 Guide to Special Education for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Learning Centres 2 and 3: 140 Borough Drive, Scarborough, Ontario M1P 4N6 (416)396-7968

Learning Centres 1 and 4: 1 Civic Centre Court, Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B3 (416)394-4898

**The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Special Education Plan adheres to the TDSB Mission and Values Statements:**

 **We value:**

* **Each and every student**
* **A strong public education system**
* **A partnership of students, schools, family and community**
* **The uniqueness and diversity of our students and our community**
* **The commitment and skills of our staff**
* **Equity, innovation, accountability and accessibility**

***Serving Our Students, Schools, and Their Communities***

* **Learning environments that are safe, nurturing, positive and respectful**

**The TDSB SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN is also guided by the following principles:**

* **All students, their families and the staff who support them have the right to be treated with respect.**
* **All students have the right to a program developed in response to their strengths and needs;**
* **All students have the right to a range of placements, programs, and services to meet their individual requirements in their neighbourhood or Family of Schools, wherever possible.**
* **All students and the staff who support them have the right to a safe, accepting, welcoming, secure, and encouraging environment.**

*We believe that active and meaningful collaboration with all stakeholders and a partnership of students, school, family and support services*

*is essential to the success of all students.*

**For a copy of this year’s** [**Special Education Plan**](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/EarlyYears/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan.aspx) **visit: www.tdsb.on.ca/specialeducation**

***This Guide to Special Education for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) provides information about supports and services for students with special education needs in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). It sets out the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) procedures involved in identifying a pupil as “exceptional”, in deciding on program placement* and in appealing such decisions when parents\* do not agree with the IPRC.** *(\*Throughout this guide, the word “parents” includes guardians.)*

***What is TDSB’s Vision for Special Education?***

TDSB’s Vision for Special Education is that students identified with special education needs be welcomed, included and supported within well-resourced neighbourhood schools. We are committed to providing all students with equitable access to special education programs, services and resources in the most supportive and inclusive environment for learning, to the fullest extent possible in the local community.

***Who are students 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. The Education Act requires that school boards provide, or purchase from another board, special education programs and services for their exceptional pupils. The Ministry of Education directs funding to school boards for this purpose.

***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; and
* Includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

***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 special education programs and services are provided by the board?***

TDSB provides a full range of programs and services to ensure that the needs of students are clearly identified and that the appropriate educational programs and services are provided for them, whether in the regular classroom, a specialized setting, or a combination of both. TDSB’s Special Education Plan reflects the board’s commitment to the development, implementation and consistent provision of effective special education programs and services to all students who need them, whether or not they are deemed to be “exceptional”. The [Special Education Plan](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/earlyyears/specialeducation/specialeducationplan.aspx) can be found at: [www.tdsb.on.ca/specialeducation](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/specialeducation).

***What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?***

An *Individual Education Plan (IEP)* is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services developed for a particular student. It outlines any *accommodations* and special education services needed to assist the student in achieving his or her learning expectations. It may also identifies specific, measureable learning expectations that are *modified from* or *alternative to* the expectations given in the curriculum policy document for the grade level subject or course. Ontario [Regulation 181/98](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/980181) governs the development of IEPs.

The IEP must be developed in consultation with parents. It must include:

* Accommodations – strategies and supports that differ from what is normally provided during instruction
* Appropriately specific and measureable educational expectations
* An outline of the special education program and services that will be received
* A statement about the methods for reviewing your child’s progress
* A personalized transition plan with specific goals and actions that build on student strengths, needs and required supports. If a student *does not* need a transition plan, the plan will state that no action is required.

The IEP must be completed within 30 school days after a child has been placed in a special education program and the principal must ensure that parents receive a copy of it. An IEP can also be developed for students who have not been formally identified as exceptional but who require special education programs and/or services. For more information see: [The Individual Education Plan (IEP) A Resource Guide](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/index.html) available at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/.

***Who is identified as an “Exceptional” Pupil?***

The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, and physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program...” Students are identified through an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education. Categories include Behaviour, Communication, Intellectual and Physical Exceptionalities.

***What is an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)?***

Students being considered for identification of an exceptionality and special education programs and/or services may be presented to an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). Ontario [Regulation 181/98](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/980181) requires that all school boards set up IPRCs. It also sets out the procedures involved in identifying a pupil as “exceptional”, deciding the pupil’s placement and appealing such decisions when the parent does not agree with the IPRC.The committee is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the board. Resident students enrolled in and attending a TDSB school are eligible for consideration by a TDSB IPRC.

***What does the IPRC do?***

The IPRC will:

* Decide whether or not your child should be identified as an exceptional pupil
* Identify the areas of your child’s exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education
* Decide an appropriate placement for your child:
* Regular Class with Indirect Support, Resource Assistance or Withdrawal Assistance
* Special Education Class with Partial Integration or Full Time
* Review the identification and placement at least once in each school year

***How is an IPRC meeting requested?***

An IPRC can be requested by the principal of your child’s school or in writing by parents. The principal:

* May, in consultation with the School Support Team (SST) and with written notice to you, refer your child to an IPRC when the principal believes that your child may benefit from a special education program
* Must request an IPRC meeting for your child, upon receiving your written request

Within 15 days of receiving your request, or of giving you notice, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet.

***May parents attend the IPRC meeting?***

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents and pupils 16 years of age or older:

* To be present at and participate in all committee discussions about your child
* To be present when the committee’s identification and placement decision is made

***Who else may attend an IPRC meeting?***

The principal (or vice principal) of your child’s schoolwill attend.You or the principal may request the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting, such as:

* Your representative, that is, a person who may support you or speak on behalf of you or your child
* Other resource people who may provide additional information or clarification, such as your child’s teacher, special education staff, board support staff, or the representative of an agency
* A translator or an interpreter, if one is required (You can request the services of a translator or an interpreter through the principal of your child’s school.)

***What information will parents receive about the IPRC meeting?***

Within 15 days of giving you notice of an IPRC, or receiving your request, the principal will provide you with written notification of approximately when the IPRC will meet. At least ten days in advance of the meeting, you will receive an invitation to attend the meeting as an important partner in considering your child’s placement. This letter will notify you of the date, time, and place of the meeting, and it will ask you to indicate whether or not you will attend.

Before the IPRC meeting occurs, you will receive a written copy of any information about your child that the members of the IPRC have received. This may include the results of assessments or a summary of information.

***What if parents are unable to attend the scheduled meeting?***

If you are unable to make the scheduled meeting, you may:

* Contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time
* Let the school principal know you will not be attending and advise the principal of issues that he or she may take forward to the IPRC on your behalf

If you do not attend, as soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward to you, for your consideration and signature, the IPRC’s written statement of decision. The statement will note the decision of identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

***What happens at an IPRC meeting?***

* The chair of the IPRC introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting.
* The IPRC will review all available information about your child. The committee will:

🡪 Consider an educational assessment of your child

* Consider, subject to the provisions of the Health Care Consent Act, 1996, a health or psychological assessment of your child conducted by a qualified practitioner, if they feel that such an assessment is required to make a correct identification or placement decision
* Interview your child if the committee considers it useful to do so (Your consent is required if your child is less than 16 years of age)
* Consider any information that you submit about your child, or that your child submits if he or she is 16 years of age or older
* The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the child. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at your request or at the request of your child, if the child is 16 years of age or older.
* You are 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 decisions

***What will the IPRC consider in making its decision about exceptionality?***

The IPRC will consider all of the information presented about your child in light of the Ministry definitions for the different exceptionalities and TDSB criteria for different kinds of program support.

***What will the IPRC consider in making its placement decision?***

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

* Meet your child’s needs, and
* Be consistent with your preferences

If, after considering all of the information presented to it, the IPRC is satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet your child’s needs and that such a decision is consistent with your preferences, the committee will decide in favour of placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services.

If the committee decides that your child should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that 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:

* The IPRC’s description of your child’s strengths and needs
* Whether the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional
* Where the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional:
* The categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified, as they are defined by the Ministry of Education
* The IPRC’s placement decision
* The IPRC’s recommendations regarding a special education *program* and special education *services*
* Where the IPRC has decided that your child should be placed in a special education class, the reasons for that decision

***What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?***

* The chair of the IPRC will sign the statement of decision and review it with you.
* **If you agree** with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC, you will be asked to indicate this by signing your name on the statement of decision. It may be signed at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned later to your child’s school principal.
* No committee placement decision can be implemented unless you have consented to the decision, or unless the time limit for filing a notice of appeal about the decision has expired and no such notice has been filed.
* If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and you have agreed with the IPRC identification and placement decisions, the following will take place:
* Where placement is not special education class full time and your child remains at his or her current school, the appropriate school staff will be informed of the need to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child.
* Where placement is a special education class full time or with partial integration with intensive program support, the appropriate special education coordinator will be directed to prepare an “offer of placement” and assist the home school principal with arranging a visit to the proposed placement for you and your child.
* Following the visit, you will be asked to indicate your acceptance or refusal of the offer of placement. The offered placement will not proceed without your signed acceptance.

***What can parents do if they disagree with the IPRC decision?***

If you **do not agree** with either the identification or placement decision made by the IPRC, you may:

* Within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss your concerns and revisit the decisions; *or*
* Within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal

If, after a second meeting, you **do not agree** with the decision, you may, within 15 days of your receipt of the decision at the second meeting, file a notice of appeal.

If you **do not consent** to the IPRC decision and you **do not appeal** it, the Board will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.

***How do I appeal an IPRC decision?***

If you disagree with the IPRC’s identification of your child as exceptional or with the placement decision of the IPRC, you may, within the timelines described above, give written notification of your intention to appeal the decision. This written notice should be addressed to: Director and Secretary Treasurer,Toronto District School Board, 5050 Yonge Street, Toronto, ON, M2N 5N8.

The notice of appeal must:

* Indicate the decision(s) with which you disagree
* Include a statement that sets out your reasons for disagreeing

***What happens in the appeal process?***

The appeal process involves the following steps:

* The Board will establish a special education appeal board to hear your appeal. The appeal board will be composed of three persons who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal. One of the three is to be selected by you and one by the board. (For more about membership see [Regulation 181/98](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/980181).)
* 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 parents 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.
* You, the parent, and your child (if he or she is 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’s ending. 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 your child’s identification or placement, or both.
* The appeal board will report its recommendations in writing, to you 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 recommendation.)
* You may accept the decision of the school board, or you may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal. You 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.

***Once a child has been placed in a Special Education Program, can the placement be 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 from you, the parent, dispensing with the annual review.

A request for a Review IPRC meeting may be made any time after your child has been in a special education program for three months.

***What does a Review IPRC consider and decide?***

The IPRC conducting the review will consider the same kinds of information that were originally considered by the previous IPRC. It will also consider the progress your child has made in the special education program and, with your written permission, will reference the IEP.

The IPRC will review the placement and identification decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

***What if my child is new to the board and has extremely complex special needs but has not been to an IPRC?***

Eligibility for placement in a Special Education Class requires an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) decision. An IPRC does not take place until the child has been attending for sufficient time to permit school staff to collect the required information and documentation. To address this delay and avoid disruption to a student’s schooling that would be caused by a possible program move part way through the year, the TDSB developed a process for conditional placement of new students, who are pre-registered (on paper) but not yet attending a TDSB school.

*Subject to parental preference*, the principal may consult with the [School Support Team](#_The_School_Support) (SST) to determine whether or not a referral to a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) is appropriate. Where it is determined that a SEPRC meeting will proceed by the SST, including the Special Education Consultant, a referral is completed by the home school and submitted to Special Education staff for scheduling. The SEPRC can provide a recommendation for conditional placement in a special education program, which the student may attend until the time at which the formal IPRC process can take place.

The membership of a SEPRC is the same as that of an IPRC and the SEPRC / IPRC processes are sequential. SEPRC recommendations are tracked so that subsequent IPRCs can be planned appropriately. When parents agree to participate in a SEPRC, they do not forgo their right to request an IPRC once their child is attending school.

***What does the SEPRC do?***

The SEPRC will:

* Note, for programming purposes, whether the student meets the requirements for an exceptionality, based on Ministry definitions and TDSB criteria
* Determine whether an intensive support special education class would be appropriate for meeting the student’s special education needs
* Provide a written *Statement of Recommendations*, outlining the student’s strengths and needs and stating whether or not a special education program or services are recommended
* Clarify that any recommendation for an intensive support special education program would be for a time period of approximately 6 to 9 months, after which an IPRC would be convened. Students placed by SEPRC in kindergarten intensive support programs will generally have an IPRC during their senior kindergarten year in preparation for the primary division.

***Is a SEPRC meeting like an IPRC meeting?***

The main similarities are:

* You will receive a letter of invitation and will be encouraged to participate in the meeting
* You may invite others to attend with you
* The committee membership is the same as for an IPRC

The main differences are:

* The SEPRC process is not based on Ministry Regulation 181/98
* A student may only be referred to a SEPRC by the decision of the home school principal in consultation with parents and members of the School Support Team (SST)
* The SEPRC meeting cannot go ahead if parents do not want one or do not attend
* No decisions about exceptionality and placement are made; only a program recommendation is made
* Parents may decline the recommendation(s) of the SEPRC but may not appeal them. Instead, they can request an IPRC once their child is attending school.

***What organizations are available to assist parents?***

Many local associations are available to provide information and support to parents of exceptional children. Some of them are members of the board’s Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). Information about SEAC associations and how to contact members of SEAC can be found at [www.tdsb.on.ca/seac](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/seac) .

***Where can parents obtain additional information about special education?***

If you have unanswered questions about special education in the TDSB,visit the TDSB website at: [www.tdsb.on.ca/specialeducation](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/specialeducation). You can also contact the Centrally Assigned Principal for Special Education in your local area. Telephone numbers can be found on the front page of this document.

***What are the Ministry's Provincial Schools and Demonstration Schools?***

The Ministry of Education operates Provincial Schools and Demonstration Schools throughout Ontario for deaf, blind, deafblind, and severely learning-disabled students. Access is usually by way of an IPRC recommendation. The schools operate primarily as day schools with transportation provided by school boards. Residential programs are offered at the schools from Monday to Friday for students who live too far from school to travel daily.

* **Demonstration Schools** provide intensive, one-year programs for students with severe learning disabilities, including learning disabilities associated with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD). An in-service teacher education program is offered at each Demonstration School. Application for admission is made by the school board with parent consent and eligibility is determined by the Provincial Committee on Learning Disabilities.

**Sagonaska School**  350 Dundas Street West, Belleville, ON K8P 1B2 Tel: 613-967-2830

**Trillium School** 347 Ontario Street South, Milton, ON L9T 3X9 Tel: 905-878-8428

**Amethyst School** 1090 Highbury Avenue, London, ON N5Y 4V9 Tel: 519-453-4408

**Centre Jules-Léger** (for French-speaking students) Tel: 613-761-9300

 281 rue Lanark, Ottawa, ON K1Z 6R8 TTY: 613-761-9302/9304

* **Provincial Schools for the Deaf** provide programs for deaf students from preschool level to high school graduation and resource services for families, school boards and other agencies. Admittance is determined by the Provincial Schools Admission Committee in accordance to requirements set out in Regulation 296.

**Ernest C. Drury School** 255 Ontario Street South Milton, ON L9T 2M5 Tel: 905-878-2851

 TTY: 905-878-7195

**Robarts School** 1090 Highbury Avenue, P.O. Box 7360, Tel/TTY: 519-453-4400

 Station E, London, ON N5Y 4V9

**Sir James Whitney School** 350 Dundas Street West, Belleville, ON K8P 1B2 Tel/TTY: 613-967-2823

**Centre Jules-Léger** (French-language school for the deaf) Tel: 613-761-9300

 281 rue Lanark, Ottawa, ON K1Z 6R8 TTY: 613-761-9302/9304

**🡪** The **Provincial School for students who are Blind and Deafblind** is a residential school operated through the Ministry of Education. Delivered by specially trained teachers, instruction follows the Ontario Curriculum and offers a comprehensive “life skills” program, tailored to student needs and designed to help students learn to live independently.

**W. Ross Macdonald School** 350 Brant Avenue**,** Brantford, ON N3T 3J9Tel: 519-759-0730

For more information about Demonstration Schools or Provincial Schools contact:

**Ministry of Education Provincial Schools Branch**

255 Ontario Street, South Milton, ON L9T 2M5

Tel: 905-878-2851 Fax: 905-878-5405