**Who Are Students Identified with Special Education Needs?**

Students identified with special education needs often benefit from greater support, accommodations, and differentiated instruction in order to be successful in school.

**How Are Elementary Students with Special Education Needs (JK to Grade 8) Identified?**

1. Through a formal Identification, Placement, and Review Committee, or **IPRC**, students can be identified according to one or more of 14 Ministry of Education recognized exceptionalities.
2. Students who are reported to the Ministry as ‘non‐identified’ but who require additional support, are assisted through the School Support Team and receive programming support through Special Education. All students who have been identified either informally or formally as needing support are eligible to receive an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
3. The majority of elementary students identified as exceptional receive their instruction in **Regular** classes (60%), where less than half their programming is delivered through Special Education.

1. In the TDSB, elementary students formally identified as exceptional~~ity~~ can be placed by IPRC in Regular Class with varying degrees of support or in Special Education Class – either Part Time or Full Time. Forty percent (40%) of elementary students identified as exceptional are taught within **Special Education** classes.
2. The TDSB “Home School Program” (**HSP**) provides Special Education support to elementary students, in their neighbourhood school. In HSP, elementary students receive up to 50% of their instruction within a self‐contained class. Most students in HSP have not been identified as exceptional (61%), and most HSP students are in Grades 5‐8 (66%).
3. Special Education Class Full Time support is provided in “Intensive Support Programs” (**ISPs**). Students in ISPs generally receive 100% of their education in a self‐contained Special Education classroom with increasing opportunities for integration as skills develop.

**How Many Elementary Students with Special Education Needs are in the TDSB?**

In 2015‐16, 31,837 elementary students out of 170,405 (**18.7% of the TDSB elementary panel**) were

identified as students with special education needs:

* **Intensive Support Programs (ISP) ‐ Gifted**: 2,942 students (**1.7%**)
* **Intensive Support Programs (ISP) – Excluding Gifted**: 4,178 students (**2.5%**)
* **Home School Program (HSP)**: 5,690 students (**3.3%**)
* **Gifted – Regular Classes**: 973 students (**0.6%**)
* **Exceptionalities other than Gifted‐ Regular Classes**: 1,725 students (**1%**)
* **Non‐Identified Special Education Needs ‐ Regular Classes**: 16,329 students (**9.6%**)

**Selected Key Findings**

* There are 14 Ministry recognized Special Education exceptionalities. The majority of students identified as exceptional through the IPRC process fall into five categories: Learning Disability (LD), Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability (MID), Autism, and Developmental Disability (DD).
* Elementary students who have NOT been identified as exceptional are nearly equally represented, with 48% males and 52% females. However, nearly two thirds of identified elementary students (64%) are *male*.
* Elementary students identified with special education needs are somewhat more likely to be born in Canada (87%) compared to those who have not been identified (80%).
* Looking at a variety of achievement results, elementary students identified as gifted achieve at a much *higher level* than the TDSB average. On the other hand, all students formally identified with special education needs (excluding giftedness) achieve at a much *lower level* than the TDSB average.
* Many students who received full‐time special education programming in Grade 8 are technically integrated into regular secondary classes when they enter Grade 9; however research is showing that many of these students end up streamed into the Applied and Locally Developed Programs of Study where access to Post‐Secondary Education is improbable.

**Remodeling the Home School Program**

In accordance with the Integrated Equity Framework, steps are being taken to remodel how the Home School Program is delivered. The Home School Program is found in all of our elementary schools. The program has been in place in the TDSB since the early 2000s. The original intent was that HSP would support some formally identified students in need of part time Special Education programming, in their local school. Currently, there are 226.5 teachers allocated for HSP, at 453 schools. Most administrators use the 0.5 teacher for a half-day congregated class that serves approximately 6 to 11 students. The majority of students in HSP are in grades 4-8. These students return to their regular class for the other half of the day. Students in these classes are not counted when calculating Grade 4-8 average class size. Thus, the HSP classes lower the Grade 4-8 class average, which sits at 23.24.

Over the past few years, the TDSB research department has explored and identified a number of issues regarding placing students in settings based on ability grouping. The following findings generally reflect programs in our schools:

* Ability groupings often impose low expectations on students
* Ability groupings often mirror social, ethnic and class divisions
* Assignment to an ability grouping is often a permanent allocation
* Students in ability groupings are often further disadvantaged based on a lack of access to positive role models and social stimulation.

General feedback from the Integrated Equity Framework community consultation responses indicate that “Students and parents were largely in support of the remodel, identifying the HSP as a key source of discrimination and stigma. However, aside from the one staff member who themselves identified as someone with a learning disability, staff were largely against the remodel of HSP, particularly if that meant that current students in HSP would be integrated into the regular program”.

**Special Education Plan – 2016**

Each school board is required to maintain a Special Education Plan. This plan is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it meets current needs. Amendments are submitted to the Ministry of Education for review (Regulation 306).

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Special Education Plan focuses on students and recognizes the unique linguistic, cultural and racial diversity of Toronto schools and communities. The TDSB is committed to the development and implementation of effective special education programs and services that respond to student needs. Special Education is included in the TDSB Integrated Equity Framework Action Plan 2016-2019 and supports the Director of Education’s strategy for improving school effectiveness outlined in A Vision for Learning in TDSB. Special Education resources and services are directed to the schools in order to provide challenging and enriching learning opportunities for students with a wide range of abilities.

**Keeping It Simple**

Clear, simple language makes information easy to read, understand and use. In our diverse city, that’s critical for reaching out to parents and the public, especially those who do not speak English as a first language.

The TDSB plain-language standard to aim for is a Grade 8 – 10 level of difficulty. That takes practice and even experienced writers may struggle. The guidelines attached have been distributed throughout our department, to provide guidance to help staff keep it simple in their communications so messages are clear. *(See Appendix A: Keep it Simple-Resource)*

**The First Nations School of Toronto Relocating to Eastern Commerce CI.**

The Board decided that the First Nations School of Toronto be relocated to Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute between January 1 and March 31, 2017, and:

1. That all current users remain in the Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute building until the First Nations School of Toronto’s enrolment increases to the point where it requires additional space in the building;
2. That over time, indigenization of the space occur subject to the availability of funds;
3. That the First Nations School of Toronto and the Aboriginal Education Centre be permanently housed at Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute;
4. That the Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute building undergo all appropriate health and safe-ty/ building inspections to ensure that the building is age appropriate and ready for a kindergarten to Grade 12 school.