

Student Services Grant Pilot Project Year Three Final Report

October 2006

**Program and Student Services Branch
Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth**

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INTRODUCTION

The Student Services Grant (SSG) pilot project grew from the *Manitoba Special Education Review: Final Report* (1999) and *Follow-Up to the Manitoba Special Education Review: Proposals for Policy, Accountability and Funding Framework* (2001). These reports recommended a more flexible approach to providing supports and services to students with exceptional learning needs and changes to the current funding model to accommodate how the supports and services could be provided.

In the *Funding of Schools 2006/2007 School Year*, a new Student Services Grant was presented. This announcement signals the conclusion of the SSG pilot and marks the province-wide implementation of the new SSG beginning in the 2006/2007 school year.

The purpose of this report is to

- provide pilot divisions with a summary of the information gathered during the SSG pilot project
- outline the next steps for the Student Services Grant for the 2006/2007 school year and beyond.

THE STUDENT SERVICES GRANT (SSG) PILOT PROJECT

Purpose of the SSG Pilot Project

The primary purpose of the SSG pilot project was to enhance learning outcomes for students through improved student services planning and increased flexibility in funding. The SSG also included a data collection component and a financial reporting component.

Background

The Student Services Grant pilot project was initiated in response to the *Manitoba Special Education Review: Final Report* (1999). This report recommended that the existing model of funding students with special needs be reviewed. Concerns identified included a need to reduce the negative labeling of students in order to receive support, the need to improve outcomes for students experiencing emotional and behavioural disorders, and the need to implement best educational practices for students with diverse needs.

The *Follow-Up to the Manitoba Special Education Review: Proposals for Policy, Accountability and Funding Framework* (2001) presented possible changes to the funding process that would require changes to policy and accountability, establishment of minimum service standards, and submission of more discrete financial information, while maintaining the working partnerships between the province and school divisions. During the 2001-2002 school year, staff from the Program and Student Services Branch and the Special Education Review Initiative consulted with educational stakeholders regarding the proposed changes and a decision was made to pilot a revised funding process that addressed several recommendations from the Review.

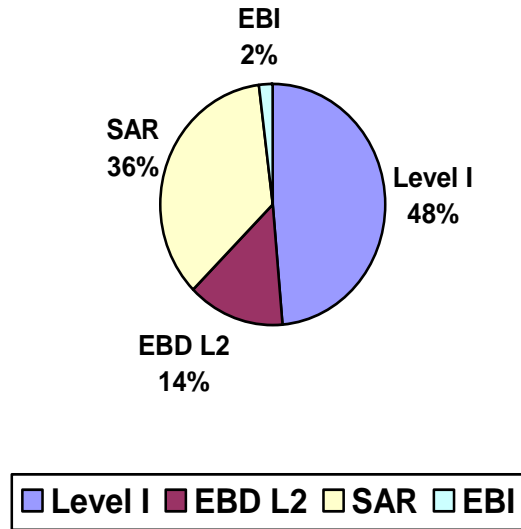
Composition of the SSG Pilot Project

The SSG pilot project combined several grants into a single grant, providing greater flexibility to school divisions in deciding how to allocate their student services dollars. It was anticipated that this flexibility would allow for better matching of services to local needs and more effective programming for students.

The following grants were included in the pilot Student Services Grant:

- Level I Special Needs
- Students-At-Risk (SAR)
- Early Behaviour Intervention (EBI) and
- Special needs funding Emotionally/Behaviourally Disordered Level II (EBD II)

The average percentage of each grant in the pilot Student Services Grant over three years is shown below:



Implementation

The Student Services Grant pilot project was implemented in the fall of 2002. This was a joint pilot involving both a revised funding approach and a new Planning in Education initiative. Originally planned as a one-year pilot project from September 2002 to June 2003, approval was obtained for a second and a third pilot year based on feedback from participating school divisions that one year was insufficient to evaluate the impact of the revised funding model.

Participating Divisions

Seven volunteer school divisions participated in the Student Services Grant pilot project:

- Border Land
- Fort La Bosse
- Garden Valley
- Mystery Lake
- Pine Creek
- St. James-Assiniboia
- Winnipeg

DATA FROM THE SSG PILOT PROJECT

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in 2002/2003, 2003/2004, and 2004/2005. The final report presents aggregated data for each type of data for the three years of the pilot.

Quantitative Survey Data

The following sections present a summary of results for the seven participating Divisions/Districts for the Student Services Grant pilot project for 2005 and 2004/2003 for comparison. The tables provide information regarding:

- School Participation
- School Attendance and Behavior Data
- School Program and Services Rating
- Students on Individualized Written Plans, Behavior Intervention Plans, and Student Specific Adaptations
- Divisional / District Student Services Profile

Provincial Results

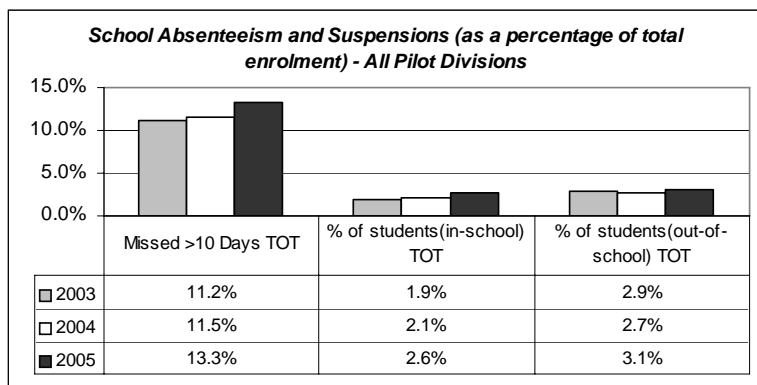
School Participation

- Seven divisions and 153 schools participated in the 2005 Student Services Grant pilot project, up 0.7% from 152 schools in 2004.

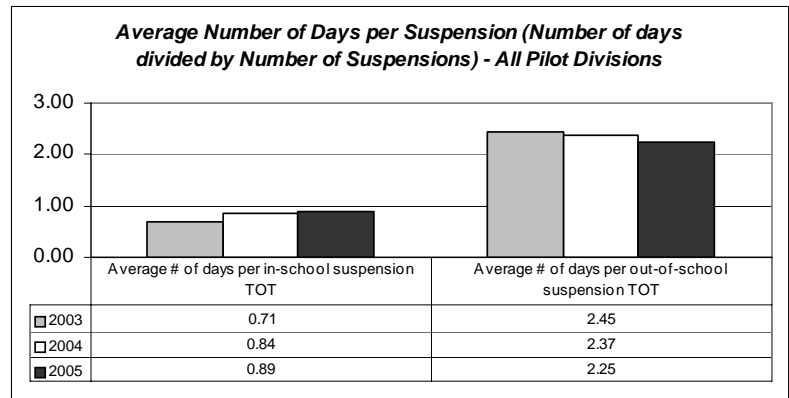
Participation	2003	2004	2005	Per cent
Division	Schools	Schools	Schools	Diff '05-'04
Border Land	17	17	16	-6.3%
Fort La Bosse	11	11	8	-37.5%
Garden Valley	8	7	7	0.0%
Mystery Lake	7	7	7	0.0%
Pine Creek	13	7	12	41.7%
St. James-Assiniboia	26	26	26	0.0%
Wpg Central District	19	19	19	0.0%
Wpg Inner City District	21	21	21	0.0%
Wpg Northern District	18	18	18	0.0%
Wpg South District	19	19	19	0.0%
Grand Total	159	152	153	0.7%

School Attendance and Behavior Data

- These data represent the percentage of students (against total enrolment) that had 10 or more absences, and were suspended in and out of school. There were small increases in all three categories



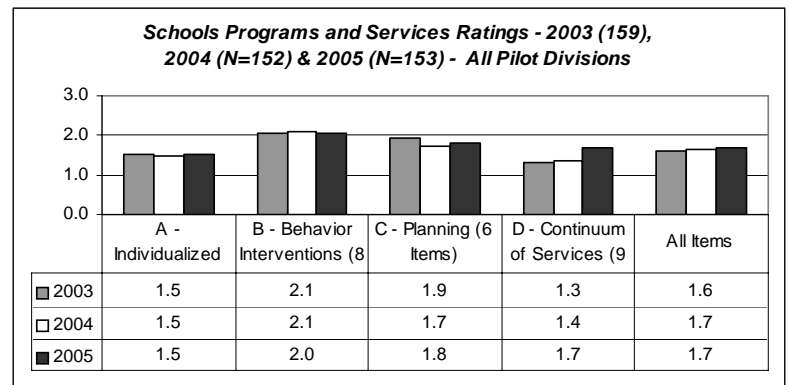
- The average number of days per suspension (number of days divided by number of suspensions) is very similar for all three years of the pilot program.



School Program and Services Rating

- School Program and Services Ratings remain similar for all three years of the pilot program. The area of *Continuum of Services* shows improvement in terms of self-reported ratings on its 9 items. Below are the schools and service ratings for individual items for the three years of the pilot program.

A summary of ratings follows on the next page.



School programs and services ratings are summarized in the table below. Respondent's average ratings (see *Rating Rubric* to the right) for each domain (Individualized Written Plans, Behaviour Interventions, Planning, and Continuum of Services) are provided for each year.

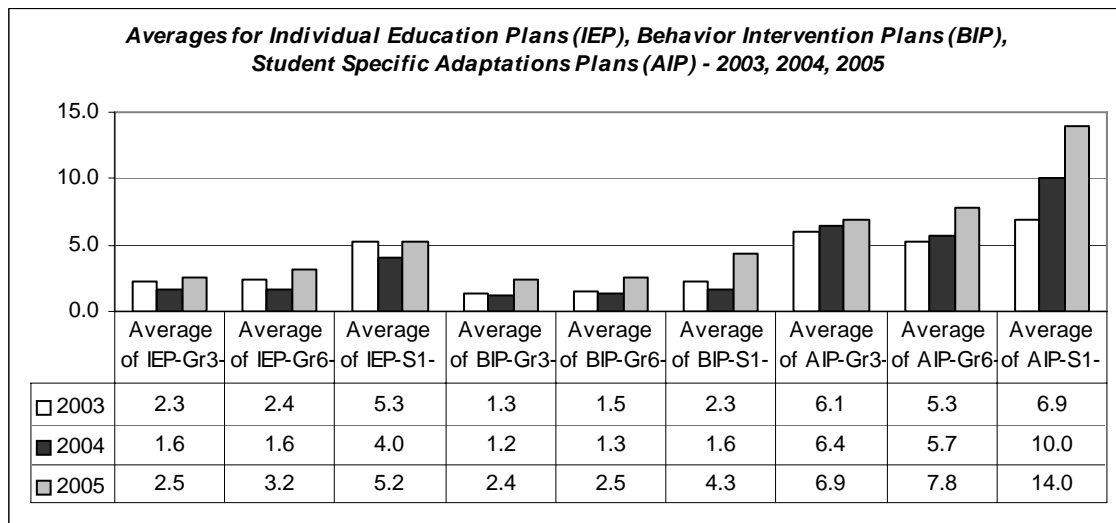
Rating Rubric
1= Always
2=Most of the time
3=Sometimes
4=Rarely
5=Never

Schools Programs and Services Rating

(N=146) Average Rate 2003	(N=142) Average Rate 2004	(N=142) Average Rate 2005		Schools Programs and Services Rating
				A - Individualized Written Plans
1.4	1.3	1.2	A1	Parents are invited to meetings to help set student outcomes in individual written plans
1.9	1.9	1.8	A2	Students (where applicable) are invited to meetings to help set student outcomes in individual written plans
1.2	1.2	1.1	A3	Individual written plans contain student specific outcomes
1.9	1.9	2.3	A4	Student specific outcomes are written in SMART format
1.5	1.5	1.4	A5	Regular review meetings with parents are held regarding individual written plans (at least 3X year)
1.3	1.2	1.2	A6	Individual written plans are reviewed by the complete team to determine progress on an annual basis
				B - Behavior Interventions
1.2	1.3	1.2	B1	Schools have a school-wide behaviour plan that was developed with input from staff, students and parents
1.4	1.4	1.6	B2	Schools integrate their school-wide behaviour plan into their school plan
2.6	2.6	2.5	B3	School professional development includes aspects of classroom management
1.4	1.3	1.3	B4	Parents are invited to meetings to help set outcomes in their child's behavioural intervention plan
1.5	1.6	1.6	B5	Students (where applicable) are invited to meetings to help set outcomes in their behavioural intervention plan
1.2	1.2	1.2	B6	Schools use positive behaviour interventions with students (e.g. positive reinforcement, social skills)
3.6	3.7	3.6	B7	Schools use suspensions to address student behavioural issues
3.3	3.5	3.3	B8	Students with severe behaviour are placed in segregated programs
				C - Planning
1.6	1.5	1.6	C1	Parents are invited to meetings to help establish outcomes for school plans
2.1	2.0	2.0	C2	Students (where appropriate) are invited to meetings to help establish outcomes for school plans
1.6	1.4	1.6	C3	Student outcomes in school plans reflect the needs of all students
2.6	2.3	2.7	C4	School outcomes are written in SMART format
2.4	1.9	1.8	C5	Schools use student outcomes data to inform the planning process
1.1	1.0	1.0	C6	Schools evaluate their school plans on an annual basis

(N=146) Average Rate 2003	(N=142) Average Rate 2004	(N=142) Average Rate 2005		Schools Programs and Services Rating
				D - Continuum of Services
				Schools use a continuum of supports and services to meet the needs of all students including:
1.2	1.2	1.2	D1	Adaptations
1.2	1.2	1.3	D2	Specialized personnel support
1.4	1.4	1.4	D3	Modified and enriched courses
1.3	1.2	1.2	D4	Individualized programming
1.9	2.0	2.1	D5	Schools offer a resource teacher model that involves a written referral and follow-up
1.4	1.3	1.3	D6	Students with learning or behavioural needs receive a complete assessment that uses a variety of assessment methods
				Schools offer early intervention programs:
1.3	1.3	1.3	D7	For learning and academic concerns
1.3	1.4	1.4	D8	For behavioural issues
1.2	1.3	1.2	D9	For physical concerns

Students on Individualized Written Plans, Behavior Intervention Plans, and Student Specific Adaptations



- In 2005, all three types of individual plans written for students with exceptional needs have shown an increase in average terms.

Qualitative Survey Data

This table summarizes survey response data collected annually for each of the three pilot years. Respondents were asked to respond to questions by selecting a number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data reported in the table below represent the percentage of respondents indicating *agree* (4) to *strongly agree* (5) to the question. In general, positive increases were observed for most questions over the course of the pilot. A blank survey form is included in Appendix A.

	Questions	2003	2004	2005	Comments
1.	The flexibility provided by the Student Services Grant assists in meeting students' needs.	36%	38%	54%	The perceived flexibility in allocating funding dollars increased over time.
2.	Meeting to discuss the pilot project with other divisions has been valuable.	32%	33%	29% [N/A-43%]	Meetings of the pilot divisions were held in the first two years of the pilot. In year three, pilot divisions met with MECY staff on a regular basis.
3.	Access to support for the project was available from the department.	46%	39%	56%	The perceived support from the department increased over time (see note above).
4.	The pilot project has encouraged us to change our approaches for the delivery of student services.	40%	50%	62%	The pilot project resulted in changes to the way service delivery options were approached.
5.	The pilot project has increased our awareness of effective practices for student services.	60%	38%	57%	Overall, the pilot project increased participants' awareness of effective practices for student services.

	Questions	2003	2004	2005	Comments
6.	The Student Services Grant Pilot has made our workload more manageable.	16%	13%	33%	The SSG reduced work associated with applications for grants; the time saved, however, may have been absorbed by planning, implementing, and reporting on school and division plans.
7.	The collection of data assisted us with planning in the area of student services.	24%	32%	50%	Data collection improved student services planning.
8.	The Student Services Grant Pilot has resulted in proactive responses for students. (e.g., positive school climate, behavioural support)	29%	38%	51%	Proactive and school-wide approaches for improving student behaviour increased significantly during the pilot.
9.	Parents and community members are more involved in the school.	0%	4%	24%	There was a substantial increase in parent participation during the pilot; however, there appears to be a need to explore ways to continue to improve it.
10.	The collection of data has improved our decision-making for student programs and services.	0%	41%	54%	Data collection improved decision making for student programs and services.
11.	The Student Services Grant Pilot will have a positive impact on student learning outcomes.	4%	33%	59%	There was a substantial increase in the perceived value of the SSG on positive learning outcomes for students.
12.	The Student Services Grant Pilot has helped direct our professional development needs.	28%	37%	51%	The SSG, perhaps from data collection and school planning, supported professional development planning.
13.	Our involvement in the Student Services Grant Pilot was helpful to our division.	60%	42%	73%	Pilot divisions viewed participation in the SSG as helpful to their school division.

Comments and observations from respondents on the qualitative data survey

The comments below were taken from the qualitative survey form. They provide some context for the responses to the questions reported above.

- The pilot has allowed us to establish common norms of operation for students with special needs and students with behavioural challenges.
- The flexibility to respond positively to school needs is tremendous. More decisions are being made by the people who know the children best – parents and teachers – at the school level. The ability to operate a Student Services budget at the school means we can constantly re-evaluate our priorities and not be bound by decisions made months earlier. We can respond to our needs as a school.
- The structure for the control of where money is allocated in school divisions needs further refining. Financial officers exercise more influence over funding than Student Service Administrators. How can Student Services Administrators be empowered to make decisions regarding allocation dollars that won't be overridden by CFOs in the budgeting process? Further training in the budgeting and divisional planning processes would benefit us.
- There is more school and teacher control. Staff has the opportunity to respond to student needs more quickly and with more focus so there is less waste of resources. This empowerment encourages teachers to problem-solve situations because the resources are at hand to implement a response. Less time is spent in application for resources, lending more time to deal with careful assessment of needs and selection of appropriate response. It would be painful and difficult to go back!
- Pilot continues to provide an opportunity for school divisions to become more proactive and responsive in meeting student needs due to increased flexibility and creativity provided through the grant. More time is needed to ensure all stakeholders are “on board” and to develop a common vision for student services and not to simply focus on the EBD II component of the grant. A priority for 2005-2006 will be to provide further information sessions for our administrators, student services personnel and others. A plan to engage parents in focus group sessions and students themselves will be considered. A continued focus will be placed upon evidence-based practice in programming.
- I believe that the Student Services Grant has provided us with the flexibility to be creative, proactive, inclusive and individualized in our approach to dealing with students with behaviour issues. We have been better able to approach issues from a systems perspective by providing PD in areas such as school-wide planning, Restitution, Behaviour Strategies/Understanding Behaviour for new teachers and Educational Assistants. Rather than always looking at individual support, we have been able to approach student issues with class wide and group initiatives that make strategies more inclusive for all. We have been able to plan for a parent component in the evenings with our Kindergarten Pro-Social Skills initiative. With the flexibility of the grant, we have been able to spread our Behavioural Support Staff throughout the division at different schools for periods of time as needed rather than being locked in to one student at one school for the entire year. In this way, we have been able to share knowledge and strategies to build capacity within various school staffs. We appreciate the Student Services Grant for the flexibility in planning that it provides for us.

- The 'one-envelope' concept inherent in the Student Services Grant Pilot provides a wonderful opportunity for school divisions/districts to become more proactive and more responsive in meeting the needs in our schools. Some changes have already occurred and some are in progress. However, changing the course of a large organization takes time and lots of opportunities for ongoing education/information sharing with those involved. I believe that more changes are possible and probable, given more time on this path.
- We need to continue to focus on improving the inclusion of parents from all cultures in our school communities, and on helping them be involved in the education of their children to whatever degree they are able.
- Continued work is needed to strengthen the connection between research and practice and on getting usable research-based information out to those in the field in a timely and cost-effective manner. This should, in turn, result in more positive changes in school-based planning as well as day to day practice.
- While having the flexibility to direct funds where they are needed in each division/district is a definite bonus/necessity, from my point of view, I always struggle with the needs of our district/division being higher than the allocation of funds that are available.

NEXT STEPS

The new Student Services Grant (SSG) was announced in *Funding of Schools 2006/2007 School Year*. The SSG will

- replace the current special needs funding Level I, Students at Risk, and Early Behaviour Initiative grants;
- be provided to school divisions based upon a formula which considers enrolment, a child-in-care component, and student demographics; and
- not include Emotionally or Behaviourally Disordered (EBD) Level II support.

Pilot school divisions had the option of returning to the process of submitting individual EBD II applications for 2006/2007 or waiting until 2007/2008 when it becomes mandatory province-wide. An EBD II application review session for pilot divisions is available upon request from the Funding Review Team.

For more information about the new SSG formula, please see the *2006/2007 Funding of Schools* report at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/index.html>.

All school divisions must continue student services planning and reporting in the *Student Services Planning Report* submitted annually to Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth at the end of October. The *Student Services Planning Report* must include programming updates and educational outcomes for the year.

Information about planning and reporting in education may be found at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/pie/index.html>.

Appendix A: Qualitative Data Survey

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth Student Services Grant Pilot

A. Demographic Information (Check One)

1. (a) I am (a) Superintendent
 (b) Student Services Administrator
 (c) Principal
 (d) Special Education/Resource Teacher
 (e) Other _____ (please specify)

1. (b) School division/district _____

B. Circle the response that best indicates your view of each of the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
1.	The flexibility provided by the Student Services Grant assists in meeting students' needs.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2.	Meeting to discuss the pilot project with other divisions has been valuable.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3.	Access to support for the project was available from the department.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4.	The pilot project has encouraged us to change our approaches for the delivery of student services.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5.	The pilot project has increased our awareness of effective practices for student services.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6.	The Student Services Grant Pilot has made our workload more manageable.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7.	The collection of data assisted us with planning in the area of student services.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
		1	2	3	4	5		
8.	The Student Services Grant Pilot has resulted in proactive responses for students. (e.g. positive school climate, behavioural support)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
9.	Parents and community members are more involved in the school.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
10.	The collection of data has improved our decision-making for student programs and services.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
11.	The Student Services Grant Pilot will have a positive impact on student learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
12.	The Student Services Grant Pilot has helped direct our professional development needs.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
13.	Our involvement in the Student Services Grant Pilot was helpful to our division.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
14.	The flexibility of funding with this grant will promote an inclusive philosophy within divisions.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
15.	More positive conversations about student behaviour have occurred because of our participation in the pilot.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
16.	The combination of the Student Services Grant Pilot with the Planning in Education Initiative has resulted in positive changes in our school-based planning.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	

C. Please provide any additional comments that you have on the Student Services Grant Year 3.