



**PARENT GUIDE
to
SPECIAL EDUCATION**

The Education Act requires that school boards provide, or purchase from another board, special education programs and services for their exceptional pupils.

The purpose of this parent guide is to:

- ∞ provide you with information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)
- ∞ set out for you the procedures involved in identifying a pupil as "exceptional"
- ∞ decide the pupil's placement, or appealing such decisions if you do not agree with the IPRC

If, after reading this guide, you require more information, please see the board contact information at the end of this document.

Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

The following Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities are listed in great detail. The Board has directed staff to use only these Ministry defined categories of exceptionality in the IPRC process and the Statement of Decision.

Behaviour

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

- a) an inability to build or 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:

- a) Disturbances in:
 - Rate of educational development
 - Ability to relate to the environment
 - Mobility
 - Perception, speech and language
- b) lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

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

Where can parents obtain additional information?

Additional information can be obtained from:

- ∞ Your local school principal; or
- ∞ The Superintendent of Special Services
St. Clair Catholic District School Board
420 Creek St.,
Wallaceburg, Ontario,
N8A 4C4.
Toll Free: 1-866-336-6139

Notes:

- ∞ If you wish to receive this parents' guide in a braille, large print, or an audio-cassette format, please contact the school principal.
- ∞ When used in this guide, the word "parent" includes guardian.

What are the Ministry of Education and Training's provincial and demonstration schools?

The ministry operates provincial and demonstration schools throughout Ontario for students who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind, severely learning-disabled as well as those with attention deficit hyperactivity 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 English-speaking students with ADHD and severe learning disabilities:

Sagonaska School
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville ON K8P 1B2
Phone: (613) 967-2830

Trillium School
347 Ontario Street South
Milton ON L9T 3X9
Phone: (905) 878-8428

Amethyst School
1090 Highbury Avenue
London ON N5Y 4V9
Phone: (519) 453-4408

Schools for students who are deaf:

Ernest C. Drury School
255 Ontario Street South
Milton ON L9T 2M5
Phone: (905) 878-2851
TTY: (905) 878-7195

Robarts School
1090 Highbury Avenue
PO Box 7360, Station E
London ON N5Y 4V9
Phone and TTY: (519) 453-4400

Sir James Whitney School
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville ON K8P 1B2
Phone and TTY: (613) 967-2823

School for students who are blind or deaf-blind:

W. Ross Macdonald School
350 Brant Avenue
Brantford ON N3T 3J9
Phone: (519) 759-0730

Francophone school for students who are deaf or have learning disabilities:

Centre Jules-Leger
281 rue Lanark
Ottawa ON K1Z 6R8
Phone: (613) 761-9300
TTY: (613) 761-9302 and 761-9304

Language Impairment

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, 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 or 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.

Learning Disability

A learning disorder 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 that is characterized by a condition that:

- a) is not primarily the result of:
 - impairment of vision
 - impairment of hearing
 - physical disability
 - developmental disability
 - primary emotional disturbance
 - cultural difference; and
- b) results in significant discrepancy between academic and assessed intellectual ability, with deficits in one or more of the following:
 - receptive language (listening, reading)
 - language processing (thinking, conceptualizing, integrating)
 - expressive language (talking, spelling, writing)
 - mathematical computations;

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 inability to profit educationally with a regular class because of slow intellectual development;
- b) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.
- c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment and economic self-support.

Physical

Physical Disabilities

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 of 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

Multiple Exceptionalities

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.

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

Most students attend their home school and follow a program that has been modified and/or accommodated by the program resource team in collaboration with the parents. This may require that part of their day be spent in a smaller resource setting or resource support may be an integrated part of in-class activity. In all cases, integration into the regular classroom is the primary goal.

What is SEAC?

SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) is a school board committee that has trustee and parent representation on it. The parent representatives come from local associations which operate to further the interests and well-being of children with special needs. Parent representatives are nominated by their organization and appointed by the board to serve on the committee. Up to 12 associations may be represented. This committee is responsible to the board on all matters related to providing special education programs and services to exceptional pupils. It works with the board to review the board's special education plan and presents to the board any recommendations that it makes as a committee.

What associations may have representation on SEAC?

The following groups may have representation on SEAC:

Autism Society Ontario
Down Syndrome Association of Ontario
Fetal Alcohol Association of Ontario
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
Ontario Association for Community Living
Our Children's Voice
VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

Other associations may also serve on SEAC.

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 (one of whom is to be selected by you, 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 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 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, 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.

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 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 is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

The IEP must be developed for your child, in consultation with you. 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 your child's progress will be reviewed; and
- ∞ for students 14 years and older (except those identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness), a plan for transition to appropriate post secondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living.

The IEP must be completed within 30 days after your child has been placed in the program, and the principal must ensure that you receive a copy of it.

How is an IPRC meeting requested?

The principal of your child's school:

- ∞ must request an IPRC meeting for your child upon receiving your written request;
- ∞ may, with written notice to you, refer your child to an IPRC when the principal and the child's teacher or teachers believe that your child may benefit from a special education program.

Within 15 days of receiving your request; or 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?

Parents and pupils 16 years of age or older are entitled:

- ∞ to be present at and participate in all committee discussions about your child; and
- ∞ to be present when the committee's identification and placement decision is made.

Who else may attend an IPRC meeting?

- ∞ the principal of your child's school
- ∞ other resource people such as your child's teacher, special education staff, board support staff, or the representative of an agency, who may provide further information or clarification;
- ∞ your representative is welcome - that is, a person who may support you or speak on behalf of you or your child; and
- ∞ an interpreter, if one is required.

Who may request that others attend?

Either you or the principal of your child's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.

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; or
 - within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with The Director and Secretary of the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, 420 Creek St., Wallaceburg, ON, N8A 4C4.
- ∞ If you do not agree with the decision after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of your receipt of the decision.

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 30 days of receipt of the original decision or within 15 days of receipt of the decision from the second meeting described above, give written notification of your intention to appeal the decision to The Director and Secretary of the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, 420 Creek St., Wallaceburg, ON, N8A 4C4.

The notice of appeal must:

- ∞ indicate the decision with which you disagree; and
- ∞ include a statement that sets out your reasons for disagreeing.

What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?

- ∞ If you agree with the IPRC decision, you will be asked to indicate, by signing your name, that you agree with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC. The statement of decision may be signed at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned.
- ∞ If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and if you have agreed with the IPRC identification and placement decision, the board will promptly notify the principal of the school at which the special education program is to be provided of the need to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child.

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.
- ∞ You may request a review IPRC meeting any time after your child has been in a special education program for 3 months.

What does a review IPRC consider and decide?

- ∞ The review IPRC considers the same type of information that was originally considered.
- ∞ The IPRC conducting the review will consider the progress your child has made in relation to 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 information will parents receive about the IPRC meeting.

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the chair of the IPRC will provide you with written notification of the meeting and 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 you will attend.

Before the IPRC meeting occurs, you will have received a written copy of any information about your child that the chair of the IPRC has received.

What if parents are unable to make the scheduled meeting?

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

- ∞ contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time; or
- ∞ let the school principal know you will not be attending, and 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 noting the decision of identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

What happens at an IPRC meeting?

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

They 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, with your consent if your child is less than 16 years of age, if they feel it would be useful to do so; and
 - 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 decision.

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. Parents are welcome to visit the program before making their decision.

What will the IPRC's written statement of decision include?

The IPRC's written statement of decision will state:

- ∞ whether 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 and Training;
 - the IPRC's description of your child's strengths and needs;
 - the IPRC's placement decision; and
 - 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.