

# A Parent's Guide to

## Special Education Funding for Assistive Technology and Equipment for Students with Special Education Needs

### What is the Special Equipment Amount (SEA)?

The Ministry of Education provides funds to school boards, through the Special Equipment Amount (SEA), to assist with the cost of equipment essential for students with special needs to access the Ontario Curriculum and/or alternative program. The need for specific equipment is recommended in an assessment or report by a qualified professional (i.e., psychologist, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, etc.)

The type of equipment eligible for SEA funding could include any items that are recommended by a qualified professional that are not available through the Board's regular day school, school based-textbook, supply and/or computer purchasing arrangements.

### Examples of eligible expenses include:

- speech analysers
- FM systems
- soundfield systems
- amplification systems
- print enlargers
- computer hardware
- software that provides access to curriculum (i.e., operating systems and accessibility programs)
- adjustable desks or computer tables
- braille
- symbol or letter voice translators
- insulated booths and study carrels
- communication aids, such as speech synthesizers
- positioning devices for sitting, standing and lying
- personal care items
- lifts or harnesses for moving students

*Special Education Funding Guidelines: Special Equipment Amount (SEA), Ministry of Education (2011)*

### What is Assistive Technology?

- Assistive Technology is any technology that helps a student with special learning needs maintain or improve his/her academic performance.
- Its applications and adaptations can help open doors to previously inaccessible learning opportunities for many children with special needs (Judge, 2001).

## What Assistive Technology is available to all students?

All students have access to some Assistive Technology programs (including word prediction and organization software) which are available on school computers.

## What are the benefits of Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology is necessary for some students in the same way that eyeglasses or other aids are necessary for some students. Its successful use in the classroom will depend on:

- the characteristics of individual students;
- the task the students need to complete; and
- the functional use of the hardware and software.

## Assistive Technology can effectively help students with special needs to:

- build on individual strengths;
- gain motivation;
- accomplish higher rates of learning and improved achievement; and
- complete academic tasks independently, including tasks they might not otherwise be able to handle unaided, leading to a greater sense of self-efficacy (Polloway, Smith, & Patton, 1988).  
Education for All, Ministry of Education (2005).

## What do I do if I think my child needs Assistive Technology specific to his/her learning needs?

- You speak to the principal. If appropriate, the principal will schedule an In-School Team meeting. At this meeting, your child's teacher, school psychologist and/or other support staff will consider if a trial of the Assistive Technology is appropriate.

## How does my child get his/her equipment?

- The Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) arranges for your son/daughter to trial the technology and collects work samples from the student. If the technology trial is effective, the school arranges an In-School Team meeting to initiate a submission of a SEA claim.
- If the technology is not helpful, the school reviews appropriate strategies and considers contacting special education support staff to review or update any recommendations.
- The claim is submitted to the Community Education Centre (CEC) or area Special Education Consultant for initial review.
- The Consultant forwards the claim to the Board offices in Newmarket where Board and Ministry of Education criteria are used for final approval.
- The equipment is ordered and the vendor ships the equipment.
- Once all of the equipment ordered for your son/daughter's use has arrived, a technician will visit the school to set up the equipment. Since students at York Region District School Board schools receive equipment on an on-going basis throughout the school year, equipment will be given set up priority according to the date received.
- During the set-up visit, curriculum and individually approved software will be configured. No additional software may be loaded onto the computer.
- The school arranges training for the student. Parents are invited to be part of the student-focussed training session.

## How does my child learn to use the equipment?

- After the equipment is set-up, school staff will schedule a time for the student-focussed training.
- Parents are encouraged to attend the student-focussed training session.

## What happens when a student transfers from school to school or to another board?

- The Board has internal processes in place to move SEA purchased equipment when a student moves from one YRDSB school to another or when a student moves to another board;
- If the student transfers out of the York Region District School Board, the receiving school board can request the equipment to be transferred; and
- SEA equipment does not transfer to post-secondary institutions, employment settings, private schools, Home Schooling or outside the province of Ontario. In these cases the equipment is redeployed to another YRDSB student who meets the requirements for such equipment.

### How does my child get equipment?

