

SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM 2020

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

- The evaluation (covered the 2012-13 to 2017-18 period) specifically examined the impacts of elementary/secondary support funding, high-cost special education, New Paths for Education, the First Nation Student Success Program, the Education Partnerships Program, and the First Nation and Inuit Cultural Education Centres Program, representing between approximately \$1.3 billion to \$1.5 billion per year between 2010-11 and 2016-17.

WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

1. Education success of First Nation students is low and is not showing broad signs of improvement, especially for students attending school on reserve.
2. The historical and community context of First Nations is that, due to unique factors such as remoteness and lack of aggregation of service models in many cases, it costs more to operate a school on reserve than to operate a provincial school.
3. The Government of Canada's separation of Early Childhood Learning from the education system on reserve is counter to internationally recognized best practice, and is not conducive to an effective education system.
4. While regional agreements in certain contexts have shown promise, they are not solutions in and of themselves as the challenges are far more complex than governance structure.
5. The demand often exceeds availability of funding in accessing services and procuring adequate funding for students with special needs on reserve, and these barriers are greater than those typically faced off reserve. Program policies also create an obstacle by requiring the disability to be 'moderate to profound,' irrespective of actual cost.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Work with First Nations and government partners to explore, identify, and assess specific funding gaps of elementary and secondary education for First Nations, including sufficient investments for capacity and service needs such as, parental engagement, culture and language, as well as transportation and infrastructure considerations.
- 2) Work with First Nations and government partners on an ambitious policy framework, which aims to tackle early learning gaps and service needs, including the integration of early childhood education, using more flexible funding approaches for First Nations, and taking into consideration transportation and infrastructure challenges.
- 3) Work with First Nations and government partners on a clear and comprehensive strategy to support First Nations in addressing special education needs at or beyond levels to those offered off-reserve.
- 4) Work with First Nations and other ISC sectors as appropriate to integrate trauma and healing-based approaches to education support, which contribute to restoring and strengthening pride, identity, and self-determination.
- 5) Invest in communications with regional partners and First Nations to improve relationships and understanding, and to further advance reconciliation.

Program Description

- The objective of the Elementary and Secondary Education Program is to provide eligible students ordinarily living on reserve with elementary and secondary education programs comparable to those that are required in provincial schools by the statutes, regulations or policies of the province in which the reserve is located.
- The Elementary and Secondary Education Program also funds special education services for First Nation students identified as having mild to moderate learning disabilities. Funding is provided for programming, remedial instruction, clinical services and resource teacher staffing.