Peel District School Board

Fix the Formula: Fair Funding for Special Education
2015 NSPRA National School Communications Award
Gold Medallion Award Entry
Finance Campaign

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Synopsis

The Peel District School Board is one of the largest and fastest growing school systems in North America with 153,000 students in 246 schools. Approximately 22,000 Peel students require special education programming.

To fund special education, the Peel board relies on several grants from the Ministry of Education—a branch of the provincial government of Ontario. One grant, the High Needs Amount (HNA), represents 30.6% or $50 million of the district’s special education grants. This HNA provincial funding formula was over a decade old and not scientifically based, as boards calculated their special education needs in different ways. As a result, Peel students had been disadvantaged, while other boards benefitted from an unfair formula. The problem was clear – and so was a solution. We needed to ask the provincial government to fix the formula.

In November 2013, the Peel board launched a comprehensive finance campaign, Fix the Formula, to fund special education students fairly. The goal of the campaign was to adjust the funding formula and secure additional funding from the provincial government to benefit all Peel board students. For five months, the district provided resources and information meetings to school staff, trustees, superintendents, and parent councils to advocate for a fair funding formula. These groups served as the voice of the campaign, invoking support in community members and provincial representatives (Members of Provincial Parliament-MPPs).

Fix the Formula led to the acquisition of nearly $19 million in provincial funding to cover special education at the Peel board over the next four years. The funding came as a result of the Ministry of Education changing its method of calculating HNA by using a statistical prediction model—the same one the Peel board had suggested in its campaign.
Program Overview

Background and Research

The Peel District School Board is one of Canada’s largest public school boards with more than 153,000 students in 246 schools. We serve 1.3 million residents in three municipalities (Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga) in the Peel Region, located immediately west of Toronto. Of these 153,000 students, approximately 22,000 require special education programming, which includes programming for students with autism, developmental disorders, emotional and behavioural challenges, physical disabilities, learning disabilities as well as programming for students who learn at a level above and beyond the curriculum.

While the board responds with the right support, the number of students with special needs, and their severity, continues to grow, as does the shortfall in the board’s budget to serve them, due to a flawed funding formula from the provincial Ministry of Education.

The flawed formula

A large component of special education funding is acquired through the HNA grant, which is based on a comprehensive funding formula. This formula was developed over 10 years ago when the province asked school districts to report their rate of special education students to develop a benchmark for funding. During this process, districts did their calculations in different ways, creating high variation between districts. Also, as this formula was developed over a decade ago, it no longer reflects the Peel district’s growing community, which has seen its enrolment grow by 30 per cent over the last eight years.

As a result of this flawed formula, funding dramatically differs across Ontario and no longer reflects the supports required by districts. The HNA grants range from $1,700 per student to a low of $339 per student—with the Peel board receiving the lowest per pupil funding of all 72 Ontario School Boards, significantly less than neighbouring school districts (with a high of $601) and the per capita average for all boards ($534). To keep pace with demand, the board spends $14 million more each year than it receives in total grants and revenues for special education, withdrawing these funds from other department budgets.

Based on this unfair formula and increased demand for special education support, the Peel board’s communications department consulted with key stakeholders to determine how to effectively implement a campaign to fix the flawed formula.

Consultation with political figures

The Board of Trustees and senior administration consulted Ontario’s Minister of Education and Members of Provincial Parliament to better understand the formula and to determine an appropriate and reasonable method to resolve the discrepancies between districts. The Minister of Education, Liz Sandals, provided feedback that she agreed the formula was flawed, but required a solution to the funding formula in order for change to occur. Based on these meetings, the Trustees and Peel board staff developed a recommended change to the HNA funding formula as well as reasonable implementation over a course of five years:

- The Peel board proposed that the provincial government fix the funding formula by using the Statistical Prediction Model to calculate the HNA in full. This model, which currently makes up just over one per cent of the HNA formula, accurately predicts the rate of special education needs by analyzing socio-economic and demographic aspects of a community, e.g. family income, immigrant status and level of education.
Research determined that this model is supported by international experts in special education as well as staff in the Ministry’s Special Education Branch.

**Consultation with key stakeholders**

Through the Peel board’s **Special Education Advisory Committee**, which represents all parent stakeholder groups in the special education community, we heard that parents feel children in special education are under-supported. Our **Parent Involvement Committee** confirmed these findings. In the past year, they had received feedback from parents, through one-on-one consultation and at parent sessions, that increased special education support and programming was required for their children.

The Peel board’s **Communications Advisory Committee**, consisting of communications staff, principals and superintendents, provided feedback on the growing need for special education support and funding in their schools. The committee also provided input from schools regarding the implementation of a board-wide campaign. They suggested a ready-made campaign package with template materials for staff to invoke the support of school councils and interested parents.

**Trustees and senior administration** were also consulted to establish key strategies to implement a successful funding campaign internally, including involving principals and vice-principals early in the campaign and providing template materials to senior and school administration to explain the complicated funding process.

**Past funding campaign successes**

In order to develop the campaign and proposed solution to the funding formula, the communications department referred to past funding campaign successes at the Peel board, specifically the Learning Opportunities Grant campaign, which resulted in an additional $12 million a year in new funding. Key learnings from this campaign included:

- Members of Provincial Parliament were key players in the success of the campaign. They became the voice of the board at a provincial level.
- Parent councils and the board’s Parent Involvement Committee were engaged and wanted to help through information sessions and petitions.
- The funding formula needed to be explained in a simple manner. Q&As and speaking points were useful tools for staff and parent councils.

**Analysis/Planning**

All research confirmed the views of senior administration and trustees: the formula is not scientifically based, equitable or fair, and is out-of-date for a province whose population has significantly shifted in the past 10 years. As a result of this research and feedback, the Peel board’s Communications department was asked by the elected board to develop a plan to reach out to the Ministry of Education to fix the unfair funding formula.

**Goal**

To support the **successful acquisition of additional funding** from the provincial government by fixing the current HNA grant funding formula. Based on a revised formula, the board would receive approximately $14 million in additional funding—phased in over a suggested five-year period.
Objectives

1) To increase awareness of the unfair funding formula among Peel parents with and without students who require special education
2) To invoke support of parent councils by attracting 75 per cent of parent council chairs to attend Fix the Formula information sessions
3) To gain support of all regional stakeholders, including the City of Brampton, Town of Caledon, City of Mississauga, and Peel Region
4) To generate 5,000 page visits to www.peelschools.org/fixtheformula from November 2013 to April 2014
5) To generate one million media impressions mentioning the Fix the Formula campaign from November 2013 to April 2014

Target Audiences

Internal
- principals and vice-principals
- classroom teachers and special education staff
- senior administration
- trustees
- the Peel board’s Special Education Advisory Committee – a legislated committee of parents and Peel board staff
- the Peel board’s Parent Involvement Committee – a legislated committee of parents and Peel board staff

External
- all parents of Peel board students—regardless if their child requires special education
- parent council chairs and members
- Members of Provincial Parliament representing parents in the Region of Peel
- Minister of Education Liz Sandals
- city councillors within Peel Region (Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon)
- neighbouring school districts
- local-, Toronto- and Ontario-based media
- parent and education influencers
- education and community partners

Key messages

- There is a solution to special education funding, one that is all about fairness and equity — and we can do something about it.
- Everyone has a stake, as the current funding model has a direct or indirect impact on every student we serve. Getting the special education funding we deserve benefits all students.
- You helped us successfully in the past—and we can do it again.
- The government needs to fix the formula now for Peel students.
- We deserve to be funded based on the students we now serve – we need funding based on current data.
- This is not about special education spending—it is about special education funding.
- The funding is needed to directly support Peel students.
- This is not about what other boards receive—it is about what Peel students deserve.

Communication/Implementation

Strategies

When faced with the massive size of staff and the de-centralized nature of a school system spread over 246 sites in three communities, the focus of the communication plan was on consistent delivery of messages. We implemented the following strategies:

- Create a theme that clearly communicates the need for a system-wide commitment to the campaign that addresses the funding Peel students deserve. The theme, Fix the Formula, reinforced the board’s concern
that Peel students are not getting their fair share of the provincial funding. This theme worked well with both internal and external audiences. The hashtag #FixTheFormula was developed to use on social media—a key communications platform for this campaign. A logo was developed to use on all campaign materials.

- Use face-to-face meetings with parent councils to: deliver the details of the formula, provide template materials for councils to use to ask the government to fix the current special education formula to fund Peel students fairly, and respond directly to questions and concerns.
- Connect the finance campaign to system goals. We can only use resources effectively to support student success if the adequate resources are available through appropriate, fair funding.
- Ensure all stakeholders understand that this campaign affects all students. If special education is underfunded, budgets from other departments will need to take cuts in order to continue to provide high-quality education to special education students.
- Assure parents that despite being underfunded, students still receive a high-quality education—comparable to other students in the province who receive more per pupil funding.
- Focus most of efforts on external audiences using template materials and a single spokesperson (Chair of the Board).
- Ensure parent councils understand that because the campaign is political in nature, promoting the campaign to all parents, through traditional school communication tools (e.g. newsletters) was not possible – it contravenes the Education Act.

**Budget**

The communications budget for this project was $2,000. As this campaign highlighted the need for additional funding, all efforts were made to keep costs at a minimum and use internal resources.

**Implementation (in chronological order)**

**November and December 2013 – launch the campaign**

- The Chair of the Board introduced the campaign to over 200 parent council chairs and members through an extensive presentation at the annual parent council kickoff event. Chairs were asked to disperse the information to their school communities and await further instructions in January.
- The campaign was announced publicly at the annual Organizational Meeting of the Board on Dec. 2, 2013. The announcement delivered key messages that explained the flawed formula in easy-to-follow language. A news release about the campaign was released the same day, with follow up calls to local media outlets.
- Once the campaign was made public, a dedicated page on the board’s website was created—www.peelschools.org/fixtheformula—to highlight the work on the campaign for external audiences.
- In addition, communications staff began a social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook, using the hashtag #fixtheformula. This hashtag was embedded in all Fix the Formula materials to spark conversation with external stakeholders. Tweets and posts directed the public to the Fix the Formula website.
- A Fix the Formula YouTube video was developed in-house by the Peel board’s Media Support Services team to be used at all information meetings and presentations, and to gain public awareness and support. The video is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TGZ06-nSuw
- Information packages were developed for Members of Provincial Parliament, delivered in person by board trustees during December and January. These packages included:
  - A letter from the Chair of the Board
  - A document outlining frequently asked questions for their knowledge and to use in their communities
- Trustee information packages were also developed with key speaking points, Q&As and a fact sheet to use for discussions and meetings in their respective communities (see supplementary materials).
January 2014—engage internal and community stakeholders

- A news release was crafted using the key messages and was then distributed to local and provincial media outlets. The communications department and Chair of the Board followed up with any media requests to increase the understanding of the campaign.
- Face-to-face meetings were held with key community partners and faith leaders, including members of the board’s Special Education Advisory Committee and Regional Council, the governing body for the Region of Peel, Boards of Trades, City of Mississauga, City of Brampton and Town of Caledon. Personalized information packages were distributed at these meetings, which included:
  - A letter from the Chair of the Board
  - Frequently Asked Questions
- Information meetings were held with trustees and senior administration, as well as union and federation representatives. Attendees were briefed on the campaign plan, and were provided with speaking points and key messages to use for discussions with parent councils and parents.
- A central information presentation by the Chair of the Board was held at the main board office for all principals and vice-principals. This meeting was recorded and broadcasted live for administrators who were not able to attend. All information provided at this event was distributed via email by the Director of Education, and posted to an internal Fix the Formula website. These resources included:
  - A PowerPoint presentation and script for principals to deliver to all staff at their schools
  - Fix the Formula video
  - Customized Q&As and fact sheets for principals, staff, and school council members
  - Politician contact list and template letters

February 2014—reach out to parent stakeholders

- School councils were invited to one of three school council information evenings held at schools throughout the Peel Region. These meetings delivered the details of the underfunding and provided template materials for councils to use to ask the government to fund Peel students fairly. These resources included:
  - guideline remarks for the chairs to use at their next school council meeting—shared with administrators to use at staff meetings
  - information documents, including FAQs and fact sheets
  - PowerPoint presentation to use at their next school council meeting—also shared with administrators to use at staff meetings
  - template email and letter for members of provincial parliament/government officials
  - contact list of government officials, other political leaders and news media
- Additional parent materials were developed for the Fix the Formula section of www.peelschools.org. This information was also posted to all 246 school websites. It included a call to action, as well as resources for community members:
  - letters to the Ministry of Education
  - fact sheets and FAQs
  - speeches and presentations
  - reports to the Board
  - news release

Evaluation

As a result of the campaign, in late April 2014, the Peel board received encouraging funding news from the government: the Peel board will receive nearly $19 million in provincial funding to cover its high-needs amount for special education—nearly $5 million more than the campaign’s goal. The money will be given out in increments of $4.7 million in each of the next four years, beginning at the start of the 2014-15 school year. The
funding comes as a result of the Ministry of Education changing its method of calculating demand for the high-needs amount by using a statistical predication model—the same one the Peel board had suggested in its campaign.

The following outlines the campaign’s success in reference to its objectives.

1) **To increase awareness of the unfair funding formula among Peel parents with and without students who require special education**

2) **To invoke support of parent councils - attract 90 per cent of parent council chairs to attend Fix the Formula information sessions**

Following parent council information meetings, parent council members and parents took immediate action. Registration forms at these meetings indicated that over 90% of parent councils had at least one member represented at a regional information evening. They took the information they learned back to their school communities and shared it with Peel families. Although, we don’t know exactly how many councils and parents sent emails or letters to their provincial government representative, we do know, anecdotally, that the government received hundreds of pieces of correspondence. Parents and parent councils also started petitions of their own, and created independently-run information sessions for parents in their communities *(see supplementary materials)*.

Senior administration and Peel board advisory groups reported that the campaign generated awareness of the funding inequity among Peel families, and that schools found the materials valuable and effective to invoke support in their communities.

3) **To gain support of all regional stakeholders, including the City of Brampton, Town of Caledon, City of Mississauga, and Peel Region**

Meetings with key community partners resulted in letters of support and recognition from all three municipalities, as well as endorsement from Peel Region. The City of Brampton and community partners even submitted letters to the Ministry of Education expressing their concerns. This support extended to school boards throughout Ontario who were also affected by the unfair funding formula *(see supplementary materials)*. They encouraged their own school communities to also campaign the government, using the *Fix the Formula* messaging and materials as a starting point.

4) **To generate 5,000 page visits to www.peelschools.org/fixtheformula from November 2013 to April 2014**

We promoted the *Fix the Formula* section of the Peel board's site—www.peelschools.org/fixtheformula—in all campaign materials, information sessions and through social media. As a result, the site received over 9,000 hits within a five-month span. In addition, the YouTube video, which was posted on the *Fix the Formula* website, generated over 1,000 views.

5) **To generate one million media impressions mentioning the Fix the Formula campaign from November 2013 to April 2014**

The campaign generated over 1.2 million positive media impressions focusing on special education funding and the *Fix the Formula* campaign in tier one newspapers. News media ran multiple stories directly related to the campaign. As the campaign grew and other school boards began showing their support, their local papers also picked up the story, extending our media reach to the provincial level. A selection of media articles can also be found in the supplementary materials section of this submission package.
Copy of letter sent to MPPs

November 26, 2013

Dear MPP,

I am writing to ask for your personal help with a critical issue for each and every Peel District School Board student. Soon you will get a call from a trustee asking for some of your time to discuss Peel’s concerns with Special Education funding, in particular, the High Needs Amount. Simply put—we want you— we need you—to be our partner in convincing the province to act and fix the formula—to fund Peel students fairly.

I am sure that you know the Minister of Education has acknowledged that the current funding formula for the High Needs Amount is out-dated and does not accurately reflect the current needs of many boards in Ontario—including Peel. The facts are clear, the current funding for the High Needs Amount is not fair or equitable for Peel students. For example, we would all expect that the special education needs and funding for students in neighbouring, urban boards would be relatively similar. Yet the figures below show clearly why we need to fix the formula for the High Needs Amount funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Board</th>
<th>Amount per Student</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peel District School Board</td>
<td>$339 per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board</td>
<td>$375 per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halton District School Board</td>
<td>$601 per student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have to say, in all honesty, that there is no objective or moral justification for these differences. We need to fund Peel students fairly.

We understand that there are no new monies for education generally or special education specifically. What is needed is a redistribution of funds to ensure that all students with special needs in the province of Ontario are accurately and fairly funded. While we acknowledge the political challenge, we would respectfully remind our MPPs that Peel students have been disadvantaged for over 10 years while other boards and their children benefitted from that outdated funding allocation. As well, there has been a significant increase in the last 10 years in the incidence of children who need special education support and in the severity of their needs.

On the invitation of the Minister of Education, we provided a suggestion on how the funding for the High Needs Amount could be improved. Based on our extensive review and consultation on the matter, we recommended the following plan to update the High Needs Amount funding:

1. That beginning in 2014-15, the funding for HNA be transitioned from the Per Pupil Amount (currently 94% of HNA) to the Statistical Prediction Model (currently 1% of HNA). It is our understanding that this model is supported by international experts as well as Ministry staff in the Special Education Branch and can be updated annually to reflect changes in community demographics and board data.

2. That we recognize, that if there are no new monies, then boards that would see a reduction in HNA funding would need a few years to adjust their services and expenditures. We would recommend a 4 year phase in beginning with 2014-15 funding adjustments as described above with at least 25% of the total of the HNA funds based on the Statistical Prediction Model. By 2017-18, there would be no allocation of HNA based on the outdated Per Pupil Amount.

3. That consideration be given to increasing the Measures of Variability (MOV) portion of the HNA funding to 10% to more adequately recognize board needs based on EQAO performance by students receiving special education support.

We were pleased to have this opportunity. We also, however, recognize the many competing issues vying for attention at the provincial level. We want—we need—your help as a local representative to make sure there is action to fix the formula. We know this is possible. With your assistance there was a revision to the Learning Opportunities Grant that made a big difference to all the students we serve. The potential impact if the province is able to fix the formula for HNA would be even greater.

Now we want the opportunity to meet with you and ask for your help. Your area trustee will be contacting you to set up a meeting. We want to provide the facts, answer your questions and seek your advice on how we can make sure we work as partners to fix the formula. We will also, again be seeking the support of our parents, school councils and community leaders in this work.

We trust that the children and parents of Peel can count on your support for equity and fairness in the funding of Special Education, in particular, the High Needs Amount.

Sincerely,

Janet McDougald
Chair
Peel District School Board

c. Peel District School Board Trustees
Liz Sandals
OPSBA
Fix the Formula: Fund Peel Students Fairly
The Facts on Special Education Funding

The Peel District School Board provides special education support to about 22,000 students. That number continues to grow. So does the shortfall in the Peel board’s budget to serve them, all due to flawed funding formula.

To fund special education, the Peel board relies on several types of grants from the provincial government. One is called the High Needs Amount (HNA), representing 30.6% of the total grants, or $50 million.

Different school boards have different special education requirements. As a result, funding per capita is never the same. However, the funding formula itself should be fair. The Peel board believes Ontario’s funding formula is broken, and that the government must fix it now. Every parent and child has a stake, as the funding model has a direct or indirect impact on each student the board serves. Getting the special education funding the board deserves is a matter of fairness and equity, and will benefit all students.

The Growth of Special Education Needs

All children have the right to the best education available. The Peel board has an obligation to acknowledge and respect their varying abilities, and support for their learning needs. That’s true generally, and certainly includes vulnerable students with developmental, physical and learning disabilities; autism; and emotional or behavioural challenges.

The Peel board has a process of identifying students who have special needs, who receive an individual learning plan. Students who haven’t formally been identified as exceptional, yet who need special support, may also have such a learning plan.

About 13,550 students have some identified exceptionality. As a percentage of overall enrolment, that rate is steady. Another 8,500 students are in the non-identified category, and receive special education help too. Those numbers rose 109% from 2006-2012.

The Current Funding Situation

Some 60% of funding comes from SEPPA – the Special Education Grant Per Pupil Amount. This is a set amount for each student overall (not just special education students), so is a fair formula. For the Peel board, SEPPA funding comes to $99 million.

While SEPPA is based on enrolment, the HNA formula is more complex. Starting years ago, HNA was based on what boards reported as their rate of special education students. That was the benchmark for funding going forward. Boards calculated in very different ways, leading to huge variances and an often inaccurate picture of true needs.

Today, the HNA grants range from $339 per student (The Peel board, last of the 72 boards in Ontario) to a high of $1,700. Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, serving the same communities as the Peel board, gets $375 per student. The neighbouring Toronto District School Board gets $522 per student. The average for all boards is $534.

The HNA grant is a vital source of special education funding, yet isn’t scientifically-based and is out of date. Peel students have been disadvantaged as a result – and not just special education students.

The Peel board’s expenses for special education, as numbers and severity of special needs rise, is $14 million more than the total grants and revenues for special education. To balance the board’s budget, that $14 million shortfall must be made up from bits and pieces of budgets from other departments and programs. This chipping away affects all children.

A Fair and Equitable Solution

In the HNA funding, part of the total is based on a newer statistical model. It looks at socio-economic and demographic aspects of a community, e.g. family income, immigrant status, level of education, and more. This sophisticated model predicts the incidence of special education needs in a community.

Yet this credible formula – supported by international experts, and staff in the Ministry’s of Education’s Special Education Branch – is used for just over 1% of the HNA. The Peel board proposes that this prediction model be used to calculate 100% of the HNA.

For the Peel board, basing the HNA entirely on the prediction model would result in the board’s shortfall, that $14 million shortfall would result in $16 million or so, eliminating the board’s shortfall and ultimately helping all students.

In the absence of new money, the province will have to redistribute funds to ensure that all students with special needs are accurately and fairly funded. Boards seeing a reduction in HNA funding would need a few years to adjust their services and expenditures. The Peel board is recommending a four-year phase-in. Beginning with the 2014-15 funding, at least 25% of the HNA could be based on the prediction model, rising to 90% by 2017-18.

Fairness and equity is at the heart of what school boards do, in delivering programs, supporting students, and creating an inclusive environment. Fairness and equity should guide how boards are funded too.
Fix the Formula: Fund Peel Students Fairly

Talking Points for Trustees on Special Education Funding

1. The current funding formula for special education is unfair.
   - The High Needs Amount (HNA) grant represents 30.6%, or $50 million, of the Peel District School Board’s total grants for special education. Through the HNA, the Peel board currently receives $339 per student – least of all 72 boards in Ontario. The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, in contrast, gets $375 per student. The neighbouring Toronto District School Board gets $522 per student, and the Halton District School Board gets $601. The average for all boards is $534.
   - Funding amounts per capita are never the same. However, the funding formula should be fair. The HNA isn’t scientifically-based (boards calculated their special education needs in different ways) and is outdated (the figures used as a benchmark are over 10 years old). Peel students have been disadvantaged as a result.

2. Funding should be based on current data.
   - In the HNA funding, part of the total – a very small part now – is based on a newer statistical model. It looks at socio-economic and demographic aspects of a community, e.g. family income, immigrant status, level of education, and more.
   - This credible model predicts the rate of special education needs in a community. International experts in special education support this model – yet it is used for just over 1% of the HNA. The Peel board proposes that this prediction model be used to calculate 90% of the HNA.

3. Our special education needs are rising, and we need proper funding to match.
   - Special education supports about 22,000 Peel students, a high percentage of our 153,000 students. As the incidence and severity of special needs rise, the Peel board’s expenses rise too. To keep pace with demand, we now must spend $14 million more than what we receive in total grants and revenues for special education. This isn’t overspending but underfunding.

4. Getting the special education funding we deserve will benefit all students.
   - To balance the board’s budget, the $14 million shortfall in special education funding must be made up from somewhere. It comes from chipping away at budgets from other departments and programs. This affects all children.
   - For the Peel board, basing the HNA almost entirely on the prediction model would result in funding in the middle of pack of the 72 boards. That would mean an additional $14-16 million per year. Eliminating the board’s shortfall and the pressure to cut other budgets, and putting us inside the funding envelope, ultimately frees resources to help every student we serve.

5. Changing the formula is about fairness and equity.
   - This is not about what other boards receive, but about what Peel students deserve – and what any boards legitimately deserve.
   - In the absence of new money, the province will have to redistribute funds to ensure that all students with special needs are accurately and fairly funded. Boards seeing a reduction in HNA funding would need a few years to adjust their services and expenditures.
   - The Peel board is recommending a four-year phase-in. Beginning with the 2014-15 funding, at least 25% of the HNA could be based on the prediction model, rising to 90% by 2017-18. The prediction model can be updated annually to reflect changes in community demographics and board data. We think that’s fair.

6. We are asking MPPs to join us in this campaign as our partners.
   - The province has many competing and important issues to deal with. We want this issue of fairness on the agenda. In the new year, we will ask our staff, parents, school councils, faith leaders and community partners to make sure the province hears how important the funding formula is for Peel. And we want our MPPs to help raise this issue, which is in the best interests of all students.
   - This is not an adversarial process. The government already acknowledges that the funding formula for the HNA is completely outdated, and doesn’t accurately reflect the current needs of many boards such as Peel. In the past, our MPPs were key players in helping to increase our Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG), and we appreciated that support. We hope we can count on that support again.
   - When it comes to special education funding, we’re not looking for the same share as any other particular board – we simply want a fair share for our students.
IMPORTANT MESSAGE
from your Plum Tree Park School Council

#FixTheFormula

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- The Peel Board is the absolute lowest of the 72 boards in the province in special education funding at only $339 per student.
- As a result of this underfunding, there is a $14 million shortfall in special education funding that must be made up from somewhere. It comes from chopping away at budgets from other departments and programs. Therefore, this affects all our children. Getting the special education funding that Peel board deserves will free resources to help every student.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

We need you to be our partner in convincing the province to act and fix the formula to fund Peel students fairly. The only way anything will change is if we take action as parents.

HOW?

- Contact your MPP via letter, email, phone—or personally visit them
- Reach out to other parents in your community to spread the word
- Use the #FixtheFormula hashtag on Twitter and Facebook
- Sign the petition in the front foyer of the school

How Special Education Funding in Ontario looks on a Sliding Scale

VISIT peelschools.org for more information and for templates of letters already done to send to our MPP (SEE REVERSE for addresses)

4 STEPS TO TAKE ACTION AND #FixTheFormula

STEP 1 - Visit http://peelschools.org/trustees/fundingcampaign/Pages/default.aspx to download a letter template to send to our MPP and then c.c. Kathleen Wynne, Liz Sandals and Janet McDougald. Both mail and email templates are available at that link.

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<tr>
<th>Mr. Bob Delaney</th>
<th>Hon. Kathleen Wynne</th>
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<td>MPP, Mississauga Streetsville</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Plaza 4; Suite 220</td>
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<td>Meadowvale Corporate Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000 Argentia Road</td>
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<td>Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario</td>
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<td>Legislative Building</td>
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<td>Queen’s Park</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:premier@ontario.ca">premier@ontario.ca</a></td>
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<th>Hon. Liz Sandals</th>
<th>Janet McDougald</th>
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<td>Minister of Education</td>
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<td>22nd Floor, Mowat Block</td>
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<td>900 Bay Street</td>
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<td>Chair, Peel District School Board</td>
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<td>HJA Brown Education Centre</td>
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<td>5650 Hurontario St.</td>
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STEP 2 - Use the power of social media! It’s amazing how quickly you can spread the word using Facebook and Twitter. Share, share, share!

On Facebook:
- Share the link to the Peel Board #FixTheFormula page on your own facebook page
- Facebook uses hashtags (2) now too! Simply add #FixTheFormula to your posts

On Twitter:
- use the hashtag #FixTheFormula
- reference those who should see your tweet

SAMPLE TWEET
I want my child @PlumTreePark to receive the best possible education. #FixTheFormula @BobDelaneyMPP @Kathleen_Wynne @Janet_S1 @PeelSchools

STEP 3 - Talk it up! A simple, “Did you know...” to other parents in the school yard and in your community is all it takes to spread the word!

STEP 4 - Sign our school petition in the front lobby. The School Council will make sure it gets mailed off to our MPP.

REMEMBER - this flawed funding formula is affecting ALL of our children and we need to do something about that. Thanks Plum Tree families!
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS: EVALUATION
Sample of support letters from neighbouring districts

The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 500 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Sandals:

As Chair of the Renfrew County District School Board, I would like to forward our Board’s support of a letter sent to you by Janet MacDougald, Chair of the Peel District School Board. We join a group of Boards where there is similar underfunding and disadvantage from the outdated per pupil funding allocation of the Special Education High Needs Amount (HNA).

Our Board supports a phased approach over four years, as suggested by Chair MacDougald. I strongly urge you to review and support of the work of Ministry Officials in the Special Education Branch, along with the CDE Committee assisting them, to begin implementing changes in the HNA funding commencing in the 2014-15 school year. We believe that if equity can be successfully achieved in four years it would be fair for both School Board’s and the Ministry. The goal is to ensure the funding meets the needs of the student it affects. Further delays will continue to challenge Boards on the low end of the funding scale in addressing adequate supports for our students with these special needs.

Please know we remain committed to the Ministry’s goals of improving student achievement with particular emphasis on narrowing the achievement gap.

We thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

David Kaiser
Chairperson
Renfrew County District School Board

Hon. Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
14th Floor Mowat Block
500 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Dear Madame Minister:

The Greater Essex County District School Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee voted on January 14, 2014 to voice their concerns around the current funding model for special education. We are requesting that the Ministry of Education review the process for funding public school boards’ special education programs and services.

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) has seen an increase in the number of identified students with complex needs. The HNA funding represents 04.89% for GECDSB. The $414.03 per pupil amount that has been frozen since 2006/2007 does NOT provide adequate funds to support identified high needs students. An increase is necessary.

The number of high needs students varies significantly from board to board serving the same community and is not a function of general enrolment. Overall enrolment, which the Special Education Per Pupil amount (SEPPA) is currently based upon is declining. However, the number and severity of identified high needs students have increased in our board.

Even though the FDK EPO does contain an allocation for special education, the issue is that the FDK EPO has a maximum of pupil FTEs it will fund. Our board was over that maximum with original estimates. This means that of the new FDK JK/GSK students, the GECDSB only received funding for 0.5 FTE of each student.

Our SEAC feels strongly that immediate changes to the current funding model for Special Education must be made in order to properly support identified students with high needs.

Thank you for your prompt attention and consideration to this extremely important matter.

Sincerely,

Connie Buckler, Chair
Special Education Advisory Committee
Greater Essex County District School Board

cc: SEAC Chairs, Ontario District School Boards
MACSE
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS: EVALUATION
Sample of support letters from municipalities and community partners

The following recommendation of the Committee of Council Meeting of February 19, 2014 was approved by Council on February 26, 2014:

CW041-2014

1. That the delegation from Janet McDougald, Chair, Peel District School Board, to the Committee of Council Meeting of February 19, 2014, re: Government Funding for Peel Students be received; and,

2. That the City of Brampton Council endorse the Peel District School Board “Fix the Formula” campaign for fairness and equity in Special Education funding; and,

3. That a copy of Council’s resolution be forwarded to the Premier, Minister of Education and Brampton area Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP) in support of the Peel District School Board’s campaign.

Yours truly,

Sonya Pacheco
Legislative Coordinator
City Clerk’s Office
Tel: 905-874-2178 / Fax: 905-874-2119
sonya.pacheco@brampton.ca

(CW-D2)
April 2, 2014

Dear School Council Chair,

This year we reached out and asked for your support with a project we considered to be a key priority—convincing the government to #FixtheFormula for the High Needs Amount for Special Education. As you know, the Peel District School Board is last in the province in this per pupil funding and that underfunding has an impact on every student in Peel.

We knew that the province had identified the High Needs Amount as an issue, and that they understood the need to fix the formula. We shared that information with you, and asked for your help in connecting with our local MPPs, as partners, to raise the issue provincially and make sure it was done now—phased in over four years.

I am writing to tell you great news—it appears from our analysis of the grants that your voice was heard! The grants reflect what we had asked for—a phased-in increase of the use of the new data over four years and the new funding that comes with that change. This is incredibly positive news for us, for you, and most of all, for our students.

On behalf of the Peel District School Board, I want to sincerely thank you for your time, energy and effort on this important task, and congratulate you on our shared success. I also want to acknowledge the role played by our local MPPs who carried the message to the province, and to the Minister of Education for acting on the issue.

Now, as we continue with our analysis of the grants, I would ask you to no longer send letters to the local MPPs or province, and to pause on hosting any #fixtheformula meetings or activities. The work we have done together has been successful and to continue with the letters and meetings would be counter-productive.

Once again, our thanks for your work. It is deeply appreciated. Your impact will be the legacy of new, needed funding for the students of Peel.

Sincerely,

Janet McDougald
Chair, Peel District School Board
New funding model ups Peel's share for high-needs students

Media coverage – selection of news articles

- Peel school trustees will make special ed funding an election issue – *Mississauga News, Brampton Guardian, Caledon Enterprise*
- Special education funding top priority for Toronto, Peel school board chairs – *Caledon Spectrum, Toronto Star*
- City supports school board campaign to fix funding formula – *Mississauga News*
- Peel School Board Chair brings fix the formula to Caledon Council - *Caledon Enterprise*
- Peel school board rallies support for provincial funding campaign – *Mississauga News, Brampton Guardian, Caledon Enterprise*
- Public board poised to join fight over special education funding – *Hamilton Spectator*
- Call for fair funding goes out again from school board – *Brampton Guardian, Mississauga News, Caledon Enterprise*