



**ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC**  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

*Lighting the Way ~ Rejoicing in Our Journey*

# Report of the Secondary Special Education Review Committee

May 2005

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## **Report of the Secondary Special Education Review Committee**

**May 2005**

### **1. Introduction**

In February 2005, a review of special education programs at the secondary level was commissioned as part of a cycle of reviews of programs with the St. Clair Catholic District School Board. SEAC was kept abreast of the review as it unfolded. As part of the Board's strategic planning process, reviews are conducted to determine coherence and connectivity between the Board's mission and its operations. As part of current practice, all reviews are presented to SEAC, as part of the validation process for the special education plan.

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board mission statement is as follows:

Walking together in Christ's light, we are called to build a Catholic learning community, and to serve as partners in the formation of life long learners, by:

- Witnessing our faith.
- Empowering individuals through celebrating their achievements.
- Creating innovative learning environments.
- Fostering stewardship and justice.

Our mission statement commits us to ensuring that all students are empowered to participate in a Catholic learning environment which maximizes their gifts and minimizes the effect of their exceptionalities on their ability to learn and grow as individuals and members of a Catholic faith community.

Special education programs and services are founded upon principles of an inclusive learning environment in which the student is encouraged to develop the student's potential to become an autonomous and contributing member of the community.

Our guiding principles are as follows:

- The rights of the learner to an inclusive educational program in the regular classroom program as the child's need for a differentiated program will permit. Integration will take precedence over segregation whenever possible taking into account the needs of the child and the parent's wishes.
- The education of each student is a shared responsibility between the classroom teacher and the program resource team and the child's parent/guardian. Through a collaborative partnership the classroom teacher will be supported in modifying and personalizing the curriculum for exceptional learners.
- Learners have the right to access a spectrum of special education programs and services to support their learning.

- When support staff is assigned to provide direct assistance to an exceptional learner, care must be taken to maintain focus on the ultimate goal of independence and autonomy.
- Since communities assist in raising children, the board maintains open and active partnerships with various local, regional and provincial agencies to access resources and promote a smooth transition to post-secondary education, work or living in the community.

A fundamental purpose of this review is to assess how well our programs and services meet our expectations as expressed in our statements of our Board mission and special education guiding principles.

## **2. Context**

Currently, there is much discussion at the provincial and ministry of education levels, about the role of special education and its funding. This discussion focuses on public accountability and student success and the funding to enable students to fully participate in the Catholic learning community. Catholic Supervisory Officers have set out a vision for special education in a discussion paper that is consistent with our board's mission and guiding principles. An excerpt from this paper is included below:

The paradigm shift needed for special education would move us away from a traditional custodial instructional model largely focused on diagnostic criteria and characteristics of disability, on standard compliance, and on care and provision of assistance to one that reflects students' abilities, student results, prevention and educational effectiveness. This shift involves a need to minimize the impact of exceptionalities, while maximizing the ability of students with special needs to participate in all aspects of schooling and community including school and provincial assessments.

Special education as part of this large scale sustainable reform must uphold a moral purpose that respects the diversity and needs of the learner, while centering on instructional practices that are results based, inclusive and committed to the Ontario context of improved achievement for all students. As such, the shift to enhanced reporting on educational results for students with special needs and complementary accountability for special education funding and services requires re-structuring and re-culturing. System leaders are key to the transformative changes required at the tri-levels of governance.

Establishing a strategic framework should reflect a commitment, the necessary capacity, the partnerships, and a focus on performance. For total accountability to occur, student success and performance achievement must be identified with a framework which includes: the child as a unique gift, a commitment to learning and success for all, building capacity, enhancing productive partnerships, achieving measurable results, and defining IEP expectations and standards.

Boards of Education receive their Special Education funding allocations from the Ministry of Education funding models which are partly based on enrolment and partly based on an assessment of the special needs. Over the last decade, in general, Boards of Education have seen a dramatic increase in learning exceptionalities. Although, there have been increases in special education funding to address these needs (most recently, ISA funding), the needs continue to grow faster than the funding to support them.

This review seeks to identify the gaps in our educational programming for special education and make recommendations within the funding available to address the needs. We continue to advocate at the provincial level for adequate funding for special education.

### **3. Review Committee Membership**

A Steering Committee met on April 13 to discuss the process for the review. The steering committee members were:

Dr. Frank Leddy, Superintendent of Education  
Anna Giuliani, Assistant Superintendent of Education – Special Education  
Bernadette Gray, Vice-Principal, St. Patrick's High School  
Ray Power, Vice-Principal, Ursuline Catholic College

In addition, several others participated in working group sessions on April 19. The working group members took responsibility for developing instruments and methods for collecting data and information about special education programs. The members of the committee were:

Renee Zarebski, Special Education Consultant  
Elizabeth Theriault, Classroom Teacher, UCC  
Gayle Savoie, Program Resource Teacher, St. Christopher  
Brenda Roby, Program Resource Teacher, St. Patrick's  
Bill Pryor, Educational Assistant, St. Patrick's  
Jamie Majeski, Classroom Teacher, St. Christopher  
Martin Forster, Special Education Consultant  
Lisa Fisher-Nooyen, Program Resource Teacher, UCC  
Adolph Estoesta, Guidance Counsellor, UCC  
Beth Duschene, Educational Assistant, St. Patrick's  
Danine DePauw, Educational Assistant, UCC  
Bruno D'Andrea, Classroom Teacher, St. Patrick's  
Dan Cote, Department Head, Special Education, St. Patrick's  
Krystal Butler, Classroom Teacher, St. Christopher  
Jane Buono, Program Resource Teacher, St. Patrick's  
Christine Brown, Educational Assistant, UCC  
Anne Brian, Program Resource Teacher, UCC  
Brett Braekevelt, Student Services, St. Christopher

#### **4. Overview of the Process for the Review**

The following is intended to give the reader an overview of the intended purpose and the methodology used in the review. Further details can be found in subsequent sections.

##### Objectives:

- To assess how well our Board's mission and special education principles are fulfilled by special education programs and services
- To review the current programs and the delivery of these programs
- To further shape the "vision" around special education programs given the provincial and ministry contexts
- To provide opportunities for students, parents and school-based staff members to participate in a process of review and revisioning
- To facilitate sharing and knowledge of "best practices"
- To summarize findings and to make recommendations for inclusion in the Special Education Plan for 2005-07

##### Process:

- Steering committee made up of Superintendent of Education, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Vice-Principals will develop and steer the process
- Working committees consisting of Vice-Principals, Special Education department heads, Resource teachers, Classroom teachers, Guidance teachers and Educational Assistants
- Working committees in collaboration with the Steering Committee developed the instruments and methodology for conducting the review
- Working committees' in collaboration with the Steering Committee and Special Education consultants collected the data and helped with its collation
- The final report was available to the committee members in draft form and was vetted through the working committees and the steering committee before its finalization

##### Components:

- Follow-up review of the recommendations of the 2001 Review
- Enumeration of the various Special Education and Student Services programs available across the District
- Demographic data for each secondary school with respect to exceptionalities
- Current special education and student services staffing
- Survey of Classroom Teachers
- Summary of Focus Group Discussion with Program Resource Teachers
- Summary of Focus Group Discussion with Educational Assistants

- Summary of Focus Group Discussion with Program Resource Teachers and Educational Assistants
- Summary of Focus Group Discussion with Students
- Summary of Parent Evening Consultations
- Visits to neighbouring school districts
- Literature Review incorporated into some of the components as deemed instructive

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Status Report on the Recommendations of the 2001 Review

A review in June 2001 made several recommendations concerning Curriculum Issues and Implementation, Program Enhancement and Development, Transitions, IEP, ISA and other documentation, Professional Development and Implementation.

The following is a summation of the secondary school administration's reporting on the implementation of the recommendations.

#### *CURRICULUM ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION:*

Recommendation	Status of Recommendation
1. Procedural guidelines should be developed whereby the school administration schedules Essential and Applied Level courses first in order to ensure the availability of these courses.	Has occurred for the most part.
2. Procedural guidelines should be developed whereby the school administration schedules Essential Level teachers first in order to ensure that there is a good match between teacher interest and student needs.	Completed as much as possible subject to changes to staffing complement due to maternity and other leaves.
3. An 'empty' Applied course should be scheduled at the beginning of each semester in order to catch those who are later found to have significant difficulties in Academic Level courses.	Not completed. Section allotment is insufficient to do this. Has been done in a limited way i.e. mathematics.
4. Essential Level courses should be offered at all three secondary schools so that students can attend their home school. This should be featured in the school course calendar.	Completed fully.

Recommendation	Status of Recommendation
5. The Secondary School Reform Committee (SSRC) will examine the results of the Grade 10 Literacy Test and develop recommendations regarding remedial activities. The present committee should consider the impact of these upon exceptional students.	This task is completed at each secondary school by the school literacy committee.
6. Other options, within the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, should be considered for students typically heading to the Public Board for vocational programs.	Not completed.

*TRANSITIONS:*

Recommendation	Status of the Recommendation
7. An assessment process for all senior elementary students which is tied into the Annual Educational Plan (eg., CAT III language & math) should be developed in order to assist in program planning.	Fully completed at St. Patrick's and Ursuline College. Not deemed necessary at St. Christopher. School success profile is now part of assessment.
8. Secondary School Guidance personnel should convey the Essentials Pathways guide to all concerned (principals, parents, teachers, students) at the school visits, on Orientation Day (parent meeting), transition IPRC, Special Education teachers' meeting.	Fully completed.
9. All Annual Reviews of exceptional students leaving elementary school should be held at the receiving secondary school.	Fully completed.
10. The transition from school to workplace for Developmentally Handicapped and other special needs students should be a linked more effectively with community partners and tied in with the student's Transition Plan.	Provided on an as needed basis. Transportation costs limit the availability and breadth of such programs.

*PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:*

Recommendation	Status of the Recommendation
11. All Special Education programs should be available to and developed jointly by the three Secondary Schools.	Not completed. Some discussion is occurring via Pathways/Student Success initiatives.
12. Program options for high-needs students with social-emotional-behavioural difficulties should be more closely examined. A committee focused primarily in this area should be struck for the 2001/2002 school year. This committee could tie in with other initiatives in the area of Bill 81 (Safe Schools Act).	Not completed.
13. Each secondary school should have an operational School-Based Team which could review and problem-solve student difficulties early in the development of these difficulties.	Partially completed.

*INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLANS, ISA 'S, AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION:*

Recommendation	Status of the Recommendation
14. When the new Ministry guidelines for the IEP are implemented, a Committee of secondary school staff should be struck in order to develop an IEP template specific to the needs of high school students. This IEP should be complimentary to other required plans (eg., Transition Plan, Annual Educational Plan, Individual Service Agreement) and be developed in such a way as to reduce redundancy in paperwork requirements. As well, an electronic version of this IEP should be developed with an import capacity from the elementary IEP.	Fully completed.
15. Consideration should be given to making available an itinerant staff with a specialty and experience in programming for high needs, low incidence students. This staff could support the students and staff in the District by providing programming ideas, inservice to various staff (EA's, regular classroom teachers, special education teachers) and assistance in the development of IEP's, ISA's, AEP's and Transition Plans.	Available upon request. However, timeliness of recourse is sometimes an issue. Central office staffing is limited.

*PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:*

Recommendation	Status of the Recommendation
16. Essential Level course teachers from all three secondary schools should be provided with opportunities to receive inservice together.	Not completed.
17. Secondary staff should have representation on the Professional Development Committee in order to identify necessary resource materials and plan effective inservice and training opportunities.	Not completed.
18. Professional development and training for Educational Assistants should be provided.	Partially completed.
19. An in-service for teachers on how to work effectively with Educational Assistants should be provided to secondary staff	Not completed.

*IMPLEMENTATION:*

Recommendation	Status of the Recommendation
20. The current Special Education Secondary School Review Committee should continue as a Steering Committee in order to oversee the implementation of the above recommendations during the upcoming academic year.	Not completed.

## **5.2 Programs available to Students with Exceptionalities**

Not all programs are available at all schools. Availability is noted after each program.

### **Resource Program**

Program Resource Teachers are available to work with students who may be experiencing difficulty in one or more subject areas. These students typically have been identified as needing remedial assistance and/or ongoing support. PRT's also often provide for those students who are in need of enrichment experiences. The Resource Program is designed to support the exceptional student in the regular classroom and, if necessary, to withdraw the student from the classroom to participate in one-on-one or small group learning experiences. As well, the PRT provides leadership in the development and delivery of the student's Individual Educational Plan. The primary focus of the Resource Program is on students who have been identified as Learning Disabled and those who may be 'at-risk' for school failure.

*Available at all schools.*

### **Reading Tutor**

This peer-tutoring course provides an opportunity for senior students to learn and practice teaching and tutoring skills. Prospective tutors must come with a genuine interest in helping other students who are deficient in reading and writing skills. Tutors develop skills in communication, interpersonal relations, leadership, teamwork and conflict management. Tutors are paired up with a junior student who has special learning needs, under the supervision of a teacher. To be eligible for this course the prospective tutor must complete an application and interview process.

*Available at St. Patrick's and St. Christopher.*

### **World-of-Work Co-op**

This is a two-credit course which provides exceptional students with practical experience in the workplace. Students are provided with extensive support and monitoring at their placements. They are encouraged to increase their confidence and self-reliance as they receive training on the job and become aware of the demands and responsibilities of being employed. This program is geared to students who study Essentials courses.

*Available at all schools with modifications due to demand.*

## **Junior Co-op/School-to-Work**

Students who are accepted into Junior Co-op/School to Work Co-op are typically students who have not performed well at the high school level for a variety of reasons. For some attendance at school has been a factor, for some commitment to schooling has been a challenge, and for others behaviour has been an impediment to success in school. Such students can be considered 'at risk' and this program assists them in getting back on track for success in school.

The Junior Co-op/School-to-Work Co-op Program is a three-credit program based on the Grade 10 Career Studies and Civics Courses. The goal is to give students the opportunity to refocus their priorities and to increase their motivation to complete their secondary school education successfully. The program includes a focus on life skills, understanding the world of work and has leadership skill sessions. Some of the days are spent on in-school instruction, with the rest spent in a Cooperative Education work placement. It is this refocusing and setting of priorities within this program which helps to promote the students' sense of self-worth and responsibility.

*Available at St. Patrick's and is attached to the Grade 10 Civics/Career Studies course. It is not available at the other schools. Will be replaced by "Navigating the Workplace" course in 2005-06.*

## **PERS Program (Peers Enhancing Relationships and Spirituality)**

The PERS program at St. Patrick's High School has been in place for ten years and involves the linking of trained students (PERS) to students who have identified social and/or emotional needs. Through positive role modeling, mentoring and guidance, these selected students improve their ability to socialize in the larger school community.

Every school day a small group of students meet for lunch in the chapel area of the school. PERS are assigned to provide support and assistance in the development of social skills. On a monthly basis, social activities such as bowling, games night, miniature golf and holiday activities are planned with PERS students modeling healthy recreational activities and social skills. The PERS program also allows students with significant social and emotional needs to have student advocates in the larger school community. The student training and supervision for the PERS program is the responsibility of the chaplain and the school Social Worker.

*Available only at St. Christopher. This program has been replaced by Teens Helping Teens (TNT) at St. Patrick's. It is not available at Ursuline College.*

### **TNT Program (Teens Need Teens)**

The TNT program is designed to help teens develop strong communication and listening skills in order to help counsel and support their fellow peers. More specifically it is designed to help students develop the following: effective listening and communication skills; an awareness for any issues that fellow peers may be dealing with; the ability to recognize any biases that may hinder a person's ability to be objective regarding certain issues; the ability to respond effectively to those who may need a listening ear or someone to talk with.

*This program is available at St. Patrick's.*

### **Peer Tutoring**

This course prepares and motivates students to provide leadership and assistance to others in their school and community. Senior students (tutors) work with exceptional students who need support in the regular classroom in either one-on-one or small group formats under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher in a chosen subject area. Tutors learn the value and complexity of social diversity, while acquiring an appreciation of the importance of contributing to their communities and helping others throughout their lives. To be eligible for this course, a prospective tutor must complete an application and interview process.

*Available at all schools.*

### **P.E.O.P.E.L. (Physical Education Opportunity Program for Exceptional Learners)**

This course, offered through the Physical Education Department, offers senior students training in mentoring, reading theory, and teaching techniques. As well, inservices provided by Occupational and Physical Therapists provide the senior student with additional learning opportunities and basic skills with which to work with their junior students. Both tutor and student have opportunities to grow in their understanding of each other's gifts. Both experience a positive and profound appreciation of each other. These programs have both a physical and leisure skill component to them.

*Available at both St. Patrick's and Ursuline College.*

### **Transition Program**

The Transition Program is a specialized program designed to support and assist students, who have been absent for extended periods of time, make the transition back into the regular high school program easier. Students returning from Young Offender detention

centres or mental health facilities may need a period of time to adjust to a regular school setting and may need intensive individual academic support to ensure success when re-integrating back to school. As well, students currently experiencing debilitating mental health problems (eg., depression, anxiety disorders, etc.) which make school attendance quite difficult can access this program. For some students a modified school day, limited but manageable integration into some subject areas and modified academic programming are essential for their success. The goals of the Transition Program are to re-integrate the student gradually, at their own pace and to continue to work towards obtaining secondary school credits. For some students, academic and personal support is essential to reaching either of these goals.

*Available at St. Patrick's*

### **STAR Program (Students/Staff Taking Academic Accountability and Responsibility for Behaviour)**

The STAR program is focused on helping students who are not achieving to their full potential in the regular school setting. The program focuses on the individual developing literacy and numeracy skills based on the Ontario Curriculum and the Catholic Graduate Expectations. The emphasis is on respectful and responsible behaviour towards self and others. The following areas will be addressed: strategies to assist with understanding personal strengths and needs as well as self-monitoring of emotional reactions and behaviour will be targeted; the understanding, development and monitoring of respectful behaviour in regards to oneself and others; focus on social skills and social interactions with adults and peer group; the development of self-knowledge through the identification of personal strengths and needs, through reflective exercises; using self-knowledge for self-advocacy of needs and requirements to enhance success within the academic environment; self-management and monitoring skills.

*Offered at Ursuline College.*

### **Essential Level Courses**

These courses are specifically designed for students who experienced considerable difficulty in meeting curriculum expectations in earlier grades, in Mathematics, English and Science. These Locally Developed Essential courses are offered at the grade 9 and 10 level. The purpose of these courses is to provide students with essential core learning in the above disciplines that will prepare them for grade 11 workplace courses. However, students who successfully complete a grade 9 or 10 essential course may proceed to the grade 9 applied course in the same discipline. All Locally Developed Essential courses can be used to meet graduation requirements.

*Available at St. Patrick's and Ursuline College. Very limited availability through Resource department at St. Christopher.*

## **Developmental Level Programs**

A relatively small number of students require alternative expectations that are not derived from the expectations in the provincial curriculum. A student's achievement of these expectations will not be assessed according to the provincial curriculum, but in relation to the expectations set out in the student's IEP. This program is flexible in nature and can be congregated or integrated depending on the needs of the student(s). The focus of these courses will typically be in the areas of communication, social and life skills, personal care, safety and community awareness. The student will not be granted a credit for the successful completion of a course that consists of alternative expectations.

*Available at St. Patrick's and Ursuline College.*

## **PASS Program (Positive Alternative to Suspension from School)**

For several years, the PASS program has been offered by Rebound for use by schools within the St. Clair Catholic District School Board. The PASS program has provided a setting for suspended students to continue with their school work and to engage in social skill development workshops. The program has been open to all students with suspension of three days or longer.

In May 2005, this service was extended to provide an in-school suspension program at each of the secondary schools. This in-school suspension program will address students who have been suspended for one to two days. The program will be provided as an alternative to at-home suspensions. The student attends school and work with the staff from Rebound in a room within the school. Students focus on completing academic work that has been prepared from the subject teacher as well as participate in a series of interventions aimed at developing accountability for self and responsibility for restitution to the school community.

*Offered at all schools.*

### 5.3 Special Education Secondary Students Demographic Information

The following table provides a snapshot of the enrolment, number of identified students and the number of exceptionalities across the three secondary schools as of January 2005.

	<b>ST. PATRICK'S</b>	<b>ST. CHRISTOPHER'S</b>	<b>URSULINE COLLEGE</b>
Enrollment (F.T.E.)	1131.5	753.5	1490
Identified Students	160 (14.14 %)	70 (9.2 %)	242 (16.24 %)
<b>EXCEPTIONALITY:</b>			
Behaviour	12	1	4
Communication: Autism	3	0	2
Communication: Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing	2	3	3
Communication: Language Impairment	3	4	0
Communication: Speech Impairment	0	0	0
Communication: Learning Disability	87	53	144
Intellectual: Giftedness	2	3	1
Intellectual: Mild Intellectual Disability	15	5	48
Intellectual: Developmental Disability	19	0	8
Physical: Physical Disability	1	1	7
Physical: Blind and Low Vision	2	0	2
Multiple Exceptionalities	14	0	23

#### 5.4 Special Education Staffing 2004-05

The following table contains the staffing provided specifically for special education programs at the three secondary schools:

	<b>ST. PATRICK'S</b>	<b>ST. CHRISTOPHER</b>	<b>URSULINE COLLEGE</b>
Program Resource Teachers	<b>3.83</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>4.0</b>
Educational Assistants	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>
Interpreters	<b>0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>

In addition, there are a number of **system staff** who provide student services support. The following table shows the number of staff across the **entire system** of elementary and secondary schools:

Social Workers	<b>3.0</b>
Child and Youth Workers	<b>6.5</b>
Speech Language Pathologist	<b>4.0</b>

Further, each secondary school has a full time chaplain.

## 5.5 The Role of the Classroom Teacher

A survey for subject teachers was completed at the high schools. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix B.1. A more in-depth survey with a small group of teachers was also conducted (see Appendix B.2). Input from just over one hundred teachers generally indicates a concern on behalf of teachers to meet the needs of students who are exceptional.

Making general accommodations such as providing students with copies of class notes, addition time for tests and exams, assistance with revisions in written assignments, and with spelling and punctuation were generally supported provided that they were in the IEP of the student. Accommodations in regards to providing an alternative evaluation process was the least supported option.

When asked to describe the type of collaboration that takes place between the subject teacher and program resource teacher the feedback varied greatly. In general the program resource teachers:

- Notify the teachers of identified students in their classes
- Provide IEPs for subject teachers
- Provide several intervention strategies when requested for assistance
- Provide support to teachers who teach the essential program
- Provide an alternative setting for exams and tests

The program resource teachers in the school are considered a link in getting information regarding students who are exceptional and with understanding student strengths and needs.

Some areas that were focused on for development in order to provide better collaboration between the program resource teacher and subject teacher were:

- Receiving information about the students' needs and their IEP earlier
- Use of short report forms to keep the resource teachers up to date on the student's progress and needs
- Monitoring of student programming on an on-going basis throughout the semester by the program resource teacher
- The need for more on-going communication and collaboration between the program resource teacher and the subject teacher

In identifying the biggest hurdles in supporting students with learning disabilities in the classroom the following areas were identified:

- Time requirements to help students individually in class
- Large class size
- Large number of identified students in one class

- Need for more resources
- Attitudinal needs of students i.e. apathy-“ I’m identified and I cannot or I will not try.”
- Range of student abilities in one classroom
- Understanding the particular disability of students
- Extra time is required to prepare for students who are exceptional in the class
- Time to understand the student’s needs and fair practice assessment
- Lack of advocacy on behalf of the student
- Need for more Educational Assistants

In identifying the types of staff development that would support inclusive education at the school level the following suggestions were provided:

- Workshops or in service on the various exceptionalities for subject teachers
- Information on diagnosis such as opposition defiant disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome etc
- Small group meetings to share information about students
- In-service on software that is available to assist students with disabilities
- In school expert speakers/web sites for personal use
- Training for general teaching body with specific roles/duties/expectations of teachers, resource teachers, --Special Education Manual
- More EA’s in the classroom
- Experience for staff as to what it means to have a learning disability
- Seminars specific to teaching strategies to helpful for various exceptionalities
- In school professional development on PD days
- Identifying resources that would be useful
- Subject teachers to have a meaningful role in the development of IEP rather just receiving an IEP
- Understanding the terms used on the IEP’s
- Understanding IPRC and IEP process
- More connection with resource teachers
- Funded/mandatory additional qualifications courses for all teachers in special education
- Fully funded additional qualification courses for all teachers

## **5.6 The Role of the Program Resource Teacher**

### **Elements of Good Practice**

The Resource teacher must provide a variety of services within the school setting. Through the many interactions the Resource teacher has with staff, they become a valuable resource for the entire educational community including the student with disabilities, parents and any other personnel who interact with the child (Bender, 1998). The main roles identified for the program resource teacher are as follows:

**Instruction:** Resource teachers spend a significant amount of time in direct instruction of students either in a sustained withdrawal, small group or in-class support model.

**Assessment:** Resource teachers interact with students to assess educational problems through in-school testing. The type of assessment can vary from formal individual assessment to daily assessment based on observation and teaching (Bender, 1998). The need for assessment may be based on a request to provide data to the school team for further recommendations or to develop next steps in program planning.

**Communication and Consultation:** One very important function of the Resource teacher is to consult with the classroom teacher to provide instructional strategies to assist the student with disabilities in the regular classroom. The Resource teacher must have an awareness of the scope and sequence of curriculum skills taught in the regular classroom in all the grade levels they serve. The Resource Teacher must have knowledge specific to all types of disabilities and be aware of the impact of the specific disability on the student in the regular classroom. Another area of support the Resource teacher provides is the provision of materials and teaching approaches appropriate for a particular student (Bender, 1998). Establishing open communication with parents and determining desirable communication mechanisms early in the school year can pave the way for smooth interactions throughout the school year (Polloway & Patton 1997).

**Planning and Clerical Time:** It is recognized by all that there is an overabundance of clerical paperwork in special education. Paper work requirements include the consultation and drafting of the IEP, documentation of related services (IPRC's, Annual Reviews, Referrals for Support) and correspondence with parents and agencies (Bender, 1998).

**Services provided by the Resource Teacher:** In the school setting, there are a number of services the Resource teacher provides to support students with disabilities. The Resource teacher provides alternative testing situations for students who have difficulty with assessment in the regular classroom. The Resource teacher may be involved in assisting students in homework completion and/or assignments and projects. The classroom teacher will often rely on the Resource Teacher to provide suggestions for materials and teaching approaches for use in the regular classroom. The classroom teacher initiates referrals for in-school assessments for students they have concerns about

to the Resource teacher. A Resource teacher may be invited into the classroom to observe students and to assist in identifying any problems the student may be experiencing. It is important for the classroom teacher and Resource teacher to collaborate when material is being taught outside the regular classroom to ensure the objectives of the lesson are similar. The Resource teacher is often called upon for crisis intervention in the school to assist as needed when behavioural problems occur (Bender 1998). In “Strategies for Teaching Learners with Special Needs”, 1997, Polloway and Patton state that special education teacher today must demonstrate competence in a number of areas for application in a variety of contexts, including the general education classroom. The Council for Exceptional Children has developed a set of knowledge and skills that are believed to be essential for all beginning special education teachers as presented in the attached Table 1 – Knowledge and Skills Statements (Polloway & Patton, 1997).

Collaboration with other Professionals: Special education teachers must be able to communicate knowledgeably and effectively with general education teachers as well as other professionals. This group may include psychologists, counselors, various types of therapists, medical personnel and other administrators. This requirement calls for oral competence, effective written communication skills and an understanding of the role and perspectives of other professionals (Polloway & Patton, 1997)

### **Focus Group Report Program Resource Teachers – Theme Summary**

1. What current programs and services are meeting the needs of our students well?
  - Excellent programs are being offered – cooperative program for exceptional students, developmental/life skills class, P.E.O.P.E.L. program, Essential programs, Star Program, GLE (Skills for Secondary Success, Peer Tutoring, Extended Support Program (i.e. Star Program)
  - Transitions are well planned – good transitions for students exiting custody or needing a high level of support, Grade 8-9 transition meetings, and school to work transitions
  - Educational assistant supports are excellent – skills of the educational assistant, good rapport between E.A’s and students, open to sharing of ideas from E.A’s, collaborative support is the key, E.A’s willing to go beyond what is expected
  
2. What Programs and services need to be further developed or implemented?
  - Additional programs need to be offered – breakfast program, GLE’s to meet identified needs, Technology and hands on courses, basic literacy courses, more optional courses at appropriate level, modified essential level courses
  - Additional funding for programs and services – smaller classes especially at the applied level, more E.A’s
  - Behavioural Support programs – alternative to suspension, support for attendance, more effective means to deal with truancy, cooperative placements for at risk students

3. What challenges or barriers exist for you at the school level in developing or delivering better programs or services?
  - Additional funding for programs and services – need additional money for services, there is a lack of resources and lack of materials
  - Time – teachers of special classes need more time to prepare for special classes, classes too long for some students, wasted time hunting for materials and resources, time to plan for individual students, time for collaborative planning (between staff and schools), excess paper work
  - Resources – need materials to work with students – reinventing materials all the time
  - Training/PD – isolation by secondary school staff, support with technology, especially the highly specialized hardware and software used by students who have specific high needs
  
4. What else would you like to tell us about special education at your school?
  - Great E.A's to work with
  - Love my role
  - There should be more attention given to special education with greater respect and appreciation
  - Desire to build teams and partnerships
  - The number of students receiving services is huge
  - Inequality of staffing levels – classes with a high number of high needs students need extra support
  - Inequality between services at different sites – different schools have different programs
  - Great support from administration of the school

## **5.7 The Role of the Educational Assistant**

Under the Education Act, Educational Assistants have not been given specific legal responsibilities. Educational Assistants provide assistance to the teaching staff in meeting the legal responsibilities in the delivery of programs to students. Teachers are ultimately responsible for the design, implementation and evaluation of individual education programs, while educational assistants participate as active team members who implement teacher-developed goals and instructions, assist in teacher-directed activities, discipline, observe student behaviour, prepare materials and participate in student related meetings. Educational Assistants work under the direction of the teacher and principal and provide assistance in the presentation of a meaningful program by involvement in the classroom activities. They enable students with a variety of emotional, behavioural, physical and personal care and medical and academic needs to access curriculum. Whenever an Educational Assistant is assigned to provide direct assistance to an exceptional learner, care must be taken to maintain focus on the ultimate goal of independence and autonomy. The role of the educational assistant has evolved from a non-instructional helper in the classroom to an instructional assistant for students with special needs. As more students with increasingly diverse needs are enrolled in our schools, it is recognized that more diversity in knowledge, skills and competencies is required by those who provide and assist with the delivery of special education.

In examining the role of educational assistants, the professional literature cites some best practices that should be evident in a school system. Educational assistants should be trained for the tasks they perform, oriented to their roles, carry out plans that have been developed by qualified professionals and receive support and supervision on an ongoing basis. It is important for the educational assistant and teacher to share expectations about the role of the educational assistant and work activities. All team members should share the same understanding and expectations about the roles of Educational Assistants. These roles will vary depending upon the specific assignment so they must be individually determined. Identified roles should be consistent with the distinction between the roles of teachers, special educators and educational assistants. It would be inappropriate to ask an Educational Assistant to independently design specialized instructional programs for students with disabilities. Secondly, there should be a match between the agreed upon Educational Assistant role and the skills, training and support they have to engage in the role. If the Educational Assistant is asked to implement specialized instruction, he or she should receive specific training and ongoing support in how to implement such instruction.

## **Focus Group Report Educational Assistants and Program Resource Teachers Theme Summary**

In addition to the separate PRT and EA focus groups, we also conducted a combined PRT/EA focus group. The following is the summary of that discussion.:

1. What is working well in the collaborative support provided by educational assistants and Program Resource Teachers in your school?
  - Continued focus on good communication is essential between all partners
  - Collaboration is vital and needs to continue
  - Staff is dedicated and go well beyond their assigned duties
  
2. What barriers exist in providing collaborative support to students by Educational Assistants and Resource staff?
  - Team meetings and communication need to be planned for
  - Time – for planning, meetings, goal setting, etc.
  - Staff must be experienced and at a sufficient level to meet the needs of the students. This includes educational assistants, program resource teachers, and classroom teachers. This is especially important at the essential/workplace level.
  - Funding for materials and educational experiences – the educational assistants should not have to fund raise to purchase materials for the school
  - There is a lack of resource materials at the essential level
  
3. What type of support, training or professional development would enhance your ability to support students?
  - More appropriate training for all staff
  - More current information provided to staff
  - Hands on, practical training
  - Time – providing time for professional development, time for planning for and preparation of materials and strategies for supporting students

## **Focus Group Report – Theme Summary**

1. What current programs and services are meeting the needs of our students well?
  - Integration of high needs students within the school.
  - Specialized services and programs are effective and based upon the unique needs of each high needs student.
  - Access to technological supports is very helpful for students. It is important for staff to be trained on the use of the equipment.
  
2. What programs and services need to be further developed or implemented?
  - Addressing behaviour needs.
  - Increase time for assembling curricular materials and increased resources.
  - Need for expanded training and professional development.
  - Access and support from specialized community teams.
  - Availability of flexible workspaces
  - Identify and address accessibility barriers or issues within the buildings
  
3. What challenges or barriers exist for you at the school level in developing or delivering better programs or services?
  - Recognition that educational assistants are professionals and have valuable information to share. Information sharing should involve two way communication between the Educational Assistant and the student's teachers
  - Investment in the professional growth and development of educational assistants
  - Review to ensure the level of support is sufficient for all areas of the school
  - Build staff awareness of inclusion and the role of educational assistants
  
4. What else would you like to tell us about special education at your school?
  - Barriers within schools that prohibit access by all students – review and invite response re school accessibility – i.e. physical barriers – access to all programs
  - Concerns were expressed in regards to the evacuation process for special needs students
  - Life skills program is great and needs to continually evolve
  - Caring staff is overwhelmed by the numbers of students with needs they are trying to assist
  - Very dedicated staff who only want the best for the students
  - Suggest implementation of a drop in class for students who are socially isolated or experiencing stress
  - Peer tutors are a valuable asset to programs

## **5.8 Observations from Students**

A cross-section of students with various exceptionalities were invited to participate in the student focus groups. A collation of the general concerns are included in this section under each question.

### **What services are available at this school?**

- Resource Room or Independent Learning Center
- Laptop technology
- Dragon Dictate, Kurzweil
- Tutoring
- EA support
- Interpreter
- Books on Tape
- Photocopying of notes
- Extra time for writing tests and exams
- Writing tests and exams in the resource room
- Teachers who are available before and after school for more help

### **What services are you using?**

- Resource assistance period
- Technology
- Soundfield systems in all classes or totable soundfields
- Extra help from teacher or PEER tutor
- Taking tests and exams in resource room

### **What is missing that would assist exceptional learners at this school?**

- More practical courses such as welding, cosmetology etc
- Soundfield systems in all classrooms
- Faster computers and scanners
- More EA's in the classroom
- Courses that allow cross over into academics

### **What challenges with programs and supports hinder the success of exceptional students?**

- Self directed lessons and independent study—we need structure and support
- Independent note taking in class
- Teachers who speak too quickly and not clearly
- More balance in the amount of homework received
- Noise level in the classroom makes it hard to concentrate
- Stigma attached to going to the resource room especially in Grade 9
- Teachers need to be discreet when providing extra assistance.

### **How can our school make learning better for exceptional learners?**

- Smaller class sizes
- More EA's
- More variety in the things done in class
- More help with organizational skills.
- Pre-requisites for courses

### **5.9 Observations from Parents**

The Parent Focus Groups at Ursuline College and St Patrick's High School were well attended. A sample of parents representing students with various exceptionabilities from gifted to developmental disabilities were represented. The discussion focused on the variety of issues. In general, there was positive support for the current program and services in place at the schools. Broad areas that were of interest to all parents included:

- A need to continue to foster strong communication between the school and the home
- A need to have more information regarding student options beyond high school
- A need to support students in advocating for their needs to teachers
- A viewpoint that integration in the community through cooperative education opportunities was a positive educational and personal experience for students

### **What Special Education Services have you found work well?**

- Expertise of resource teachers and educational assistants
- Efforts to problem solve and create as many "win/win" scenarios
- Co-operative education placement
- P.E.O.P.E.L program
- Communication between the school and home
- Compassion and discretion of the resource staff in working with students
- Information sharing at the IPRC
- New physical setting of the life skills room
- Meeting with the teachers early in the semester to explain student's needs

### **Communication is an important part of the link between school and home. How well do you feel we accomplish this?**

- Pertinent information does not always get home with the kids
- School website, automated message on phone and school sign are good sources of information for parents
- The planner is a good way to communicate with the school
- More school newsletters to inform of events and activities
- Possibly a week at a glance newsletter

- Other than yearly meetings for the IPRC review, there is very little communication
- Need to communicate to subject teachers the needs of students, modifications and accommodations earlier
- Progress reports on how well the student is doing would be appreciated sooner
- Parent/teacher interviews are not well attended

**What suggestions for change would you recommend?**

- Need to develop measurable goals and specific expectation in area of lifeskills
- Would like more specific goals or expectations of the resource room program
- Develop advocacy skills for students
- Improved communication between the classroom teacher and the resource teacher when student is struggling
- Programming for students who are gifted
- Increase communication with parents and guardians
- More EA's to increase integration
- More information about the IPRC process
- More information regarding what options are available after secondary
- More information regarding college entrance requirements for students with Learning Disabilities
- All students should receive a secondary school diploma
- Documentation on the report card does not reference the IEP box
- Increase enrichment opportunities
- A detailed list of resources that are available
- More instruction in the resource room
- Access to the second floor of the building for physically disabled students
- Early start time is a challenge for students who are medically fragile
- More physiotherapy at least once a week (life skills)
- More integration of exceptional students from the congregated classes
- Report comments for life skill students need to address real accomplishment for life skills

**Of the following areas: high school transition, school-to work transition, accommodations/modifications, which should be considered for future development?**

- Transition information to college
- What type of assessments are required to pursue individual supports at college level
- When is this information shared
- What type of work placement are available
- Helping students to develop skills to advocate for themselves

- Life skills for independent living
- Early transition to high school
- Assistance to world of work
- Life skills curriculum-cooking, buying groceries, sewing a button
- Students need to be informed of what courses are required for what job
- Helping students particularly Grade 9 students to access the resource room and help

**Do you feel we have a sufficient range of courses offered at the senior level to accommodate the ability and range of our students?**

- Not sure
- More work experiences in different areas of the job force
- More technical courses
- More hands-on courses
- Need to provide self management skills, banking, goal planning, saving for car, organizational skills

**Is there any other area that you would like to be considered for further development?**

- Foster greater social interaction and friendships
- Assist individual to actively seek opportunities to develop a social relationship and be involved in school activities
- Smaller class sizes
- More programming in area of the gifted
- Continued interaction with local association of Community Living
- Resource staff awareness of community college, post-secondary options an assistance available there
- Learning tools that could help parents and students bridge the gap between them
- Tutoring services available for the community
- Parent information sessions regarding IPRC and IEP
- First year teachers should not be teaching applied courses
- All children should receive a secondary school diploma
- Print on course sign up sheet is too small, and not informed enough to counsel child as to which courses they should be taking-need to inform parents of the options available at the school

## **5.10 Best practices**

As part of this report's objective to seek out best practices, site visits were made to the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board and the Lambton-Kent District School Board.

### **5.10.1 Windsor-Essex Catholic**

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board offers the following programs through Catholic Central High School and Assumption College School:

#### Students-at-Risk Team

- Identifies students-at-risk
- Students are recommended by members of the team
- Criteria: Age 16 or more, Less than 16 credits (16/16)
- Team includes: Principal, Vice-Principal, Co-op Counsellor, Resource Teacher, Classroom Teachers, Credit Recovery Teacher, Guidance Counsellor
- Lack of success will lead to team meeting to discuss appropriate intervention

#### Students-at-risk guidance counsellor

- Interviews students for at-risk program
- Sends information letter home for parental consent
- Consistent contact for at-risk students
- Maintains contact with classroom teachers and parents (through progress reports)

#### Assisted Support Program

- Ideally should not be based in resource room to reduce stigma
- One teacher should be assigned to the assisted support program
- After first month of semester, teachers will recommend students for this program
- Criteria: poor attendance, not submitting assignments, *minor* attitude, behaviour and conflict problems
- If a student is sent to this class, the teacher will complete a form outlining the work expected to be complete during the period
- Before the end of the period, the program teacher will indicate the work that was done in class and send the student back to class
- The program teacher will update parents through progress reports

#### Credit Recovery

- At the end of the semester, classroom teachers will complete a form indicating the unsuccessful units of study of their failed students
- Students will be identified for the credit recovery program through the Students-At-Risk Team
- Criteria: students who received a 40-49% final mark in a class
- Students will be timetabled for one period of GLE for the following:

- Completion of unsuccessful units in the failed class to receive a 51% final mark
- Learning, planning and organization skills
- Completion of work in the other three classes
- Students will receive a Credit Recovery Certificate upon the required completion of the unsuccessful units

### Lifeskills Program

- One resource teacher per 15 students
- Grade Eight intake meeting – determine IEP and option sheet
- Year One focus: Numeracy; Communication Skills; Personal Life Skills  
Art; Social Skills – all are non-credit courses
- Year Two: Non-credit courses  
In-school work experience for one period per day
  - Stocking vending machines, counting vending machine money, washing cafeteria tables, collecting attendance, washing chalkboards of lifeskills classes, watering plants, working with custodians, working in campus ministry with second-hand uniforms
- Years Three+: Non-credit courses  
Community work experience for two periods per day  
In-school work experience for two periods per day
  - Stocking cafeteria fridge, stocking vending machines, cleaning cafeteria kitchen, serving food, preparing food, working with custodians

### Students-at-risk Program

- Candidates will be chosen by Students-At-Risk Team
- Program will not include Lifeskills students
- Program begins in Grade 10
- With the input of the Students-At-Risk Team, a customized timetable will be developed for the student
- Grade 10: Essentials level courses  
Civics/Careers (emphasis on Apprenticeships)  
GLD 20 (job shadowing opportunities)  
Credit recovery to be scheduled as necessary
- Grades 11 and 12: Essentials level courses  
Co-op  
Credit recovery to be scheduled as necessary
- Upon successful completion of co-op courses, students will receive a certificate outlining the competencies and skills achieved at their co-op placement
- Upon successful completion of co-op courses, students will receive their certificates at the special dinner for all students in the program
- Students who are graduating will receive their certificates and a professional employment portfolio cover at graduation

### **5.10.2 Lambton-Kent**

The Lambton-Kent District School Board offers the following programs through Northern Collegiate and Alexander MacKenzie Secondary School.

#### ABLE (Academics Based on Life Experience) Program

The ABLE Program has the following features:

- four subjects with four different teachers
- operates with a smaller class size 12 –15 in reality it usually grows to 18
- students are functioning at a grade 2 to 4 level for math and English
- students will achieve a certificate not a diploma
- credits go with K-code courses which are technological classes leading to work experience in grades 11 and 12

#### Northern Collegiate - Credit Recovery Program

The credit recovery program is for high-risk students who have fallen in the range of 40%-49%. After semester one of grade 9, a student has 3 weeks to recover the credit at the lunch hour. At the end of semester two, the student has the exam week time to complete requirements for credit.

For grade ten students, the same format is in place for semester one. For semester two, the students enrolls in a junior co-operative education program. During junior co-op, students can recover lost credits during first two weeks in school or on the reflective Friday days.

The student earns the credit at a 51% if all requirements are met.

The school is also looking at PLUARS for 18 year olds who have been out of school for a year. They will write equivalent exams based on a module set up. Students who complete 4 exams successfully would receive 16 credits.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 Establish a professional development program for secondary school staff who provide special education programs and services to students (i.e. classroom teacher, program resource teacher, and educational assistant).
- 6.2 Review and develop role descriptions and expectations for all staff who provide special education programs and services to students.
- 6.3 Develop a process for the recruitment, mentoring and ongoing professional development of the program resource teacher.
- 6.4 Review the timelines for building the master timetable and develop a process for timely consultation regarding the needs of identified students, including students who are transitioning to the secondary school.
- 6.5 Investigate opportunities to link the student data management system with the special education database.
- 6.6 Improve communication regarding special education programs, services and processes.
- 6.7 In collaboration with other departments within the board, examine opportunities for alternative and innovative programs and pathways.
- 6.8 Develop an inventory of existing resource materials; establish a committee to research newly developed materials; make a recommendation for an acquisition plan.

## **7. References**

Council for Exceptional Children: Ontario CEC Position Paper: Professional Standards and Competencies for Educational Assistants

Council for Exceptional Children: Respect, Appreciation, and Acknowledgement of Paraprofessionals Who Support Students with Disabilities

U. S. Department of Education: Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools: Elements of Good Paraprofessional Practice

Bender, William N. (1998). Learning Disabilities, Characteristics, Identification and Teaching Strategies, (pp. 247-251). Baltimore: Allyn and Bacon.

Polloway, Edward A. and James R. Patton 1997. Strategies for Teaching Learners with Special Needs, (pp. 28-31). Ohio: Prentice-Hall Inc.

OCSOA Special Education: New Directions For Funding, Accountability And Student Success

## **Appendix A – Knowledge and Skills Statement for Program Resource Teacher**

### **Appendix B – Review Instruments:**

- B.1 Classroom Teacher Survey**
- B.2 Overview of instructional strategies utilized by classroom teachers**
- B.3 Focus Group Questions – PRT**
- B.4 Focus Group Questions – EA**
- B.5 Focus Group Questions – PRT/EA**
- B.6 Focus Group Questions – Students**
- B.7 Focus Group Questions – Parents**

Accommodations Survey for Exceptional Students

Appendix B.1

The purpose of this survey is to ascertain how teachers provide accommodations for individual students in their classes. Information collected assist in determining needs for future planning.

How would you respond to a student in your class with a Learning Disability (IPRC) if she/he requested any of the following?

Content Acquisition	Indicate Yes (Y) or No (N)	Comments /Concerns
To provide the student with a detailed course outline		
To provide the student with copies of class notes		
To allow the student to tape record class instruction		
Editing Assistance	Indicate Yes (Y) or No (N)	Comments/Concerns
To provide assistance in the correction of spelling and punctuation.		
To provide assistance with revisions in written assignments		
Tests and Exams	Indicate Yes (Y) or No (N)	Comments/Concerns
To provide extra time for daily class work		
To provide extra time for tests and exams		
To complete tests and exams in the Resource room		
Tests and Exams	Indicate Yes (Y) or No (N)	Comments/Concerns
To provide scribing for student during test and exams		
To provide the opportunity for student to respond orally to questions on tests and exams		

To allow errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar without penalizing the students on tests and exams.		
To allow the use of basic calculators and spelling aids on tests and exams.		
Evaluation	Indicate Yes (Y) or No (N)	Comments/Concerns
To evaluate the process in completing questions or assignments.		
To allow alternative assignments		
To provide alternate forms for evaluation based on students learning style (i.e. – oral, visual, tactile)		

**Development of the Individual Education Plan**

1. Describe the type of collaboration that takes place between classroom teachers and program resource teachers in your school.

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2. What has been the biggest hurdle in supporting students with learning disabilities in your classroom?

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3. What kinds of staff development would support inclusive education at your school?

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Thank you for your time and support in completing this survey.

**RECEIVING INFORMATION**

In the classroom, students receive information from texts, presentations and discussions, board notes, diagrams, drawings or visual aids. A student who has problems receiving information will find at least one of these tasks difficult.

<b>Classroom Tasks, Suggested Accommodations</b>	<b>Currently apply or have applied</b>	<b>Would like to know how to implement</b>	<b>Have tried but not found to be successful</b>
<b>ATTENDING to ORAL LESSONS and DISCUSSIONS</b>			
• give specific signals which may be used to focus attention Example: using a key word such as “note this”	23	1	
• provide reference to text	24	1	
• permit taping of class lessons and discussions	5	2	1
• pair student who has difficulty taking notes with one who takes good notes	22	1	2
<b>READING TEXTS AND NOVELS</b>			
• provide reading list ahead of time	6	4	1
• permit use of taped texts and novels	12	3	
• suggest alternative or abridged versions of texts and novels	8	5	1
• provide vocabulary, glossary and pre-reading questions before a topic is studied	17	2	
• consider reducing the reading requirements of a particular topic	17	2	

	<b>Currently apply or have applied</b>	<b>Would like to know how to implement</b>	<b>Have tried but not found to be successful</b>
<b>COPYING BOARD AND OVERHEAD NOTES</b>			
• permit use of NCR (no carbon required) paper by a writing partner	5	13	
• provide student with copy of overhead to highlight or fill-in-the-blanks	20	3	
<b>READING MAPS, CHARTS, DIAGRAMS</b>			
• provide a legend or written description	15	3	
• provide a visual reference (example)	21		
• arrange for, or assist with, colour coding	12	1	

### **UNDERSTANDING and THINKING about INFORMATION**

Students who have good overall intelligence and who are appropriately placed may still have difficulty understanding certain aspects of course material. Their specific disabilities may interfere with their ability to process information.

<b>UNDERSTANDING ABSTRACT CONCEPTS</b>			
• start with concrete, hands-on materials; introduce abstract concepts gradually	22		
• use visual aids: pictures, diagrams, charts, maps, films, video tapes, and computer simulations	25	1	
• have student practice thinking aloud by verbalizing the steps until the vocabulary and processes are familiar (one-on-one situation, resource room)	17	5	2

	<b>Currently apply or have applied</b>	<b>Would like to know how to implement</b>	<b>Have tried but not found to be successful</b>
<b>PROBLEM SOLVING</b>			
• provide step-by-step problem solving procedures; ensure that there is a record of these	20	3	
• brainstorm in small groups to work out solutions	19	3	3
<b>GENERALIZING to NEW SITUATIONS</b>			
• reduce number of practice questions	24	1	
• give extra time	26		

### **RETAINING and RETRIEVING INFORMATION**

Learning disabled students may have short or long term memory problems. This has been attributed, in part, to an inability to make meaningful connections by sequencing, relating and ordering previously learned information.

<b>RETAINING AND RETRIEVING INFORMATION</b>			
• provide detailed course outline where possible	19		1
• provide drill/practice sheets	25		
• arrange for peer tutor or remedial help	21	2	2
• permit use of spelling aids or calculators	26		
• allow open-book tests	23		1
• permit use of study sheets for tests	22		1
• provide outlines, vocabulary lists, formulas for tests/exams	21	1	
• reduce the amount of material by eliminating or substituting a unit or topic	20	2	

## COMMUNICATION INFORMATION

Students are required to demonstrate their knowledge in written and oral form. Learning disabled students are more likely to have problems with the written requirements: however, a few may have greater difficulty with oral expression. Rarely will a student be completely unable to demonstrate knowledge in either form, although some may find all verbal communication challenging.

	<b>Currently apply or have applied</b>	<b>Would like to know how to implement</b>	<b>Have tried but not found to be successful</b>
<b>WRITING</b>			
• permit use of word processor, spelling checks or dictionaries	20	1	
• reduce/eliminate penalty for misspelling	21		1
• encourage and assist student in proof-reading	21	1	
• accept point form notes	21		1
• accept work which has been dictated by the student to a scribe (if acknowledged)	17	4	
• reduce number of written answers required on a test	20	1	
• substitute oral presentations for some written assignments	15	4	2
<b>SPEAKING</b>			
• permit student to pre-tape oral presentations or make personal presentations	13	3	
• prepare student in advance to encourage contribution to discussion	11	5	2
• pair student with verbal partner for oral assignments and accept written proof of contribution	9	8	1
• substitute for participation mark	11	5	

	<b>Currently apply or have applied</b>	<b>Would like to know how to implement</b>	<b>Have tried but not found to be successful</b>
DRAWING DIAGRAMS, GRAPHS, CHARTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have a "model" copy of the final product available</li> </ul>	20		1

In addition, students with learning problems benefit from classes where the following strategies are on-going:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reinforcing text book skills- ie. use of table of contents, indices, chapter headings, introductions and conclusions</li> </ul>	2.4192e+17	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teaching effective note-making and organizational strategies</li> </ul>		3	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teaching study skills and exam strategies</li> </ul>		4	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing advanced organizers or summaries which outline main points of study unit</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presenting materials in manageable units</li> </ul>		4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using a variety of approaches to accommodate different learning styles</li> </ul>		5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage the use of mnemonics and other memory aids</li> </ul>		3	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using co-operative groups</li> </ul>			4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reinforce use of day planner in classroom</li> </ul>			

**Focus Group Questions – PRT**

- 1. What current programs and services are meeting the needs of our students well?**
- 2. What Programs and services need to be further developed of implemented?**
- 3. What challenges or barriers exist for you at the school level in developing or delivering better programs or services?**
- 4. What else would you like to tell us about special education at your school?**

**Focus Group Questions – EA**

- 1. What current programs and services are meeting the needs of our students well?**
- 2. What Programs and services need to be further developed of implemented?**
- 3. What challenges or barriers exist for you at the school level in developing or delivering better programs or services?**
- 4. What else would you like to tell us about special education at your school?**

**Focus Group Questions – PRT/EA**

- 1. What is working well in the collaborative support provided by education assistants and program resource teachers in your school?**
- 2. What barriers exist in providing collaborative support to students by education assistants and resource staff?**
- 3. What type of support, training or professional development would enhance your ability to support students?**

**Focus Group Questions – Students**

- 1. What services are available for exceptional learners at this school?**
- 2. What services are you using?**
- 3. What is missing that would assist exceptional learners at this school?**
- 4. What challenges with programs and supports hinder the success of exceptional learners?**
- 5. How can our school make learning better for exceptional students?**
- 6. How is the school helping to prepare you for post secondary?**
- 7. What could we do better?**

**Focus Group Questions – Parents**

- 1. Communication is an important part of the link between school and home. How well do you feel we accomplish this?**
- 2. Do you feel you are well informed about the various programs that exist at St. Patrick's High School?**
- 3. What changes would you like to see implemented if any?**
- 4. Of the following which would you feel need to be improved or enhanced?**
  - **High school transition**
  - **School to work transition**
  - **Classroom accommodation/modification**
  - **Life skills for independent living.**
- 5. Do you feel we have a sufficient range of courses offered at the senior level to accommodate the ability and range of our students?**
- 6. Other concerns or comments?**
- 7. What Special Education Services have you found to work well?**