



Section R:

Staff Development

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, 2027.

Purpose of the Standard

To provide details of the board's professional development plans for special education staff to the ministry and to the public

The TDSB is a learning organization that believes that capacity building is key to ensuring equity of outcomes for all students. Focusing on capacity building helps to ensure coherence and alignment of special education and inclusion practices across the district, which allows us to better serve students with special education needs and disabilities. Our staff development model provides on-going opportunities for staff at all levels to engage in professional learning and training in multiple ways, including through job-embedded, self-directed and mandatory sessions.

Professional Learning Plan

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.

Differentiated professional learning is determined by the goals in the TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), local School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and data/evidence collected through a variety of sources.

Staff at all levels as well as union and association partners provide input into areas for learning. The TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) receives information on staff development through the Leadership Report, and they also provide recommendations on areas of focus for staff professional learning.

Staff are engaged in several types of professional learning opportunities throughout the school year to help them better serve students with special education needs and disabilities. These learning opportunities include compliance training such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Supporting Children with Prevalent Medical Conditions, and mandatory learning such as the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Strategy and Chairing Identification and Placement Review Committee



(IPRC) Meetings. Other professional learning opportunities are school-specific, based on the goals of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). New Special Education Teachers participate in professional learning opportunities through the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) and also participate in additional topic-specific learning sessions. The Special Education and Inclusion Department, in collaboration with the Student Achievement and Programs, also provides professional learning opportunities specifically designed for new teachers and newly-appointed administrators. Any staff member may also engage in self-directed learning based on professional and personal growth goals. Beginning September 2026, Special Education – Part 1 or equivalent will be a required qualification for all administrative positions.

Over the next two years, we will focus on the following areas for professional learning:

1. Truth and reconciliation, including the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP;
2. Individual Education Plans (IEPs);
3. Learning Conditions;
4. Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy; and
5. Trauma-informed practices and cultural safety.

Areas of Learning Focus

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: [Calls to Action](#) (43, 62 & 63 specifically for education) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP](#) (Article 14 specifically for education) are frameworks to engage in building respectful, reciprocal, relevant and responsible relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, parents, families, and communities. Within the context of what is known as Canada, the effects of the Residential School System and [intergenerational trauma](#) impacts many survivors' families and possible engagement with school. The processes and procedures associated with Special Education and Inclusion should be done in ways that are trauma-informed and culturally safe, considering how social and historical contexts, as well as structural and interpersonal power imbalances, shape experiences within schools.

A belief in Indigenous Education is that everyone has gifts to share. When serving students with special education needs and disabilities, it is important to remember that each student has gifts, and that educators have responsibilities for co-creating and



enhancing the conditions for those gifts to be shared, honoured and affirmed. To enhance the conditions in classrooms and special education, the [4R Framework](#) of respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility (Kirkness and Barnhardt) is a tool that supports educators to work in good relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, and parents.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Staff will be focusing on strengthening IEP quality through human-rights-aligned, neurodiversity-affirming and evidence-informed practices, in consultation with parents, to ensure legal compliance, instructional coherence, and meaningful, student-centred planning. The IEP Audit and Monitoring Tool supports school and system leaders in strengthening the development, implementation, and review of IEPs in alignment with Ontario legislation (including Regulation 181/98), Growing Success, and the TDSB Special Education Plan. The audit process promotes consistent, transparent, and accountable practices by clarifying roles and responsibilities, strengthening timelines (e.g., 30-day development and annual review requirements), and reducing the inappropriate use of modified expectations. It centres student voice, family partnership, and professional collaboration, while building educator capacity through job-embedded professional learning, coaching, and feedback. The work is evidence-informed and data-driven, using system-level indicators and school-based data to monitor implementation fidelity, improve IEP quality, and enhance equitable access to learning, well-being, and achievement for students with special education needs and disabilities.

Learning Conditions

Learning conditions and the operating environment of a classroom support a dynamic interrelationship between students, staff, and teaching and learning.

A quality learning environment optimizes students' independence to access learning opportunities and resources that is pivotal for long-term success for students.

When implementing effective classroom learning conditions (teaching strategies, assessment, evaluation, third teacher, flexible seating, student voice, culturally relevant, responsive and safe resources and pedagogy, etc.) educators must:

- Consider students' intersecting identities and lived experiences
- Use resources and pedagogy that foster a healthy self-identity by affirming, respecting, and promoting cultural knowledge
- Build on students' experiences in ways that promote well-being and belonging
- Consider the teacher/staff member as a learner

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- What biases or barriers (systemic, attitudinal, other) have been identified and dismantled?
 - Does data shared by the teacher of student assessment and evaluation indicate evidence of Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy principles?
 - Is there an opportunity for ongoing professional learning?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) means designing innovative ways to make curriculum accessible in any learning situation/context, for individual learners with different backgrounds, learning styles and abilities.

Principles of UDL focus on adapting teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment to suit the learner rather than the other way around. It means creating flexible materials and methods before they are offered to students and understanding that the kinds of support needed by one student can be beneficial for all the students (necessary for some, but good for all). For example, if one student needs colour coding as a method of organizing notes, all students in the class may find this strategy helpful. UDL means planning learning opportunities that will extend the learning of all students, whatever their level of achievement, and helping each student reach their potential (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

Differentiated Instruction (DI)

Differentiated Instruction (DI) is based on the idea that because students differ significantly in their strengths, lived experiences, interests, learning styles, and readiness to learn, instructional approaches need to be adapted to match these differing characteristics and to provide multiple learning paths for students. The learning content, process, products and environment can be differentiated in any learning situation to support student learning to achieve greater success (Tomlinson, 2004).

Instructional interventions are monitored by the classroom teacher. When a student begins to show signs of persistent learning difficulties or advanced abilities, full understanding of how a student learns is needed to decide the best ways to use the student's strengths to address areas of need. This is achieved through a review of classroom support strategies, educational assessments and consultation with parents/legal guardians and/or students.

Information is gathered and reviewed by teachers through development of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and through consultation at a variety of In-School Support Team



(IST) and School Support Team (SST) meetings. With parental permission, information from existing professional assessments and/or community-based resource people is also collected and reviewed. Teachers and staff use this information to create a learning plan that is differentiated to best support the student's unique learning needs.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP)

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), as per the Ontario Ministry of Education, refers to an inclusive education system in which students must see themselves reflected in the curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences. Students need to experience teaching and learning that reflect their needs and who they are.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive 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 our students are', educators can tailor programs and practices to better meet the needs of their diverse student populations and to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Trauma-Informed Practices

Trauma-Informed Practices help educators understand how trauma can impact student learning, behaviour, emotional regulation and overall well-being. School climate and culture can improve through trauma-informed practices and principles of cultural safety by taking proactive steps rather than reactive and punitive measures. Students can develop skills to build resilience, strategies to respond to dysregulation, and the ability to attend to learning. Knowledge of these practices can also support the development of positive relationships between students, staff and parents.

TDSB's Budget Allocation Dedicated to Staff Development in Special Education

The Special Education and Inclusion Department allocates specific funds to support professional learning and to build the capacity of all TDSB staff in the area of Special Education and Inclusion. This will ensure alignment and coherence with regard to special education practices and processes across the district, and promote shared responsibility and shared accountability for improved outcomes for students with special education needs and disabilities.



Cost-Sharing Arrangements with Other Ministries or Agencies

When appropriate, the TDSB enters into agreements to facilitate staff development. Several agencies and institutions have partnered with the TDSB including, but not limited to, the Ontario Ministry of Education, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Hospital for Sick Children, Turning Point Youth Services, Massey Centre, Geneva Centre for Autism, Children's Treatment Network, Grandview Kids, and Kinark Child & Family Services.

Communication of the TDSB's Special Education Plan and Professional Development Opportunities

TDSB staff are made aware of the Special Education Plan and professional learning opportunities through various communication tools, including:

- Memos
- Monthly Special Education and Inclusion newsletter for all staff
- TDSB internal and external websites
- Professional Activity (PA) Day learning sessions for support staff
- Staff, department and Family of Schools meetings
- Monthly MART/ACL meetings with special education lead teachers from all schools

The Special Education and Inclusion Department receives input from staff directly, through their supervisors and in conversations with unions and associations around areas for learning, and the department creates and facilitates sessions to align with these learning needs.