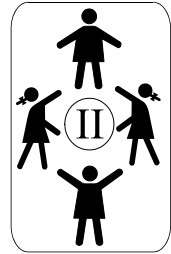

CHAPTER II

AREAS of INQUIRY - KEY FINDINGS, DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATIONS



This section of the report provides the analysis of key findings and recommendations, based on the Areas of Inquiry for the Review. Chapters III to IX provide the detailed results and supporting documentation for Chapter II.

The Areas of Inquiry were based on the Parameters of the Review as originally articulated by Manitoba Education and Training. (The Parameters of the Review are appended to this document.) The five Areas of Inquiry paralleled the Review goals to a great extent. In order to clarify the Areas of Inquiry, questions to be addressed were listed under each Area.

The Areas of Inquiry were publically available and widely circulated during the Review. They served as a means of maintaining focus for the Review.

AREAS OF INQUIRY

1. IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- < What special education programs and services are currently being provided by divisions/districts throughout the Province?
- < What delivery models are being used? How do these respond to the needs and strengths of students?
- < Are programs and service models compatible with provincial policies?
- < How do programs and service delivery models correspond to best practices as described by current research?
- < How appropriate and effective are the current provincial service delivery requirements and expectations (including the Annual Division Action Plans or ADAP's)?
- < In what areas and to what degree should schools and divisions/districts have flexibility in programming and service delivery? What are the implications for setting public policy?

2. EXAMINATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

- < How do Manitoba's special education policies, practices and procedures compare to those in other Canadian provinces and territories?
- < How do Manitoba's special education policies, practices and procedures compare to what are considered to be internationally recognized, research-based best practices?
- < How do provincial special education policies and procedures impact on the delivery of programs and services in divisions/districts?
- < How does the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other legislation affect special education provincial policies and procedures?
- < How does the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other legislation affect the delivery of special education programs and services?
- < To what degree do current special education policies and procedures reflect the government's educational renewal plans and initiatives?

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- < Are students who require services or programs identified through the use of appropriate and consistent criteria and assessment practices?
 - < What factors must be present for the existence of a supportive learning environment that accommodates the needs of all students and leads to successful student outcomes?
 - < Are culturally appropriate special education programs and services available?
 - < Are current programs and services meeting the emotional, social, physical and academic needs of students in the estimation of parents/guardians, students, educators, and other service providers?
 - < What criteria and processes are used to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of special education programs and services?
 - < Are special education human and financial resources being appropriately and efficiently used in service and program delivery?
-

4. EXAMINATION OF THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF COSTS AND FUNDING MODELS

- < How does Manitoba's funding model compare to those in other Canadian provinces and territories?
- < What are the costs of special education programs and services being delivered in divisions/districts throughout the Province?
- < What fiscal resources are necessary to support special education programs and services? How and by whom are they best provided?
- < What processes need to be in place to ensure that funds to support special education programs and services are used appropriately and effectively?
- < How can the diverse needs of students receiving special education programs and services be balanced with those of other students in terms of the demands on human and financial resources?

5. EXAMINATION OF INTERSECTORAL PLANNING IN RELATION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

- < How do existing special education policies and practices affect intersectoral planning, particularly by the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat, and the delivery of services?
- < What are possible avenues for more effective and better coordinated service delivery among Manitoba Education and Training, other government departments, intersectoral and community agencies, and divisions/districts?
- < Are there changes that can be made in policy, planning processes, funding mechanisms, resource allocation, and/or service delivery arrangements that will lead to enhanced outcomes for students, including improved transition to post-school opportunities?

The questions under each Area of Inquiry will be discussed separately. Where necessary, the key findings will be preceded by an introduction in order to place the discussion in an appropriate context. Discussion of the findings will be followed by the related recommendations. Recommendations are repeated as the final Chapter of the report (Chapter X).

A. IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

While the title of this Area of Inquiry suggests a narrow discussion or itemization of programs and services, the questions relating to this Area of Inquiry are more broadly based. They deal with compatibility of delivery models, programs and services to the needs of students, provincial policies and current research. The discussion draws upon the Annual Division Action Plans, the case studies, the information from the consultation process, the legal analysis and the literature review.

1. WHAT SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ARE CURRENTLY BEING PROVIDED BY DIVISIONS/DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE?

Due to the limitations of past Annual Division Action Plans, fluctuating yearly enrolments, staffing changes, as well as the lack of consistent program terminology, it was not feasible to create a complete and accurate inventory of all special education programs and services. Nevertheless, a number of key findings relating to this question emerged.

Key Findings

- < A wide range of special education programs and services are currently being provided across Manitoba, although the same special education programs and services are not universally provided.
- < Larger school divisions (particularly those in urban Winnipeg and Brandon) provide a greater diversity of specialized programs. They are able to offer parents more choices, partly because of higher population concentration in a limited geographic area and partly because of local expenditures for special education.
- < Special education and resource teachers, school counsellors and para-professionals are found across the province (although not necessarily in every school). Consistent with the pattern of program options, other

specialist teachers (for example, behaviour support teachers, early childhood transition support teachers) are found more frequently in larger, urban settings.

- < Access to clinical services exists across all divisions/districts, but is very limited in some rural and northern areas where issues of small, scattered populations affect the level of service delivery.

Discussion

The findings point to the fact that, although many programs and services are being offered across the province, what is provided varies from division/district to division/district and from community to community. This raises questions of equitable access to programs and services - without even straying into discussions of service adequacy or quality. (This issue will be addressed in more detail in subsequent sections.) In addition, the current system lacks a mechanism to gather systematic and consistent information on special education programs and services. The Annual Division Action Plans in some cases provided a clear picture of programs and services, while in other cases they did not.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- A.1.i. The Province develop a mechanism for tracking the actual special education programs and services being provided and that this mechanism be compatible with the new program review process being developed by Manitoba Education and Training. (See recommendation A.5.i.).

2. WHAT DELIVERY MODELS ARE BEING USED? HOW DO THESE RESPOND TO THE NEEDS AND STRENGTHS OF STUDENTS?

Key Findings

- < The history of special education in Manitoba suggests that since the publication in 1989 of Special Education in Manitoba: Policy and Procedural Guidelines for the Education of Students with Special Needs

in Public Schools (also known as the “green book”) integration of students with special learning needs into regular classrooms has increased dramatically.

- < In 1998, the most common delivery model was based on a philosophy of inclusion with a continuum of programming and supports.
- < The case studies illustrate some subtle differences in how divisions/districts state their approach to the delivery of special education. The different foci may not be incompatible in practice, but they may create different parental expectations regarding source delivery.
- < The case studies also suggest that, overall, the vast majority of school staff surveyed (close to 90%) believed their school operates “always” or “most of the time” on a philosophy of inclusion. Where school staff generally perceived a problem with the practice of integration into regular classroom settings was with students who have severe emotional/behaviour disorders.
- < Various divisions/districts have recognized the need for specialized programs for students with particular exceptionalities. In some cases, students with severe behaviour disorders are placed in alternative settings for a portion of the day, while in other cases students are in specialized facilities that are deemed to be more conducive to their learning than a regular classroom.
- < Operationalizing a model of service delivery still varies across schools, even within the same school division/district. The trend observed in the case studies was that early and middle years schools were more adept at putting an inclusive philosophy into practice than were senior years schools, not only because of their tendency to adopt a more child-centred approach, but also because curriculum demands are not as intense. The leadership and beliefs of the school principal also influence how divisional philosophy is implemented at the school level.
- < Having a skilled resource or special education teacher in a school contributes to effective operation of an inclusive model.

Discussion

The research literature clearly supports the benefits of inclusion, bolstered by the continuum of supports and services, for both students with exceptionalities and their peers. The research supports the concept of “progressive inclusion” which allows for alternative placements (for all or portions of the day) in certain cases for students with particular exceptionalities; for example, students with severe emotional/behaviour disorders. (This issue of Emotionally Behaviour Disordered students will be addressed further in sub-section 4 under this Area of Inquiry.)

In the main, Manitoba educators have adopted a philosophy of inclusion as the foundation for the delivery of special education. The most common delivery model is grounded in inclusive philosophy coupled with a continuum of programming and supports. First choice programming for students with exceptionalities is in regular education classes in neighborhood public schools with their same age peers.

While school staff’s understanding of “inclusion” may vary - as does service delivery across schools - there is evidence of acceptance of and commitment to a philosophy of inclusion. Manitoba Education and Training’s 1989 document Special Education in Manitoba appears to have helped set the stage for changes in philosophy and practice.

Nonetheless, inclusive programming does require support. Having someone with the skills and knowledge to organize and coordinate resources - and to support classroom teachers in a collaborative manner - assists in the implementation of quality programming, in optimizing resources and in reducing stress on educators and other service providers. (This issue will be addressed again under the third Area of Inquiry.)

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- A.2.i. Manitoba Education and Training and Manitoba school divisions/districts retain policy that supports a philosophy of inclusion, where first choice of programming for students occurs in regular classrooms with their same age peers in neighbourhood schools. Furthermore, this policy be substantiated in practice by a

continuum of supports, services and placement options in order that each child can receive the supports, services and programming that are most appropriate to his/her needs.

3. ARE PROGRAMS AND SERVICE MODELS COMPATIBLE WITH PROVINCIAL POLICIES?

We assume in this section that the phrase “provincial policies” refers directly to Special Education guidelines as described in the 1989 Special Education in Manitoba.

Key Findings

- < Manitoba’s school divisions/districts all put forth models or approaches that can be construed as consistent with guidelines found in the 1989 document from Manitoba Education and Training.

Discussion

The 1989 document Special Education in Manitoba is almost 10 years old. Division/district models or approaches to special education are consistent with the document, in part because of the openness of the document. The terms and phrases “special education,” “special learning needs,” and “available or possible under the circumstances” are open to interpretation. Additionally, service standards are not defined. Given the age of the document, and the fact that the document itself asserts that it would “require updating,” revision is obviously required. At the same time, it must be recognized that practical direction for program and service delivery is also contained in other more recent Manitoba Education and Training documents (to be discussed under the second Area of Inquiry).

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- A.3.i. Manitoba Education and Training revise the policy document Special Education in Manitoba. (Further direction to this recommendation is found under the second Area of Inquiry.)

4. HOW DO PROGRAMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS CORRESPOND TO BEST PRACTICES AS DESCRIBED BY CURRENT RESEARCH?

Key Findings

- < The practice of integration and the adherence to an inclusionary philosophy are both found in Manitoba schools and are supported by the research literature. Inclusion with a continuum of supports is the same model the research identifies as “progressive inclusion,” an approach that helps create strong schools. Strong schools provide supports and resources for all children, whether they have short or long-term special learning needs.
- < In addition, the literature from other jurisdictions (such as the United States and Scotland) contains examples of programs that are similar to “best practice” currently found in various school divisions/districts in Manitoba (for example, early childhood intervention programs, mentoring programs, and efforts to include parents and community as partners).
- < The literature points to the importance of Individual Education Plans (IEP’s) which are also widely used in Manitoba. The Province’s recent document, Individual Education Planning - A Handbook for Developing and Implementing IEP’s Early to Senior Years, provides direction and support for IEP development. (IEP’s are discussed further under the third Area of Inquiry.)
- < The emerging literature on “best practice” for students with Emotional Behaviour Disorders (EBD) suggests that these students may require placement outside the regular classroom setting. Decisions regarding placement and instruction of students with EBD must be made on a more individual basis: “For students who engage in highly disruptive behaviour, regular pull-out services are essential When problem behaviour becomes too severe, even effective collaborative partnerships or expert consultation approaches likely will fail and a more restrictive classroom placement is justified” (Gable et al, 1998). Specialized and appropriate programming of this nature for students with severe behaviour disorders has been developed in some Manitoba school divisions/districts. In other cases, “zero tolerance” policies for violent behaviour restrict student access to school attendance.

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- < Again, the research on FAS/FAE is relatively new and evolving. Certain Manitoba school divisions/districts are developing programs to address the needs of students with FAS/FAE. However, many educators are concerned they do not know how to identify, nor how to program for these students.
 - < Best classroom instructional practices include (but are not limited to) cooperative group learning, activity-based learning, resource-based learning, computer-assisted learning, and curricular adaptations that allow all students to participate in the same lesson. These instructional practices are increasingly found in Manitoba schools. They are consistent with Manitoba Education and Training's Success for All Learners: A Handbook on Differentiating Instruction, which has received much praise from Manitoba educators.

Discussion

Across Manitoba it is possible to find examples of many (if not all) of the “best practices” identified in the current research literature. The Success for All Learners document is a good example of how information on “best practice” is well received by the field. It seems clear that this type of document is helpful to schools and can act as one vehicle for promoting good instructional practice.

Issues around disruptive or violent student behaviour pose considerable challenges for schools. Resorting to “zero tolerance” policies, while intended to protect other children, may increase the risk for students with behaviour disorders and/or place increased strain on other systems (e.g., day care).

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- A.4.i. Manitoba Education and Training continue to develop documents that provide support to educators on “best practice,” including, but not limited to, issues of emotional/behaviour disorders (EBD) and FAS/FAE.

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- A.4.ii. Manitoba Education and Training, in collaboration with other stakeholders, review the various “zero tolerance” approaches and policies to assess their potential and actual impact on students and other systems.

5. HOW APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE ARE THE CURRENT PROVINCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS (INCLUDING ANNUAL DIVISION ACTION PLANS)?

During the Review process, provincial service delivery requirements were in a state of flux, as administrative changes were announced in April 1998. Some information was collected before, and some after, the April 1998 announcement.

Key Findings

- < The ADAP's were the vehicle by which each division/district was to state their philosophy and program plans. The quality and comprehensiveness of the ADAP's were variable.
- < Submissions called for a standardized framework that would require consistent data collection from divisions/districts. They suggested that, in order to incorporate an accountability function, the vehicle should be part of, and not separate from, division/district policy. There was a desire that the ADAP's be tied to school plans and present an action focus.
- < Some Student Services administrators confirmed that the ADAP's provided an important internal and external accountability document, as well as served as a planning vehicle.
- < The proposed “audit” or review process is as yet undefined, thus raising concerns in school divisions/districts about its purpose, implementation and usefulness. Interviews with representatives from Manitoba Education and Training confirmed that this process was still under development and could yet take more of a program review focus.

Discussion

In some divisions/districts the ADAP's did present clear and thorough information on division/district approach, student needs, future directions, as well as program and service delivery practices, while in others they did not. In instances where ADAP's were well done they were able to serve an internal and, to some degree, external accountability function. However, the ADAP's did exist in the absence of enumerated standards, thus limiting their effectiveness. (See sub-section 6 under this Area of Inquiry for further discussion.)

A program review process conducted every three years (as suggested by the April 1998 announcement) could be a useful vehicle for providing consistent information to Manitoba Education and Training regarding the state of special education in the province. At the same time, the process could be constructed using a collaborative, consultative model in which representatives from Manitoba Education and Training could work with divisions/districts in reviewing their special education programs and services, with a view to improving the delivery of special education and perhaps, more broadly, student support services.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- A.5.i. Manitoba Education and Training develop and institute a collaborative, consultative program review process where representatives from Manitoba Education and Training work in concert with school divisions/districts and parents. Rather than an "audit", the regular program review process would focus on accountability for purposes of improvement rather than compliance. Furthermore, the program review should have an action focus, coupled with clearly defined program outcomes in order to address both the need for accountability and for continuous improvement. Requirements of the process could also ensure that consistent and accurate data were collected from divisions/districts on special education programs, services and students served. School divisions/districts should continue to produce annual reports, similar to the ADAP's, but based on revised reporting guidelines. The annual report should be "updated", rather than re-done, in non-program review years.

A.5.ii. Manitoba Education and Training pilot and formally evaluate the program review process.

6. IN WHAT AREAS AND TO WHAT DEGREE SHOULD SCHOOLS AND DIVISIONS/DISTRICTS HAVE FLEXIBILITY IN PROGRAMMING AND SERVICE DELIVERY? WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SETTING PUBLIC POLICY?

Key Findings

- < Participants in the case studies wanted to retain a certain amount of flexibility so that, at both the school and division/district level, services and programming can respond to local contexts and specific student needs. There was also a desire for an underlying set of service standards in order to ensure a level of equity across the province; a theme which was echoed in submissions where there was a call for minimum levels of service based on “best practice.”
- < The legal analysis suggests that “much is left to local authority without the imposition of minimum standards, which potentially attracts section 15 review.” (Section 15 of the Charter guarantees the right to equal protection and benefit of the law “without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”)

Discussion

The push-pull of flexibility-equity is at issue here. The minimum standards of service delivery would promote - but would not on their own ensure - greater equity.

Minimum standards would leave room for flexibility at the local level to develop programs that would be appropriate to the local context. Minimum standards also suggest that there is a mechanism to monitor whether these standards are met; a concept that could be embedded in the regular program review process.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- A.6.i. Manitoba Education and Training develop and articulate minimum service standards for special education (to be contained in the revised policy document).

B. EXAMINATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

1. HOW DO MANITOBA'S SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES COMPARE TO THOSE IN OTHER CANADIAN PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES?

Key Findings

- < Policy documents from the other Canadian jurisdictions generally present special education in the broader context of providing supports to meet the wide range of student needs. (Although Manitoba's document states "this goal of special education is consistent with the goal of regular education," this does not provide the same conceptual frame as other provinces.) Other provincial policies, however, are similar to Manitoba in that they continue to support an inclusive model of special education with a continuum of supports that allows for alternative placement when it is considered in the best interests of the individual student.
- < Policy documents from other Canadian jurisdictions are more closely grounded in provincial/territorial legislation.
- < Many other Canadian jurisdictions have become more prescriptive and more detailed concerning the roles, procedures and responsibilities to be followed by all stakeholders. There is a clear emphasis on parents as critical members of the team when planning and implementing support services for children with exceptionalities.

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- < Provincial/territorial special education policies also recognize that children with exceptionalities often have multiple needs and, therefore, are developing interagency (intersectoral) agreements to better support children and youth.
 - < Contrary to the situation in Manitoba, a number of other Canadian jurisdictions have retained specific branches or sections devoted to special education.
 - < The special education policy documents in a number of provinces/territories reflect best practices identified in the literature on inclusive schools.

Discussion

Recent Canadian policy in special education is challenging school boards, educators, parents and students to rethink their understandings of special education as something completely separate from regular education, to one that considers how to best support the individual learning needs of all students.

While other jurisdictions retain special education branches within their provincial governments, Manitoba's move to integrate special education services into the broader system is consistent with an inclusive philosophy - assuming that the expert supports for special education remain accessible to parents and educators alike.

Manitoba's 1989 document, Special Education in Manitoba, is sub-titled "Policy and Procedural Guidelines," thus suggesting it does not have the strength of policy. Neither is it as comprehensive as other provinces'. One could argue that Special Education in Manitoba must be taken as one piece of a larger Departmental thrust, from which arise more recent documents, including Individual Education Planning - A Handbook for Developing and Implementing IEP's Early to Senior Years. However, even if educators know about all the other relevant provincial documents and recognize the connections between Special Education in Manitoba and these documents, assembling all the appropriate and connected documents can be time consuming and confusing.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- B.1.i. Manitoba Education and Training revise its special education policy document to become a comprehensive handbook on policy and procedures including:
- statement of philosophy and policy (including minimum standards);
 - definitions of terminology;
 - detail regarding administrative practices and procedures;
 - expectations regarding identification and assessment processes, including IEP's;
 - detail on the appeal process;
 - an outline of roles, responsibilities and expectations of all stakeholders (including Manitoba Education and Training, other government departments, agencies, the division/district, the school, as well as parents and students);
 - expectations regarding the qualifications of educators, para-professionals and other service providers.

Furthermore, the special education policy document needs to: be grounded in “best practice” (see the following section); include all the pertinent supporting documentation; and delineate the connections to other Manitoba Education and Training directions and initiatives.

2. HOW DO MANITOBA’S SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES COMPARE TO WHAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES?

To answer this question we have drawn on information from the literature review (Chapter IV) in order to compare Manitoba’s policies, practices and procedures to “best practice”. In this instance we have broadened the analysis to include not only the 1989 Special Education in Manitoba, but also some of the more recent documents released by Manitoba Education and Training and the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat.

Key Findings

- < As previously discussed, the research literature identifies the importance of an inclusive philosophy where the first choice placement for exceptional students is in the neighbourhood school with same age peers. While the emerging literature on EBD suggests that alternate placements may sometimes be in the best interests of some children (e.g. those with severe emotional behaviour disorders), this is not viewed as being in conflict with the over-riding philosophy of inclusion. Manitoba's policy is consistent with this philosophy of inclusion.
- < The research literature identifies the importance of a team approach that includes a school team with a central role for parents, as well as the coordination of interagency or intersectoral services. While the 1989 Special Education in Manitoba document asserts that the planning process will involve a team approach, more recent initiatives have enhanced previous policy. In 1994, the Manitoba government established the Children and Youth Secretariat to facilitate a coordinated approach and integrated system of services for children, youth and their families. In 1995, the departments of Education and Training, Family Services, Health and Justice released an Inter-departmental Protocol Agreement for children/adolescents with severe to profound emotional behaviour disorders, while 1997 saw the Guidelines for Registration of Students in Care of Child Welfare Agencies (Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Family Services, Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat, and Manitoba Justice). (More discussion of intersectoral collaboration is found under the fifth Area of Inquiry.)
- < Special education policies and practices also need to pay attention to transition issues, both the transition into school and post-high school transition. Mirroring the need for a coordinated approach identified in the research literature, Manitoba has developed transition guidelines: Guidelines for Early Childhood Transition to School (Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Family Services, Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat, and Manitoba Justice, 1997) and Manitoba Transition Planning Process Support Guidelines for Students with Special Needs Reaching Age 16 (Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat, Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Family Services and Manitoba Health, 1998). (For further discussion of post-high school transition see the fifth Area of Inquiry.)

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- < Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are also recognized as important in any analysis of research-based "best practice." While the expectation of an IEP is not new to Manitoba, the document Individual Education Planning - A Handbook for Developing and Implementing IEP's Early to Senior Years, released in September 1998, provides more detailed direction and support for developing and implementing IEP's.
 - < Manitoba Education and Training's document Reporting on Student Progress and Achievement: A Policy Handbook for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents, while not specific to special education, has references for both outcomes and the need for continuous assessment. Consistent with the research on assessment, it asserts that "to determine whether student learning outcomes have been achieved, student assessment must be an integrated part of teaching and learning. Student learning is a continuous, systematic, and comprehensive process".
 - < Manitoba Education and Training in its large scale assessments (including standards testing) seeks to be as inclusive as possible, allowing for certain adaptations for students with special learning needs. The research literature supports this approach.
 - < Success for All Learners: A Handbook on Differentiating Instruction is also based on best practices identified in the research literature. It is also a publication from Manitoba Education and Training that has received accolades. More "best practice" documents and supporting documentation on exemplary programs were requested by the field.

Discussion

Manitoba, through both Manitoba Education and Training and the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat, is moving in its most recent publications and protocols to reflecting "best practice" as identified in the international research literature. As with any policy or protocol, however, existence does not ensure implementation.

Documents based on recognized "best practice," such as Individual Education Planning and Success for All Learners, provide important support to educators. The widespread positive reaction that Success for All Learners has received, speaks to the usefulness of the document.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- B.2.i. Manitoba Education and Training continue to provide support to the field in areas of “best practice” (as they have done with the Success for All Learners document).

3. HOW DO PROVINCIAL SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IMPACT ON THE DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN DIVISIONS/DISTRICTS?

Key Findings

- < As previously stated, the 1989 document Special Education in Manitoba promoted greater integration of students with exceptionalities into regular classrooms in neighbourhood schools. However, the non-definitive nature of statements in the document allow for variability (and potentially inequitable) programming and supports. The submissions to the Review also raised the concern that the current policy (guidelines) for special education “lack clarity, consistency and continuity.”
- < Changes in the funding formula have also had an impact on resources allocated to special education programming and services. (A further discussion of financial issues and impacts is found under the fourth Area of Inquiry.)
- < Given the release of a series of documents from Manitoba Education and Training over the last few years under the banner of “Renewing Education: New Directions” educators express some confusion over what they sometimes see as contradictory directions. For example, educators ask - *“Is differentiated instruction in conflict with standards testing?” “How will children who have a Modified program [sic] meet provincial standards?”*
- < While intersectoral collaboration is a government thrust, it does not always translate into real, cooperative and efficient service delivery at the local level. (Again, this will be discussed further under the fifth Area of Inquiry.)

Discussion

In part, these issues would be addressed by a comprehensive and cohesive document on special education policies and procedures. (See Recommendation B.1.i.) However, clearer explanation to educators in the field as to how Manitoba Education and Training's policies and initiatives are connected and compatible is still required.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

B.3.i. Manitoba Education and Training, in collaboration with other education stakeholders (e.g., Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba) take steps to clarify confusion over perceived contradictions in provincial directions.

4. HOW DOES THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AFFECT SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVINCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES?

This question will be answered in the context of provincial/territorial policies and procedures across Canada, as well as in relation to Manitoba. The analysis and recommendations arise not only from the answer to this question but to the subsequent one as well and, therefore, are found under question B.5.

Key Findings

< As stated in Chapter VI, "the Charter has changed the legal landscape in Canada Equality has a place of primacy in the determination of who will have benefit and protection under the law." Most Canadian jurisdictions have now chosen to address special education directly in their legislation. "Manitoba is nearly the only jurisdiction that has not addressed with any clarity the issue of right of access to an education for exceptional children." (See Chapter VI.)

5. HOW DOES THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AFFECT THE DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

Again, based on the legal analysis, there are a number of conclusions that can be drawn. To some degree, the submissions and the case studies provide additional information. The following points will illustrate that, rather than the question of “how does” the Charter and other legislation affect special education programs and services, the question is - what are the implications of the current status?

Key Findings

- < The legal analysis argues that “the legal environment in Manitoba for special needs children is characterized by a lack of formal statutory arrangements Complacency of assumptions in legislation practically insists that the courts will exercise their jurisdiction when gaps in law become the subject of debate. The best place for the right to liberty and security of the person, as well as the right to equality as it is understood in Canada, to be realized, is in the solemn exercise of the will of the legislature.” (See Chapter VI.)
- < In the case studies, various school division/district administrators expressed a desire to have more direction regarding their legal responsibilities. One theme in the submissions was the need for review and revision to the Public Schools Act, coupled with a concern that Manitoba had not revised its education statute to be consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Parents were concerned that rights to the most enabling environment (or inclusive education) were not enshrined in legislation. Conversely, some submissions recommended retaining a more flexible system without the benefit of new legislation.

Discussion

The argument is sometimes put forth that legislation limits flexibility and/or legislation is not required if all stakeholders operate in a collaborative manner in the spirit of good will. The weight of the evidence suggests otherwise. Our analysis concurs with that of Smith and Foster (1996) who state that: “Rights are not the only answer to the barriers faced by students with disabilities but they are a critical means for moving from a *charity mode*

to a *minority rights* mode.” Legislative reform would also ground policy in legislation and, as such, remove it from the domain of uncertainty and the potential danger of ill-informed decision-making.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- B.5.i. The Province of Manitoba make changes to Manitoba’s legislation in order to achieve consistency with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly to ensure the right to equality as it is understood in Canada and relates to the right of access to education for exceptional children.

6. TO WHAT DEGREE DO CURRENT SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REFLECT THE GOVERNMENT’S EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL PLANS AND INITIATIVES?

To some extent this question has already been addressed through previous discussion. The following points simply extend the discussion under B.3.

Key Findings

- < There was often confusion on the part of teachers as to how the government’s renewal plans and initiatives fit together and how they are consistent with special education policies and procedures, despite the fact that Manitoba Education and Training documents consistently support high expectations for all students, a focus on outcomes, personalized learning opportunities, as well as parental and community involvement.
- < There was lack of understanding of how other provincial directions were compatible with the thrust of Success for All Learners.
- < There was confusion and concern expressed by many teachers and some parents about the Modified (“M”) designation and a belief that, in combination with provincial testing practices, it will lead to higher drop-out rates. It should be noted, however, that those more familiar with the details of the “M” designation (for example, Student Services

administrators) were not concerned regarding the designation itself, but rather with the struggling learners who would not qualify for the designation due to their higher cognitive functioning.

Discussion

The discussion in this section will focus on the issue of the Modified designation, as the more global issue has already been addressed. The Modified designation was intended for students with significant cognitive disorders for whom more than 50% of the curriculum will be modified. Students not falling into this category are expected, with assistance, to achieve the learning outcomes of the regular curriculum. The concern in the field is not only with the identification of students for “Modified”, but also with what will happen to the students who will now have to reach regular curriculum standards. Educators in the field and the Department do not see this latter issue in the same way.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- B.6.i. Manitoba Education and Training develop a process to engage educators in the field in how to address the issue of struggling learners who do not qualify for a Modified designation. (The recommendation is not to change the Modified designation, but rather to find solutions that will address the educational needs of struggling learners for whom a Modified designation would be inappropriate.)

C. ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. ARE STUDENTS WHO REQUIRE SERVICES OR PROGRAMS IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE USE OF CONSISTENT CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES?

Key Findings

- < From the consultation process (both submissions and forums) a strong theme emerged regarding the need to ensure early identification, followed by early intervention services. While pre-school services were not formally within the scope of the Review, they were referenced in terms of the need for early identification and intervention.
- < The case study evidence indicated that while students are often identified as having exceptionalities or special learning needs relatively early - through the health system prior to schooling or in the early years of their schooling - the intervention services do not always follow.
- < Evidence from the case studies and the consultation process suggested that assessment appeared problematic, particularly given the issue of long waiting lists for certain types of assessment. Relatedly, the consultation process raised concerns about pre-school assessments not being accepted, nor always well-used by the education system.
- < Are criteria and assessment practices always appropriate and consistent? No - and in some cases consistency may not be desirable. Issues regarding appropriateness that were raised in the submissions included the need for criteria in order to assess English Second Language (ESL) students in their first language, as well as fair assessments for students having specific assessment challenges (for example, students with Cerebral Palsy).
- < The IEP process was also explored under this question. Evidence from the case studies indicated that the IEP process is generally accepted and used, although the type of students who is included is variable across divisions/districts and across schools within the same

division/district. While a team approach was acknowledged, who plays a significant role on the team was again subject to local conditions. Parents were frequently, but not always, valued members of the team.

Discussion

“Early intervention” was variously perceived by participants in the Review as pre-school services and as services/supports in the early years of school. While pre-school services are technically beyond the scope of this Review, they were often raised in the discussion of early identification and intervention. The statistic cited in Strategy Considerations for Developing Services for Children and Youth published by Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat was widely quoted in the submissions: “For every dollar spent in effective early intervention programs, the taxpayer can save up to \$7 later through increased graduation rates and decreased numbers of youth involved in criminal activity, on welfare and pregnant during adolescence” (from Schseinhart, Barnes, Weikart, 1993). It was indeed difficult, if not impossible, to separate the importance of early intervention (including pre-school services) from the later success of the child.

More closely related to the original intent of this question were the issues of consistent assessment criteria and appropriate assessment practices. There is little to suggest that consistent criteria are used (particularly as one looks across the health and education sectors). This is a complex area, again requiring concerted intersectoral efforts. Indeed, the term “assessment” itself has the potential to create confusion as there is the initial assessment of the child’s exceptionalities (i.e., strengths and needs), followed by regular and ongoing assessment of the child’s progress.

Regarding assessment practices, these should be appropriate to the student and, therefore, will not be consistent in form; rather, they need to be appropriate to the child’s exceptionality. Again, practice is currently variable across the province, in part because of limited and unequal access to professionals who conduct initial assessments.

At the level of the child, IEP’s can act as vehicle for monitoring whether the plans and outcomes for a particular child are consistent with the yet to be articulated minimum standards. On an ongoing basis, this requires appropriate assessment of the child’s progress.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- C.1.i. The Province give priority to early intervention services, including both pre-school and early years identification, assessment and intervention services. (This is clearly an area requiring intersectoral involvement as pre-school services are beyond the mandate of Manitoba Education and Training.)
- C.1.ii. Manitoba Education and Training, in its revised policy and procedures document on special education, give direction on assessment criteria, assessment practice (in order to promote appropriate assessment), and expectations regarding the development and use of Individual Education Plans, as per its recent document Individual Education Planning - A Handbook for Developing and Implementing IEP's Early to Senior Years. (See recommendation B.1.i.)
- C.1.iii. Manitoba Education and Training assist the field in developing alternative methods to promote appropriate assessment practice as applicable to students with special learning needs.

2. WHAT FACTORS MUST BE PRESENT FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT ACCOMMODATES THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS AND LEADS TO SUCCESSFUL STUDENT OUTCOMES?

This is a complex question that we have attempted to answer through the results of the case studies (and to a lesser degree the consultation process), in conjunction with the research literature.

Key Findings

- < While students may have defined learning outcomes in their Individual Education Plans, the case studies point to the fact that learning outcomes are not often evaluated in conjunction with specific interventions, program elements or in relation to the set of factors outlined below.

- < Factors important to a supportive learning environment that accommodates the needs of all students are captured in the following table. They represent characteristics that parents should talk with educators about and look for in their child's school. The factors or characteristics are grouped under five major headings: philosophy in practice; supports; teaming (including parental involvement); intersectoral collaboration; and transition processes. It should be recognized that many of these factors are inter-related and some are overlapping.

FACTORS FOR A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	
Category/ Factor or Characteristic	Description of Ideal Characteristics
<i>PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE</i>	
Philosophy of inclusion put into practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration into classroom with same age peers, occurs as much as possible with alternative placements used as last resort when appropriate for a specific need. - The school accepts children in their neighbourhood as <u>their</u> students (not the responsibility of someone else).
Non-categorization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are classified by instructional need, not label.
Use of new knowledge/"best practice"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is awareness of and deliberate attention to implementing what is known as "best practice" in the school and classroom.
Instruction supports learning of all student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Differentiated instruction and curricular adaptations are used to personalize learning opportunities for students.
Early Intervention (early years strategies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools with early years identify students who require supports and target interventions to meet identified needs (e.g. Reading Recovery TM).
Individualized Education Plans (IEP's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP's are developed and used as a basis for planning and implementing a student's program.
Ongoing assessment based on learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student assessment is continuous and based on articulated learning outcomes (tied to goals in IEP). - Assessment is appropriate to the student's exceptionalities.
Formalized program planning and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school uses a formal process for planning and evaluating the programs it implements. (On a larger scale this process is used for school planning.) The program evaluation process should include pertinent stakeholders and should build in time for regular reflection.
Culturally appropriate programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs and services for students with special learning needs are sensitive to, and appropriate for, the student's culture.

FACTORS FOR A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	
Category/ Factor or Characteristic	Description of Ideal Characteristics
SUPPORTS	
Variety of curriculum and resource material available	- The school has a variety of curriculum and resource material available to support group and personalized learning.
Physical supports - space & technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school has adequate and appropriate space to support programming and services to exceptional students. - Students have the necessary technological supports they need to support their learning and functioning in the school community.
Classroom supports - specialist educators	- Skilled specialist teachers support classroom programming for students with special learning needs including resource and/or special education teachers, as well as counsellors.
Classroom supports - para-professionals	- Skilled para-professionals assist in delivery programs to students with special learning needs.
Classroom supports - access to clinical services	- Clinical services (e.g. speech/language pathology, physiotherapy, psychology) are sufficiently available to support programming for students with special learning needs.
Teacher professional development	- Teachers have access to and are supported in professional development related to special education.
Para-professional professional development	- Para-professionals have access to and are supported in professional development related to special education.
Attitude	- School administrators, teachers and support staff accept and value students with exceptionalities. Administrator approach is important in creating an open, inclusive and welcoming school with high expectations for all students.
Students have a sense of belonging	- All students feel they are part of the school community. Positive interactions among students are evident based on acceptance and understanding.
Class size allowing for 1-on-1 support & personalized programming	- Particularly in classes where there are children with special learning needs, class size is small enough to help support individualization and personalization of learning.
TEAMING & PARENT INVOLVEMENT	
Peer collaboration among school staff (teachers & para-professionals)	- There is a collaborative culture in the school. Within the regular operation of the school staff (administrators, teachers and para-professionals) work together to plan and problem solve.
Broad-based and collaborative team approach to programming for individual students	- A student's team includes parents, the student (as appropriate), educators, para-professionals, other professionals (as appropriate). These people work together to plan, implement and evaluate a student's program (IEP). The parent approves the IEP.
Parents actively involved in student's program	- Parents are not only involved in the IEP process, but have a defined role in supporting and monitoring their child's progress.

FACTORS FOR A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Category/ Factor or Characteristic	Description of Ideal Characteristics
Parents in partnership with school (parental satisfaction)	- Parents believe they are in a partnership with the school, rather than in an adversarial position. They are satisfied that programming and service provision operate in the best interest of their child. Their opinions are valued.
Educators provide ongoing support to families of students with special learning needs	- The school ensures that parents are well informed about their child's program and progress. The school pays deliberate attention to supporting the child (student) and his/her family.
Student (where appropriate) involved in planning process	- Where appropriate, the student has a role in developing his/her own goals, planning his/her program, and in the process of self-assessment.

INTERSECTORAL COLLABORATION

Formalized coordination with community agencies/organizations	- There are defined structures that provide the framework for coordination of service delivery. Roles and responsibilities are defined.
Team members ready to respond to leadership from variety sources	- Leadership or case management may come from different sources depending on what is appropriate in the particular circumstance and for the specific child. The team accepts these different sources of leadership as legitimate.
Normalized practices across sectors	- Intersectoral protocols and processes are defined, understood and systematically used.
Service provided in continuous fashion - across time and agency	- Service is seamless. There are no interruptions as service responsibility moves from one agency to another.
Connections to broader community	- The school finds ways to involve the community (e.g. businesses, agencies) in partnership with the school. - At the middle years and senior years levels, communication and linkages are made with employers, training and post-secondary institutions.

TRANSITION

Planned & coordinated transition into early years from pre-school	- There is an process for seamless transition between pre-school and school-based services.
Articulation between levels within the school system	- As students move between levels in the education system (e.g. middle years to senior years) - particularly when they change schools - there is a process for sharing information that begins prior to the student changing levels.
Planned & coordinated transition to post-school options	- There is a process for transition between school and post-school options. - The planning for post-school transition is begun by age 16 and, preferably, before that age.

FACTORS FOR A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	
Category/ Factor or Characteristic	Description of Ideal Characteristics
Structured procedures to facilitate community integration	- Direct connections are made between the school and community supports, services and recreational opportunities to facilitate a student's integration into the community. This is part of transition planning for the individual student, but also includes using community resources while the student is still in the school system.

Discussion

In combination, the factors listed above paint a picture of a exemplary school that functions as part of a larger community. Based on the research literature (and to some degree on the situations documented in the case studies), one can assume that these factors, if present, will lead to successful student outcomes. However, in Manitoba, there is no way to relate the presence of these factors to student outcomes, as little documented evidence of student outcomes exists. While students' IEP's may include articulated outcomes, schools have little experience aggregating outcome evidence and linking outcomes to program components.

Additionally, it is imperative to recognize that student "learning outcomes" are more far-reaching than strictly academic ones. As articulated by Manitoba Education and Training, the broad outcomes of education are: academic; personal; social; career; and life management. Life management outcomes include, for example, planning and managing personal resources to achieve personal goals. The challenge for the system becomes - how to find appropriate indicators that students are progressing towards academic, personal, social, career and life management outcomes.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- C.2.i. Manitoba Education and Training, in collaboration with educators, parents, students, and community, develop authentic, credible and appropriate indicators of student learning outcomes as a basis for both student and program evaluation.

3. ARE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE?

Key Findings

- < While some examples were noted, the case studies did not find that culturally appropriate programming for students with special learning needs was being widely developed or implemented. Nevertheless, there were people across the province who recognized this was an area requiring increased attention, including new strategies and new ways of thinking, in particular for Aboriginal students and students from recent immigrant communities.
- < In the submissions, most recommendations that were made regarding this issue concerned Aboriginal students, either the need for more Aboriginal staff and/or the need for programming that was *“more sensitive, fair and educationally relevant to the needs of First Nations students, their families and communities.”*

Discussion

While little appears to exist in Manitoba that can be described as culturally appropriate programming for students with special learning needs, neither did the review of the research literature uncover much in terms of “best practice” in this area. For example, the literature on Aboriginal children primarily focuses on the effects of social conditions, rather than on culturally-based “best practice” for those Aboriginal children who have special learning needs. However, the literature does serve to remind us that, historically, certain groups who were less privileged socially and economically have been unfairly over-represented in special education categories.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- C.3.i. Manitoba Education and Training, in collaboration with other stakeholders, develop, pilot and evaluate culturally appropriate programming approaches that would be appropriate for Aboriginal students who have special learning needs.

C.3.ii. Manitoba Education and Training, in collaboration with other stakeholders, develop, pilot and evaluate culturally appropriate programming approaches that would be appropriate for students from recent immigrant communities who have special learning needs.

4. ARE CURRENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES MEETING THE EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, PHYSICAL, AND ACADEMIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN THE ESTIMATION OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS, STUDENTS, EDUCATORS AND OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS?

Obviously, this is a complex question with answers that are variable depending on local situations, unique needs, available supports and the perspective of the respondent. The case study evidence includes examples of where student needs are not perceived to be well met, as well as with examples of rich and reassuring success stories. Therefore, the case studies and the information from the consultation process can only be summarized into some general trends and observations. It should also be noted that community forums tended to bring out more parents who had encountered problems and/or had concerns to express regarding the experiences of their children.

Key Findings

- < Many (but certainly not all) **parents** interviewed in the case studies were pleased with the supports that their child had received, but there was a serious undercurrent of concern that supports might be reduced or disappear in the future. Parents also expressed concerns regarding lack of therapeutic services. They emphasized the importance of para-professional support, sometimes viewing this as the concrete evidence that their child was receiving programming and services. Parents were also cognizant of when various factors necessary for a supportive learning environment (as previously listed) were not in place. Parents had high expectations for their children - and for their children's schools - but also recognized that the system operates within constraints (for example, high clinical caseloads).
- < Many **parents** who attended the Community Forums expressed frustration with the lack of coordinated service delivery, concern over a

dearth of information on available programs and services, fear about funding cutbacks, and the feeling that they were not always listened to as a key important source of information about their child's needs and strengths. Many were exhausted from working as their child's advocate on virtually a full-time basis.

- < The perceptions of **exceptional students** as to how well programs and services are meeting their needs were not dissimilar from those of the parents interviewed. Some were extremely positive about their school experiences, while others had concerns and suggestions for improvement. Overall, students stressed the importance of their teachers to their success, as well as counsellors, para-professionals and, in some cases, the principal. Students were particularly negative when they felt they were singled out or labeled. In two different case studies, students commented that they had been told they were unable to do "higher learning". There were also instances where high achieving students did not feel they were sufficiently challenged, rather they were simply being given additional work of the same type.
- < In some case study schools, **students in regular programs** were able to provide examples of how they helped their peers with special learning needs and where they had witnessed the successes of their peers. However, students expressed concern if there were students whose behaviour disrupted their classes. They were quick to recognize the value of a non-violent school environment, and they appreciated the fact that their schools were safe.
- < **Educators** recognized that much progress has been made in special education in Manitoba over the last decade, particularly in providing for the physical needs of students. Generally, early years educators were more likely than their counterparts at senior years to perceive that their school "always" or "most of the time": operates on a philosophy of inclusion; integrates students with special learning needs into classroom activities; and is flexible enough to make special accommodations for students when necessary. At the same time, there was a perception that the number of students with special needs has increased over the last three years.
- < The areas that **educators** most often cited as the "big issues" that need better resolution were: behavioural issues (EBD students); lack of school

therapy services (including mental health services); poor transition into the community after high school; lack of support for Level I students; lack of support for struggling learners; and lack of programming for gifted students. FAS/FAE was another ‘top of mind’ issue that was raised by many educators, often in conjunction with behavioural concerns.

- < **Other service providers** (for example, mental health workers, social workers, speech and language pathologists, workers in community agencies) echoed some of the same concerns as educators. There was a perception that some students’ needs were well met, while others were not. Generally there was a consensus that, in most cases, students with visible disabilities *“are having their needs met more so than emotionally disturbed kids or students with learning disabilities”*. Lack of clinical services, particularly in the area of speech and language, was a concern, although many areas of clinical service were identified as being overloaded. Intersectoral collaboration was viewed as one key to improved service delivery.

Discussion

It appears that while progress has been made in addressing health needs and access for students with physical disabilities, meeting the academic, social, emotional needs for the wide range of exceptional students continues to be a challenging task for schools and communities. Students whose exceptionalities are not physically visible (e.g., students with learning disabilities) may not receive the programming and supports they require if assessments have not been well done and results have not been shared with classroom teachers. (See recommendations under section C1.) Subsequently, classroom teachers may require professional expertise and/or para-professional support to design and implement appropriate programming. (A further discussion on the necessity of human resource support is found under C6.)

While good practice and good intentions were evident in many of the case studies, a few situations raised serious concerns about the impact that labels, certain programming approaches, and unwitting comments can have on children’s self-confidence. High expectations coupled with stimulating and appropriate learning opportunities are necessary prerequisites for future success.

The evidence also suggests that, not only do parents need to be a valued part of the team, but also that they require information about the service and program options that are available in education and across other sectors. In some instances the provision of accurate information would have gone a long way to address the concerns raised by parents.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- C.4.i The Province develop an information booklet specifically for parents that not only summarizes provincial policy in special education, but also provides references as to where parents can go to access support services. Information should be available in multiple languages and formats, including American Sign Language (ASL), and should be widely available.
- C.4.ii Educators hold high expectations for students which are reflected in defined outcomes for students in order to foster success through building on student strengths, rather than emphasizing deficits.

5. WHAT CRITERIA AND PROCESSES ARE USED TO EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

Key Findings

- < Some school divisions/districts had conducted (or were in the process of conducting) their own reviews of special education. Some also had experience with “occasional program reviews,” but most did not engage in evaluation processes. At the school level, evaluation of individual student progress was much more common than evaluation of programs or services.
- < There was some interest expressed by some educators in paying more attention to program evaluation in the future, if the appropriate supports can be mustered.

Discussion

Overall, evaluation of special education programs and services appeared to be neither systematic nor commonplace. This is not particularly surprising as program evaluation has not, historically, been an activity for which educators have been trained.

The approach of an integrated school plan that includes systematic monitoring and evaluation processes holds promise but, currently, is practised infrequently. Schools need to include goals for, and evaluation of, special education and student support services as part of their annual school planning process.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

C.5.i Manitoba Education and Training articulate expectations for ongoing and systematic evaluation of special education programs and services, backing these expectations through inservicing and other supports. It is reasonable for this to be linked to the school planning process, as well as to the proposed divisional/district program review process.

6. ARE SPECIAL EDUCATION HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES BEING APPROPRIATELY AND EFFICIENTLY USED IN PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY?

While some of the issues that relate to this topic are discussed in the following section on funding models, the issue of cost effectiveness will be addressed under this question. The key findings present information from the case studies and consultation process, while the analysis section incorporates references to the use of Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education (FRAME) and current thinking on education finance. The analysis for this section also helps to set up sub-section “Examination of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Costs and Funding Models.”

Key Findings

- < Some schools and divisions/districts indicated in the case studies that they had adjusted staffing patterns in order to better use human resources. However, certain types of human resource support (particularly clinical/therapeutic services) were more difficult to access than others, regardless of the adjustments that schools or divisions/districts had made. (The lack of clinical and therapeutic services was also raised in divisional/district submissions.)
- < In the case studies, resource teachers, counsellors and para-professionals were viewed as key human resource supports. The need for skilled people in these positions was emphasized. It was also noted that people in these positions were sometimes overworked and often their time was difficult to juggle. For example, there was concern that resource teacher time was not well spent doing paperwork.
- < As evidenced by both the consultation process and the case studies, para-professionals were equated with programming in the minds of many parents and educators alike, as they represent concrete indication that a child is receiving assistance.
- < The need for more training in the area of special education was almost universally cited as something which would help to increase effective use of human resources. This included specific training for teachers, resource teachers, counsellors, school administrators and para-professionals.
- < The need for ongoing professional development for educators and para-professionals was also raised throughout the case studies and the consultation process. Areas identified for professional development (in no particular order) were:
 - FAS/FAE;
 - autism/PDD;
 - strategies for teaching students at risk and struggling learners;
 - writing IEP's;
 - writing behaviour management plans and behaviour management strategies;
 - differentiated instruction strategies;
 - use of multiple intelligence theory;

-
- rubrics; and
 - outcome-based learning.
- < Effective use of financial resources was closely related to the use of human resources. Case study participants were quick to point out that both were needed to support quality inclusive programming. (Again, it should be noted that the lack of evidence in the domain of student outcomes makes it difficult to make definitive statements regarding “quality.”)
- < Through the use of Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education (FRAME) accounting terminology and procedures have become standardized in Manitoba allowing for the consistent reporting of expenditures. However, FRAME was not intended for use in an analysis of cost effectiveness and, as such, lacks the necessary detail in the reporting structure at the program level.

Discussion

Human resources are the key component in the delivery of educational programs. While para-professionals clearly play an important role in the delivery of services to students with special learning needs, their role should be viewed as one component of the student’s overall program. Resource and/or special education teachers should have the professional expertise to make the necessary programming decisions. In conjunction with appropriate deployment of human resources, is the need for people who provide programs and services to be appropriately trained, including para-professionals, teachers and school administrators.

The other question regarding resources concerns the use of financial resources. The implementation of the Schools’ Finance Program (1992-93) marked the introduction of a resource costing funding model in Manitoba (Lawton 1996). Given the intent and structure of FRAME, problems arose when attempting to analyze the cost effectiveness of special education programming, highlighting the need to link more effectively input oriented school finance structures to output based school reforms. As noted by Odden and Clune (1998):

Another dilemma between the school finance structure and the tenets of standards based education reform that has emerged in the

1990's is that school finance formulas focus on dollar inputs while education reform seeks to emphasize results and outcomes. Many claim that these two emphases put two pieces of the education system in conflict: input financing and output expectations.

Furthermore, cost effectiveness is difficult, if not impossible to determine, when the grant itself, by its very nature does not require accountability. In Manitoba, the Level I support grants are determined on a per pupil ratio, ignoring how extensive or limited the program might be, or how many students in fact are receiving Level I supports. As noted by Lawton (1996), special purpose grants are so loosely related to specific work that they serve the purpose of a general purpose grant where "the province is satisfied as long as there is adequate evidence that the appropriate service was offered or purchase made". This appears to be the case in Manitoba.

Central to undertaking a cost effectiveness activity, it is necessary for an organization to set its objectives, identify programs that meet or address the objectives, allocate funds to support these programs, identify measurable outcomes, and evaluate the degree to which the program has achieved the desired outcomes. As previously discussed, identified measurable outcomes and systematic program evaluation are not in place in most Manitoba's divisions/districts. Until accountability measures are formally built into a program evaluation process, questions related to effectiveness of resource use and the allocation of human and financial resources cannot be meaningfully answered.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this Review, it was desirable to provide an indication of the relationship between programming and supports as they relate to per pupil expenditure. In order to narrow the focus of the analysis, a list was developed which incorporated indicators identified in the literature as being important to the effective delivery of programming and supports to exceptional students. (Refer to the Table Factors For a Supportive Learning Environment beginning on page 36.)

Forty of the schools participating in the case studies were used in this analysis¹. Each school received a score on a four point scale, for each of the items appearing on the best practice indicator list. The rubric used for scoring each characteristic was:

¹ Three were not included as they represented very specialized situations. For example, one school was in the case study only because of its specialized program for deaf students.

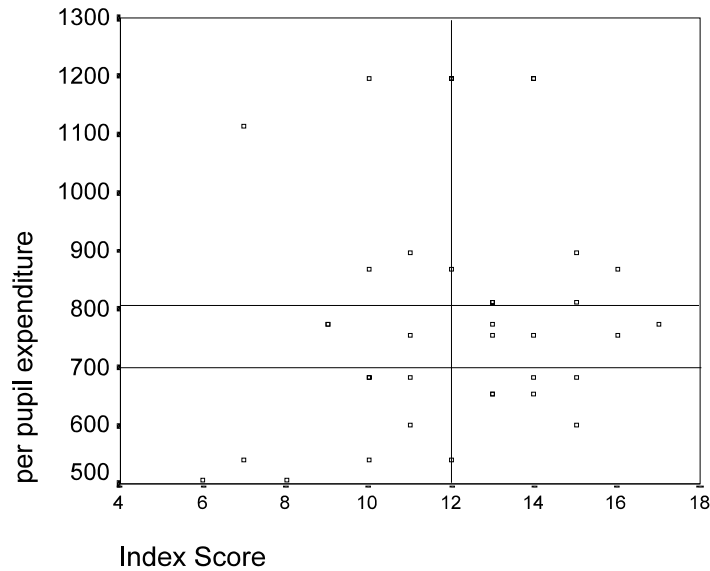
-
- 1 = no evidence this characteristic is present;
 - 2 = some evidence this characteristic is present, although on a limited or sporadic basis;
 - 3 = evidence that this characteristic is regularly present - as the general practice - but not necessarily in a high quality manner at all times;
 - 4 = solid evidence that this is accepted and regularly implemented practice of a generally high quality.

For each of the five sections (see page 36) the mode was used as the section score. The sum of section scores created the total index score (out of a possible 20). Then analysis was undertaken to determine the relationship (if any) between “best practice” index score and per pupil expenditures in the case study division.

When analyzed, the median index score was 12, while the median per pupil expenditure was \$773.00 for case study divisions². Further analysis indicated that per pupil expenditures in the range of approximately \$700.00 to \$800.00 were most likely to result in index scores above the median (Graph II-1). Some of the variability in Graph II-1 occurs as a result of divisions/districts that have large high need populations which require a greater range of specialized supports.

² The per pupil costs which are used for comparison of exceptional costs are calculated using the total Exceptional expenditures divided by the overall enrolment. The overall enrolment has been used because the Exceptional expenditures are a mixture of costs related to pupils in special classes, supports for pupils integrated into regular classes, including expenditures for Level I pupils who are not specifically identified as to numbers, gifted students, as well as Clinical services which can relate to the overall enrolment. The specific number of students related to these expenditures is not identifiable. In the absence of a specific number of pupils related to Exceptional expenditures, overall enrolment has been used as the denominator. While this calculation does not produce a precise numerical “per pupil cost”, it does produce a relative cost expressed in terms of the total number of pupils in the system. This type of comparison is consistent with calculations made in the FRAME reports.

Graph II-1
Relationship Between Per Pupil Expenditure and Best Practice Index Score



While this analysis provides an imperfect measure of the relationship between programming and supports, it does give some indication of the range of per pupil expenditures required when looking at implementing best practice characteristics. As discussed later in this chapter, the median is often used when identifying fiscal equity targets to which all divisions/districts would be brought up to or beyond. (Recommendations relating to fiscal equity are found later in the sub-section D.3, following further analysis of the funding model.) In order to facilitate more precise analysis in the future, specific indicators related to student and program outcomes must be developed.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- C.6.i Human resources be deployed according to student needs and programming goals. This assumes, for example, that para-professionals support programming goals, rather than para-professionals being viewed as the sole support for students with exceptionalities.
- C.6.ii People who work with students who have special learning needs must be appropriately trained. This includes:

-
- a) mandatory pre-service training for all teachers in topics related to special education. (This would require course work in addition to the one required course, Psychology of Learning and Instruction, that is currently part of the undergraduate program.);
 - b) ongoing professional development for teachers in areas related to best instructional practices and special education (see list of topics on page 46);
 - c) professional development for school administrators relating to special education issues;
 - d) training and/or required qualifications for para-professionals who work with exceptional students, including ASL qualification for para-professionals working with deaf students;
 - e) reinstatement of minimum qualifications for resource teachers (not all of which need to be based on academic course work).

C.6.iii Manitoba Education and Training, in collaboration with stakeholders, develop indicators that would be appropriate to measure program quality and outcomes. (Note: this is a similar recommendation to C.2.i.)

D. EXAMINATION OF THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF COSTS AND FUNDING MODELS

1. HOW DOES MANITOBA'S FUNDING MODEL COMPARE TO THOSE IN OTHER CANADIAN PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES?

Key Findings

- < Canadian jurisdictions use a variety of funding models. The Maritime provinces tend to fund on a block per pupil basis. The Western provinces provide a basic instructional block (or core grant), supplemented with specific (categorical) funding for special education students. Saskatchewan is similar to Manitoba in that it provides base funding, plus a combination of an additional block and categorical. Base funding is determined on need and the local Board's ability to pay; that

is, the greater the disparity between the need and the ability to pay, the greater the grant.

- < In other Canadian jurisdictions there is a trend to provide categorical funding based on student needs rather than on labels. The intent is to determine student needs and then place students in categories depending on support requirements rather than labels.

Discussion

The concept of categorizing students by support and service requirements moves the system away from the necessity of labeling and potentially stigmatizing students. Furthermore, although the “label” may be the same, different children (depending on their level of ability) may require different types or intensity of support.

Supports should be provided along a service continuum with the intention of addressing the special learning needs of all students, whether those be short or long-term needs. This conceptual shift also fits with ongoing monitoring of student progress and re-assessment of student needs. If certain supports are no longer required, then they are not continued. However, if the need re-emerges, then the supports would be re-instated. Additionally, categories based on need would help to address issues raised in the consultation process and case studies around certain types of students (e.g., Down Syndrome, FAS/FAE) whose needs are not currently recognized in funding criteria and students whose needs would require higher levels of funding (e.g. blind students).

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- D.1.i. Manitoba Education and Training redefine criteria for categories of support (i.e. Level I, II, III) based on student needs, rather than on labels which assume that all children with certain named disabilities require exactly the same level and type of support.

2. WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES BEING DELIVERED IN DIVISIONS/DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE?

Key Findings

- < Between 1992-93 and 1996-97, the overall education expenditures by school division/district, excluding exceptional (i.e. special education) increased by 1.97% or approximately \$18.62 million. In comparison, during the same time period, exceptional expenditures increased by 12.04% or \$15.35 million.
- < There has been a significant shift in expenditures related to gifted education, which realized a 34.38% decrease between 1993-94 and 1996-97. In contrast, expenditures for Special Needs Students - Regular Classes experienced a 19.29% increase.
- < As a result of the changes in 1992-93, Level I unit grants increased from \$23,000 to \$45,000. At the same time, the funding ratio increased from 1 unit per 160 pupils to 1 unit per 180 pupils. Level II per pupil grants increased from \$7,000 to \$8,250 and Level III per pupil grants increased from \$15,800 to \$18,960. All Special Needs grant levels have remained at the same formula levels since 1992-93, except for changes in the clinician ratio.
- < Various school divisions/districts in the case studies provided financial breakdowns that showed the cost for providing programming and supports for Level III students is in the neighbourhood of \$35,000 annually.
- < When assessed on a regional basis, urban and northern school divisions/districts receive a smaller proportion of their expenditures through provincial grants than do rural school divisions. There is a significant variation in the type and cost of programming and the supports being provided according to region. A number of school divisions/districts provide services at or near the level of provincial grants. FRAME data also indicate that some divisions/districts have received grants in excess of expenditures.

Selected Financial Information (1996-97) by Region				
	Urban	Rural	North	Province
Percent of Support for Function 200 Exceptional	59.93%	81.77%	56.68%	66.12%
Mean Per Pupil Expenditures	\$909.00	\$572.00	\$909.00	\$772.00
Median Per Pupil Expenditures	\$787.00/ \$812.00	\$580.00/ \$602.00	\$710.00/ \$749.00	\$644.00/ \$648.00

- < Approximately 60% of special needs funding (coordinator, clinician, Level I) is based on overall enrolment rather than defined needs and levels of expenditures. However, enrolment is declining, while special learning needs are reported as increasing.

Discussion

As previously discussed, there is a lack of detail in the FRAME reporting structure, as there is no information at the “program” level. While macro analysis can be undertaken to determine divisional/district exceptional costs, it is not possible to allocate these to the specific program level. During the case study data collection, attempts were made to identify program specific costs without success. The most clearly definable cost that was identified across a number of case study divisions/districts was the Level III per student cost - a cost divisions/districts report as being almost double the provincial grant.

It must also be recognized that a number of factors resulting from the financial analysis may help to explain perceptions which surfaced throughout the Review that reductions in funding have been occurring. While the Province has been seen by some as “cutting back” support to education, specifically, this has not been the case for special education. However, reductions elsewhere may have negatively impacted on certain divisions’/districts’ overall ability to provide programming and support to students, including those with special learning needs.

One factor which may contribute to the perception of reduced funding in the area of special education is the reduction in expenditures devoted to gifted education. In many cases, the perception that certain special needs support is being provided at the expense of gifted education appears to be warranted.

Another factor, may be the negative impact that declining enrolment has had on the allocation of block based support such as funding for Level I support at the provincial level. However, enrolment fluctuations as well as the large increases in support provided upon the introduction of the Schools' Finance Program, may explain variations in the perceptions of educators encountered in the case studies. Given that the number of Level II and III students have continued to increase, one can infer that the same trend applies to the Level I students. However, the overall decline in enrolment and the related decline in Level I support has resulted in the perception that Level I funding is not keeping up with increased demand.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- D.2.i. The base Level I funding be increased, and additional Level I funding be available in relation to high levels of need, as identified through the proposed program review process.
- D.2.ii. A specific allocation be made to ensure the delivery of gifted programming.
- D.2.iii. If, in future, Manitoba Education and Training wishes a more definitive answer to the question of program and service costs, FRAME will have to be adjusted to capture more discrete financial information.

3. WHAT FISCAL RESOURCES ARE NECESSARY TO SUPPORT SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES? HOW ARE THEY BEST PROVIDED?

Key Findings

Findings listed under the previous question are also relevant in conjunction with the question regarding necessary resource allocation.

- < The evidence suggests that there are a number of key areas that require increased fiscal resources, regardless of whether improved intersectoral collaboration and more efficient use of resources at a division/district level become realities. These are:

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- clinical and therapeutic services (speech and language services, occupational and physiotherapy, mental health/psychiatric services for youth);
 - support for students whose needs would currently be considered Level I (including gifted students);
 - counselling support at the early years level; and
 - other early childhood intervention services (including pre-school services).
- < Participants in the Review process, indicated general satisfaction with funding for English Second Language (ESL) and for English Language Enrichment for Native Students (ELENS).

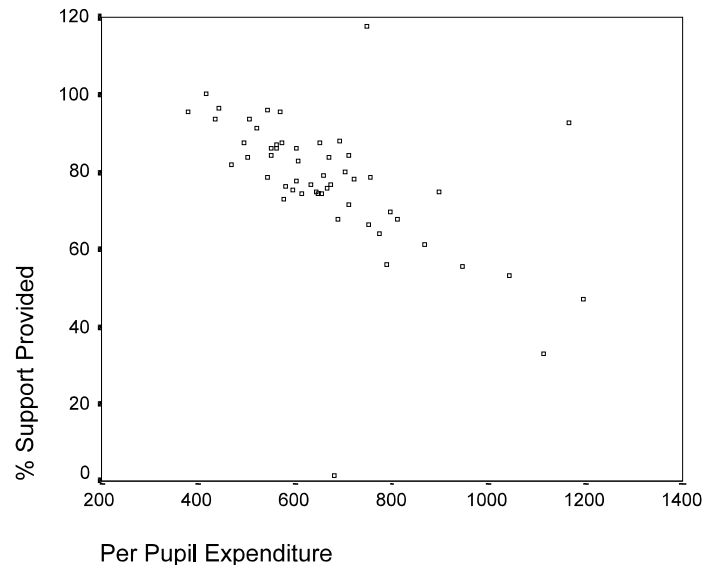
Discussion

While Manitoba Education and Training has primary responsibility, an intersectoral approach is warranted, specifically in relation to therapeutic services and early childhood intervention (including Manitoba Health and Manitoba Family Services). (See the fifth Area of Inquiry for further discussion.) Provincial dollars need to be allocated to these areas. (This echoes the recommendation in the Health of Manitoba's Children report regarding needed increases in speech and language services.) There is an argument that some clinical and therapeutic services fall within the domain of Health, and that pre-school services are the responsibility of Manitoba Health and Manitoba Family Services. Nonetheless, the need for improved (and more equitable) access to services in these areas are evident and the money ultimately needs to come from provincial revenues, regardless of the Department.

Another answer is related to questions of fiscal policy, equity and the level to which divisions/districts are reasonably expected to partner with government in funding programs and services. Odden and Clune (1998) suggest that few school finance systems have explicit fiscal equity targets which results in low levels of "horizontal equity" - that is, equal expenditures per pupil across school divisions/districts. According to their argument, the lack of explicit fiscal equity targets leads to a large degree of variability in financial support. This lack of horizontal equity became obvious when analyzing the per pupil expenditure in Manitoba in relation to Function 200 - Exceptional expenditures. As Graph II-2 shows, there is wide variation in per pupil expenditure, as well as in the percent of support provided for

special education. In fact, an inverse relationship exists between per pupil expenditure and support provided in that, as per pupil expenditure decreases, the percentage supported increases.

Graph II-2
Relationship Between Per Pupil Expenditures and Percent of Support
(in relation to Function 200 - Exceptional)



The variations in per pupil expenditures and percent of programming supported were noted, leading to the conclusion that, while some divisions/districts program only at or near the level of support, others are programming well beyond the provincial support they receive. This reality results in wide variations across the province in the levels of special needs supports available to students, and leads one to question the equitable access to supports and services available in the public school system. Possibly, an explicit fiscal equity policy target in relation to special education would alleviate some of these inequities. A fiscal equity policy target requires associating the minimum expenditure level to some point in the current distribution of spending in the system “such as the median”. The median would become the target to which all divisions/districts would be brought up to or beyond. As pointed out earlier, the median per pupil expenditure for the case study divisions/districts was approximately \$775.00, while it was in the \$650.00 range for the province as a whole.

The issue of adequacy of expenditures was raised throughout the Review by participants, as it was one of the Areas of Inquiry of this Review. While

there were many attitudes and perceptions expressed related to the current funding model (the Schools' Finance Program), in general, most comments focused on the overall funding amount and whether it is adequate to meet student needs. It has been argued that recent trends both in American courts and legislatures are moving beyond the goal of fiscal equity to the goal of adequacy, that is, "sufficient funding to support high minimum student achievement". As noted by Odden and Clune (1998), adequacy is contrasted with equity in its focus "on the level of dollars and outcomes as opposed to relative differences in fiscal inputs".

Adequacy requires the determination of an adequate spending base, an emphasis on compensatory aid and accountability. Accountability occurs at the school level and includes the monitoring of outcomes, encouragement of efficiency and ensuring that extra aid is directed towards supplemental education. Currently in the United States, several economists are attempting to determine the spending level needed to allow an average school to teach an average student to rigorous performance standards. In order to undertake this analysis they are attempting to determine: desired achievement levels or performance standards; measures of different student need, such as exceptionalities; limited English proficiency; background income; price variation in educational ingredients; and the efficiency of producing achievement results.

Canadian educational finance experts suggest that when one questions the adequacy of education, one must ask: "adequate for what?" (Lawton 1996). This question, it is argued, leads to the question: "what resources are needed to achieve our objectives?" As noted earlier, in order to address the notion of adequacy, there must be an attempt to link finance structures to student outcomes. Until this is done, answers dealing with the effective use of resources cannot be meaningfully answered. However, when linking best practice index scores accorded the case study schools to their division/district per pupil expenditure, a crude indicator of the relationship between adequacy and expenditure emerges (Graph II-1). The relationship tentatively suggests that a per pupil expenditure in the \$700 - \$800 range is related to implementing many best practice characteristics. In this case, adequacy is based on the assumption that best practices are adequate to provide desired student outcomes. Clearly, the missing link is documentation of the direct relationship between practice and outcomes.

The Schools' Finance Program had an immediate impact on the amount of support provided to school divisions/districts in Manitoba. However, the

issue of the adequacy of funding continues to be the overriding issue when looking at Manitoba's funding for special education. Approximately 60% of Exceptional funding support is block based, determined by student enrolment numbers rather than need. (See Key Findings under the previous question.) If the two issues of horizontal fiscal equity and accountability are to be realized in relation to special education, there is a need to link more closely financial support to need and outcomes.

As noted by Lawton (1996), the key decision concerns what programs are to be offered to achieve specific objectives, "since the basic operating costs of the typical school program represent between 60% and 80% of the costs of a high quality program. Once the question of which program should be offered is answered, research and practice provide guidance on the basic resources needed". However, he goes on to caution that the relating of resources to results is very complex and in many instances "at best imprecise and at worst pure fiction" and warns that "a simplified business model of accountability, based on a utilitarian model of education as a service industry linked to job preparation, will fail". While greater accountability is desirable, the lack of specificity found in the relationship between educational finance and outcomes can be seen as a cloak which "provides the privacy needed to shield their work from opposing systems of value" (Lawton 1996).

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- D.3.i. Equity be a primary focus of any revisions to the funding model and accompanying funding formulas for special education. Equity and provincial support targets be coupled with expectations of minimum service standards and appropriate accountability processes.
- D.3.ii. Manitoba Education and Training revise the funding model and formulas for special education, retaining a model based on some degree of provincial divisional/district partnership, but with the flexibility to increase provincial Level I funding based on identified local needs. (See recommendation D.2.i.) In addition, the revised funding model take into account:

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- a) the need for funding to follow the student, with some mechanism or formula to recognize the expenditures required to implement programming that may have a broader application than a particular child;
 - b) categorical grants be based on the level and type of student need rather than labels intended to represent specific exceptionalities which in themselves may be highly variable in the degree of support required. Then if students require a certain level of support, the funding would be forthcoming. (There is a need to be outcomes focused, rather than disability focused, which might help to change the perception that funding decisions are part of a negative process. See recommendation on criteria for categories D.1.i.)

D.3.iii Provincial funding needs to be allocated to support increased levels of certain clinical and therapeutic services.

D.3.iv Ratios for clinician grants be reassessed to take into account local contexts (such as large geographic areas).

D.3.v. School counsellor grants should be extended to include kindergarten to senior 4, rather than grade 5 to senior 4 enrolment.

4. WHAT PROCESSES NEED TO BE IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT FUNDS TO SUPPORT SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ARE USED APPROPRIATELY AND EFFECTIVELY?

Key Findings

- < The ADAP's and the financial data in FRAME were the only vehicles for assessing programs and expenditures. There was no clear way to link the two.
- < Provincial policy does not currently set out minimum expectations (service standards).
- < Manitoba Education and Training has proposed a new program review process (originally termed an "audit") that will occur in divisions/districts every third year.

Discussion

Policy, grounded in legislation, that sets out minimum service standards represents a foundation element for accountability. Also, as previously mentioned, there is a need for: common definitions; a standardized division/district reporting vehicle, coupled with defined outcomes and action-focused plans; consistent program evaluation expectations at the division/district and school levels; regional intersectoral planning; consistent use of individualized student plans (IEP's); and, meaningful involvement of parents, students, educators, and other relevant service providers.

“Best practice” in evaluation suggests that everyone understands the value of evaluation processes not only for accountability purposes, but also for purposes of continuous improvement. The focus is on accountability for improvement rather than for compliance.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- D.4.i. As per recommendation A.5.i., a collaborative program review process be instituted where Manitoba Education and Training works in concert with school divisions/districts to review their divisional/district program and service delivery on a regular basis. (Every three years as proposed by Manitoba Education and Training appears to be a reasonable expectation).

5. HOW CAN THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES BE BALANCED WITH THOSE OF OTHER STUDENTS IN TERMS OF THE DEMANDS ON HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES?

Key Findings

- < Generally, Review participants agreed that it was important to “unite and not divide” students.

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- < Concerns were most likely to surface regarding the integration of students with severe emotional/behavioural disorders where the safety and/or learning environment of other students might be compromised.

Discussion

In order to “unite and not divide” students, adequate resources, well trained staff, intersectoral collaboration, as well as teaming between the school and the home are important elements. (See previous discussion of a supportive learning environment.) Nevertheless, students with severe emotional/behavioural disorders pose challenges as to how to ensure the learning needs of these students are well met, while at the same time not jeopardizing learning opportunities and the safety of other students.

Some other Canadian jurisdictions recognize in their policies that, at some time in their school careers,

any student may require some support services at some time in their schooling; several students will require additional supports at various stages in their schooling; some students will not be able to access or participate in schooling without a constant level of support; and a few require a level and type of support service that the school system cannot provide on its own (Northwest Territories).

This speaks not only to the need for a continuum of supports and services for the benefit of all students, but also to the imperative of having assessments that identify individual student’s needs, plans that target interventions for individual students, and processes to monitor student progress and learning outcomes. This places “special education” within the continuum of student support services.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- D.5.i A continuum of supports and services become the basis for supporting all students, with “special education” students receiving supports within this continuum.

E. EXAMINATION OF INTERSECTORAL PLANNING IN RELATION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. HOW DO EXISTING SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES AFFECT INTERSECTORAL PLANNING, PARTICULARLY BY THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH SECRETARIAT, AND THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES?

Key Findings

- < Credit was given to the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat for addressing key issues such as truancy, FAS/FAE, EBD and children's transition to school. In some instances, it was suggested that closer collaboration with the field would be appreciated in the development of protocols.
- < The case study evidence suggested that at the school level, there was a lack of awareness of the Secretariat's role, while administrators (who were generally more aware of the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat) were sometimes confused as to its mandate.
- < A clearer definition of the Secretariat's role and more money to facilitate greater empowerment of the Secretariat were suggestions made in the submissions. Alternatively, some submissions advocated for the creation of a "Department of the Child."
- < Existing policies and practices, specifically in relation to special education, reference teaming and intersectoral collaboration. In older documents there is less specificity as to how this should occur than in the newer protocols.

Discussion

The Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat has an important and challenging role to play in facilitating intersectoral collaboration around priority issues. Given its relatively recent establishment, it is not surprising that there is some lack of awareness of the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat and some confusion regarding its role and mandate. At the same time there is virtually universal recognition that leadership is required

to facilitate coordination of services and development of intersectoral protocols.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- E.1.i The role and mandate of the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat be clearly articulated and more widely publicized.
- E.1.ii The Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat continue to address important issues that impact on the lives of children and youth, and to develop intersectoral protocols through a process of involving all pertinent stakeholders.

2. WHAT ARE POSSIBLE AVENUES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE AND BETTER COORDINATED SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG MANITOBA EDUCATION AND TRAINING, OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, INTERSECTORAL AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES, AND SCHOOL DIVISIONS/DISTRICTS?

Key Findings

- < There was agreement, from representatives of government departments, educators and other service providers that intersectoral cooperation had increased over the last five years.
- < Clarification of the roles and mandates of all those who provide service to children and youth with exceptionalities was called for in the consultation process.
- < At the local level, coordination was most effective in cases where the local professionals had established solid and trusting relationships, and sometimes worked together despite the constraints of their systems, in order to meet the needs of children and youth in their communities.
- < Other service providers and agencies did not necessarily have the awareness/knowledge of intersectoral protocols, nor the resources to support their own participation in intersectoral planning and coordination of services.

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- < Young people who are held within the Justice system do not have access to special education supports or services. When released and placed back into public schools, transition plans are infrequently in place.
 - < URIS (Unified Referral Information System) was generally applauded as an important and welcome initiative, although submissions called for the completion of the manual and implementation with adequate supports across the province, including “Health dollars” to support more medical-related procedures.
 - < According to parents, the transition into school did not always go smoothly. At the community forums, parents whose children were about to enter school expressed fear regarding the transition and what services would be available for their children once they reached school age.

Discussion

In the cases where intersectoral collaboration was working well, people not only had commonly understood and accepted processes to follow, they were also willing to “bend the rules” a little when necessary in order to help meet the needs of young people. The collaborative development of mutually beneficial processes, the sharing of information and the joint sponsoring of professional development sessions were all examples of making local intersectoral collaboration work.

The need to ensure “grassroots” participation in the development of protocols, not only in the educational community but also with other line level service providers, became evident. Issues of confidentiality, service coordination and mandated responsibilities have yet to be fully addressed. Manitoba, however, is moving in the right direction with people at all levels indicating increased receptivity to collaboration.

Provision and coordination of services are sporadic for young people who have been held by the Justice system (e.g., Manitoba Youth Centre). Rarely is provision made for smooth re-entry into public school, resulting in gaps in service provision.

Regarding transition into school, schools need more lead time and information in order to be more effective. (Some divisions/districts already had such processes in place prior to the Guidelines for Early Childhood Transition to School.) Where school divisions offer nursery programs, there is another gap in that students with exceptionalities are not funded as they would be in other pre-school situations. In addition, better information to parents of pre-school children needs to be available to help avoid the fear and conflict parents may feel when their child is approaching school age. Early intervention strategies, which include precise data on infants, developmental assessment and pre-school services, are prerequisites to positive school experiences.

Specific options for more effective service delivery included: full service or service-linked schools; multi-agency community initiatives; and multi-agency planning. The school remains the community cornerstone in many places in Manitoba. While this does not mean the school must take coordinating responsibility in all cases, it does suggest that the school building may be the hub for children and youth services. Moreover, this concept is compatible with “single window” access to services. A “single window approach” would involve standard or consistent identification and assessment practices, which would lead to the development of a individualized child-centered “living and learning” plan that would begin in the pre-school years.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- E.2.i The URIS manual be completed and distributed.
- E.2.ii Intersectoral cooperation include the provision of consistent and accurate information to parents regarding the school system and the range of service/supports available to school-age children. The Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat could take the lead on such an initiative.
- E.2.iii A “single window” for accessing services for children and youth be developed through collaboration among Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Health, Manitoba Family Services and Manitoba Justice. In this model, children and youth would receive the

necessary programming, and supports and services regardless of their current placement (e.g., in nursery school, in youth centres). “Living and learning” plans could be developed in pre-school years and for the starting point for educational IEP’s.

- E.2.iv A child profile information system be developed and ultimately linked to cross-sector funding. Implementation would require case managers with cross-sectoral authority or someone who is accountable for providing the supports that will produce desirable student outcomes.
- E.2.v Manitoba Education and Training explore a full service or service-linked school concept where the school is the physical site for service delivery, (although this does not necessarily require school personnel to perform the coordinating function). In non-urban areas, an option for central coordination could rest with the Regional Health Authority.

3. ARE THERE CHANGES THAT CAN BE MADE IN POLICY, PLANNING PROCESSES, FUNDING MECHANISMS, RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND/OR SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS THAT WILL LEAD TO ENHANCED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS, INCLUDING IMPROVED TRANSITION TO POST-SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES?

Key Findings

Many suggestions were put forth in the case studies and the consultation process regarding changes that could lead to enhanced outcomes for students. These have already been dealt with in previous sections relating to policy, funding, resource allocation, and various aspects of service delivery (including factors relating to a supportive learning environment). In this section, the focus will be on post-school transition.

- < Evidence from the consultation process and the case studies indicates that the transition from school to post-high school life is difficult for many young people as there is a “gap” in services between ages 18 and 21.

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- < The case studies did include examples of schools using the PATH process for students with exceptionalities.

Discussion

Students often remain in school simply because adult services do not commence until age 21. Even at age 21 employment and recreational activities are limited in many communities. Post-school transition planning and intersectoral cooperation must be addressed in order to reduce the “gap” between age 18 and 21 and to provide better employment opportunities to young adults with exceptionalities. While schools may be using planning processes (such as PATH), this on its own does not ensure that post-school opportunities will appear.

Implementation of the Transition Planning Process document, along with the resources to support transition planning are deemed necessary, along with better collaboration at the local level among Manitoba Family Services, Manitoba Health and Manitoba Education and Training. Collaboration must begin while the young person is still in school in order to create employment-related training opportunities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- E.3.i Concerted intersectoral efforts be made to develop, pilot and evaluate collaborative transition models so that young people are able to leave school for meaningful lives within their local communities, including social, recreational and employment options. Manitoba Family Services needs to play a major role in these efforts.

F. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are a number of areas that warrant further research in the coming years. One area which justifies particular attention is in the area of “best practice”. Answers to the following questions will be helpful in determining the most effective approaches in meeting student needs.

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- < Are all individual best practices equal and what is the connection between each? Is there a hierarchy of importance with some being more important than others or are they all equally important? Are some best practices pre-requisites to others? For example, are some necessary in order for others to occur or to work well while others are stand alone?
 - < Is there a group of best practices that are considered as being sufficient to cross an agreed upon "adequacy" threshold?
 - < Is the benefit of best practice, in terms of student outcomes related to each practice, roughly equal? Are all combinations of best practice equally good?
 - < What are the financial implications of implementing these best practices? Is the cost of implementing each roughly equal?

G. DISSEMINATION OF THE REVIEW REPORT

It is recommended that:

- < The report on the Manitoba Special Education Review be a public document, with the exception of the data that compromises the anonymity of Review participants.
- < A separate public document, approximately 10 to 15 pages, be developed for widespread public dissemination and be available in multiple languages and formats, including American Sign Language (ASL).