

## Section C:

# THE BOARD'S GENERAL MODEL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION



[We value your feedback! Please click this feedback link to leave your comments on the Special Education Plan. All feedback must be received by February 28, 2026.](#)

### ***Purpose of the Standard***

*To provide the ministry and the public with information on the board's philosophy and service-delivery model for the provision of special education programs and services*

## TDSB Mission

To enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and well-being and to acquire the knowledge, skills and values they need to become responsible, contributing members of a democratic and sustainable society.

### **We Value**

- Each and every student's interests, strengths, passions, identities and perspectives on their education
- Partnerships with students, parents/caregivers/guardians, staff, community partners, and education partners
- A strong public education system that promotes full participation by identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers so that all students, including students with disabilities/special education needs and intersecting identities, are provided with opportunities to realize their full potential
- The diversity of students, parents/caregivers/guardians, staff, community partners, and education partners
- Shared leadership and respectful working relationships
- Accountability and innovation
- The contributions of a highly skilled and diverse staff
- Digital citizenship and environmental stewardship

# Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)

Student success drives everything we do in the TDSB. The TDSB's [Multi-Year Strategic Plan \(MYSP\)](#) sets direction and identifies system goals to support approximately 239,000 students in 579 schools.

With Equity as a guiding principle, and a commitment to Truth and Reconciliation: Calls to Action, the MYSP will guide and focus our work for the next three years (2025-28). The MYSP serves as a roadmap towards realizing the collective vision for the students and staff served by the TDSB and is a reflection of the rich perspectives, ideas, and goals of TDSB communities.

Measuring our success is critical to knowing we are making a difference for students. Our expectation, and our goal, is that everyone improves.

## Multi-Year Strategic Plan Goals

### EQUITY

Equity is a principle that will continue to guide the TDSB in all that it does. Equity will be foundational to all TDSB work and will be embedded throughout the strategic directions.

### TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

We commit to the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action.

### BELONG

All students belong, are engaged, and valued in an inclusive environment.

### ACHIEVE

All students reach high levels of achievement, success, and personal development.

### THRIVE

All students graduate with the confidence, skills, and knowledge to thrive.

### REVITALIZE

All students and staff learn and work in inclusive, safe, and modern environments.

# Special Education Programs and Services

The Toronto District School Board's (TDSB's) Special Education Plan is developed with a commitment to the provision of special education programs and services for students as outlined in the Education Act and the Regulations associated with it, and in alignment with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP).

## Inclusion

The TDSB is committed to creating inclusive learning environments for students with intersecting identities, and to building capacity of staff to serve students with special education needs and disabilities. The TDSB holds high expectations for students and supports their achievement and well-being by removing systemic barriers that stand in the way of their success.

Equity of outcome is supported in the TDSB through the provision of a range of special education supports and services for students. This range includes both in-school and itinerant support, short term intervention services, and placements in regular classes as well as self-contained classes.

Ontario Regulation 181/98 requires school boards to consider placing students with exceptionalities into regular classes with appropriate special education services before considering placement in special education classes. In the TDSB, we continue to be responsive to the understanding that as students learn, they develop skills and so their special education service and program needs change over time. Students being welcomed, included and supported in well-resourced neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes are able to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school life. This allows for valuable learning opportunities for groups which have been historically excluded, such as students with disabilities and intersecting identities.

The following TDSB research report and reflective guides highlight the benefits of adopting an inclusive education model, particularly for students with special education needs and disabilities: [A Case for Inclusive Education](#) and [Equity and Human Rights in Special Education: Critical Reflective Practice Guide](#).

Some students with unique strengths and needs may require more specialized or intensive programs and support. TDSB staff work with parents/legal guardians to determine the most appropriate supports for their children.

The TDSB will continue to work to ensure that each student is thriving in an accessible, inclusive, and engaging program by:

- Following appropriate identification, placement, and review procedures with full and appropriate parent/legal guardian involvement
- Assigning teachers with appropriate educational qualifications
- If required, developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) which focus on improved student learning and ongoing review of expectations and services set out in the IEP
- Providing equitable practices in the development of all aspects of learning for the exceptional student (i.e., academic, social, cultural, physical, intellectual, behavioural and emotional)
- Recognizing all transition processes (i.e., preschool, elementary, secondary, post-secondary, work, community, class-class, activity-activity)
- Valuing student, parent/legal guardian involvement and input
- Conducting ongoing evaluation of special education services
- Ongoing capacity building of staff in applying current teaching and learning strategies and methodologies designed to respond to the identities, lived experiences, strengths and needs of students with special education needs and disabilities

## The Referral Process

### Parents/Legal Guardians as Partners

Parents/legal guardians know their children's strengths, abilities, needs, and areas for improvement. It is critical that parents/legal guardians provide information about their children and participate in decisions that affect their children's education.

### Concerns About A Child

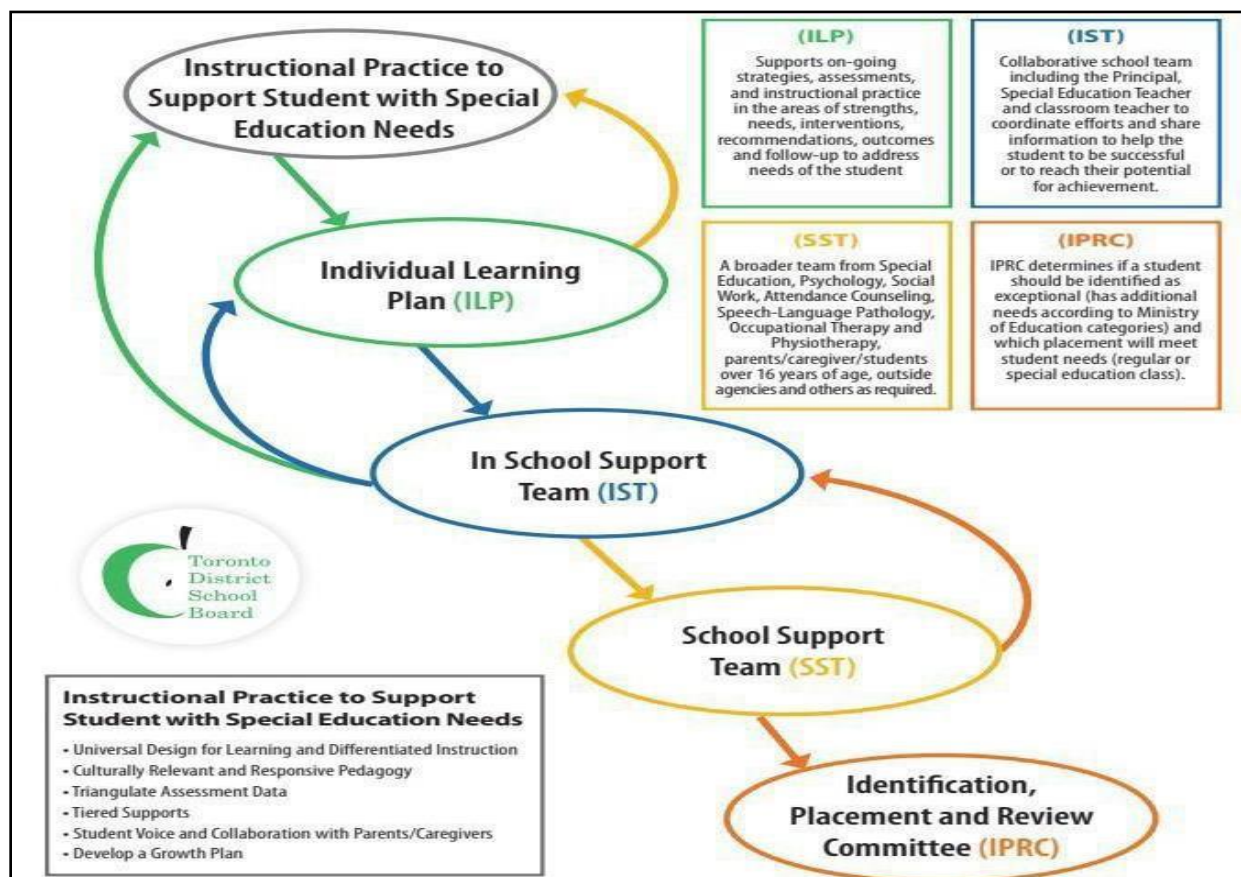
A parent/legal guardian or their child's teacher may determine that a child is having difficulty learning. The teacher(s) may contact the parents/legal guardians to discuss their findings, or parents/legal guardians may reach out to the teacher(s) and principal with concerns they may have about their child. Parents/legal guardians may choose to involve a friend, family member or advocate at any time, and with permission, school staff can communicate with them as well.

## Steps in the Referral Process

The steps in the referral process include:

- Development of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP);
- In-School Support Team (IST) meetings with school-based staff;
- School Support Team (SST) meetings with school-based-staff, Special Education and Inclusion and/or Professional Support Services staff, and
- Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

### The Referral Process



## Supporting Students Through an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is the first step in supporting students who may not be meeting their achievement goals. Developing an ILP involves parents/legal guardians and the student (as appropriate) as much as possible, to allow an opportunity for student voice and agency and also parents/legal guardians partnership with parents/legal guardians.

The ILP is a tool used by the teacher to detail, track and monitor on-going assessments, instructional strategies, interventions, recommendations, and follow-up strategies to address the needs of the student. The ILP allows the teacher to compile detailed and specific information about the student's current abilities, strengths, and areas for growth in relation to their identity and lived experiences, based on the learning conditions provided by the teacher. It is implemented and assessed for 6-8 weeks to determine next steps. The teacher(s) continuously assesses student progress, adjusts the ILP as necessary, and evaluates and reports progress to parents/legal guardians and appropriate staff.

If the planned interventions are successful, staff and the student will continue with those interventions. If the student is still experiencing challenges, the steps below are followed.

## **Referral to the In-School Team (IST)**

If focused interventions have been implemented but the student continues to experience challenges, the teacher(s) will present the student to the In-School Support Team (IST) where additional interventions or assistance required to support the teacher(s) and student are explored.

IST meetings are a proactive, problem-solving opportunity to support programming and success for the academic, physical, social and emotional strengths and needs of the student. The school team works together to support the student, the parent/legal guardian, and the teacher(s) through planning and implementing supports and strategies, with regular monitoring of progress.

### **Members of the In-School Support Team**

The members of the IST consists of a core group of individuals, including:

- the student's teacher(s);
- the principal or vice-principal;
- the school special education teacher (if available);
- a guidance teacher/counsellor (especially at the secondary level);  
and
- the student success teacher (especially at the secondary level).

The teacher(s) will have gathered information and reviewed assessment material (e.g., diagnostic assessments, recent work samples, direct observation) and recorded strategies implemented on the Individual Learning Profile (ILP). They share this information at the IST meeting and the IST will review the ILP, on-going strategies, assessments and instructional practice, in areas of strengths, needs, interventions, recommendations, outcomes, and follow-up to support the student.

After the IST meeting, the teacher will work with the student to ensure any additional strategies suggested by the IST are implemented. The teacher will reach out to additional staff for support as needed, including the Special Education and Inclusion Consultant. Most students' needs can be addressed by the IST. However, if the strategies recommended by the IST have been implemented for 6-8 weeks with little observed progress, the IST can refer the student to the School Support Team (SST).

## **Referral to the School Support Team (SST)**

Only if it has been determined after careful deliberation with the In-School Support Team, the teacher and the principal that the recommended strategies have been implemented for 6-8 weeks with little observed progress, the student may be presented to the School Support Team (SST).

### **Members of the School Support Team**

In addition to the school staff listed above, this team offers additional knowledge by including:

- psychologists;
- social workers;
- attendance counsellors;
- speech-language pathologists;
- occupational therapists;
- physiotherapists;
- child and youth workers/child and youth counsellors, and
- parents/legal guardians and students over 16 years of age.

Parents/legal guardians are the most valuable partner in a child's education. Although parental attendance at the IST and SST meetings is not mandatory, parents are strongly encouraged to attend. Parents who cannot attend will be informed about any plan of action recommended at the meeting to address their child's needs. Students over 16 years of age are also encouraged to participate and must be consulted. Students 18 years of age or older must be invited to attend the SST and give permission for their personal information to be shared with their parents.

When a member of the TDSB's Professional Support Services (PSS) such as a psychologist or social worker attends the meeting, parental permission is required if the student is to be discussed by name.

The SST may recommend Professional Support Services (PSS) staff support, a return to the IST or a referral to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

## **Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)**

If further assessment is completed and results indicate a need for identification, an IPRC meeting is held to determine whether the student should be identified as exceptional and to determine appropriate placement. For more information on IPRCs, refer to [Section H: The Identification Placement and Review Committee \(IPRC\) Process and Appeals](#).

# **Teaching and Learning**

The use of evidence-based teaching and learning strategies are essential to supporting all learners, including those with special education needs and disabilities. Within the Tiered Approach, staff focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP).

## **The Tiered Approach**

A tiered approach to prevention and intervention supports inclusion. It is based on the understanding that effective assessment, instruction, and appropriate intervention strategies are essential to ensuring all students will succeed.

The tiered approach ensures appropriate and timely interventions that leverage the student's strengths and reduce, as much as possible, additional areas of need. The approach also facilitates early identification of students who may be at risk so that prevention strategies can be implemented.

**Tier 1** consists of evidence-based classroom instruction based on the Ontario curriculum. The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) are used to ensure a variety of ways for students to participate in and demonstrate their learning. Teachers choose effective, culturally responsive and trauma-informed instructional strategies for all students in a classroom setting. Assessment in this tier is classroom-based and involves the teacher monitoring the progress of the class and noting any student with areas of need.

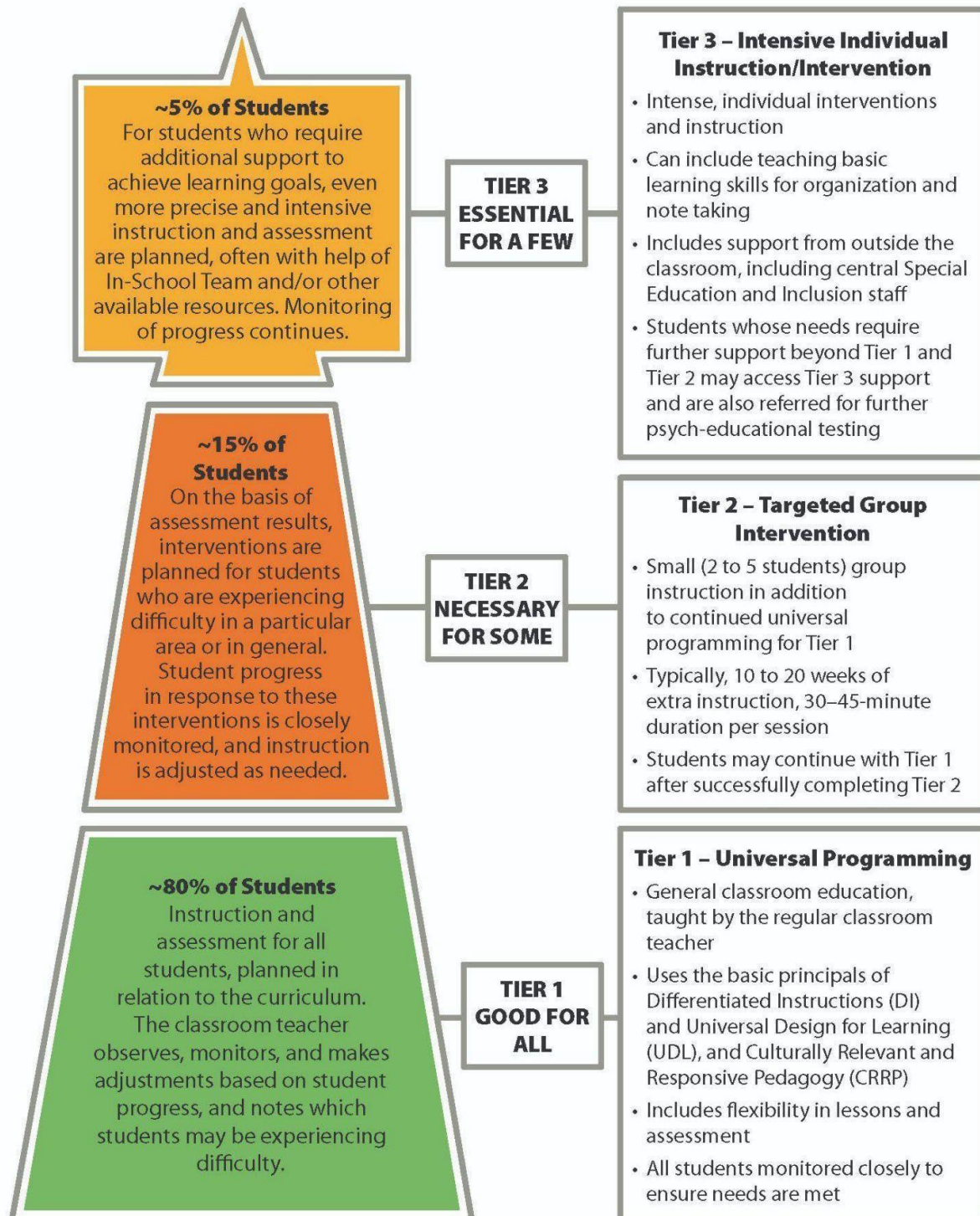
**Tier 2** provides more intentional instruction and short-term interventions for individual students or for small groups of students, in addition to Tier 1 programming. Tier 2 requires teachers to identify students who are progressing with difficulty when using Tier 1 instruction and to closely monitor the students through ongoing assessment.



Teachers will gather student information to be presented to the In-School Team (IST) to discuss strategies to better meet the needs of the student.

**Tier 3** uses intentional and focused interventions that provide increased support for students to achieve learning goals. To ensure precise interventions, teams will engage from a holistic perspective utilizing quantitative and qualitative data. Through collaboration with school staff, parents/legal guardians, the student, and any additional agency resources, the team will develop a plan in support of the student's pathway.

# The Tiered Approach to Intervention



The graphic above summarizes the Tiered Approach to prevention and intervention.

## Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The core concept of UDL is that of “necessary for some and good for all.” UDL comprises instructional and assessment strategies, materials, and tools that respond to the needs of a specific student or group of students.

UDL allows access to the curriculum for all students. In this model, teachers design learning opportunities and create learning environments that are inclusive, flexible, and accessible for all students, regardless of achievement level. The learning principles of UDL are Universality and Equity, Appropriately Designed Spaces, Flexibility and Inclusion, Simplicity, Safety, and Different Modes of Perception.

## Differentiated Instruction (DI)

Unlike UDL, which applies broad-based principles for planning, DI focuses on specific strengths, interests, learning styles and needs of the individual student. The instruction is adapted to meet high expectations of achievement and engagement in learning since the planning considers the identity, lived experiences, strengths and areas of need of the student.

The areas of learning that are differentiated when planning instruction are:

- the *content* of learning (what students are going to learn, and when)
- the *process* of learning (the types of tasks and activities)
- the *products* of learning (the ways in which students demonstrate their learning)
- the *environment* of learning (the context and environment in which students learn and demonstrate learning)

## Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP)

“Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP) recognizes that all students learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity. By knowing ‘who their students are’, educators can tailor programs and practices to better meet the needs of their diverse student populations and ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed” ([Ministry of Education, Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusive Education](#)).

Culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy involves recognizing that “culture” encompasses various aspects of social and personal identity. It also means acknowledging students’ multiple social and personal identities and the social impacts that arise where identities intersect.

Teachers consider the student's intersecting identities and lived experiences in programming for the student. Some considerations for the teacher when incorporating CRRP are:

- How have you used a variety of resources, including community partners (as applicable), to ensure the learning environment and pedagogical materials are accessible to the student and that the life of the student is reflected in the daily workings of the classroom?
- Is the classroom environment and are the resources reflective of the student's intersecting identities (i.e., classroom as the third teacher)?
- In what ways have you presented resources, materials and books from both local and global perspectives?
- How is the student actively engaged and how does the student have voice in their learning?

## **Culture of Shared Responsibility**

The majority of students' needs can be met in the regular classroom in their neighbourhood school. Strategies such as the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), appropriate accommodations and a tiered approach to intervention can support students when working toward their learning goals. Staff from the Special Education and Inclusion, Program, Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Departments and the Urban Indigenous Education Center collaborate with the school to support professional learning for administrators, teachers and support staff so that educators can meet students' unique needs.

Parents/legal guardians' voices and perspectives inform our planning. Teachers are directly responsible for educational program planning and continue to create a culture of shared responsibility that supports all students and leads to improved learning and well-being that include practices from the following documents:

- [Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12](#)
- [Growing Success \(2010\)](#)