
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

REPORT SHOWS SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IMPROVE RESULTS

VICTORIA – The first-ever report on the performance of students with special needs shows that student results are improving, though there is more work to do, Education Minister Shirley Bond said today.

“More students with special needs are meeting or exceeding expectations in reading, writing and math on the Foundation Skills Assessment than in 2000-01,” said Bond. “In fact, we’ve seen across-the-board increases from Grade 4 and 7 students with sensory disabilities, learning disabilities and behaviour disabilities.”

The report, entitled *Students with Special Needs – How Are We Doing? 2005-06*, measures the demographics and performance of students with special needs at B.C.’s public schools. Performance measures include Foundation Skills Assessment and provincial examination results, school completion rates and grade-to-grade transition rates.

“Students with special needs are making real gains and they, along with their parents and teachers, should be extremely proud of their efforts,” said Bond. “But we need to do more. We will continue to work with parents, teachers, school trustees, superintendents and principals at the Learning Roundtable to find ways to continue to improve achievement for students with special needs.”

The report focuses on students in four performance reporting groups: sensory disabilities, learning disabilities, behaviour disabilities and gifted. These groups include students with special needs who are most likely to be working toward a certificate of graduation.

The report shows:

- There are 61,277 students who have been identified as students with special needs at B.C. public schools this year – a decrease of 4,649 or seven per cent from 2001-02.
- The number of students with learning disabilities has increased by 13 per cent.
- The six-year school completion rate for students with learning disabilities has increased from 17 per cent in 2000-01 to 68 per cent in 2004-05.
- The completion rate for students with behaviour disabilities has doubled from 13 per cent, but is still only 26 per cent.
- The completion rate for students with sensory disabilities has decreased to 66 per cent from 70 in 2000-01.

“In the speech from the throne, our government asked the question: ‘How can we better help students with special needs?’” said Bond. “This report is part of the answer. School boards are accountable to the public for the achievement of students with special needs. The new report will help districts identify trends and determine where improvements are needed.”

The Province increased funding to support students with special needs at public and independent schools in 2005-06 by more than \$45 million to nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars. School districts also received \$2 million – \$1 million more than last year – for students with special needs who moved from one district to another or who were identified after the Sept. 30 final enrolment count. Operating funding for school districts will increase next year by \$20 million, and school boards are being asked to focus these additional resources on priority areas such as class size and composition.

To view the report, visit <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/achieve/spec-ed.php> online.

For information on AchieveBC, visit www.achievebc.ca online.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUND

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SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN B.C.

- Funding for all students with special needs increased by \$45.5 million to nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars in 2005-06. The \$45-million increase includes an additional \$38 million for school districts and \$7.5 million for independent schools.
- School boards now receive \$32,000 for each full-time Level 1 student, \$16,000 for each full-time Level 2 student, and \$8,000 for each full-time Level 3 student. These grants have increased by \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$2,000, respectively.
- Students in the Level 1 funding category are dependent handicapped or deaf and blind. Level 2 students are intellectually disabled, physically disabled, chronic health impaired, visually impaired, deaf or hearing impaired, or autistic. Level 3 students have intensive behaviour disorders or serious mental illness.
- Districts received \$2 million this year for students with special needs who moved from one district to another or who were identified after the Sept. 30 final enrolment count.
- The government has invested \$2.2 million more in communication technology and special equipment for students with special needs.
- The Province provides more than \$26 million a year to school districts that host provincial resource programs, which offer services to students with special needs or students who are in hospitals, treatment centres or detention centres.
- In 2002, funding of about \$230 million was rolled into school districts' annual operating grants for students with special needs who do not fall into the Level 1, 2 or 3 funding categories, such as gifted students and students with behaviour disabilities.
- This year, there are 40,393 students who fall outside the Level 1, 2 and 3 funding categories – a decrease of more than 7,600 from 2001-02. During the same time period, the basic per student allocation has increased by more than \$2,300.
- The Ministry of Education monitors the work of school boards in improving the achievement of students with special needs through district accountability contracts.

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