



Parent Guide to Special Education

Revised February 2022



Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board
"Building communities of faith, hope and service"

What is a Special Education Program?

A special Education Program is an educational program based on the results of continuous assessment and evaluation. It includes an Individual Education Plan containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the student.

What are Special Education Services?

Special Education Services are the facilities and resources, including equipment and support personnel needed to create a special education program. These could include:

- ♦ intervention/consultation with a psychologist, behavior specialist, speech and language pathologist, special education coordinator;
- ♦ academic assistance from a Learning Support Services Teacher (LSST);
- ♦ physical support from an educational assistant; or
- ♦ assistive devices

Who decides if a child will receive Special Education Services?

This is a cooperative decision among the parents, classroom teacher, principal and the LSST. The process begins with a parent/teacher meeting to discuss the strengths and needs of the student. An individual education plan may be developed as a result of this meeting.

What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

The Individual Education Plan is an educational road map for a student. Each student's plan outlines program modifications and necessary support services. The education team will use classroom observation, educational assessment tools and other professional evaluations to complete the I.E.P. The classroom teacher works with parents, the LSST, and the student to identify the student's strengths and needs, and to set goals.

The IEP must contain the following:

- ♦ specific educational expectations;
- ♦ an outline of the special education program modifications that will be received by the student;
- ♦ a statement about the methods by which the student's process will be reviewed; and
- ♦ for students 14 years and older (except those identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness), a plan for the transition to appropriate post-secondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living.

Parents, as important partners, are encouraged to actively participate in the development of the IEP and to sign it once completed.

What happens once an Individual Education Plan is in Place?

The Individual Education Plan will evolve as a student grows and matures. Within each term, a student's goals and needs are reviewed and discussed with parents. Regular communication and review with the parents are essential to the success of the individual education plan.

Will my child always need an Individual Education Plan?

Some students may develop strengths and acquire skills allowing them to continue their education without an individual education plan. The purpose of an individual education plan is to provide a structure for defining and reviewing the needs of the student on a regular basis and determining if modifications are required.

What if my child needs more help?

Sometimes a formal assessment (psychological or further academic testing) is required to determine a student's specific needs. An IPRC may be considered as a result of these assessments.

What is an IPRC?

Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards develop an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). In the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, the IPRC will consist of the Superintendent of Special Education or a designate (Special Education Coordinator) and a team of two principals.

What is the role of the IPRC?

The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) will:

- ♦ decide whether or not a student should be identified as exceptional;
- ♦ identify areas of the student's exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education;
- ♦ decide on program modifications or in some cases, if placement is necessary; and
- ♦ review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

Who is identified as an Exceptional Pupil?

The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as "a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program...".

Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board believes the needs of the majority of students with exceptionalities can be met in an age appropriate regular classroom with a modified program and support services.

Behavioural

Behavioural Exceptionality: A learning disorder characterized by special 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:

- ♦ an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;
- ♦ excessive fears or anxieties;
- ♦ a tendency to compulsive reaction;
- ♦ an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.

Communicational

Autism: A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:

- ♦ disturbances in: rate of educational development; ability to relate to the environment; mobility; perception; speech and language
- ♦ lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.

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

Language Impairment: A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:

- ♦ involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and
- ♦ include one or more of: language delay, dysfluency, voice and articulation development which may or may not be organically or functionally based.

Speech Impairment: A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm and stress.

Learning Disability: 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 that:

- ♦ 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 average in range;

- ◆ results in
 - academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range), and/or
 - academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort an/or with additional support;
- ◆ 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;
- ◆ may typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing, memory and attention, processing speed, perceptual motor processing, visual-spatial processing, executive functions (e.g.: self-regulation of behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making);
- ◆ 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
- ◆ is not the result of a lack on 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.

Intellectual

Giftedness: An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that required differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

Mild Intellectual Disability: A learning disorder characterized by:

- ◆ an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and support services
- ◆ an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development
- ◆ a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Developmental Disability: A severe learning disorder characterized by:

- ◆ an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development
- ◆ an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development
- ◆ a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Physical

Physical Disability: 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 students without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.

Blind and Low Vision: A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

Multiple

Multiple Exceptionalities: A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such 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.

How is an IPRC meeting requested?

The school principal must request an IPRC meeting upon receiving a written request from the parents. The principal may also request an IPRC when the classroom teacher or the LSST believe that the student requires extraordinary support to succeed in school. The parents must be informed of this request in writing.

The principal must provide the parents with a copy of this guide and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC Committee will meet, within 15 days of receiving a request or giving notice.

May parents attend the IPRC meeting?

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents and students 16 years or older to be present at and participate in all committee discussions about the student and to be present when the committee's identification and placement decision is made.

Who else will be at the IPRC meeting?

The LSST, a principal / vice-principal employed by the board, and a board appointed delegate (Special Education coordinator) will be present at the IPRC meeting.

Who else may attend an IPRC meeting?

The following are also able to attend:

- ♦ other resource people, at the discretion of the principal, such as the psychologist, speech and language pathologist, or an agency representative who may provide further information or clarification;
- ♦ a representative for the parents - that is, a person who may support the student or parents, or speak on their behalf; and
- ♦ an interpreter, if one is required. (An interpreter can be requested through the school.)

Either the parents or the school principal may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.

What information will parents receive about IPRC meeting?

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the school principal will provide to the parents, this information booklet and an invitation to attend the meeting as an important partner in considering their child's placement. This letter will include the date, time and place of the meeting and will ask the parents to confirm their attendance.

Before the IPRC meeting occurs, parents will receive an IPRC information package. This package will include:

- ♦ IPRC cover sheet (application form);
- ♦ the most recent individual education plan;
- ♦ the latest report card;
- ♦ samples of student work, teacher observations and anecdotal notes; a summary of prior school information including student strengths, weaknesses, accommodations put in place, and LSST and support staff intervention;
- ♦ any relevant assessment/reports from board support staff (psychology, speech and language, social work), as necessary; and
- ♦ any assessments/reports from outside agencies, medical personnel, therapists, etc. received with the parent's permission.

What if the parents are unable to attend the scheduled meeting?

If the parents are unable to attend the scheduled meeting time an alternate date or time may be arranged through the school principal. If a parent does not attend the meeting, the principal will forward the I.P.R.C.'s written statement of decision to the parents.

What happens at the IPRC meeting?

During the meeting, the principal, the LSST and/or classroom teacher, and parents will present the student's profile and needs. The student (if 16 years or older) may also outline his/her own needs and concerns. If necessary, any other support staff in attendance will review the results of their own intervention. The I.P.R.C. may request a health or psychological assessment if such is required to assist with a correct identification or placement decision.

Parents are encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion. After all information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision.

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

The I.P.R.C.'s written statement of decision will state:

- ♦ whether the committee has identified the student as exceptional;
- ♦ where the committee has identified the student as exceptional,
 - the categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified as they are defined by the Ministry of Education;
 - the IPRC's description of the student's strengths and needs;
 - the IPRC's placement decision (if any); and
 - the IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and the necessary support services;
- ♦ the student's placement and the reason for the decision.

What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?

Once the parents have reviewed and agree to the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC, they will be asked to sign and return the recommendation. If the student has been identified as exceptional and the parents have agreed to the identification and placement, the school principal will ensure that a new individual education plan is completed, if necessary. This must be completed and sent to the parents within 30 school days after the IPRC's determination.

An IPRC Review meeting will be held annually to decide whether the original identification and placement decisions should be continued or whether modifications should be made. A parent may request this review any time after the student has been in a special education program for 3 months.

What can parents do if they disagree with the IPRC's decision?

If parents do not agree with either the identification or placement decision made by the IPRC, they may:

- ♦ within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the I.P.R.C hold a second meeting to discuss concerns; or
- ♦ within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with the:
Director of Education
Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board 1325
California Avenue
Windsor, Ontario N9B 3Y6
- ♦ any notice of appeal must indicate the decision with which they disagree and their reasons for disagreement.

If parents do not agree with the decision after the second meeting, they may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of receipt of the decision.

If the decision is not appealed within the time provided, the principal will be instructed to implement the IPRC's decision.

What happens in the appeal process?

The appeal process involves the following steps:

- ♦ The board will establish a special education appeal board to hear the appeal. The appeal board will be composed of three people (one of whom is to be selected by the parent) who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal.

- The chair of the appeal board will arrange a meeting to take place at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after he or she has been selected (unless parents and board both provide written consent to a later date).
- The appeal board will receive the material reviewed by the IPRC and may interview anyone who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal.
- The parent and the student (if 16 years or older) are entitled to be present at, and to participate in, all discussions.
- The appeal board must make its recommendation within 3 days of the meeting ending.

The appeal board may:

agree with the IPRC and dismiss the appeal;

disagree with the IPRC and refer the matter back to the IPRCC, stating the reasons for disagreement;

or

set aside the determination of the IPRC that the student is an exceptional student.

These recommendations will be in writing, giving reasons behind the decision, and will be provided to both the parents and the Director of the school board.

Within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the Director will submit it to the school board, for acceptance or rejection, and inform the parents and the IPRC of the board's decision.

Parents may accept the decision of the school board, or may appeal to the Special Education Tribunal. A hearing must be requested in writing to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal. Information about making an application to the tribunal will be included with the appeal board's decision.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Special Education Branch
 Ministry of Education
 Mowat Block
 Queen's Park
 Toronto, Ontario
 M7A 1L2
 Tel. (416) 314-2333
 1-877-699-5431

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

According to Regulation 464/97 “Every district school board shall establish a special education advisory committee that shall consist of ... one representative from each local association that operates locally within the area of jurisdiction of the board, as nominated by the local association and appointed by the board...”

Under this regulation: “A special education advisory committee of the board may make recommendations in respect of any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board.”

As required by the above regulation, the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board established a Special Education Advisory Committee representing the local associations. At the time of printing of this manual the following associations were represented. Please feel free to call the local associations for more information.

Associations Represented on SEAC

The following associations are currently being represented on the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board:

Autism Ontario – Windsor-Essex	519-250-1893
Community Living Essex County Community Living Windsor	519-776-6438 519-974-4221
Inclusion Action in Ontario	877-681-5128
Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex County (LDAWE)	519-252-7889
Parents for Children’s Mental Health	Windsor@pcmh.ca
Up About Down – Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association	519-973-6486