

**First Nations Education Steering Committee
First Nations Schools Association**

***Revised Special Education Program (SEP) Funding Implementation
Two-Year Plan
March 2004***

The First Nations Education Steering Committee and the First Nations Schools Association have been mandated by B.C. First Nations schools to administer the Special Education Program funding for the B.C. region. To ensure that there is an effective and efficient implementation process, FNEESC and the FNSA have established a unit to administer the special education dollars specifically.

The allocations for B.C. for the next two years are as follows:

2003/04 \$4,397,400 SEP + Gathering Strength Special Education funding of \$1,470,000 = **\$5,867,400**

2004/05 \$4,892,600 SEP + Gathering Strength Special Education funding of \$1,470,000 = **\$6,362,600**

The total amount of funding will be administered by FNEESC/FNSA. A portion will be used to provide regionally coordinated services in addition to the individual school allocations.

Special Education programs and services in the SEP are divided into two categories: *direct service delivery* and *indirect service delivery*. At a minimum, 75% of SEP expenditures must be for direct services. The maximum amount that can be spent on indirect services is 25%. The following chart summarizes the FNEESC/FNSA plan for the distribution of SEP funds for the next two years. A more detailed description of both the direct and indirect budgets is provided on the following pages.

SEP Funding Allocation Summary Chart

	2003/2004	2004/2005
Total Allocation	\$5,867,400	\$6,362,600
B.C. Approach: Direct Services	\$5,340,515 (91%)	\$5,802,771 (91.2%)
INAC minimum allowable: Direct Services	\$4,400,550 (75%)	\$4,771,950 (75%)
B.C. Approach: Indirect Services	\$526,885 (9%)	\$559,829 (8.8%)
INAC maximum allowable: Indirect Services	\$1,466,850 (25%)	\$1,590,650 (25%)

Direct Services

Direct Services	2003/2004	2004/2005
School Allocations	\$4,576,768	\$4,981,534
School Allocations Holdback	\$240,882	\$262,186
Coordinated Student Assessments	\$100,000	75,000
Toll-free Special Education Resource Line	\$150,000	\$100,000
Resource Staff Speech-Language Pathologists (2) and Special Education Consultant (1) Salaries and Benefits	\$172,865	\$249,051
Equipment/Resources	\$10,000	\$10,000
Language and Learning Certificate Program	\$35,000	\$50,000
Supporting Diverse Learners Diploma	\$40,000	\$60,000
Special Education Community Support	\$15,000	\$15,000
Total Direct Service	\$5,340,515	\$5,802,771

School Allocations

In 2000, the FNSA membership passed a resolution supporting the option of allocating dollars to First Nations schools on a base plus per capita formula. Schools are required to submit a workplan indicating the areas of SEP expenditures.

School Allocation Holdback

At last year's AGM, the FNSA membership agreed to reserve 5% of the school allocation amount (\$240,882) for those schools that were unable to meet the needs of their high cost special education students with their allotted amount. This decision was made with the understanding that the issue would be revisited at the 2004 AGM to determine the effectiveness of this strategy.

This issue was raised at the 2004 FNSA AGM. The direction given by the membership was to keep the allocation holdback amount at 5%. The Special Education Resource Committee will continue to review applications for the additional funding.

Coordinated Student Assessments

Many of the First Nations schools in B.C. are isolated making accessing various professionals very costly. In order to create economies of scale, FNEC/FNSA will continue to organize provincially coordinated psycho-educational assessments. In 2003/2004, 70 psycho-educational assessments were made

available to schools with the budget allocated for this purpose. With the proposed budget for the 2004/2005 school year, approximately 52 assessments would be available through this process. This change does not necessarily mean a reduction in the assessments conducted, as many schools also use a portion of their SEP funds to provide assessments for students.

Toll-free Special Education Resource Line

Results of the evaluation of the toll-free resource line indicate that while this is a worthwhile and valued service, some restructuring is required to maximize the cost-effectiveness for First Nations schools. Given that less than half of First Nations schools use this service, that 17% of schools use it more than 3 times per year, and that schools are requesting increased specialist support at the school level, the FNSA Board and the FNEESC personnel committee have both decided to restructure the position of the toll-free resource line coordinator to include more school visits. It is not anticipated that this will impact the availability of the phone line to schools given its current level of use.

Resource Staff

FNEESC/FNSA currently employs a Special Education Consultant and a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP). These professionals are available to travel to communities to provide student assessments, staff professional development, workshops for parents/community members, and other areas of support as requested by the schools.

Due to the overwhelming need for speech-language services in First Nations schools, the budget has been adjusted to accommodate the salary and benefits of an additional SLP without impacting school allocations. This issue was addressed and decided upon at the FNSA AGM by the FNSA membership.

Equipment/Resources

In order to provide quality services to schools, there is a need for an ongoing purchase of up-to-date resources, equipment and testing materials. The special education resource personnel use these resources when providing direct services to students and staff in First Nations schools.

Language and Learning Certificate Program

In response to the need for speech and language services in First Nations schools, FNEESC/FNSA has offered several courses in this program. An additional two courses will be offered in the summer 2004 in Kelowna.

FNEESC/FNSA is exploring alternative delivery options of some of the courses in this certificate in order to expedite training in this area. One possibility is the

development of on-line courses so that diploma students can take courses during the school year.

Supporting Diverse Learners Diploma/Certificate

There is currently a shortage of appropriately trained professionals in the field of special education, both in First Nations schools and in provincial schools. As First Nations schools receive funding to implement special education programs, there is a need for the continuation of a significant amount of energy to be devoted to professional development and incentives for new and experienced teachers, as well as teacher assistants.

FNESC/FNSA has partnered with Simon Fraser University in the delivery of a two-year graduate diploma, *Supporting Diverse Learners*. This program is flexible and multi-leveled so participants can study relevant topics and apply what is learned in their workplace and community. Discussions have been ongoing with the University College of the Cariboo to join the partnership and provide credit for the certificate portion of the program for teacher assistants.

Special Education Community Support

Conference calls continue to be a cost-efficient and easy way to provide support to schools in accessing funding and meeting reporting requirements. Another benefit of these regional calls is the opportunity for schools to network. Results of the special education evaluation indicate that these are a valued service.

Indirect Services

Indirect Services	2003/2004	2004/2005
Special Education Manager and Special Education Secretary Salaries and Benefits	\$102,135	\$90,199
Special Education Travel Budget	\$80,000	\$94,000
Special Education Resource Committee (SERC)	\$7,500	\$7,500
Administration (5%)	\$294,250	\$318,130
Read Well Reading Program Training	\$8,000	0
Other Professional Development t.b.a.	\$0	\$10,000
Program Evaluation	\$25,000	\$25,000
Special Education Resource Library mailing costs	0	\$5,000
Special Education Team Professional Development Professional Development (5 People)	\$10,000	\$10,000
Total Indirect Services	\$526,885	\$559,829

Special Education Manager and Secretary

The Special Education Manager and Secretary provide coordination and support for the implementation and distribution of the SEP funding. This unit is also responsible for the collection of data and for satisfying accountability requirements by reporting to INAC in aggregate form. These persons are responsible for the coordination of the entire special needs program, including managing the Toll-free Resource Line, the Special Education Consultant, the Speech-Language Pathologist, and psychologists and other professionals who conduct assessments. The FNEsc/FNSA special education professional development opportunities are also coordinated by the Special Education Manager and Secretary.

This portion of the budget has been reduced, as the secretary has taken on responsibilities in other program areas. A portion of her salary now comes from those budgets.

Special Education Travel Budget

This budget covers the travel and accommodation costs of FNEsc/FNSA special education staff when they travel to First Nations schools to provide support and services. This budget has increased with the proposed additional staff that will be traveling to schools.

Special Education Resource Committee (SERC)

The FNEESC/FNSA Special Education Resource Committee serves as advisors to the FNEESC/FNSA Special Education team who respond to the direction of communities in terms of special education funding and services. The following is a list of areas that the SERC will be involved:

- Reviewing special student cases requiring extra consideration.
- Monitoring the implementation of the Special Education Program (SEP) Funding Implementation Two-Year Plan
- Monitoring funding allocation methodology
- Reviewing and recommending assessment materials
- Reviewing and recommending curriculum materials
- Establishing priorities for the provision of special education resources and services
- Recommending professional development opportunities provided to teachers and other staff of First Nations schools, and parents of special needs children

The SERC now consists of the following members:

- FNEESC/FNSA Special Education Team
- FNEESC Executive Director
- 1 FNSA board member
- 2 Special Education teachers from First Nations schools
- 3 parents of First Nations special needs children
- 1 educational psychologist
- 1 specialist in the area of special education

Administration (5%)

The administration budget contributes to the rental of office space, the FNEESC/FNSA receptionist and finance clerk, audit services, phone costs, and postage.

Other Professional Development

Professional development will be provided in an area to be determined in the future. The subject area chosen will reflect the needs expressed by First Nations schools. For example, many schools are purchasing the special education software Kurzweil 3000 and Co:Writer 4000 and are interested in training in classroom applications of the two programs. There have also been requests for additional training sessions in Boardmaker.

Program Evaluation

There will be an evaluative component of this plan that would see a different portion of the process evaluated each year. This is to enable FNESE and the FNSA to ensure that the best possible services are being provided to support First Nations students and schools. Changes will be incorporated according to recommendations and these will be ratified by the membership of the FNSA each year at the FNSA Annual General Meeting.

The 2004 special education evaluation, “*A Good Start...*”, has provided valuable feedback regarding the FNESE/FNSA administration of SEP and the provincially coordinated services provided by FNESE/FNSA. The recommendations from the evaluation are reflected in the proposed changes to the 2004/2005 SEP budget. Copies of the evaluation will be available in print as well as on the FNSA website. The evaluation process will be continued in the 2004/2005, with a different portion of the SEP program being evaluated.

Special Education Resource Library Mailing Costs

In 2003, FNESE/FNSA was able to purchase some special education resources with a portion of the Library Resource Grant. These resources are all catalogued and are now available for First Nations schools to borrow. This portion of the budget covers the mailing costs to schools.

Special Education Team Professional Development

In order for the FNESE/FNSA Special Education staff to remain current on issues and programs related to special education, it is necessary to provide relevant professional development opportunities. This budget will cover the costs of staff members to attend conferences and/or courses that will enable them to provide improved services to First Nations schools.