

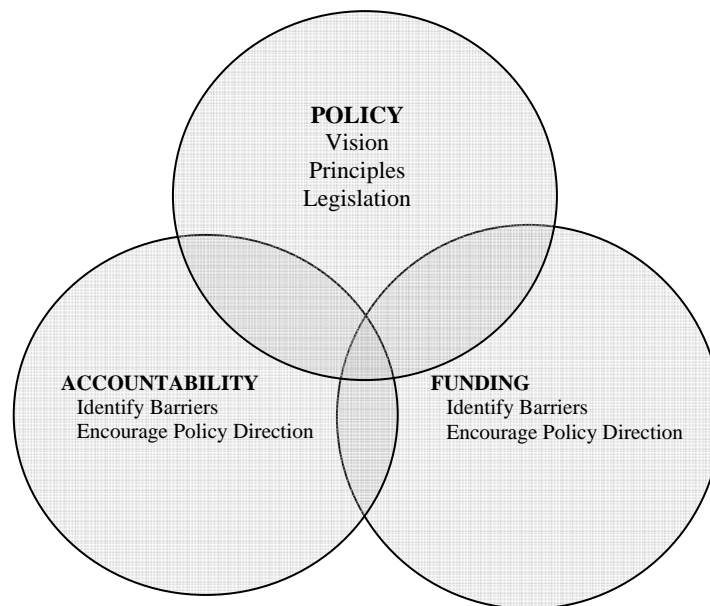
**A Summary of Key Information and Issues Regarding  
Policy, Accountability and Funding  
for Special Education in Alberta**

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November 2008**

## OVERVIEW

The author was contracted by Alberta Education to provide a brief background on the current status of Alberta's policy, accountability measures and funding distribution for special education, and to identify issues in each of these three areas. Access was given to a wide range of department documents.

Although separable from a conceptual point of view, policy, accountability and funding are, and should be, inter-connected. Policy sets the direction and the destination. Accountability measures provide periodic checks along the way to see what progress has been made, and funding provides the needed resources through a rational process. Systems work well when there is congruence across all three components. The figure below illustrates the interconnection between policy, accountability and funding.



It would seem that policy is the logical starting point and that accountability and funding should follow and be used to support policy direction. In complex systems however there is a tendency for decisions to be made on an ad hoc basis or independently without considering compatibility with the other components. It is important to identify where congruence is lacking across policy, accountability and funding so it can be addressed. As policy changes are made, there is usually a need to change accountability and funding so they remain congruent and support one another.

This paper places an emphasis on policy and policy issues while also providing an assessment of the accountability and funding components.

## A. POLICY

Public policy refers to *a governing set of principles given force and effect by elected officials in order to meet recognized public needs. Policy is made in the name of “the public” and is interpreted and implemented by both public and private actors. Policy sets out what government intends to do and chooses not to do.* Policy in this form is typically facilitative in nature and describes the direction that government or Alberta Education wants to take (e.g., school choice).

Alberta Education also develops directional policies for the education system for early childhood services through grade 12 (ECS-12). The Alberta Policy Classification Project defines policy as an outcomes-based statement that contains a rationale and is a requirement for the ECS-12 system, but leaves it up to school authorities to determine how the policy should be implemented (e.g., school authorities provide English as a Second Language - ESL - programming).

### Current Status

#### Legislation

Alberta Education policy starts with the *School Act*. Most of the provisions of the *Act* apply to all school authorities and all students and children. There are a number of Sections that specifically address special education.

**School Act** Current special education policy is reflected in key legislation, in particular, Section 47 of the *School Act* states:

*47(1) A board may determine that a student is, by virtue of the student’s behavioural, communicational, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics, or a combination of those characteristics, a student in need of a special education program.*

*(2) Subject to section 48, a student who is determined by a board to be in need of a special education program is entitled to have access to a special education program provided in accordance with this Act.*

*(3) Before a board places a student in a special education program it shall*

- (a) consult with the parent of that student, and*
- (b) where appropriate, consult with the student.*

Other sections of the *Act* relevant to special education are:

- Section 8 - Right of access to education – sets out the age and citizenship/immigration requirements for students who have a right of access to education in Alberta.
- Section 44 – Resident student – establishes that a student is a resident student of the board in which the student’s parent resides.

- Section 45 - Responsibility to students – establishes that school boards must provide an education program to all of its resident students.
- Section 48 - Special Needs Tribunal – establishes that a Tribunal hears matters referred to it by boards when a board determines that the special needs of a particular student cannot be met in an education program provided by the board.
- Section 123 - Appeal to Board – sets out the right of a parent to appeal a decision which significantly affects the education of a student made by an employee of the board to the board.
- Section 124 - Review by the Minister – establishes that the Minister of Education may hear appeals from a decision of a board related to the placement of a student in a special education program.
- Section 125 - Powers on Review – sets out that the Minister may review a matter under section 124 in whatever manner the Minister considers appropriate and may make whatever decision the Minister considers appropriate.

Provincial policy, legislation and government actions (including those of school boards) related to children and students with special education needs must consider, and be congruent with, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The government, public school boards and private schools are subject to the *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act*. In particular, all of these entities or school authorities must not discriminate on the grounds of physical or mental disability when providing education services.

Alberta has an array of school authority types:

- *Jurisdiction*: public and separate publicly elected school boards. A board must provide an education program to each of its resident students as described in section 45 of the School Act.
- *Francophone Regional Authority*: based on an elected board by electors who have Francophone rights under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- *Charter School*: operated by a registered society or non-profit company under section 31 of the School Act. Charter schools accept students who meet the requirements of the school's charter as approved by the Minister of Education.
- *Accredited Funded Private School and Designated Special Education Private School (SDEP)*: operated by a registered society or non-profit company under the Private Schools Regulation section 1(e), they may charge tuition fees and choose students in accordance with their selection process and criteria.
- *Home Education* is also an option for Alberta families.

### **Alberta Education Policies and Standards**

The annual *Special Education Coding Criteria* provides more detailed definition for what the *School Act* considers “a student in need of a special education program.” The coding criteria establish sixteen diagnostic disability categories, generally based on a medical diagnosis, although documentation of the impact of the condition on schooling is also required.

Alberta Education presently has three policies that refer to special education:

- *Special Education* states that “school authorities are required to provide special education programs based on Individualized Program Plans (IPPs) designed to meet the educational needs of identified exceptional students.”
- *Educational Placement of Students with Special Needs* states that “educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards, in consultation with students, parents/ guardians and school staff.”
- *Services for Students and Children* states that “school authorities will work together with members of the community to meet the needs of students and children who are "at risk" or who have special needs.

The requirements for the delivery of special education in Alberta are set out in *Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004* and three associated documents: *Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education*, *Accommodating Students with Exceptional Needs in Charter Schools* and *Requirement for Special Education in Accredited-Funded Private Schools*. The documents address requirements relating to:

- Access (informed consent, identification, assessment, specialized assessment, right of access to records, coordinated services)
- Appropriateness (professional standards, parent involvement in decision making, placement, individualized program planning, implementation and evaluation)
- Accountability (school authority policies and procedures, reporting to parents, program monitoring and evaluation, participation in provincial assessments)
- Appeals (special education appeals)

In addition to the above, there are at least fifty other documents that provide varying degrees of direction for special education in the province. These include the annual *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 1* and the annual *Funding Manual for School Authorities*. The province also issues many special education programming guides such as the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series.

## **Policy Issues**

Setting or changing policy does not happen in a vacuum. Ideally, policy is developed within a framework that provides a vision and the principles of the desired state, rather than responding only to issues of the time. Policy decisions, and indeed accountability and funding decisions, should move special education toward the desired state and be congruent with the principles. There are many policy issues in special education across Canada and across nations. Discussions over the past few years have identified a number of concerns and issues related to policy for special education in Alberta.

*Issue: What is the vision of special education in Alberta? What are, or should be, the guiding principles?*

- Does Alberta Education have a clear and current vision of special education in Alberta with supporting principles?

**Issue:** *Consistency in policies, requirements and reporting structures for special education.*

- To what degree should policies, requirements and reporting structures for special education be different from those for general education?
- Can disability rights be protected if there are no provincial special education policies, requirements and reporting structures?
- Should policies, requirements and reporting structures be the same wherever a student receives schooling, including with respect to:
  - School board, private school, charter school, home education, or
  - ECS, elementary, junior high or senior high school.

**Issue:** *Clarification of terms (special needs, special education, inclusion, integration and disabilities) and a clear definition of what we mean by special education needs.*

- What is special about special education?
- Who should be included in special education? Should the focus be only disabilities, or should gifted and talented be included?
- What proportion of the population has special education needs?

**Issue:** *Appropriateness of labels and categories for identifying students.*

- Do current provincial categories and labels, which are based on a medical model, provide useful information for education?
- Without categories and labels, how can the province track students who have special education needs, and, does the province need to track these students in some way?

**Issue:** *Appropriateness of the outcomes of the Alberta Programs of Study for students with special education needs.*

- Are there some students with special education needs (i.e., those with cognitive disabilities) for whom the outcomes of the Alberta Programs of Study are inappropriate?

**Issue:** *Differing interpretations of what is meant by an inclusive model of schooling.*

- What definition does Alberta wish to adopt?
- What will be the impact of the definition Alberta chooses?

**Issue:** *Inconsistency within the delivery of special education programming across the province.*

- To what degree does local decision making affect the consistency of programming across the province?
- Can large urban areas and rural, remote areas be expected to offer comparable special education programming?

A review of the literature identified a number of other policy issues or controversies regarding special education which are also relevant to Alberta.

**Single or Parallel Legislation and Policies** Many school authorities are struggling with the question of whether special education should retain a separate identity or be fused with general education. Some countries/states have instituted laws and policies that make students with disabilities no different than any other students, while other countries/states have retained parallel systems for general and special education (Jakubeky undated, Ferguson 2008).

*Issue: Does Alberta want to maintain a separate special education identity, or have a unified view of education for all students?*

**Assessing Disabilities** Some researchers argue that eligibility assessments that are based on a disability category have little relevance to the planning and delivery of instruction and result in a disproportionate representation of children from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds in special education programs (Hartman and Nagle 2004). In comparing the delivery of special education in Alberta and in Finland, Jahnukainen (2008) states:

*The current Alberta model is based on a “psycho-educational” disability model with high pressure on specialized assessment and a complex coding system. In Finland, special education eligibility is based on observed educational needs and it is construed as difficulties rather than disabilities related to learning. As a consequence, though both countries have a relatively high proportion of students in special education, the pressure in Alberta is on students with severe disabilities and in Finland, the major part of the special support is delivered as preventative actions for student with mild difficulties.*

There is a belief in some Alberta schools that students cannot receive programming which addresses their difficulties unless they have a complex psycho-educational assessment, diagnosis and disability label.

*Issue: How can student difficulties be addressed most efficiently to meet their needs?*

**Placement** Perhaps the most pervasive discussion in special education relates to the concept of inclusion and where students with special needs should receive their schooling. The conviction by many is that children with disabilities are better served with age peers in the community school rather than in specialized and segregated schools and classes (UNESCO 1994, Barton and Armstrong 2007, Ferguson 2008). Winzer's (2002) arguments for educating students with special needs in general education classes include:

- Educational equity demands equal educational treatment and equal opportunities to learn with one's peers.
- All students need to learn in natural environments in which they are provided age-appropriate models for behavior and communication, and meaningful curriculum.

Timmons (2007) notes that even where there is a general acceptance of inclusive education in principle on the grounds of social justice, few Canadian educators feel adequately prepared in

terms of professional preparation, special education support and expertise and resources. Studies indicate that placement in general education actually may not be an acceptable alternative to parents of children with either mild or severe disabilities; advocacy groups for deaf, learning disabled and gifted are hesitant to embrace inclusive education as they see the potential of losing significant gains they have made in securing resources for their children (Polsgrove, 2004, Timmons, 2007). Others argue that some students with disabilities benefit from a more structured and clearly defined environment than general education classrooms provide and may find general education more constricting than enabling (Ackerman undated, Zera 2000).

Some researchers have noted a recent counter-movement against inclusion as some students with disabilities can infringe on other students education by either monopolizing a teacher's attention or by placing peers and teachers in physical danger (Armstrong, 2007, Slee, 2007).

*Issue: Should Alberta policy encourage/require the participation of students with special needs in general education classrooms in neighborhood schools, or encourage/require a continuum of placements?*

**Access to general education curriculum** Some researchers take the position that access to the general curriculum and learning the same educational content is the only way students with disabilities can be as successful as their non disabled peers, while others note that teachers are concerned that access to the general curriculum may come at the cost of teaching critical functional and independent living skills (Hardman and Nagle, 2004).

*Issue: Is there one curriculum for all students in Alberta?*

**Disability classifications** Some disabilities can be measured and defined objectively, for example there is usually agreement whether a student is blind. But many disabilities are less well defined and/or have many differing definitions (e.g., learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, giftedness and emotional/behavioural disabilities). Determination of these disabilities requires considerable professional judgment and subjective analysis so results vary widely. There is wide variation in the number of students identified by different countries, ranging from 0% in Iceland to 26% in Finland, 11-12% in the United States and 4-5% in most European countries (Ackerman undated, Ferguson (2008).

Traditionally, difficulties with school and education have been considered to lie within the student, due to a disability, difference or disinterest. Ferguson (2008) notes that UNESCO research speaks of the importance of shifting approaches to identifying disability away from "diagnoses" toward careful assessment of the interaction between the student and the school environment. It has been suggested that school practices create barriers for many students, and much more attention should be directed at eliminating or reducing these barriers than diagnosing the student's disabilities. One approach suggested is the SETT framework where instructional planning actively considers the relationship among the student, the environment, the task and the tools (Zabala, undated).

*Issue: Is the current emphasis on disability classifications a help or a hindrance to students and schools?*

**Individualized Program Plans** A cornerstone of special education over the past 30 or more years has been the use of the Individualized Program Plan (IPP), also known as Individual Education Plan (IEP) for any student identified as needing special education. The IPP records the assessed needs and strengths of the student, sets annual measurable goals and objectives and identifies required classroom accommodations for the student.

Many professionals and parents state that the IPP has become mechanistic, concerned more with procedure and compliance than with results. One position is that the IPP be eliminated altogether because it has failed to meet its original intent as either an effective planning document or accountability tool. Some argue that the general curriculum establishes the goals and objectives and so all that is needed is a statement of the supports and accommodations provided so the student can access the general curricular outcomes (Hardman and Nagle (2004).

***Issue:** Should the current IPP format be required for every student who requires special education programming?*

## **B. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability is the obligation to answer for the execution of assigned responsibilities. Alberta Education and school authorities are responsible for ensuring that the highest quality of education is provided for students and are accountable pursuant to the Alberta Government Accountability Act.

### **Current Status**

The Renewed Funding Framework (RFF) gives boards more freedom in how they use their funding while increasing the need to demonstrate measurable results. The Accountability Pillar of the RFF was created to give Alberta school boards a consistent way to measure their success and assess progress using a broad spectrum of measures including high school completion rates, diploma exam results, provincial achievement test results, and parent, student and teacher satisfaction with several measures associated with the quality of education.

For most of the measures, results for special education are not disaggregated from general education. School authorities report numbers of students with special education needs' codes in their September 30<sup>th</sup> Student Information Systems (SIS) submissions.

**Provincial Achievement Tests** Most students with special education needs participate in Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs), and Diploma Exams (DIPs), but the results are not disaggregated and reported separately for special education. Analysis indicates that a significant portion of some special education student groupings do not perform near the level of non-special education students on these tests.

**Grade Level of Achievement (GLA)**, recently introduced as an approach to enhanced program planning and evaluation, records a teacher's judgment of a students' academic progress based on the learner outcomes in a subject area after the course for a specific grade level has been completed. Students with special education needs are reported as being either at grade level, above grade level or below grade level or, for students not on a graded curriculum as achieving IPP goals in three areas - foundation, academic readiness and life skills. While GLA data have been collect from only 60% of Alberta schools to date, results are more favourable across special education student groupings.

**Certificate of School Completion** A certificate of school completion, initiated June 2008, may be awarded for students with cognitive and other delays. In 2008, 192 certificates were issued.

**Parent Satisfaction Survey** One measure which focuses specifically on special education is a parent satisfaction survey of parents of students with severe disabilities, but it does not include parents of other students with special education needs. While the results tend to show findings similar to those of parents of non-special education students, they point to concerns with respect to quality of education, curriculum, student expectations and responsiveness.

**Annual Education Results Report Information** Expenditures and achievements in special education are a part of the annual planning and reporting cycle and included in the Three-Year Education Plan and Annual Education Results Report (AERR). There is no requirement for separate reporting of results for students with special education needs as a component of the Accountability Pillar measures.

The requirement for reporting special education expenditures as part of the Audited Financial Statement was discontinued August 31, 2007.

**Special Education Programming Standards Reviews** monitor the extent to which special education programming in school jurisdictions is in compliance with the Standards for Special Education. The reviews check student records to confirm if students meet the provincial special education coding criteria including: current diagnostic assessment reports, statement of levels of achievement, a listing of the supports provided and an annual Individualized Program Plan (IPP).

A study of Special Education Programming Standards Reviews to date found:

- School jurisdictions took them seriously and put a considerable amount of effort into ensuring student files were current and accurate.
- The majority of school jurisdictions welcomed feedback regarding their policies, procedures and practices in special education.
- School jurisdictions created focused and effective special education action plans to address the required changes in the review reports.

**Monitoring Severe Disabilities** occurs in a number of ways.

- The documentation for individual students with severe disabilities in private schools is monitored annually, and students may be approved for a two or three year period.
- Jurisdictions may request an audit of their students with severe disabilities if they believe that they are serving more students than in their profile.
- In 2007, files for all students with severe disabilities in school jurisdictions were reviewed in the Severe Disabilities Profile Review.

**Teacher Certification** Alberta, like most other jurisdictions, does not require that teachers have courses in special education in order to receive Alberta Teaching Certification or to teach students with special education needs. However, the Teaching Quality Standard requires teachers to ensure:

- *They know how (including when and how to engage others) to identify students' different learning styles and ways students learn.*
- *They understand the need to respond to differences by creating multiple paths to learning for individuals and groups of students, including students with special learning needs.*
- *They understand the need to vary their plans to accommodate individuals and groups of students... (and) know which strategies are appropriate to help different students achieve different outcomes.*

## **Accountability Issues**

Discussions over the past few years have identified a number of concerns and issues related to accountability for special education in Alberta.

**Issue:** *The effect on programming of rigorous requirements for identification.*

- Is a disproportionate amount of time and money being dedicated to documenting disabilities to justify coding? Would resources be more effectively directed to programming for all students who are performing poorly?
- Are educators themselves the best professionals to determine whether students have special education needs, rather than depending on psychologists and health professionals to document disabilities? What supports would be needed to effect this shift in diagnostic and programming focus?

**Issue:** *Appropriateness for special education students of our overall markers of success.*

- Should the same accountability measures be used for all students?
- Should accountability results for students with special needs be reported separately from other students?
- What is appropriate programming for students with special needs, and is there a need to monitor whether school authorities are providing appropriate programming?
- Is the Individualized Program Plan (IPP) being implemented effectively and efficiently as a key programming support mechanism?

**Issue:** *Challenges of interagency collaboration to deliver services.*

- How can other Ministries, programs, agencies work collaboratively and be accountable for the role they play?

## C. FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

### Current Status

In September 2004, Alberta introduced the *Renewed Funding Framework* (RFF), giving school boards the flexibility and freedom to meet the unique needs of their students and communities. The RFF provides Base Instruction funding based on student enrolment and additional funding to meet the needs of specific student groups and for certain geographic or population challenges. The *Funding Manual for School Authorities 2008-09* states:

*Funding for ECS-12 education is based on the principles of equity, flexibility and accountability. The allocations identified in this Manual represent a mechanism that equitably distributes provincial funding to support the education of all Alberta children and students from Early Childhood Services (ECS) to Grade 12. Unless otherwise specified, school authorities have maximum flexibility in determining how these funds are used to best meet local needs.*

*Funding is provided to school authorities with the expectation that the school authority will offer the necessary programs or services to meet the needs of all funded children/students. It is also expected that school authorities will comply with all relevant government legislation, policy, regulations, and standards when applying for funding. School authorities are accountable to meet the education needs of all their students and children, for the results achieved and for the use of resources.*

Alberta funds school authorities for students with special needs in a number of ways.

**Mild/Moderate Disabilities/Delays and Gifted and Talented** Alberta does not provide designated funding for grade 1 to 12 students who have mild/moderate disabilities or who are gifted and talented. High school students with special education needs (grant code 500 or 550) receive funding for 35 Credit Enrollment Units (CEUs) and additional funding is provided for credits completed in the summer for students identified with the 500 grants code. Jurisdictions have the flexibility to meet these program requirements from within their total Funding Framework allocation. Designated funding is provided for eligible ECS children with mild/moderate disabilities/delays or who are gifted and talented.

**Severe Disabilities** School jurisdictions receive severe disabilities funding based on a profile of historical numbers of approved students. The per-student rate for 2008-2009 is \$16,465. Accredited funded private schools and charter schools receive funding at the same rate, but it is based on the number of annually approved students.

**Designated Special Education Private Schools** There are two funding rates for students with mild/moderate disabilities attending Designated Special Education Private Schools (DSEPS): \$10,473 for students whose parents consulted with their resident school board prior to placement and \$6,523 for students whose parents did not consult with their resident school board. For students with severe disabilities, DSEPS receive a base instruction rate of \$6,523 for each student plus the severe disabilities funding of \$16,465 per student. DSEPS may also charge tuition.

Alberta funds other programs which offer support to schools for children and students with special education needs.

- *Student Health* is a cross-ministry initiative that provides regional inter-sectoral partnerships with funding for health-related services in schools such as physical and occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, audiology and emotional/behavioural supports. Funding is administered through Alberta Education.
- *Children and Youth with Complex Needs* is a cross-ministry initiative that provides regional inter-sectoral partnerships with funding for children and youth who require extraordinary care and service from more than one ministry or service sector and who requires a high degree of service coordination because of the complexity and intensity of the services required
- *Regional Educational Consulting Services* is comprised of four regional centres that provide consultation, inservice and assessment services to school authorities serving students with low-incidence disabilities. School authorities purchase service from these centres at a subsidized rate (less than one-half cost). The province provides funding to these four centres which allows them to charge subsidized rates.
- *Specialized Services Students with Visual Impairments*, within the provincial Learning Resources Centre, provides specialized equipment and learning materials in Braille, large print and audio format to school authorities for students/children with visual impairments.

## **Funding Issues**

Discussions over the past few years have identified a number of concerns and issues related to funding special education in Alberta.

**Issue:** *Adequacy of special education funding.*

- Since school authorities have full flexibility in the way in which funding is used, is it possible to determine adequacy of funding for particular groups of students?
- When school authorities do not report special education expenditures or costs, how can adequacy of funding be determined?

**Issue:** *Supports for special education programming.*

- Should all supports for special education programming be the responsibility of the local school authority, or are there some supports that should be provided on a provincial level?

**Issue:** *Availability of resources across the province.*

- What can the province do to ensure all school authorities have equitable access to resources?

**Issue:** *Appropriate distribution of funding.*

- How can adequacy and equity of funding be determined in a simple and cost-effective manner, and be responsive to change?
- Should DSEPS receive a higher rate of funding than other school authorities and also be allowed to charge tuition?

A review of the literature revealed that the two most common funding issues were finding the best funding model for special education and evaluating the match between funding models and accepted criteria.

**Funding Criteria** There is general agreement in the literature on the criteria that should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a special education funding model. The model should be: understandable, predictable, flexible, adequate, have ease of reporting, allow for cost control, connect special education to general education, and be neutral in terms of identification and placement (Parrish 2006).

The research literature identifies four special education funding models and various combinations of these models: (a) percentage reimbursement of costs, (b) a pupil weighting system, (c) funding based on teachers and/or staff and (d) census based funding.

The research does not reflect support for any particular model, and many governments use a combined method. Noah and Sherman (1979) in reviewing funding systems in Europe, Canada, the United States and Australia concluded that “search for a *perfect* or *ideal* system of school finance is likely to be not only unnecessary, but futile.” The authors suggest that each country adopts its particular system of school financing as the result of a long process of adjustment and compromise to its particular context and to the major policy goals which it has favored over time.

**Incentives and Disincentives** Each funding model carries with it both planned and unplanned incentives and disincentives which directly or indirectly influence the orientation, amount and types of service provided at the local level (Parrish, 2006, Parrish and Harr 2006). Some models encourage identification of many students to generate more revenue while others discourage such identification as it spreads the available funding over more students. Some models encourage a particular placement such as a special class or special school. Greene and Forster (2002) compared states which provided block grants or census based funding with those that provided a “bounty” for identified special education students, and found that the growth in special education numbers was significantly higher in those states that funded on the basis of identified students. In a pan-Canadian study of special education funding (McBride 2004), it was found that:

- Half the provinces/territories pool revenues from local and provincial/territorial sources and redistribute on a formula basis to local school authorities with the senior government providing 100% of the funding. In the other provinces/territories, central funding comprises 48% to 78%, with local school authorities responsible for the rest.
- All but two provinces/territories include some of their funding for special education in the base allocation.
- Most provinces/territories use some form of individual student identification to allocate some portion of their special education funding, particularly for severe disabilities.
- A predominant theme across most provinces/territories is increased flexibility for local jurisdictions accompanied by enhanced mechanism for accountability for student outcomes and adherence to provincial/territorial standards for programs and services.

**Issue:** *Which of the accepted criteria for special education funding does Alberta’s funding model meet?*

**Issue:** *What are the consequences of the funding model that Alberta uses?*

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