

**A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**



Special Education Services

***Programs and Services
Parent Guide***

Revised – October 2019

You are encouraged to approach your school staff when you have concerns regarding the education of your child.

School Principal: _____

School SERT: _____

School Telephone Number: _____

The Beliefs

The Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) believes that each student is a unique gift from God and as such has the right to an education which will foster spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social growth. We believe that students with special needs (exceptionalities) should be given the opportunities and support necessary to reach their full potential. In the HCDSB, all decisions are grounded in the following five foundational assumptions:

- *All* students can learn
- *Teachers* have the greatest influence over student learning
- We can all be *more* than what we currently are
- *Support* and professional development are required to be so
- This is best accomplished in *partnership* with parents

The Practice

The practice of the HCDSB is to provide every opportunity for parents to be actively involved in the decision making process regarding their child's learning needs, especially in relation to the development and implementation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP includes the special education programs and services the HCDSB provide that addresses your child's learning needs.

The Ontario Education Act

The Ontario Education Act requires that school boards provide special education programs and services for their exceptional students. The purpose of this Parent Guide is to provide you with information about the Special Education Programs and Services available to students within the Halton Catholic District School Board.

What are "special needs" (exceptionalities) in education?

Children with special needs require teaching interventions that differ from the average population in order to learn, to optimally develop skills, and to reach their full potential. Many types of special needs exist, and in education these are referred to as "exceptionalities". An "exceptional" student is a student who has significant, behavioural, communication, intellectual (including gifted), physical, or multiple needs such that he or she is considered to need a special education program.

What is a Special Education Program?

A special education program is defined in the Education Act as an educational program that is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation and includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

What are Special Education Services?

Special Education Services are the people, facilities, technologies, equipment, and other resources your child's school will need to put together and then carry out the IEP. The people that may be involved with planning and implementing your child's program are your child's teacher(s), the school Special Education Resource Teacher(s) (SERT), the Principal and board support staff.

How are exceptionalities recognized (identified)?

Schools refer to the formal recognition of exceptionalities as "Identification". You may know that your child has special needs before entering school. You are asked to tell the school so procedures can be started to support and "identify" your child. Sometimes teachers are the ones who recognize or suspect that your child might have special needs. In these cases, specialized assessments may be offered after consulting

with you. Sometimes exceptionalities will become apparent later in schooling. Regardless of when or how your child's special needs are recognized, you should discuss your child's needs and identification procedures with the school.

How does my child receive a screening or assessment?

Formal identification of students as "exceptional" is based upon reports that may have been prepared or conducted by school or board staff or outside agencies. Possible sources of assessment data include educational, medical/health, occupational/physical therapy, behavioural/psychiatric and psychological and/or speech-language.

HCDSB conducts a screening to identify potential "gifted" students in Grade 4. Parents are notified by the school SERT and provided with test administration information at that time.

How is my child determined exceptional?

After reviewing assessments, if there is evidence that your child has exceptional educational needs, you or your school Principal can ask for an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meeting. This Committee will look at your child's individual strengths and needs and decide on an appropriate identification and placement for your child.

What is an IPRC?

An IPRC is an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee. All school boards in Ontario have these committees. The committee is made up of at least three people: i) The committee "chair" must be the school Principal, or a supervisory officer; ii) The other two members are either special education resource teachers or regular teachers appointed by the Chair.

This committee makes the formal decision about whether a student is exceptional and whether they require a special education program. Parents (and students who are 16 years of age or older) are invited to attend and encouraged to participate during the IPRC meetings. You may agree with and consent to your child's identification and placement, request further discussion, or disagree with the IPRC and appeal the decision.

What is the role of the IPRC?¹

First, the IPRC decides whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional. A lot of information is considered and discussed when making this decision: e.g. assessments, parent and teacher observations.

Second, if your child is exceptional, the committee has to identify the area(s) of exceptionality, according to the definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

Third, the IPRC considers the strengths and needs of your child in order to determine the appropriate special education "placement" for your child. A placement defines where the special education program will be delivered and the reason for the placement if other than a regular class.

After the initial IPRC meeting, you are invited by the school to review your child's identification and placement annually as the needs of your child may change.

¹Ontario Regulation 181/98

How is an IPRC meeting requested?

An IPRC meeting can be initiated in two ways: i) If it is believed your child may benefit from a special education program, the Principal of your child's school may, with written notice to you, refer your child to

an IPRC or ii) If you believe your child would benefit from a special education program, you also can request an IPRC. You do this by sending the Principal of your child's school a letter requesting the meeting. Upon receipt, the Principal will request an IPRC meeting on your behalf and on behalf of your child. Within 15 days of receiving your request or giving you notice, the Principal will provide you with a copy of this Parent Guide and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet. IPRC meetings are usually held where the student attends school.

Can I attend the IPRC meeting?

Yes. Parents (and students 16 years of age or older), are invited to be present at, and participate in all committee discussions and be present when the committee's identification and placement decision is made.

Who else may attend an IPRC meeting?

Other than the committee members, your child's teacher(s), special education staff, or board support staff may be invited to attend.

You may also invite representatives to support you, speak on your behalf or on behalf of your child, or who can, at your request, provide further information or clarification. Principals shall make every effort to accommodate parental requests for specific relevant resource staff to be present at the IPRC meeting. In addition, Principals should assist parents with suggestions regarding who might be able to provide them with additional information, support and guidance.

A language interpreter or sign language interpreter can be made available if one is required. The interpreter can be requested through the Principal of your child's school.

A pupil 16 years of age or older is entitled to attend.

What information will I receive before the IPRC meeting?

At least 10 days before the meeting, you will receive a letter inviting you to the IPRC meeting and will indicate when and where the meeting will take place. You will also receive a written copy of any information about your child that the Chair of the IPRC has received. This may include assessments, reports or a summary of information. In the letter you will also be invited to indicate whether you will attend the meeting.

What if I am unable to attend the scheduled meeting?

If you are unable to attend the scheduled meeting, you can contact the school Principal to arrange an alternate date or time.

If you do not wish to attend, the Principal will send you the written IPRC Statement of Decision after the meeting which will inform you of the outcome of the IPRC. You are asked to sign and return the Statement of Decision to the school Principal.

What happens at an IPRC meeting?

After the Chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting, the IPRC will review all available information about your child, including any results of assessments, and any other information that you submit about your child or that your child submits if he or she is 16 years of age or older.

With your consent (if your child is less than 16 years of age), and if the IPRC feels it would be useful, they could request to interview your child.

You will be encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion. Following this, the committee will make its decision about whether your child is an exceptional student and in what category. Sometimes the IPRC will recommend that further assessments be carried out before a decision is made.

If your child is identified as exceptional, the committee will then also make a decision about your child's "placement".

What is a "placement"?

In making its placement decision, the IPRC may consider a range of options, such as:

- ***A regular class with indirect support.*** The student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialized consultative services.
- ***A regular class with resource assistance.*** *The student is placed in the regular class for most or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from a qualified special education teacher.
- ***A regular class with withdrawal assistance.*** The student is placed in the regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom for less than 50 percent of the school day, from a qualified special education teacher.
- ***A special education class with partial integration.*** The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class where the student-teacher ratio conforms to the standards in O. Reg. 298, section 31, for at least 50 percent of the school day, but is integrated with a regular class for at least one instructional period daily.
- ***A special education class full time.*** The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class, where the student-teacher ratio conforms to the standards in O. Reg. 298, section 31, for the entire school day.

*In Secondary, as an evolution of support, some students may access resource assistance by a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) in a resource room.

How does the IPRC decide on placement?

The Ministry of Education remains committed to the principle that the integration of exceptional pupils should be the normal practice in Ontario. The Inclusion and Range of Placement Policy of the HCDSB indicates that the default placement for all exceptionalities is the regular classroom, but that the appropriateness of the placement is determined through an examination of the student's needs. *The placement chosen must be in the best interest of the student and must take into consideration the parent's wishes.*

What happens after the IPRC has made all its decisions?

The recommendations of the IPR Committee will be given to you in a written Statement of Decision. This Statement of Decision will inform you if your child was identified as exceptional, and if so, the category of exceptionality according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities as set by the Ministry of Education. The Statement of Decision will also indicate the recommended placement. Also listed will be your child's strengths and needs, and the IPRC's recommendations about the programs and services your child may need, if any.

If you **agree** with the IPRC decisions, you will be asked to sign your name to the Statement of Decision. You are not obligated to sign your consent at the IPRC meeting, but can take more time to consider your decision. The Statement of Decision may be taken home and then returned within 15 days.

If you sign consent to the Statement of Decision, and your child has been identified exceptional, the Principal of the school at which the Special Education Program is to be provided, will be notified to begin the process of developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child.

What is an IEP?

An IEP is an Individual Education Plan that is designed to address the learning strengths and needs of your child. An IEP **must** be developed for every student identified as exceptional. An IEP may also be

developed for a student who is not formally identified but who requires special education programs or services.² The details of how IEPs are developed and implemented are given in the Ministry's Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide, 2017.

² *Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide, 2017*

An IEP must be developed and completed within 30 school days of your child's placement by the IPRC and the Principal must ensure that you receive a copy. An IEP must be developed in consultation with you and where your child is 16 years of age or older and it must include:

- a description of the student's strengths and needs and 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
- a transition plan that includes the specific goals, actions required, person(s) responsible for actions, and timelines for each education transition where the student requires support.

Will there be a transition plan on the IEP?

PPM No. 156, "Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs", *requires all students who have an IEP*, whether or not they have been identified as exceptional by an IPRC, to have an up-to-date transition plan at every stage of their journey through school.

What specifically does an IEP address?

An IEP is *not* an outline of everything the your child will be learning in any given term, but it is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required and may include recommendations made by the IPRC. The IEP is a working document that identifies learning expectations which may be accommodated, modified or include alternative learning goals in a particular subject or course. Only expectations that differ from the regular expectations for your child's grade will be listed. Specific teaching and assessment methods will only be listed if they differ from what the teacher is doing for the rest of the students.

What are accommodations and modifications?

Accommodations are a change to normal teaching practice to help your child achieve the provincial expectations for that grade level, or to have their individual learning needs met. Accommodations in no way alter the curriculum expectations for the grade level or course. For example, a child with a learning disability might require a controlled, quiet environment in which to write tests. A hearing-impaired child might need a personal FM system and/or a soundfield system. A gifted child might need enrichment that differentiates depth, breadth and pace of the curriculum.

Modifications are changes made in the grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet your child's learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level. Learning expectations can also be modified in number or complexity. For example, a grade 5 student identified with a developmental disability may be working on a limited number of the simpler learning expectations of the grade 1 English curriculum in reading. A gifted child may have their work reduced in some areas to allow for more complex assignments in other areas that provide additional challenge.

If a child has only accommodations on their IEP, the IEP box will not be checked off on their Provincial Report Card. If the child has modifications, the IEP box will be checked. This is to show that the child is working towards expectations not at grade level.

What are "alternative" expectations?

Some students may require "alternative" expectations in order to succeed. Alternative expectations are developed to help your child acquire knowledge and skills that are not represented in Ontario Curriculum.

A developmentally delayed child may have an alternative expectation in the area of Daily Living Skills. A student with a learning disability may require an alternative goal in the area of Learning Skills: Organization.

How often can the IEP be revised or updated?

The IEP is a working document, and is reviewed and updated at least once every school term. Parents are encouraged to collaborate with the school team in developing and revising the IEP and to discuss your child's progress, on an ongoing basis.

The school Principal has a legal obligation to see that the IEP is implemented. Any concerns about the IEP, or its implementation, should be discussed with the child's teacher, school SERT, and Principal.

Once a student has been placed in a Special Education Program, can the identification or placement be reviewed?

Yes, it can. A review IPRC meeting must be held once every school year, unless the Principal receives written notice from the parent or student (if 16 years of age or older), saying they do not require this annual review for this school year. A Review IPRC meeting can also be requested by the parent or student (if 16 years of age or older) any time after a period of three months in a Special Education Placement. This request should be made in writing to the Principal.

What does a review IPRC consider and decide?

The Review IPRC will consider the same type of information originally considered along with any new information that is available. Sometimes additional assessments will be recommended to provide additional information about your child, and his/her changing strengths and needs. The Review IPRC can also specifically consider the progress your child has made in relation to the IEP. With this information, the Review IPRC will determine whether the special education placement should be continued as is, or whether a different decision should now be made.

What can I do if I disagree with an IPRC decision?

If you do not agree with an Identification or Placement decision made by the IPRC, you may, within 15 days of receiving the Statement of Decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss your concerns. If you do not agree with the decision after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal with the Director of Education within 15 days of your receipt of the decision from this second meeting.

Alternatively, if you do not wish to ask for a second IPRC meeting, you may, within 30 days after receiving the first IPRC's statement of decision, file a notice of appeal with the secretary of the board.

How exactly do I appeal an IPRC decision?

Within the time limits given above, written notification of your intention to appeal the decision must be sent to the Director of Education, Halton Catholic District School Board, 802 Drury Lane, Burlington, Ontario, L7R 2Y2. In the notice of appeal you must indicate the decision(s) with which you disagree and your reasons for disagreeing.

What happens in the appeal process?

The school board will establish a Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB) to hear your appeal. The appeal board will be composed of three individuals who have not previously been involved in the matter. As a parent, you are able to select one of these individuals. Parents and the HCDSB may each submit a list of persons they wish to invite to the meeting to discuss any further information regarding your child's strengths and needs. Within 30 days after the appeal board is selected, a meeting will take place at a convenient time and place, unless both the parents and the school board 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 and your child (if 16 years of age or older) are entitled to be present at, and to participate in all discussions.

The appeal board must make its recommendations to the school board within 3 days of the meeting's ending.

What can the appeal board decide?

The appeal board may agree with the IPRC and recommend that their decision go ahead or it may disagree with the IPRC and make its own recommendations regarding your child's identification or placement, or both. The appeal board will report its recommendations, in writing, to you and to the School Board, and will provide the reasons for its decision.

What will happen after the appeal board's decision?

Within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the HCDSB will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations. School boards are not required to follow the appeal board's recommendations.

You may choose to accept the decision of the HCDSB or you may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal. If you choose to appeal to a Special Education Tribunal, you can request a hearing by writing to the Secretary of the Special Education Tribunal. Specific information about how to do this will be included with the appeal board's decision.

What can I do if my child's Identification and Placement are appropriate, but his/her needs aren't being adequately met?

In this case, it isn't necessary to call an IPRC as identification and placement are not an issue. Either the effectiveness of your child's special education program (IEP) is the concern, or you have an issue with the programs and/or services being delivered to your child in support of the IEP.

In both cases, the place to start is with the school SERT or Principal who has responsibility for the delivery of the IEP and its effectiveness. Ask to have your child's IEP reviewed along with the supporting services.

If you would prefer to talk over the concern with someone outside of the school, contact the Special Education Consultant assigned to the school (see below for contact information).

If issues persist that you feel need to be addressed, you may also contact the Superintendent of Special Education Services (see below for contact information).

Where can I go for more help?

Getting more help or information is quite easy. If you would like to speak to someone, this is the most reliable route to follow:

- a) Contact the Principal or the Special Education Resource Teacher at the school your child is attending or will attend; or
- b) Call **(905) 632-6300 Ext. 125** to speak to the Administrative Assistant of Special Education Services who will link you to:
 - i. **Special Education Consultant** assigned to the school your child is or will be attending;
 - ii. **Superintendent of Special Education Services**

Where can I get more information?

- a) You may visit the website for the Special Education Branch of the Ministry of Education, to

access all legislation, guidelines, regulations and contact numbers for Ministry officials.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>

- b) Call **(905) 632-6300 Ext. 125** to speak to the Administrative Assistant of Special Education Services who will link you to the Chairperson of our Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Where can I get alternate formats of this guide?

- a) Call **(905) 632-6300 Ext. 125** to speak to the Administrative Assistant of Special Education Services who can provide you with Braille, large print, or audio formats. Additional copies of this guide are also available.

What is SEAC?

Each school board in Ontario has a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) that is made up of people from local community organizations, from the school board, and from the community. The Superintendent of Special Education Services is part of SEAC as are two Board Trustees. SEAC makes recommendations to the Board about special education programs and services for exceptional students in the Board.

In addition to the Superintendent of Special Education Services and the two Board Trustees, the following local community agencies and members of the community are represented on the Halton Catholic District School Board's SEAC:

- Association for Bright Children (ABC), Halton Chapter (www.abcontario.ca)
- Autism Ontario, Halton Chapter (www.autismhalton.com)
- Easter Seals Ontario (www.easterseals.org)
- Halton Down Syndrome Association (www.haltondownsyndrome.com)
- VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children (www.voicefordeafkids.com)
- Two members at large

Specific information about who the members are and how they can be reached is available on the Halton Catholic District School Board's website: www.hcdsb.org/Community/SEAC, by calling the Board at (905) 632-6300 or 1-800-741-8382 from North Halton.

Are there other educational options outside the Board?

The Ministry of Education operates Provincial and Demonstration Schools throughout Ontario for deaf, blind, deaf-blind and severely learning-disabled students.

Candidate students are placed in Provincial Schools through an application and screening process. The Board's Special Education Consultants will assist you in assembling the application support materials and required screening documentation. When a student is accepted for placement in a Provincial School, the student's home school board calls an IPRC that will then place the student.

Residential programs are offered at the schools Monday to Friday.

If you would like more information about Provincial and Demonstration Schools, visit the Provincial Schools website at: www.psbnet.ca or the Ministry of Education website at: www.edu.gov.on.ca.

Provincial Schools for the Deaf:

Ernest C. Drury School

255 Ontario Street South, Milton, ON L9T 2M5
Tel: 905-878-2851 TTY: 905-878-7195

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/ecd/index.html

Robarts School

1515 Cheapside Street, London, ON N5V 3N9
TTY & Tel: 519-453-4400

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/robarts/index.html

Sir James Whitney School

350 Dundas Street West, Belleville, ON K8P 1B2
Tel: 613-967-2823 or 1-800-501-6420 TTY: 613-967-2823

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/sjw/index.html

Provincial School for the Blind and Deaf-Blind:

W. Ross MacDonald School

350 Brant Avenue, Brantford, ON N3T 3J9
Tel: 519-759-0730 or 1-866-618-9092

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/wross/index.html

French-language Provincial School for the Deaf and Demonstration School for students with severe learning disabilities:

Centre Jules-Léger

(French Language Programs for French-speaking Students)

281 Lanark Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1Z 6R8

Tel: 613-761-9300 TTY: 613-761-9302

<https://centrejulesleger.ca/en/centre-jules-leger/admissions/provincial-school/>

English-language Demonstration Schools for students with severe learning disabilities:

Amethyst School

1515 Cheapside Street, London, ON N5Y 3N9
Tel: 519-453-4400

<https://psbnet.ca/en/schools/amethyst/>

Sagonaska School

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

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/sagonaska/index.html

Trillium School

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

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/trillium/index.html

Our Mission

The Halton Catholic District School Board, in partnership with home and Church, is dedicated to providing excellence in Catholic education by developing Christ-centred individuals enabled to transform society.

Our Vision

The Halton Catholic District School Board is a model learning community, widely recognized as distinctively Catholic, providing exceptional education, while nurturing the call to love and serve.

Our Values

At the Halton Catholic District School Board, **we value:**

Our Catholic Faith

and aspire to be models of Christ through our actions of love, forgiveness, compassion, and acceptance.

The Whole Child

and create conditions that support the spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional well-being of all students so that they may fulfill their God-given potential.

Excellence in Learning

and provide opportunities that meet the needs and aspirations of all learners in a supportive, creative and innovative learning environment.

Relationships and Partnerships

and recognize that our success is reflective of the healthy and vibrant partnership of staff, parents, pastors, and members of our broader community.

The Importance of Contributing to Our Communities

and respect diversity, celebrate multiculturalism, honour individual rights, and embrace the social values of collective responsibility and the common good.