment data, focusing on learning rate and level, to identify students who are having difficulty and to plan specific assessment and instructional interventions of increasing intensity to address their needs effectively. The tiered approach can be used to address both academic and behavioural needs. The nature, intensity, and duration of interventions may be decided by teachers individually or in collaboration with a school team, always on the basis of evidence derived from monitoring student achievement. The tiered approach can facilitate early identification of students who may be at risk and ensure appropriate and timely interventions for students who exhibit persistent learning difficulties, significantly reducing the likelihood that they will develop more intractable problems in the future (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003).²⁵

While there was acknowledgment of both differentiated instruction and the tiered approach during stakeholder consultations, the Reviewers noted that there is a need to make stronger linkages to these practices as part of how planning and instruction occurs in classrooms within the UCDSB. There are

²⁵ Ministry of Education. (2013). *Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. Located at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/learning.html>

pockets of excellence in each school where these practices are visible and are making a difference for students and in the general classroom climate. However, the Reviewers are left with a general impression that classroom management (or, the specific concern around managing student behaviors), appears to be treated separately from the selection of effective teaching and learning strategies that are also consequential to learning and improvements in the overall classroom climate resulting from greater student engagement, reduction of off-task behaviours – such as differentiating classroom approaches (even though research suggests that adapting teaching practices in such a way that students are engaged in their learning is highly effective and reduces behavioural episodes for some students). The Reviewers would encourage all schools to revisit the use of differentiated instruction to address the realities and the learning needs of mixed abilities classrooms within the district-wide model that is founded upon a tiered-intervention approach.

Furthermore, the Reviewers wonder whether and how the school district could significantly reduce the number of IEPs for “non-identified” students with a deeper implementation of differentiated instruction bundled with a tiered approach to classroom instruction? As noted earlier in Section 3.3.1 of this report, there are approximately 2600 identified students and 3500 “non identified” students (that is, students without an IPRC designation or medical diagnosis confirming a learning exceptionality) with an IEP in the UCDSB. ²⁶ To what extent would some IEPs become unnecessary for some “non identified” students, as a result of a deep and consistent application of differentiated instruction in more classrooms across the UCDSB?

4.0 Funding Commitments to Support Special Education in the UCDSB:

The successful delivery of Special Education Programs and Services within school boards is reliant upon securing a range of resources (human, material, and financial) to ensure its success. The Ministry of Education’s Technical Paper defines the type and range of financial resources that all school boards receive each year²⁷. One of the key budget lines within the provincial model for funding K to 12 Educations is the Special Education Grant for Ontario schools, which is made up of six distinct allocations:

- Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) Allocation;
- Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA) Allocation;
- Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Allocation;
- Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Allocation;
- Care, Treatment, Custody and Correctional Amount (CTCC Amount) Allocation, and;

²⁶ According to the Ministry of Education, 52% of students with an IEP were “identified” through the formal IPRC process as having a learning exceptionality, while 48% with an IEP were not formally identified as having any learning exceptionality. See Ministry of Education (2017). *2017-18 Education Funding: A Guide to the Grants for Student Needs*, p.3. The Guide is located at:

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1718/2017_18_special_edu_grant_en.pdf

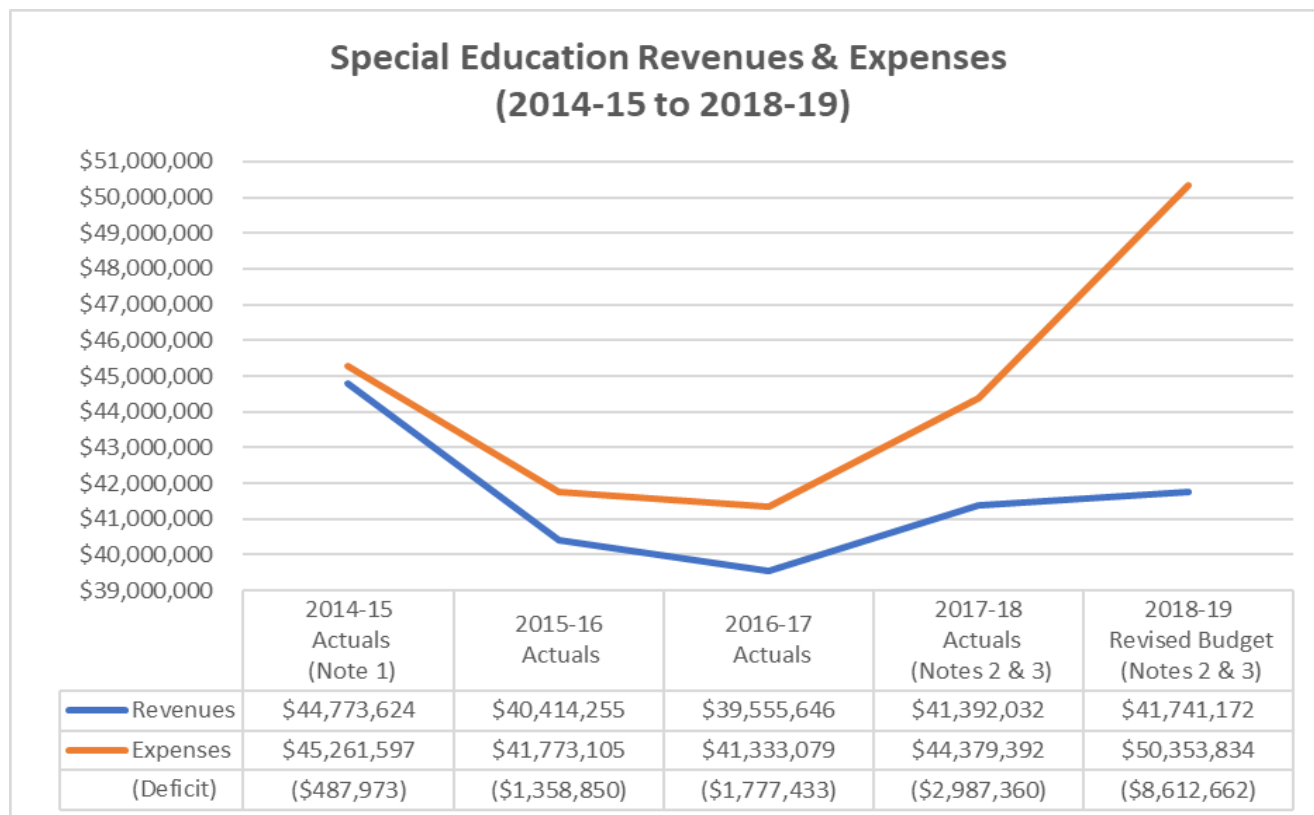
²⁷ Ontario Ministry of Education (2018). *Education Funding: Technical Paper – Spring 2018*, p, 40. See: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1819/2018-19-technical-paper-en.pdf>.

- Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) Allocation

During the 2018-2019 School year, the Upper Canada District School Board received funding in accordance to these specialized budget lines totalling \$40.29M.

Budget Line	Provincial Allocation	UCDSB Allocation
Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) Allocation –billion	\$1.54B	\$19.88M
Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA) Allocation	\$1.13 B	\$17.25M
Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Allocation	\$106.6 M	\$1.38M
Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Allocation	\$105.3 M	\$0.13M
Care, Treatment, Custody and Correctional Amount Allocation	\$103.9 M	\$1.45M
Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) Allocation	\$15.2 M	\$0.20M
TOTALS:	Province-Wide = \$3.01B	UCDSB Allocation = \$40.29M

As noted earlier in the report, the UCDSB Board of Trustees has gone to extraordinary lengths to support its Special Education Plan by devoting the full amount of its Special Education funding to resource the Plan’s commitments, as well as subsidizing a growing gap in Special Education funding that commenced in 2014 when the province revised its approach for calculating the “High Needs Amount” funding for school boards. As a result, the Board directed an additional \$8.6M in support of Special Education in 2018-2019, beyond what the province allocated in this particular budget line. The graph below presents the trend to augment the Board’s Special Education expenditures over the past 5 years:



Note 1: For the 2014-15 year, the \$44.8M in revenues included the items below which resulted in the net transfer of \$2.6M from Special Education deferred revenue to revenue for the year.

Note 2: The revenues for both 2017-18 and 2018-19 include the transfer of SEA (Special Equipment Amount) per pupil amount deferred revenue into revenue for each year.

Note 3: The revenues for the 2017-18 & 2018-19 years exclude the centrally negotiated collective agreement extension funding of \$1.6M used in each year (there is no mechanism in the Ministry financial documents to allow for the transfer of these non-Special Education GSN funded amounts to the Special Education envelope). However, per the contract extensions, \$1.6M was allocated in 2017-18 & 2018-19, and therefore reflected in the expenses, for the purposes of increasing Special Education staff for these two years.

[Source: Courtesy of the UCDSB]

It is also evident from the 2018-2019 operational year that the Board is experiencing significant and extraordinary financial hardship due to a variety of factors outside of its control as it relates to Student Transportation costs. This further speaks to the necessity to revisit how the Board plans and deliver its program commitments in Special Education, given that the discretionary funding that the Board had

previously drawn upon to close the gap between revenue and expenditures in this program area is depleted. Compounding these developments is a dramatic increase in the number of EAs, escalating to 444.86 or 53% of the total special education staff allocation.

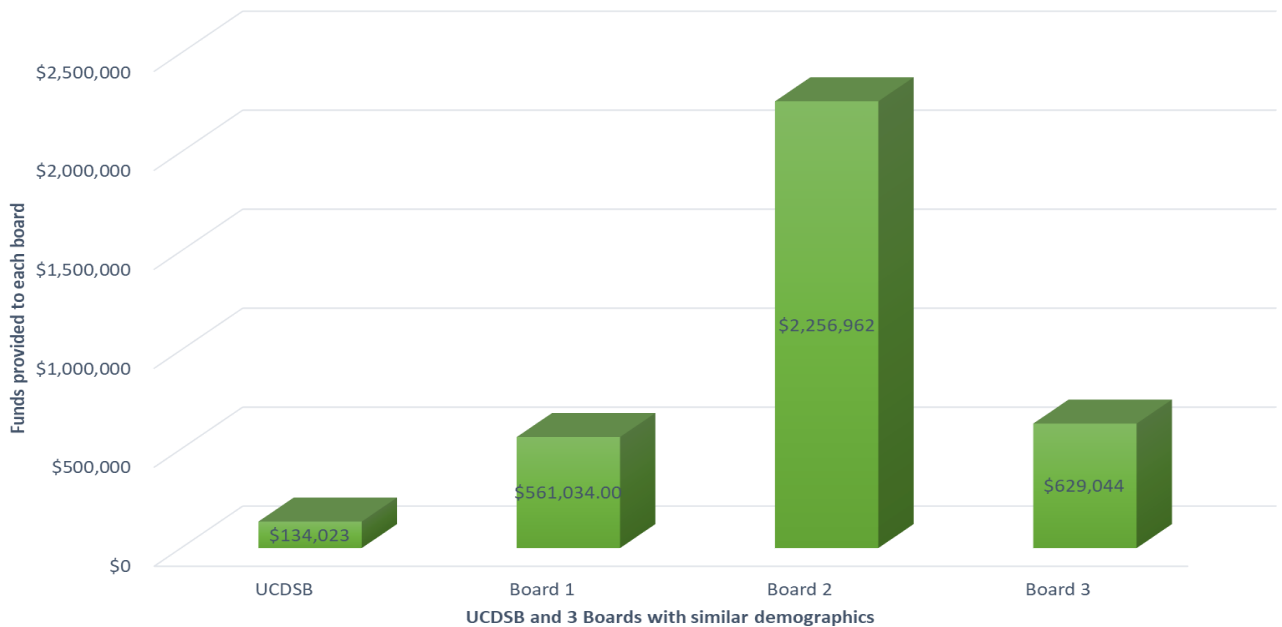
The Reviewers believe that an immediate remedy exists to curtail the escalating demands for Educational Assistants and receiving additional revenue from the Ministry of Education for Special Education costs, in the form of remodelling programming delivery for students with high needs. Some examples of a proposed revised program framework are attached to this report. Should the Board adopt a model of this nature, it will enhance its program delivery experience for students with high needs and will likely increase the Board’s eligibility for accessing provincial funding that is available under the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) within the Special Education funding model.

The UCDSB has experienced limited success in achieving applications that secure revenue through the SIP portion of the Special Education funding model. During the period 2014 to 2018, the applications received resulted in the following outcomes:

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
\$62,248.00	\$8,333.00	\$275,908.00	\$139,310.00	\$133,363.00

A comparative perspective with other school districts with similar Special Education program commitments and student need profiles would demonstrate a significant gap between what the UCDSB receives in funding through successful application for SIP claim requests compared to other jurisdictions. As shown in the chart below, the UCDSB’s model of serving high needs students does not favor access to the Special Incidence Portion Grant:

SIP Funding 2018-19



5.0 What steps, if any, can the schools and board implement to modernize our service delivery?

The 2019 review of special education programs and services revealed a number of key findings that differ significantly from the last extensive review completed in 2012. These range from; the challenging student profiles specifically as they relate to Autism Spectrum Disorders and escalating mental health needs, translated mainly into a intensified need to offer behavior management programming as well as the fragmented access to psychological assessments; to an increased demand for training to meet the changing needs of students, and; to an overwhelming desire to push toward school or system designated classes.

Two key areas of concern should be addressed in the immediate future.

1. Needs of the students with mental health needs, specifically behavior exceptionalities;
2. Needs of the students on the Autism Spectrum.

The review also revealed specific recurring themes as outlined in the key findings on pages 21 – 27 of this report. As well, this report includes a series of recommendations to consider should the Board choose to address these themes.

5.1 Key Findings

1. All stakeholders acknowledged that our students are our first priority.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>We need to take the “special” out of Special Education. “All means all.”</p>	<p>Consider what opportunities are available through the avenue of “collaborative professionalism” as promoted by the provincial policy memorandum PPM 159, where all levels of the education system can work together to promote the perspective that the delivery of special education is “a shared commitment” in the UCDSB.</p> <p>Further consideration about using the staff’s existing model of its Initiatives Committee (consisting of Senior Management representatives and local Labour Executives) to support the key messages and emphasis found in this report.</p>
<p>Educate through communication and collaboration with schools, parents, community and all other partners.</p>	<p>Celebrate and promote these contributions. Seek out other sources of partnerships e.g. Community Living, as well as business/ industry support for funding.</p>

2.Ensure that the Board’s Special Education leadership is connected to schools.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>Schools, trustees and SEAC & PIC validated the quality of the leadership team. The team is available to the system and familiar with the challenges.</p> <p>All stakeholders recognized the daunting task of modernizing the programs and services within the parameters of financial sustainability.</p>	<p>Consider how to enhance the capacity of the senior management team to support program delivery with other in-house expertise, in order to move the work forward, change the culture and implement the Pilot models.</p> <p>Use of in-house resources will allow other key stakeholders (e.g. principals; system principals; Wellness Team professional leaders; Key LRTs) to share their expertise and build capacity.</p>
3.There is a perception that the Upper Canada District School Board is considered the “special education board” by many members of the community	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>Stakeholders disclosed what parents of incoming students with special needs have been advised by others in the community. The common messaging promotes the following perception <i>“...if you want special education services, then go to the Upper Canada DSB because they can provide what you need.”</i></p> <p>This trend has contributed to the UCDSB receiving additional students with high needs for program support.</p>	<p>Consider how the Board’s annual Communication Plan could engage this perception.</p> <p>Consider how principals may benefit from further training regarding provincial legislation on Special Education, to help them inform parents of their rights.</p> <p>Consider the opportunity to engage this local perception about the capabilities of the UCDSB to support students with special education needs, by promoting the school district as the destination of choice for ALL students.</p> <p>Collect data on number of students with high needs coming from other jurisdictions, as a focus for future follow up and review with community organizations and, with the Ministry of Education.</p>
4. Special education programs and services in the UCDSB are almost exclusively delivered through the inclusion of students with special needs into the regular classroom.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>The full-inclusion model was introduced some time ago. Does it still serve all students well?</p> <p>Stakeholders have clearly stated that the board needs to move to a more fluid model. One size</p>	<p>Consider what other programming options the Board wishes to develop on par with its existing program model;</p>

<p>does NOT fit all. Are we neglecting the needs of average students?</p> <p>The practice of evacuating classrooms because of students with high needs is detrimental to the well-being and education of ALL students.</p> <p>There is a systemic demand for change/modifications in the current delivery model. We need to keep the students in their community as much as possible.</p> <p>There are few options for some schools to remove a student in need of de-escalation, to another location within the school.</p> <p>Change the model of delivery to one that is somewhere between inclusion and designated classes.</p>	<p>Study the viability of creating a few school and/or system designated classes. Explore with a small number of schools a model for success, as part of a pilot program. Provide the resources and support needed for the implementation of the program pilot;</p> <p>Consider exploring a variety of program options including - but not limited to - school hubs, multi-needs rooms, school designated classrooms, system designated classrooms, Section 23 program placements;</p> <p>Enhance the current training focus with a Staff Development model where all staff in the system are more prepared to play a role in supporting any new program directions established by the Board;</p> <p>Consider what program models permits the Board to concentrate resources and staff to serve a number of students with similar needs.</p>
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5. Student aggression, violent behavior, mental health and addictions are the utmost concern of school based staff.

Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>The solution to dealing with all of these challenges seems to be to “add an EA”.</p> <p>Administrators do not necessarily understand that they have the flexibility to develop program models that work for their respective school.</p> <p>It is not evident that the needs of students with special needs is a shared responsibility in schools and at a systems level.</p> <p>The concept of shared responsibility is limited to staff working with the high needs student and even then they are restricted by job descriptions.</p> <p>BMS training is supported but there needs to be more skilled staff in the schools.</p> <p>The redesign of the combined CYW/Behaviorist roles has diluted a necessary skill set.</p>	<p>New school administrators may not understand options regarding program design flexibility, nor fully grasp their roles and responsibilities under the Act or Regulations. Consider establishing a coaching model with superintendents, who can work with principals to clarify and support a wider range of program alternatives that is permissible in Ontario schools.</p> <p>Consider what additional training principals, teachers, and support staff require for their respective roles, regarding support for any student with special needs.</p> <p>The School Support Team model reinforces the shared responsibility. Consider how all schools can establish a regular meeting schedule throughout the school year, to allow regular opportunities for teams to meet.</p>

<p>There is no evidence that data is being collected to identify sources of aggressive behavior. The aggressive behavior is the main concern.</p> <p>Safety plans are developed; however, the “ownership” of their implementation is not a shared responsibility. EAs and other resource staff appear to be ill equipped to deal with extreme aggression.</p>	<p>Consider how all superintendents can periodically learn from / contribute to the efforts of School Support Teams to: plan / review the delivery of programs and services for students with special needs, and; establish training required to meet the needs of the schools.</p> <p>Consider expanding BMS training in the school district. Prepare board-wide training plan focused on urgent needs.</p> <p>Consider expanding training commitments to assist staff who need to develop and deliver on the safety plans for students.</p> <p>Consider whether and how community-based resources are being fully utilized by schools in the district.</p>
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<p>6. The high number of EAs allocated to the school system far exceeds the funded allocation.</p>	
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Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>The EA recruitment and allotment process are flawed. The EA recruitment process does not require the training to meet the developing trends in needs of students.</p> <p>Take the Ministry envelope and brainstorm ways to meet as many expectations as possible within a 10% overrun in the first year and steadily decline until we are living within the envelope.</p>	<p>Consider what options are available to collaborate with Labour groups on this complex issue.</p> <p>Consider re-drafting of EA postings need to clearly articulate the skill set required to meet the needs of the changing student population. Remove the cost of emergency EA support from the school budget.</p> <p>Consider how to enhance the current process for assessing with schools about their needs, through interaction with the School Support Team.</p> <p>Consider individual design of service delivery model within a budget cap.</p>

7. There are a significant number of non- IPRCd students with an IEP.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>The current model supports a substantial number of non-identified students. Can (the UCDSB) continue to support these numbers or should support be focused on identified students only?</p> <p>Do we need IEPs for everyone?</p> <p>Parents believe that an IEP is the only way to get the service.</p>	<p>Consider how differentiated instruction can be expanded in classrooms throughout the school district, so to further support the learning needs of a wide-range of students. There is an immediate need to review the merits of tiered intervention.</p> <p>Consider further staff development about key concepts, such as differentiated instruction. It is not evident that Universal design is widely understood and implemented.</p> <p>Consider how the curriculum priorities can be balanced with life-skills priorities when developing an IEP for certain students.</p> <p>Enhance and define a district standard for developing an IEP. Principals are in the specific role to authorize the plan’s development given such standards.</p> <p>Consider what additional steps will support Principals to become further informed about the range of options to meet needs without an IEP, including the use of tiered intervention and alternative programming through LRT.</p>
8. Demand for ASD services is increasing rapidly in the UCDSB.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>There is a significant increase in the ASD profile and the demand for skilled staff to support the needs.</p> <p>We have two ABA therapists for the entire board.</p> <p>Confusion between behavior exceptionality, learning disability, global developmental disability and autism profiles.</p>	<p>Consider expanding current efforts to work with the ministries, community agencies to plan successful entry and supports for the students and families.</p> <p>Consider how to further utilise the resources in the community for students with ASD.</p> <p>Engage in a dialogue with the Geneva Centre to provide customized training in preparation for September. Consider establishing an accredited training course with the Geneva Centre for the board staff.</p>

	Consider providing informal screening tools/checklists to schools to better understand profiles.
9. The District’s definition of educational assessments is too limited and does not account for other forms of evidence that can be collected about a student’s learning needs.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>We are lucky if we can get 3 psychological assessments a year.</p> <p>Formal assessments take anywhere from 6 months to a year. What do we do in the interim?</p> <p>The help we need when we need it is rarely accessible.</p>	<p>Consider how to develop an broader understanding that psychological assessments need not be the sole recourse to support educational planning for a student(s)</p> <p>Consider what steps will assist Learning Resource Teachers to administer educational assessments that are within their qualification to do so, and how they can use such data to assist with appropriate program planning.</p>
10 . The high demand for support and services in Mental Health is impacting the sense of efficacy and efficiency of Wellness /Special Ed team model to deliver the assessments, tools, training and programming.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>We need more staff and less administration. A lot of people spread over a large area board serves as an attempt to put out fires only.</p> <p>The delivery model is not meeting the needs effectively.</p> <p>The practical programming needed from the assessments tools is inadequate.</p>	<p>To what extent does the “Wellness side” of the model need restructuring so that the next Mental Health Plan is keeping up with the demands for this type of support / service in schools?</p> <p>Consideration of the SLP Team and the SLP Assistants to work in tandem with the Special Ed team and in school programming with the staff in the schools.</p> <p>Consider how to enhance the assessment process with Psychology, SLP and Special Education support, with a focus on enhancements of assessment process, evidence-based interventions and building capacity and sustainability.</p>
11. Staff training does not align with emerging trends.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration

<p>Collective agreements are not aligned with the board’s mission to serve all students.</p> <p>Some EAs choose to take their personal leave days when training is scheduled on PD days.</p> <p>EAs are ill equipped to deal with all of these behaviors. The efforts focus on minimizing the disruptions in whatever way works, rather than supporting a Behaviour Plan or Safety Plan that has been developed by all staff input.</p> <p>In School Support Teams (SST) are valued by schools who use them well. Principals in both panels spoke of the value of these.</p> <p>How do we provide addiction counselling?</p> <p>Student Support Partners are spread very thin given the existing high needs.</p> <p>Social workers are not available when needed.</p>	<p>Consider how the next round of collective agreements can reflect the emerging needs of the system.</p> <p>To what extent should participating in training be mandatory for all staff with specific Special Education assignments? Consider compulsory training required for this group of employees, in order for the board to maintain its vision.</p> <p>The <i>In School Support Team</i> model is necessary in all schools. Training on how to use the team’s expertise is essential. Consider the benefits of formalizing the participation in these meetings by, preparing agendas and keep minutes with Action Items .</p> <p>Engaging with external resources on a fee for service basis to provide this service to schools.</p> <p>Consider hiring social workers or engage on fee for service where student needs peak or where there are unique demands for program-delivery.</p>
<p>12. Many students are perceived to be arriving to the early Primary Division program (K – Grade 2), with under developed milestones.</p>	
<p>Stakeholder Comments</p>	<p>Options for Consideration</p>
<p>Children arrive with little or no oral communication skills.</p> <p>Children are arriving in schools with little or no self regulation skills.</p> <p>Children lack the ability to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes to learn.</p>	<p>Effective entry-to-school planning provides mechanisms that allow schools to respond to changes in the child’s needs, family, community, or resources.</p> <p>The implementation of a Kindergarten Intervention Program will screen specific needs using developmental screening tools to support programming needs and supports.</p> <p>Consider training for the staff who work with the students who require these supports.</p>
<p>13. Life skills programs are limited to secondary schools.</p>	
<p>Stakeholder Comments</p>	<p>Options for Consideration</p>
<p>We need to program for need. If we have to use life skill settings to do so then we should plan accordingly.</p>	<p>Life skills programs are limited to secondary schools by and large. Consider the implementation of designated space that would</p>

<p>If a student hates school then we need to figure out why. School should be fun, challenging. Teach to interests.</p> <p>We need to stop coddling the students. If a behavior is unacceptable for one, then it is for all. Life skills & Social Skills programs work for this.</p>	<p>allow for the life skills instruction to take place, in more schools throughout the district.</p> <p>Community partnerships may provide space. E.g. community centers.</p> <p>More dialogue with parents to explore de-escalation and engagement strategies.</p>
<p>14. Sensory rooms vary greatly in equipment and design.</p>	
<p>Stakeholder Comments</p>	<p>Options for Consideration</p>
<p>We have good SEA funding.</p> <p>SEA in the area of technology equipment is appreciated and seems to be well integrated.</p> <p>We/parents fundraise to equip sensory rooms.</p> <p>They are used a lot as time out areas or calming spaces.</p> <p>They are too small. We have very little equipment in them.</p> <p>Not sure which equipment we need.</p>	<p>Consider preparing an inventory of SEA equipment available and post on central site.</p> <p>Consider developing a board standard for sensory rooms. Some jurisdictions have already considered the key characteristics for such spaces.²⁸</p> <p>Consider soliciting funding from major businesses/ industry as sponsors for these areas, since the cost of up-keep of materials can be prohibitive.</p> <p>Consider the type of training that supports the specific use of equipment in these locations and standards for maintaining upkeep and use.</p>
<p>15. The current rate of SIP claims submitted by the UCDSB is extremely low.</p>	
<p>Stakeholder Comments</p>	<p>Options for Consideration</p>
<p>We have very few SIP claims.</p> <p>The time and effort we dedicate to prepare claims does not give results needed.</p> <p>Even the claims we resubmitted that were funded last year did not come back funded to the same extent.</p>	<p>Reach out to successful Boards to train staff in the preparation of SIP claims.</p> <p>Reduce paperwork by providing efficient electronic templates.</p> <p>Ensure timelines for schools to prepare claims are adequate.</p> <p>Provide a short-term SIP team to support this process after schools and support personnel have supplied their input.</p>

²⁸ See: Sensory Rooms Serve Students in Crisis. *ACSD Education Update*, 61, 4 (April 2019). At: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education-update/apr19/vol61/num04/Sensory-Rooms-Serve-Students-in-Crisis.aspx>

16. Access to community resources are sporadic and inconsistent.	
Stakeholder Comments	Options for Consideration
<p>We have great community support and collaboration.</p> <p>We have very little community support. Students are sent back to school too early because the agency says they cannot provide support without parental involvement or that the case is too extreme for them.</p>	<p>Planned outreach using integrated service model with all partners will be helpful.</p> <p>Consider if a dedicated liaison staff to support parents may be necessary for the short term, as part of transition planning.</p>

The following recommendations, school based or systemic, although at times challenging to consider, will, over time, alleviate resource and financial pressures currently impacting the Board as well as provide effective, relevant programming and support to ALL students.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. That the Board enhances its annual Communications Plan so to position the UCDSB as the board of choice for excellence in education for ALL students.
2. That the Director of Education appoint an Implementation Working Group featuring a cross section of central and school-based staff whose expertise aligns with the key operational components identified in this report.
3. That the Senior leadership team establish a board-wide professional development plan to provide quality program planning and interventions to respond to the needs of the students with behavior exceptionalities and the students on the Autism Spectrum.
4. That the Board implement a family of schools "Power Pilot" which includes one secondary and two elementary schools (one focused on primary division, one focused on junior division) to test a multi-disciplinary team approach to program planning, intervention and support and that the Board create an experienced system-based team to support the pilot schools.

<p>5. That the Senior leadership team establish a plan to refresh the knowledge and use of Universal Design - Differentiated Instruction -Tiered intervention. That the schools review the use of Individual Education Plans in light of differentiated instruction.</p>
<p>6. That the Board implement a customized training/coaching requirement to ensure a greater quality and consistency of service delivery for the influx of students on the autism spectrum, as well as for serving students in the areas of behavior, mental health and addictions. Alternatively, a fee for service agreement with an external agency rich in these human resources, could dramatically reduce the pressures within the school district to ensure effective support.</p>
<p>7. That the Board approve the establishment and resourcing of school based and or regional designated classrooms to meet the needs of hardest to serve students. That the Board prepare a policy, setting standards for establishing and equipping sensory rooms.</p>
<p>8. That the Board develop a plan to reduce the number of support staff incrementally as per existing restrictions. That the Board review and refine its hiring processes to reflect the needs of the system and schools.</p>
<p>9. That the Senior leadership team reassess the wellness/special education resource chart to link services closely connected to school with the education component and, to re-evaluate positions on the Special Education organization chart in order to maximize the availability of PSSPs in the schools.</p>
<p>10. That the Senior leadership team engage in an internal capacity building exercise wherein all individuals wishing to contribute their specific skillset and expertise to supporting new models for the delivery of Special Education in the district are recognized and utilized by the system.</p>
<p>11. That the Board designate qualified individuals to supporting students on the Autism Spectrum and engage in a dialogue with the Geneva Centre to provide customized training in preparation for September and establish an accredited training course with the Geneva Centre for the board staff. That the Board reach out to the community partner agencies that have a specific mandate to serve those with Autism.</p>
<p>12. That the Board engage in the services of social workers to support schools dealing with an increase in aggressive behaviors and addictions. Fee for service agreements may assist here.</p>

13. That the Board initiate programming for life skills areas where required and deemed beneficial, within the IEPs that are designed for students in the UCDSB.

14. That the Board appoint a short-term SIP/SEA team to support the claim process, and to coordinate a less labour intensive and more efficient SIP process.

15. That the Board prepare a policy, setting standards for establishing and equipping sensory room spaces that have been / will be established in schools within the UCDSB.

The Power Pilot Models

The Power Pilot Models described below offer two (2) possible options to consider to better meet the needs of the highest risk students and alleviate the Board's financial burden.

The Power Pilot Model (1)

A commitment to students with behavior exceptionalities - Implementation Plan

Step 1. Identify exact number of students with this profile in the board. Where are they congregated? Which level? Are the students IPRCd? Which assessments are needed to support the profile e.g. medical?

Step 2. Determine an elementary and secondary school in family of schools willing to engage in the Power Pilot self contained hub. Which resources and programs are already in place? Which resources need to be added? Are further assessments needed? Which training is needed? Which space is required?

Step 3. Establish a dedicated school support resource team which ideally would include the Principal of Special Education, a psychological associate, a behaviorist and a school support counsellor. Determine and schedule training needs for all individuals interacting with the students. Connect with local social service agencies.

Step 4. Determine appropriate programs and strategies, resource staff roles.

Step 5. Meet with the family to communicate the program model.

Step 6. Implement the Power Pilot.

Step 7. Provide ongoing support, monitoring, data collecting, evaluating and reporting to Superintendent of Special Education and Family of Schools Superintendent.

The Power Pilot Model (2)

A commitment to the students on the Autism Spectrum – Implementation Plan

Step 1. Identify exact number of students with this profile in the board. Where are they congregated? Which level? Are the students IPRCd? Which assessments are needed to support the profile?

Step 2. Determine an elementary school in family of schools willing to engage in the Power Pilot self contained hub. Which resources and programs are already in place? Which resources need to be added? Are further assessments needed? Which training is needed? Which space is required?

Step 3. Establish a dedicated school support resource team which ideally would include the Principal of Special Education, a psychological associate, a speech and language pathologist, an ABA therapist, a behaviorist and a school support partner. Determine and schedule training needs for all individuals interacting with the students. Connect with local therapeutic agencies.

Step 4. Determine appropriate programs and strategies, resource staff roles.

Step 5. Meet with the family to communicate the program model.

Step 6. Implement the Power Pilot.

Step 7. Provide ongoing support, monitoring, data collecting, evaluating and reporting to Superintendent of Special Education and the Family of Schools Superintendent.

APPENDIX A

Stakeholder Questions

SEAC Focus Group:

1. What do you think Special Education programs and services means?
2. How does our board meet the needs of our exceptional students? Are we doing the right things?
3. What steps – if any- do you think we can implement to modernize our service delivery to our exceptional students?
4. In your opinion, as a SEAC member charged with ensuring that all students get the best learning experience, what should be a priority going forward?
5. If you had one wish as a SEAC member, what would it be?

Superintendent and System Principals Focus Group:

1. What do you value and appreciate about your board’s current approach in special education?
2. What are some trends that you feel have emerged in your district?
3. What staff training or resources would be necessary to respond to these trends?
4. What are students, parents/guardians, staff, community, SEAC trustees saying about your programs and services?
5. Are there other program models that should be considered in response to these trends?
6. What advice do you have for how your board can continue to serve the students with special needs within the parameters of financially sustainable options?
7. If you had one wish with regards to special education services in your board, what would it be?

Trustee Focus Group:

1. What do you value and appreciate about your board’s current approach in special education?
2. What are students, parents/guardians, staff, community, SEAC, trustees, saying about your programs and services?
3. As an elected trustee, charged with the learning experience of **all** students, what should be a priority going forward?
4. What advice do you have for how your board can continue to serve the students with special needs within the parameters of financially sustainable options?
5. If you had one wish with regards to special education services in your board, what would it be?

UCDSB Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Focus Group:

1. What do you think Special Education programs and services means?
2. How does our board meet the needs of our exceptional students? Are we doing the right things?
3. What are some trends that you feel have emerged in special education in our board?
4. What steps- if any- do you think we can implement to modernize our service delivery to our exceptional students?
5. In your opinion, as a PIC member, what should be our priority in special education going forward?
6. If you had one wish as a PIC member, what would it be?

Labour Executives' Focus Group (CUPE/ OSSTF/ ETFO/ PSSP):

1. Are there topics you would like to discuss today?
 2. Is there an elephant in the room?
-
3. What do you think special education programs and services means?
 4. What do you value and appreciate about the UCDSB's approaches in special education?
 5. a) What trends is your membership saying it is seeing in special education? b) What are your members' needs in light of these trends?
 6. What advice do you have for how the UCDSB can continue to serve students with special needs within the parameters of financially sustainable options?
 7. What should be the UCDSB's priority going forward? How can your membership support the board?
 8. If you had one wish for your membership with regard to special education services in the UCDSB, what would it be?

APPENDIX B

Summary of School Visits (8 Elementary Sites / 5 Secondary Sites)

Meeting Date	Location
January 30,2019	North Grenville District High School Kemptville
	South Branch Elementary School Kemptville
	Oxford-on-Rideau Public School Kemptville
February 19, 2019	Chimo Elementary School Smiths Falls
	Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute - Smiths Falls
	Duncan J. Schoular Public School Smiths Falls
February 25, 2019	Westminster Public School Brockville
February 26, 2019	Eamer's Corners Public School Cornwall
	Cornwall Collegiate & Vocational School - Cornwall
	Bridgewood Public School Cornwall
February 27,2019	Thousand Island Secondary School

February 28, 2019	Rockland High School Rockland
	Rockland Public School

Summary of Focus Group Meetings: January 2019 to March 2019

Meeting Date	Location	Participants
January 30,2019	Kemptville	School Administrator (principals) Focus Group.
	Kemptville	Special Education Leadership Team including Dr. Alison Inglis, Dr. David Armstrong (Chief Psychologists)
February 19, 2019	Smiths Falls	UCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
February 25, 2019	Brockville	UCDSB Superintendents and System Principals
February 27, 2019	Smiths Falls	UCDSB Trustee Working Group
March 21, 2019	Brockville	UCDSB Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)
March 21, 2019	Brockville	Labour Executives – UCDSB Local: CUPE; OSSTF; ETFO; PSSP.
March 28, 2019	Teleconference	Special Education Leadership Team- Superintendent of Special Education Ron Ferguson, Principal of Special Education Debbie Banks, vice-principal of Special Education Julie Symonds.

APPENDIX C

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Appendix D

Biographies of Shirley Rocque and Moira Sinclair

Shirley Rocque, OCT

Shirley Rocque was born and raised in Northern Ontario where she lived until 2000. Shirley began her career in education in 1973 when she graduated from the Ecole normale de Sudbury/Sudbury Teachers' College. She earned her BA, BEd and MEd from Lakehead University between 1984 and 1994. Shirley completed her Supervisory Officer Certification in 1993. Other credentials can be found on the Ontario College of Teacher's website.

Shirley considers herself a life-long learner with a strong commitment to making education work for all students. One of Shirley's mottos is: "There is always a way." Her dedication to students with special needs was evident in her many years as provincial co-lead for special education with the Ontario Ministry of Education. Her experiences also include teaching at the elementary, secondary, college and university levels. Throughout her career, Shirley held elementary and secondary principalships as well as superintendent, Education Officer and manager positions with the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Since her retirement in 2012, Shirley continues to be active in the community serving on boards and volunteering her time to support children and youth. She currently chairs the Board of Directors of youturn Youth Support Services.

Moira Sinclair OCT

Moira Sinclair hails from Scotland UK, where she entered the field of teaching after a 4 year Education Program at the University of Edinburgh (Moray House). Moira taught in Scotland before immigrating to Canada to take up a position in teaching with the City of York Board of Education, now amalgamated with Toronto DSB. While in Canada she earned a BA (Psychology major) from York in 1979 and over the years earned many Additional Qualifications Courses in the areas of Special Education, Physical & Health Education and Guidance to name a few, culminating in Principal's Certification in 1984. Other credentials can be found on the College of Teachers website.

Moira was fortunate to work in a variety of roles in her teaching career including classroom based, resource based, and team-based teaching. (In urban & rural areas). She served as a Consultant in Student Services Department in the City of York Board for 12 years in both Panels, before entering school administration roles in the Elementary panel in 1991.

Moira has always been a team player with a strong commitment to making education work for all students and their families. She worked throughout her career with multi-disciplinary teams, and interagency and inter-ministerial programs to endeavor to create a holistic approach to whatever was required. For the last 14 years before retiring from full time work Moira was an Education Officer and Manager in the Toronto Regional Office of the Ontario Ministry of Education. In the role of Education Officer, she served as provincial co-lead for special education with her Francophone counterpart and as such worked with a number of Divisions within the Ministry of Education as well as across Ministries. Moira has also taught Special Education Courses at York & U of T and provided much expertise in the

area of the Behaviour Exceptionality. While at the Ministry she was seconded to an Education Officer role to establish the Early Years initiative to Full Day Kindergarten.

Since her retirement in 2012 Moira continues to be an active participant in the Ontario Council of Exceptional Children in 2 of their subdivisions, OCASE & OCCBD as well as the local Chapter, serves on Boards in her community and has been involved in short term assignments such as chairing SEABS. She enjoys hiking, theatre, reading and travel.