



A Parent's Guide to

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

ACHIEVING SUCCESS TOGETHER





# Message from the Director

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

At the District School Board of Niagara, we believe all children are equal and should have the same opportunity to experience success. This fundamental belief forms the core of the DSBN's Special Education programming.

Children with special education needs do not see themselves through the lens of a condition. They simply see themselves as children. They have the same desires as every other child: to be loved, to learn and to make a positive contribution.

We believe all children can learn, and we know that all children learn differently. Our Special Education supports and accommodations are designed to meet the unique learning needs of each student identified as exceptional. Students are supported through their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and a school team which works to create a learning environment that promotes inclusion and full participation for all students.

Parents are also important partners in creating a rich educational experience for students. Parents want the best for their children. They envision a future filled with hope and possibility, where their children experience joy, friendship and all the hallmarks of a fulfilled life. Regular and ongoing communication between the school and home helps create the conditions for that kind of personal prosperity. Our schools welcome the opportunity to work with parents to ensure students are benefiting from the most effective supports and instruction.

Children with special education needs have much to offer. Their strength and determination teaches us to look at the world differently; to see it as a place of opportunity and diversity. By working with students with diverse learning needs, we truly come to understand that there is no such thing as impossible. It is a tremendous experience of personal growth for all involved and, as a Board, we are honoured to be entrusted with their education.

Sincerely,



Warren Hoshizaki  
Director of Education



# Table of Contents

OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

1

PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING SUPPORTS FOR  
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

2

COLLABORATING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

7

THE IPRC PROCESS

8

- EXCEPTIONALITIES
- PLACEMENTS
- PROGRAMS

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

18

PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS

19

TIPS FOR PARENTS

20



# THE FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA

## OVERVIEW

The provisions of special education programs and services within the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) are mandated by the Education Act; the regulations contained within Regulation 181/98 is the provincial legislation which determines special education operating procedures within Ontario. The practices and procedures of the District School Board of Niagara strive to encompass both diverse and individualized supports, while reflecting the intent of this legislation.

In the DSBN, Special Education is a collaborative process that encompasses the supports, services, and strategies that provide the opportunities for each student to reach his/her potential. Each student is a unique individual with his/her own strengths and needs and some students may require special education supports and services to achieve success. The DSBN has a full continuum of services available to help support the unique needs of each child.

Parents and families are an integral part of a successful education. You are invited and encouraged to be involved through ongoing communication with the school. Your knowledge and input is of utmost importance when planning supports for your child within the education setting. The goal for each child is to ensure that they are served in the most enabling environment that lends itself to their individualized success. The DSBN strives to build a school community that values the learning differences and contributions of each and every student.

### **The Parent's Guide to Special Education**

The District School Board of Niagara values parents as a key stakeholder in their child's education. We have worked to create a guide that is inviting, provides information about our special education services and supports a framework for a positive, collaborative working.

The Ministry of Education requires that all school boards have available a guide for parents to inform them of Special Education services in their board.

This Parent Guide is available in Braille, large print and audio format, please contact the Board to request one of these alternate formats if required.

# PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The District School Board of Niagara is committed to offering a wide range of both special education services and programs to students board-wide. We provide supports and programs that are responsive to the strengths and needs of each student ensuring a successful learning environment for all. Working together and collaborating as a team to support every child is essential to achieving success.

## Special Education Services

Special Education Services refer to the facilities, resources and equipment necessary for developing and implementing a student's special education program. The District School Board of Niagara is committed to providing a full range of services to meet the needs of all students. These services can include, but are not limited to, LRT/SERT support, technology and accessibility equipment, Speech Language Pathology or Psychological Assessment, and or consultation, Youth Counsellor and/or Social Work support.

## Special Education Programs

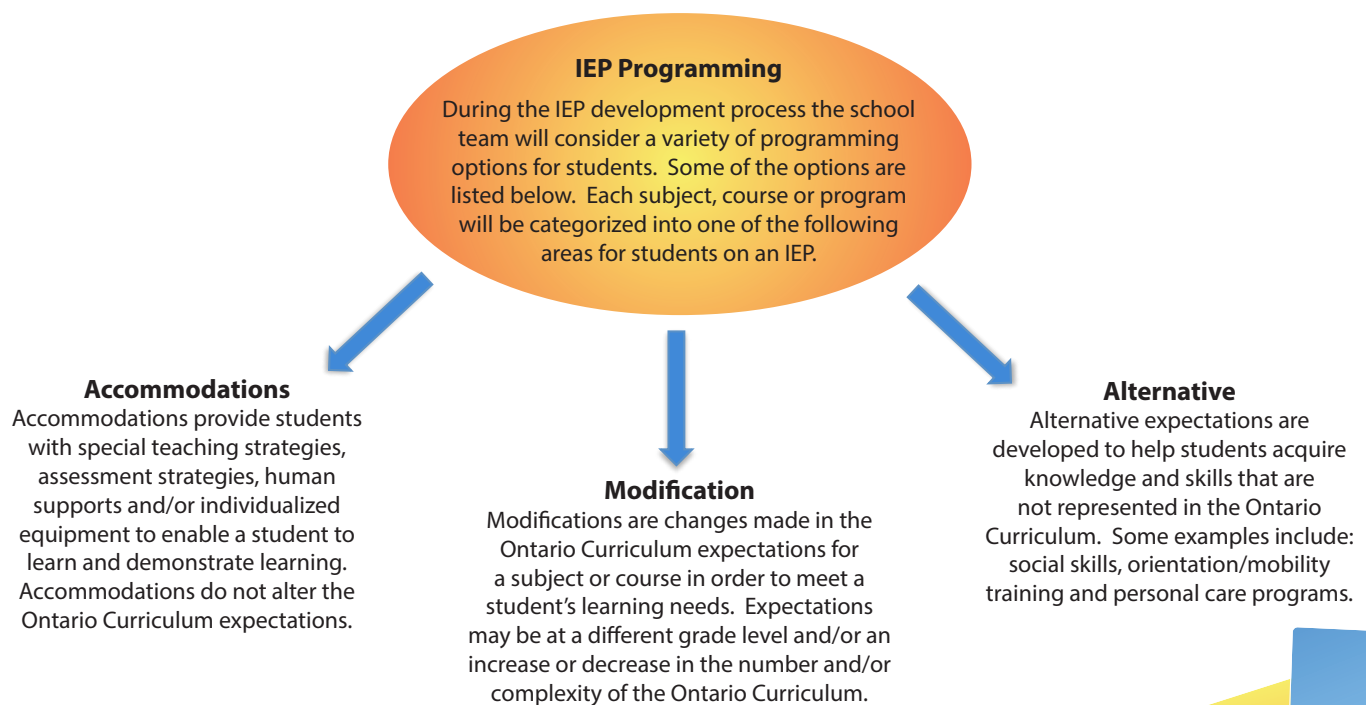
All special education programs are based on the results of continuous assessment and evaluation, and must be outlined on an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**. The DSBN believes that all students have the right to learn in a program setting that best supports and meets their needs. There are a variety of programs available within the District School Board of Niagara to help support students with smaller classroom sizes and smaller teacher to student ratio. These teachers are qualified special education teachers.

# THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN I.E.P.

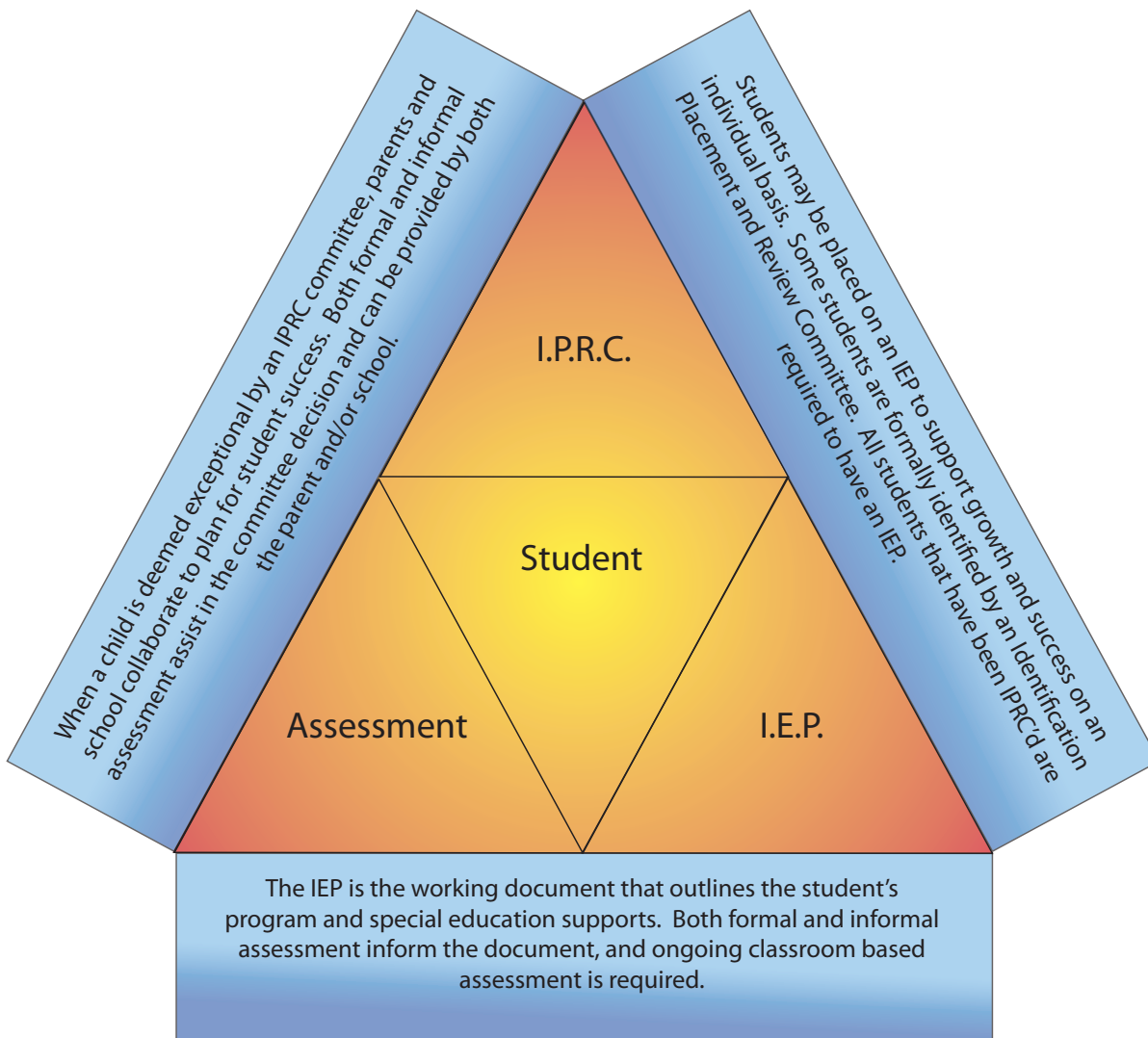
An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan that outlines programming for a student with special education needs. An IEP defines a student's strengths and needs, and identifies accommodations and/or modified expectations from the Ontario Curriculum or alternative expectations that make up a student's program. The IEP is a working document and as such, revisions and updates are required and should be expected. Parental input is essential and welcomed in the development of the IEP. The school will work with you to develop a program that supports your child and ensures that you are kept up to date regarding changes and revisions. A copy will be kept in your child's Ontario Student Record.

When students struggle with some aspects of learning, the In-School Team may decide, in consultation with you, to begin an Individual Education Plan to support programming for your child. IEP's can be created to support programming that is accommodated, modified and/or alternative. All programming must be assessed, monitored, and reviewed on an ongoing basis and reported on through either the Ontario Provincial Report Card (accommodated, modified programming) or an Alternative Report Card (alternative programming).

For students who have been formally identified through the IPRC process, an IEP is a mandatory and valuable programming plan to set goals, strategies and plan assessment that serve the individual needs of your child specifically.



# PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS



## TRANSITION PLANNING

All students that have an Individual Education Plan will have a transition plan to support them. Transitions from within the school environment, between schools/grades, school to work, further education and community opportunities require supports and planning to allow student success. The probability of a successful transition is significantly increased when schools work with parents/guardians, employers, community agencies, and providers of further education to develop coordinated transition plans for exceptional students. Transition plans can include a variety of supports for students.

Below are some examples of transition processes that are in place at the District School Board of Niagara:

**Preschool Transition Process:** DSBN Staff work with local preschool resource consultants and various community agencies to ensure preschoolers with educational needs enter DSBN schools successfully. Developing transition plans, sharing information, and providing support to families new to the DSBN are key components to the Preschool Transition Process.

**Connections for Students:** Students who are transitioning out of Autism Intervention Programs within the community, such as Intensive Behavioural Intervention are supported by our ABA Facilitator and Special Education Team to make the return to school successful.

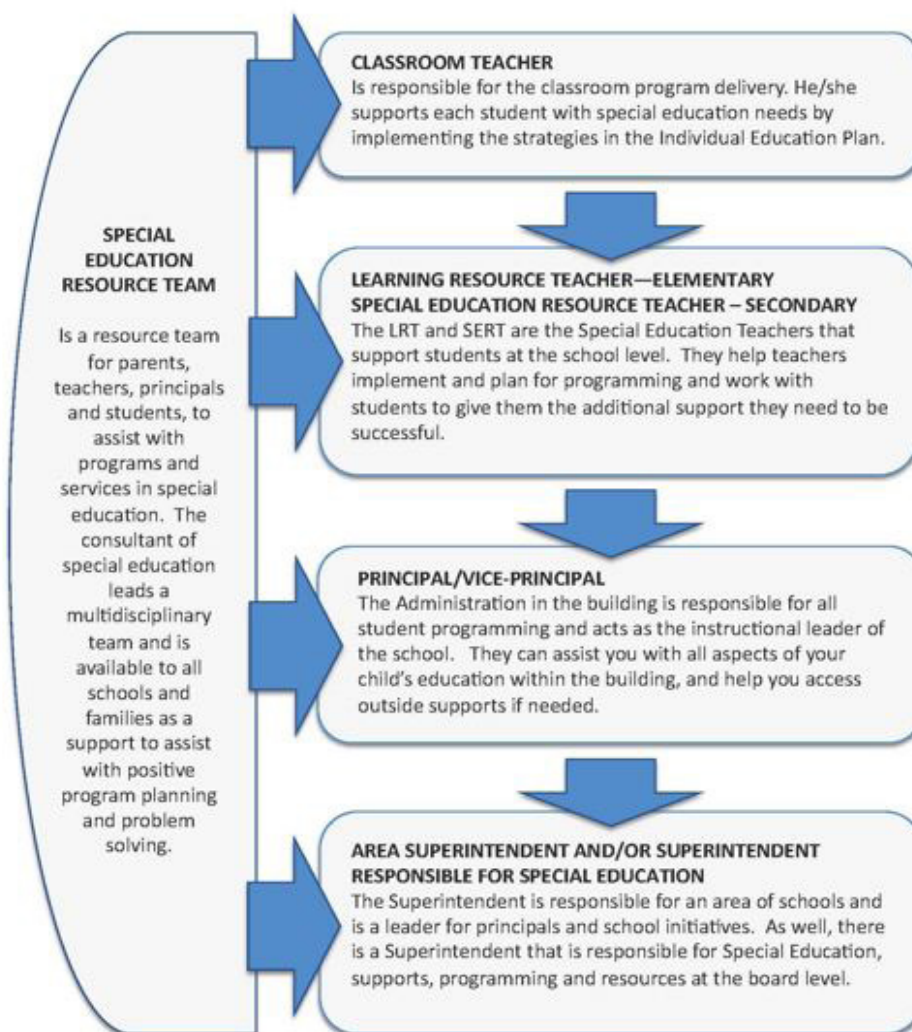
**Grade 8 to 9 Transition:** A transition form is completed for every student entering grade 9. This information is shared with the receiving school staff to ensure that the learning strengths and needs of each student are considered before the student starts secondary school. For students on an IEP, this may include a meeting with both the elementary and secondary school staff.

**Integrated Transition Planning:** The DSBN works closely with other community agencies and other government ministries to ensure that proper transition planning takes place for students with developmental disabilities. For some students, school transition planning may take place to support transitions within the school environment, between grades and schools. In addition, at age 14, students will be offered an Integrated Transition Process that the school will facilitate to assist families and students in planning longer term for transition to community opportunities. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and The Ministry of Education have created a framework and collaborative plan to provide a more streamlined integrated transition planning process to support young people with developmental disabilities who are preparing for transition to adulthood.

While these are some of the main processes that have been put in place to ensure planning opportunities and parental input for students, transition planning takes place day to day for many students within the DSBN. We recognize that the needs of every child are different and individual plans and considerations are needed.



## Consultation Sequence for Special Education Questions and Concerns



# COLLABORATING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

## Collaborating with Your Child's School

Collaboration with parents as partners is essential to a supported learning environment for every child. Your continued involvement with your child's education is very important. To ensure that we are programming effectively for your child's strengths and needs in the educational setting, we value your knowledge and input.

Communication is the key to a collaborative and effective relationship. Keeping the lines of communication open between the school and home sets the stage for student success. The school is ready to support you and your child with their learning needs from the moment they enter the DSBN. There are many transition processes in place to ensure that families and students feel supported in their education.

Early and ongoing assessment of students takes place in all classrooms to ensure that students are being programmed for effectively. If you or your child's teacher feel that your child is having learning difficulties, early communication is key. There are a variety of early intervention strategies that can be implemented to assist students in being successful and we want to work with you to determine the best supports to assist your child.

Each school in the District School Board of Niagara has an In-School Team with the principal as chair. This formalized on-going problem solving forum is in place to assist the school in determining supports and next steps for every child in the building. The team develops and reviews plans designed to enable students who are experiencing difficulty to succeed. At the secondary level, it is referred to as the In-School Student Success Team to reinforce the collaboration among the Student Success and Guidance resource departments.

If the In-School Team determines that additional supports may be needed, they have access to a Multidisciplinary Team at the system level that provides ongoing support for students, teachers, staff, and schools.

### DSBN Staff that may be part of the In School or Multidisciplinary Team:

Classroom Staff	School Staff	System Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Classroom Teacher</li><li>• Educational Assistant</li><li>• Special Education Teacher</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Principal</li><li>• Vice-Principal</li><li>• Learning Resource Teacher (elementary)</li><li>• Special Education Resource Teacher (secondary)</li><li>• Student Success Teacher (secondary)</li><li>• Guidance Teacher (secondary)</li><li>• Instructional Coach</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student Achievement Leader, Special Education</li><li>• Consultant, Special Education</li><li>• Resource Teacher</li><li>• Central Educational Assistant</li><li>• Speech Language Pathologist</li><li>• Psychologist or Psychological Associate</li><li>• Youth Counsellor</li><li>• Social Worker</li><li>• ABA facilitator</li></ul>

# IDENTIFICATION PLACEMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEES

## What is an IPRC?

An Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) meet to determine whether a student is exceptional and what placement and program will best support the student. This committee of educators will meet with you to discuss the special education needs of your child. If your child is over 16 years old, they are invited to participate in the meeting. In collaboration with you, the team will make decisions on how best to meet the needs of your child. This meeting takes place annually to review the decision, but can be held more frequently when change and collaboration is needed.

The committee has three required team members: a principal chairs the meeting and two other staff members take part. As the parent/student, you play an important role in helping the committee make good decisions about your child and the support options that are available within the District School Board of Niagara. You are encouraged to ask questions at the meeting and to provide the IPRC with any relevant information you consider important to the decisions of the IPRC.

## Along with the Principal, the committee could have any of the following educators present as committee members:

- Classroom Teacher or Learning Resource Teacher/Special Education Resource Teacher for the school
- Special Education Teacher, Consultant or Resource Teacher
- Vice-Principal of the school
- Other School/Board staff that have a good understanding of your child

## The IPRC Committee will:

- Determine whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional according to the Ministry of Education's definitions of exceptionalities (as outlined on Appendix A)
- Decide on an appropriate placement based on the strengths and needs of your child. The committee has a duty to discuss and describe the strengths and needs of your child when making the IPRC decisions.
- Be responsible for making initial decisions about exceptionality, placement, and program, as well as review these decisions each year. The Ministry of Education allows for a review to take place after three months if the parent or school feel that it is in the child's best interest, however, a yearly review is required.
- Move forward with its decision when the parent or student (16 years or older) is comfortable with the recommendations.

## What role do I play in the IPRC Meeting?

- Parents have the most valuable input when it comes to their child, and we encourage each parent to share, collaborate, and be involved in their child's education and planning. As well, students 16 years and older can participate as a valuable partner in planning their educational program.
- The committee will ask for your input and discuss the options that are available in the District School Board of Niagara. You are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification if needed. We strive to ensure that you understand the options being provided and move forward only when you have consented to the IPRC Decision.
- The Education Act requires that we inform you that you can appeal the IPRC decision if you have not been able to resolve your concerns with the school. You have 15 days once the decision is made to request that another IPRC be held to discuss your concerns. If you do not agree with the decision after this second meeting you may file a notice of appeal within **15 days**, to the **Secretary of the District School Board of Niagara, 191 Carlton St., St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7P4**. You can also appeal to the **Secretary of the District School Board of Niagara** with **30 days** of the original IPRC meeting, as an alternative to the above.

## I.P.R.C. Appeal Process

The DSBN strives to meet the needs of all learners through a collaborative process with parents. During the IPRC process your input is both valued and necessary for us to move forward with the identification and placement decision. If there is ever a time that you are feeling uncomfortable with the discussion, have re-considered, or would like to have further discussion with the committee, please speak with the principal of your child's school. We believe that working together to come to the right decision is needed for all parties.

The Ministry of Education requires that we inform you of your right to appeal the Identification Placement and Review Committee decision should you disagree. The following is the process should you feel unsuccessful when speaking with the principal and the Student Achievement Leader for Special Education:

- Within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss your concerns: or
- Within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with the **Secretary for the District School Board of Niagara, 191 Carlton St., St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7P4.**
- If you do not agree with the decision after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of your receipt of the decision.

***The notice of appeal must:***

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

## What happens when the appeal process is implemented?

*The appeal process involves the following steps:*

- The DSBN will establish a special education appeal board to hear your appeal. The appeal board will be composed of three persons who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal, one of whom will be selected by you, the parent.
- The chair of the appeal board will arrange a meeting to take place at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after he or she has been selected unless parents and board 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.

Parents, and students who are 16 years old or over, are entitled to be present at the meeting, and to participate in all discussions. After the meeting the appeal board must make its recommendation within three days of the meeting's ending. The appeal board may agree or disagree with the recommendation. If they agree, they will recommend that the decision be implemented. If they disagree they will make a recommendation about your child's identification or placement or both. The appeal board will report its recommendations to you in writing, outlining the reasons for its recommendations.

If the DSBN does not follow the suggested recommendations you may appeal to the Special Education Tribunal. The following steps should be followed:

- Request a hearing by writing to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal.
- All necessary information to make an application to the Special Education Tribunal will be included in the appeal board's statement of decision.

While this procedure and process is in place to ensure that parents' and students' rights are protected with regards to special education Identification Placement and Review Committee decisions, we encourage you to inform the school principal, and subsequently the Superintendent of Special Education Support Services if further assistance is needed prior to beginning an appeal process.

# IPRC Process

(Identification Placement and Review Committee)

## IPRC Requested by Principal

- The principal may request an IPRC meeting if they believe that one is necessary to aid them in supporting your child.

## IPRC Requested by Parent/Guardian

- You as a parent, may request an IPRC meeting be held to discuss the placement and exceptionality for your child.
- When the request is made in writing, the Principal will set an IPRC meeting and respond within 15 days.

## Invitation Letter Sent to Parent

- An IPRC invitation will be sent to you to attend and collaborate regarding the strengths and needs of your child. A form on which you should confirm your attendance will accompany this invitation.
- You will receive "A Parent's Guide" from the DSBN for you to read and familiarize yourself with the process and ask questions before and during the meeting.

## IPRC Meeting

- The Principal will chair the meeting. Two other staff members will be present as committee members and may include classroom teacher, Learning Resource Teacher, Vice-Principal and/or DSBN staff from School Support Services - Special Education Department.
- You play a very important role in this meeting and we encourage you to attend, ask questions and collaborate regarding your child's Education Plan.
- The committee will make a decision with your input, and move forward once you are comfortable with the IPRC decision.
- You will be asked to sign if you are in agreement with the decision, and will be given a copy of the IPRC paperwork for your records.

## The IPRC Decision

- The decision will be made in consultation with you and will be implemented when the IPRC Statement of Decision is signed and you are in agreement.
- Exceptionalities are outlined in this pamphlet and are provided by the Ministry of Education.
- Placement options that are available in the DSBN include, Indirect Service, Resource Assistance, Withdrawal Assistance, and Special Class Placements. These are discussed in detail on Page 15.
- IPRC Decisions will be reviewed annually unless you, or the Principal of the School feel it is in the best interest of the child to convene another meeting after three months.

# CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

# EXCEPTIONALITIES

Category	Ministry of Education Definition
<b>Behaviour</b>	
<b>Behaviour</b>	<p>A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;</li> <li>excessive fears or anxieties;</li> <li>a tendency to compulsive reaction;</li> <li>an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.</li> </ol>
<b>Communication</b>	
<b>Autism</b>	<p>A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>disturbances in:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rate of educational development;</li> <li>- ability to relate to the environment;</li> <li>- mobility;</li> <li>- perception, speech, and language;</li> </ul> </li> <li>lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language</li> </ol>
<b>Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing</b>	<p>An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.</p>
<b>Language Impairment</b>	<p>A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and</li> <li>include one or more of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- language delay;</li> <li>- dysfluency;</li> <li>- voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Speech Impairment</b>	<p>A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.</p>
<b>Learning Disability</b>	<p>One of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- affects the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are at least in the average range;</li> <li>- results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range) and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support;</li> <li>- results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and work habits and learning skills;</li> <li>- may typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; executive functions (e.g. self-regulation of behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making);</li> <li>- may be associated with difficulties in social interaction (e.g., difficulty in understanding social norms or the point of view of others); with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities;</li> <li>- is not the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural differences; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.</li> </ul>



# CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

Category	Ministry of Education Definition
<b>Intellectual</b>	
<b>Giftedness</b>	An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.
<b>Mild Intellectual Disability</b>	A learning disorder characterized by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive service;</li> <li>an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development;</li> <li>a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.</li> </ol>
<b>Developmental Disability</b>	A severe learning disorder characterized by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;</li> <li>an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;</li> <li>a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.</li> </ol>
<b>Physical</b>	
<b>Physical Disability</b>	A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.
<b>Blind and Low Vision</b>	A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.
<b>Multiple</b>	
<b>Multiple Exceptionalities</b>	A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT OPTIONS WITHIN THE DSBN

The District School Board believes that when discussing placements for students, the regular education classroom should always be the first consideration. We also believe that choices and options should be available to families to assist in meeting the unique educational needs of some students. A variety of placement options are available within the DSBN as outlined below.

## **Regular Education Classroom with Indirect Support:**

- Your child's strengths and needs are addressed through an Individual Education Plan to support programming for your child.
- The Regular Education Teacher and the Special Education Teacher in the school will collaborate and strategize together to best educate your child.
- The Regular Education Teacher delivers all programming and curriculum to your child.

## **Regular Education Classroom with Resource Assistance:**

- Your child's strengths and needs are addressed through an Individual Education Plan to support programming for your child.
- The Regular Education Teacher is assisted as needed by a Special Education Teacher, in delivering the curriculum to your child in his/her classroom.
- Your child may receive specialized instruction individually or in small groups within the regular classroom from a special education teacher.

## **Regular Education Classroom with Withdrawal Assistance:**

- Your child's strengths and needs are addressed through an Individual Education Plan to support programming for your child.
- The Regular Classroom Teacher delivers the majority of your child's program, and is assisted by the Special Education Teacher as needed.
- The Special Education Teacher may work both in your child's classroom or work privately/ in groups with your child to help them reach their full potential.
- Your child receives some instruction outside the regular classroom for less than 50% of the day.

### **Special Education Class with Partial Integration:**

- Your child's strengths and needs are addressed through an Individual Education Plan to support programming for your child.
- The Special Education Teacher delivers the majority of your child's program.
- The Regular Education Teacher will deliver portions of your child's program within a regular education classroom, as appropriate, to help your child reach their fullest potential.
- The Education Act requires that Special Education Class sizes are smaller than Regular Education Class Sizes to allow for more intensive educational supports.
- The student-teacher ratio conforms to Regulation 298 of the Education Act for at least 50% of the day.

### **Special Education Class - Full-Time:**

- Your child's strengths and needs are addressed through an Individual Education Plan to support programming for your child.
- The Special Education Teacher delivers all of your child's program to help them reach their full potential.
- The Education Act requires that Special Education Class sizes are smaller than Regular Education Class Sizes to allow for more intensive educational supports.
- The student-teacher ratio conforms to Regulation 298 of the Education Act for 100% of the day.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS OFFERED AT THE DSBN

The District School Board of Niagara offers many program options for families and students to help them reach their full potential. While the regular education classroom is always considered first, we recognize that some students require different programming options. The following programs offer the support of a Special Education Teacher, and in many cases the support of educational assistants. The DSBN believes that a range of placement options ensure that a variety of settings are available to support the specific programming needs of students.

## PROGRAMS

### Structured Strategies Program

This low-enrolment classroom engages learners working on Ontario Curriculum, with supplementary programming in social skills development and self-regulation. Strategies include, leveled breaks, sensory and movement breaks, social skills programming, assistive technology and a structured classroom environment. The goal of the program is to help students develop the independent self-regulation skills necessary to be successful in the regular classroom setting. This program is a collaborative approach to learning/teaching, and is supported by a special education teacher and educational assistant.

### Communication Program

This class supports students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and significant needs in the areas of expressive and receptive communication skills. Programming is based around individual needs and addressed through alternative curriculum. Augmentative communication strategies are used to promote independence and communication, and sensory regulation.

### Fundamental Skills Program

This low-enrolment classroom supports students with significant intellectual disabilities and alternative programming needs. Students are working on significantly modified curriculum expectations and programming is supplemented with functional skill development. In the program, students gain independent living skills, receive intensive academic supports through individualized programming, and receive intensive support for physical needs as required. This program is taught by a special education teacher in collaboration with a classroom educational assistant.

### Specialized School to Community Program

This low enrolment classroom supports students with significant intellectual disabilities and alternative programming needs at the secondary level. Students may be working on modified Ontario Curriculum expectations and programming is supplemented with functional and vocational skill development as needed. In this programming students gain independent living skills, receive intensive academic supports through individualized programming, and receive support for intensive physical needs as required. Transition to the community is an integral part of the program, with a focus on building connections to community supports as students approach graduation.

### Elementary Gifted Program

The students in the program demonstrate an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth best serviced in the Part-Time Gifted Program to allow them to reach their educational potential. Students in the program will have an Individual Education Plan that outlines the Alternative Expectations that the student will be completing, in the area of Higher Order Thinking Skills.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Many community organizations are available to assist parents/students with information and support them through special education processes.

All school boards are required to maintain a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) that participates in monthly meetings to advise the District School Board of Niagara in making decisions about their Special Education programs and services.

The following community partners are members of the Special Education Advisory Committee for the District School Board of Niagara:

- Association for Bright Children - Ontario
- Autism Ontario
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
- Community Living
- Down Syndrome Caring Parents Niagara
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder - Ontario Network of Expertise
- Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara
- Niagara Children's Centre
- Niagara Regional Native Centre
- Niagara Support Services
- Pathstone Mental Health
- Voice for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

Collaborating with community agencies to better support students and families is of utmost importance. It is always best practice to inform the school principal of people that will be attending a meeting to support you.

# MINISTRY PROVINCIAL AND DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS

What are the Ministry's Provincial and Demonstration Schools?

The Ministry operates Provincial and Demonstration Schools throughout Ontario for students who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning-disabled including students with learning disabilities associated with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These programs are offered at the schools Monday to Friday, for students who live too far from school to travel daily.

## **DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS WITH SEVERE LEARNING DISABILITIES, INCLUDING LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH ADHD.**

### **Amethyst School**

1090 Highbury Avenue • London ON • N5Y 4V9  
Telephone: (519) 453-4408

### **Sagonaska School**

350 Dundas Street West • Belleville ON • K8P 1B2  
Telephone: (613) 967-2830

### **Trillium School**

347 Ontario Street South • Milton ON • L9T 3X9  
Telephone: (905) 878-2851

## **SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF**

### **Ernest C. Drury School**

255 Ontario Street South • Milton ON • L9T 2M5  
Telephone: (905) 878-2851  
TTY: (905) 878-7195

### **Robarts School**

1090 Highbury Avenue  
Box 7300 • London ON • N5Y 4V9  
Telephone and TTY: (519) 453-4400

### **Sir James Whitney School**

350 Dundas Street West • Belleville ON • K8P 1B2  
Telephone and TTY: (613) 967-2823

## **SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND DEAF-BLIND**

### **W. Ross Macdonald School**

350 Brant Avenue • Brantford ON • N3T 3J9  
Telephone: (519) 759-0730

Where can parents obtain additional information?

- School Principal

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

The DSBN considers parents a valued partner when planning for their child's education. Collaboration and communication between the school and home are essential to a good working relationship. Here are some things to consider when you have questions about your child's education or you have a planned meeting with the school:

- Keeping a file at home that contains school information about your child is always a good idea. Report Cards, Individual Education Plans, assessments and IPRC forms are all important documents that can help when you meet with the school.
- Your child's teacher is always the best person to contact regarding your child's progress. This can be done by phone, through a visit or email. You can arrange a time to speak to your child's teachers when you have questions or information to share. Arranging a meeting is always possible and will support ongoing planning to address your child's needs.
- In preparing for a meeting, write down a few questions you have or the information you wish to share, prior to meeting with the school. This way you are sure to cover all of the topics you want to discuss and can stay focused on your goal.
- Feel free to bring someone with you to the meeting: a friend, support person, parent advocate or community partner. Informing the principal prior to the meeting would be best practice.
- Ask for clarification and explanations when needed. Special Education practices and processes can be overwhelming and the school wants to ensure that you understand and have all of your questions clarified.
- The principal can request resource staff from Special Education Services to attend case conferences and meetings. The role of this person would be to offer support and further programming suggestions regarding your child's education.

Effective communication is the key to building relationships of mutual trust and cooperation. Although educators and parents share the same goal, each views the student's educational needs from a different perspective. The goal of the partnership between home and the school is to provide a welcoming nurturing environment where your child can achieve success and reach their fullest potential.