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2009 – 2010

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PARENT GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION





Frank Piddisi
Superintendent of Special Services

Parent Guide To Special Education booklet is available
in braille, audio and large print version.

Summary Of Parental Involvement

The practice of TCDSB is to provide every opportunity for parents to be actively involved in the decision making process regarding their children especially as it relates to the development of the IEP and to the delivery of special education programs and services.

Parent(s) may request in writing that a principal refer the student to an IPRC and the principal is then required to refer the student.

Parent(s) must provide written consent before most assessments can be carried out. Parent(s) must be provided with a written statement of the decisions reached by an IPRC stating:

- description of student's strengths and needs
- identified exceptionality based on Ministry of Education categories and definitions
- placement decision
- recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services.

Parent(s) written consent is required before a student may be placed in a special education program as determined by an IPRC. *(It should be noted that where a parent refuses or fails to consent to a placement and has not appealed within the appropriate time limits, the Board may direct the appropriate principal to place the exceptional student as recommended by the IPRC, and to notify the parent(s) in writing of the actions taken.)*

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed in consultation with the parent. The IEP is completed within 30 school days after a student has been placed in the program. The parent will receive a copy of the IEP.

Parent(s) must be advised in writing of the reviews to be held by the IPRC regarding the student's placement.

Parent(s) have the right to appeal the decisions of an IPRC.

Mission Statement

In a school community formed by Catholic beliefs and traditions, our Mission is to educate students to their full potential by providing:

- leadership in the shared responsibility for education that exists among schools, students, families, parishes and the community
- role models of Gospel Values and Catholic doctrines, teachings and beliefs
- a safe and welcoming learning environment that is an example of Christian community
- guidance in what students need to learn
- instruction in the learning process itself
- religious, academic and technological instruction
- integration of Catholic, Christian beliefs into the total learning experience
- feedback on student proficiency and performance.

Purpose Of Guide

The purpose of this Parents' Guide is to provide information to parents about special programs and services provided by the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) and the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). It also outlines the procedures involved in identifying a student as "exceptional", deciding the student's placement, or appealing such decisions.

It is understood that a parent can at anytime contact the principal if they wish to access special services for their child. Throughout this brochure, "*parent*" will mean one or both parents or guardians.

Philosophy Of The Toronto Catholic District School Board

*“...The integrity of Catholic education does not and cannot rest sole ly on the shoulders of a few individuals or belong only to certain groups of people...”
“We are bound together by a common faith and in common service.”*

Fulfilling the Promise (PP 6-7)

In partnership with families, the parish and the community, our Catholic education system is directed at developing the full spiritual, physical, academic, cognitive, social and emotional well being of each student. Through their learning experiences, students develop a sense of self-worth and dignity as people of God and are able to make a useful contribution in a complex and changing society.

Inherent in these beliefs is the recognition that all students, regardless of exceptionality, are entitled to education in the most enabling environment. The exceptional student is a unique child of God and has a right to be part of the mainstream of education, to the extent to which it is practical and beneficial.

“Our commitment is to every student. This means[ensuring] that we develop strategies to help every student learn, no matter their personal circumstances.”

Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education, 2008

In order to provide an education in the most enabling environment, TCDSB advocates the principle of inclusion as part of a continuum of services/programs which includes modification of the regular class program, withdrawal, and intensive support programs.

Inclusion of students with special educational needs in our schools can be summed up: *“We invite you to become active participants in the process of Catholic Education. We urge you to bring your energy, enthusiasm and generosity to the task of building a Catholic community within your school and to shaping the vision of Catholic education.”*

This Moment of Promise (P. 22)

Ministry of Education Categories of Exceptionalities (continued)

Developmental Disability:

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

- (a) inability to profit from a special education program because of slow intellectual development;
- (b) ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;
- (c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment and economic self support.

Physical:

Physical Disability: A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are the same age or developmental level.

Blind and Low Vision: A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

Multiple:

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities, that is of such nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.

Ministry of Education
Categories of Exceptionalities (continued)

Learning Disability: A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and is characterized by a condition that:

- (a) is not primarily the result of impairment of vision/hearing, physical disability, developmental disability, primary emotional disturbance or cultural difference;
- (b) results in significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with deficits in one or more of: receptive language (listening, reading); language processing (thinking, conceptualizing, integrating); expressive language (talking, spelling, writing); mathematical computation;
- (c) may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as: a perceptual handicap; a brain injury; minimal brain dysfunction; dyslexia; developmental aphasia.

INTELLECTUAL:

Giftedness: An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

Mild Intellectual Disability: A learning disorder characterized by:

- (a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive services;
- (b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development;
- (c) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment and economic self-support.

Who Is An Exceptional Student?

The Education Act defines an exceptional student as “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program...” Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

What Are Special Education Services?

Special education services are defined in the Education Act as the facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program.

What Is A Special Education Program?

A special education program is defined in the Education Act as an educational program that:

- is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation
- includes an Individual Education Plan (IEP) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

What Is An Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

All children learn differently. Program modifications may be incorporated into a formalized IEP which focuses on the child's strengths as well as areas of need. The IEP is developed by the school, in consultation with the parent. It must include:

- specific educational expectations
- an outline of the special education program and services that will be received
- a statement about the methods by which the student's progress is reviewed
- for students 14 years and older a plan for transition to appropriate post-secondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living.

The principal will provide the parent with a copy of the Parent Guide. The IEP must be completed within 30 school days after a student has been placed in the program.

What Assessments Are Carried Out?

If more formalized assessment and/or additional information is needed, a variety of special services staff is available within the TCDSB to conduct these assessments. Parents have the option to seek out assessments from sources outside the Board.

The educational assessment may include a review of the student's work and academic records, administration of standardized group tests and, if deemed necessary, individual assessments.

Depending on the nature of the student's learning needs, the IPRC may wish to consider other assessments such as psychological, psychiatric, audiological, social work and speech-language pathology. All of these assessments are carried out by qualified professional staff employed by the Board on the basis of informed parental consent.

Ministry of Education Categories of Exceptionalities

Behaviour: A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over a period of time, to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect education performance. This may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

- (a) an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;
- (b) excessive fears or anxieties;
- (c) a tendency to compulsive reaction;
- (d) an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory or other health factors, or any combination thereof.

COMMUNICATION:

Autism: A severe learning disorder that is characterized by disturbances in rate of educational development, ability to relate to the environment, mobility, and/or perception, speech and language, or lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes the language.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing: An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

Language Impairment: A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system or which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors and which may;

- (a) involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and
- (b) include one or more of the following: language delay; dysfluency; voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically functionally based.

Speech Impairment: A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

Provincial and Demonstration Schools

The Ministry operates provincial and demonstration schools throughout Ontario for deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning-disabled students, as well as those with attention deficit hyper-activity disorder (ADHD). Residential programs are offered at the schools Monday to Friday, for students who live too far from school to travel daily.

Demonstration Schools For Students With Severe Learning Disabilities, Some Of Whom May Have ADHD

SAGONASKA SCHOOL (613) 967-2830

350 Dundas Street West, Belleville, Ontario K8P 1B2

TRILLIUM SCHOOL (905) 878-8428

347 Ontario Street South, Milton, Ontario L9T 3X9

AMETHYST SCHOOL (519) 453-4408

1090 Highbury Avenue, London, Ontario N5Y 4V9

Provincial Schools For The Deaf

E. C. DRURY SCHOOL

255 Ontario Street South, Milton, Ontario L9T 2M5

Telephone:

• TTY: (905) 878-2851

(905) 878-7195

ROBARTS SCHOOL

1090 Highbury Avenue, P.O. Box 7360, Station E

London, Ontario N5Y 4V9

Telephone and TTY

(519) 453-4400

SIR JAMES WHITNEY SCHOOL

350 Dundas Street West, Belleville, Ontario K8P 1B2

Telephone and TTY:

(613) 967-2823

Provincial School For The Blind And Deaf-Blind

W. ROSS MACDONALD SCHOOL (519) 759-0730

350 Brant Avenue, Brantford, Ontario, N3T 3J9

Additional information is available from your school principal or the Superintendent of Special Services.

What Is An Identification, Placement And Review Committee (IPRC)?

The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) has three essential functions:

- to determine the strengths and needs of students
- to identify the student's exceptionality according to the categories and definitions provided by the Ministry of Education and Training (see pp 13-15)
- to recommend program placement, to be followed by the development/modification of the Individual Education Plan.

An IPRC is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the Board. This is a requirement of Regulation 181/98 of the Ministry of Education for the Province.

How Is An IPRC Meeting Requested?

The principal:

- may, with written notice to the parent, refer the student to an IPRC when the principal and the teacher(s) believe that the student may benefit from a special education program
- must request an IPRC meeting for the student, upon receiving a written parental request.

Within 15 days of receiving a parental request, or giving the parent notice, the principal must provide the parent with a copy of the **Parents' Guide to Special Education** and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet.

Who Attends The IPRC Meeting?

Parents and students age 16 and older are entitled to attend. Others who may attend are:

- the principal or designate
- other professionals such as the student’s teacher, special education teacher and/or Board support staff
- students under 16 years of age with parent’s consent
- an interpreter (requested through the principal of the student’s school)
- a person to support or speak on the parent’s and student’s behalf
- Principals will make every effort to accommodate parental request for specific resource staff to be in attendance.

What Information Will Parents And Students Receive About The IPRC Meeting?

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the principal will provide the parent with written notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend.

At least one day before the IPRC meeting, the parent and student age 16 and older will receive a written copy of any information that will be considered by the IPRC. This may include the results of assessments or a summary of information.

If the parent is unable to attend to the scheduled IPRC meeting, he/she shall:

- contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time, or
- inform the school principal that he/she will not attend and give written or verbal permission for IPRC to proceed.
If the parent gave permission for the IPRC to proceed, the principal shall forward the IPRC form for the parent’s consideration and signature.

Special Education Programs

In addition to Special Education Resource, the following Intensive Support Programs (ISP) are available:

- Behaviour
- Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing
- Gifted
- Learning Disability
- Kindergarten Intervention and Needs Development (KIND)
- Kindergarten Language Program (KLP)
- Practical Applied Living Skills (PALS)
- Developmental Disability
- Language Impaired
- Multiple Exceptionalities
- Autism – Program to Assist Social Thinking (PAST)

Note: To obtain further information about location and range of programs currently available, please contact the Special Services Department (222-8282 ext. 2486).

The student’s home school will be first considered in providing a appropriate program.

Organizations To Assist Parents

Many community organizations provide information and support to parents of exceptional students:

Autism Ontario	416-489-0702
Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District	416-229-1680
VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children	416-487-7719
Toronto Association for Community Living.....	416-968-0650
Association for Bright Children.....	416-925-6136
Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy	416-244-9686
Down Syndrome Association of Toronto	416-966-0990
Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada	416-861-8398
Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD)	519-842-9506

Representatives nominated by these organizations are members of the **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)** of the Board. The role of the Committee is to provide advice to the Board on issues related to exceptional students. Monthly meetings are open to the public.

The Appeal Process

The Notice of Appeal must:

- indicate the decision with which the parent disagrees and
- include a statement that sets out reasons for the parental disagreement.

The appeal process involves the following steps:

- the Board will establish a Special Education Appeal Board to hear the appeal. The Appeal Board will be composed of three persons (one of whom is to be selected by the parent) who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal
- the Chair of the Appeal Board will arrange a meeting to take place at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after he or she has been selected (unless the parent and Board both provide written consent to a later date)
- the Appeal Board will receive the material reviewed by the IPRC and may interview any persons who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal
- the parent and student, (if 16 years old or over), are entitled to be present at, and to participate in, all discussions
- the Appeal Board must make its recommendation within 3 days of the meeting. It may agree with the IPRC and recommend that the decision be implemented; or disagree with the IPRC and make a recommendation to the Board about the identification and/or placement
- the Appeal Board will report its recommendations in writing to the parent and to the School Board, providing the reasons for its recommendations
- within 30 days of receiving the Appeal Board's written statement, the School Board will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations. Boards are not required to follow the Appeal Board's recommendation
- the parent may accept the decisions of the School Board, or may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal. A parent may request a hearing by writing to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal. Information about making an application to the Tribunal will be included with the Appeal Board's decision.

What Happens At An IPRC Meeting?

As soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward for the parent's consideration and signature, the IPRC's written statement of

The chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting. The IPRC will review all available information about the student. They will:

- consider an educational assessment
- consider other assessments as needed
- interview the student (with parental consent if the student is less than 16 years of age) if required
- consider any information that the parent or student submits, including recommendations for programs and services.

The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the student. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at the parent's request, or at the request of the student, aged 16 years or older. The parent is encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion. Following the discussion, after all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision.

What Will The IPRC Consider In Making Its Decision?

Before the IPRC can consider placing a student in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will:

- meet the student's needs
- be consistent with the parent's preferences.

If the IPRC determines that placement in a regular class will meet the student's needs and the parent agrees, the committee will recommend placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services. If the committee decides that the student should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for the decision in its written statement of decision.

What Will The IPRC'S Written Statement Of Decision Include?

The IPRC's written statement of decision will state whether the student has been identified as exceptional;

If the student is identified as exceptional, the statement will include:

- the categories and definitions of any identified exceptionalities, as permitted by the Ministry of Education
- description of the student's strengths and needs
- placement decision
- recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services.

Where the IPRC has decided that the student should be placed in a special education class, the reasons for that decision will be provided.

What Happens After The IPRC Has Made Its Decision?

The parent's signature on the IPRC form indicates agreement with the decision made by the IPRC. The statement of decision may be signed at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned.

If the IPRC identifies the student as exceptional and the parent has agreed with the IPRC identification and placement decision, the Board will promptly notify the principal of the school at which the special education program will be provided. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the student will be developed or modified.

How Is A Special Education Placement Reviewed?

A review IPRC meeting will be held within the school year, unless the principal of the school at which the special education program is being provided receives written notice (waiver) from the parent dispensing with the annual review.

The parent may request a review IPRC meeting any time after the student has been in a special education program for 3 months. At the review meeting, the following information is considered:

- additional information to that presented to the initial IPRC
- the progress the student has made in relation to the Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The IPRC will review the placement and identification decisions and make appropriate recommendations.

What If The Parent Disagrees With The IPRC Decision?

If the parent does not agree with either the identification or placement decision made by the IPRC, the parent may:

- within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss these concerns
- or*
- within 30 days of receipt of the decision, the parent may file a notice of appeal with the Director of Education who is also Secretary of the Board.

If the parent does not agree with the decision after the second meeting, the parent may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of receipt of the decision.

If the parent does not consent to the IPRC decision and does not appeal it, the Board will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.