



Special Education Parent Handbook

March 2007

1. Introduction and Philosophy

District School Board Ontario North East believes that all students should be educated in an environment of learning, which will assist them in developing their maximum potential as individuals and as contributing members of society.

To achieve this potential, modification to the individual student's program and/or placement are sometimes needed. They may be and can be adjusted at the classroom and school level by accessing the support services available. Other times specialized programs and services may be required in an alternate setting in order maximize the potential of an individual student. It is a continuous pursuit of the Board to develop and implement the programs and services that will both address the needs of the learner and reflect the beliefs of District School Board Ontario North East.

2. Special Education Programs and Services

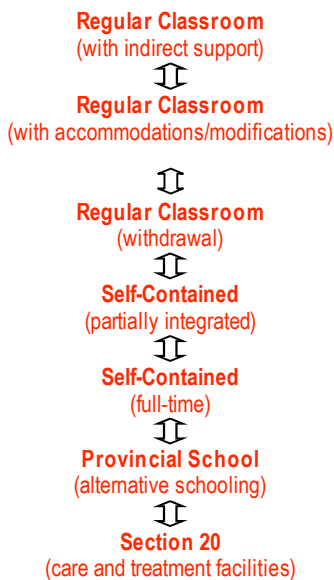
2.3 What is an "Exceptional Pupil?"

An "exceptional pupil" means a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual (including the intellectually gifted), physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered by a board committee to need placement in a special education program and/or requires special education services. (see Figure 1)

FIGURE 1
CATEGORIES OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

- ▶ **BEHAVIOUR**
Behaviour Exceptionalities
- ▶ **PHYSICAL**
Physical Disability/Blind & Low Vision
- ▶ **MULTIPLE**
Multiple Exceptionalities
- ▶ **INTELLECTUAL**
Giftedness
Mild Intellectual Disability
Developmental Disability
- ▶ **COMMUNICATION**
Autism
- ▶ **DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**
Language Impairment
Learning Disability

FIGURE 2
PLACEMENT OPTIONS



2.4 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 individual annual program goals and learning expectations, as well as an outline of special education services to meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.
- Special Education Programs include a range of placement options beginning with the least restrictive learning environment to the most specialized learning setting. (See Figure 2)

3. What is an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)?

3.1 What is an IPRC?

Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards set up Identification, Placement and Review Committees. An IPRC is composed of at least 3 people, one of who must be a principal or a supervisory officer of the board.

In District School Board Ontario North East, this three-member committee is usually chaired by the Principal (Vice-Principal). The Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) and the student's teacher may be the other committee members.

Parents are invited and encouraged to attend their child's IPRC meeting.

3.2 What is the role of an IPRC?

The IPRC will:

- decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;
- identify the areas of your child's exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education;
- decide an appropriate placement for your child;
- review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

3.3 Who is identified as an exceptional student?

The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as "a pupil who's 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.

3.4 What is an IEP?

Once identified as an exceptional student, an IEP must be developed for your child, in consultation with you. It must include:

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

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

3.5 How is IPRC meeting requested?

The principal of your child's school:

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

Within 15 days of receiving your request, or giving you notice, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet.

3.6 May parents attend the IPRC meeting?

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents and pupils 16 years of age or older:

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

3.7 Who else may attend an IPRC meeting?

- the principal of your child's school;

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

3.8 Who may request that they attend?

Either you or the principal of your child's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting. As a courtesy, the chairperson of the IPRC should be notified in advance of any representative or additional resource personnel invited to attend.

3.9 What information will parents receive about the IPRC meeting?

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the chair of the IPRC will provide you with written notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend as an important partner in considering your child's placement. This letter will notify you of that day, time and place of the meeting, and it will ask you to indicate whether you will attend.

Before the IPRC meeting occurs, you will receive a written copy of any information about your child that the chair of the IPRC has received. This may include the results of assessments or a summary of information.

3.10 What if parents are unable to make the scheduled meeting?

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

- contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time; or
- let the school principal know you will not be attending. As soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward to you, for your consideration and signature, the IPRC's written statement of decision noting the decision of the identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

3.11 What happens at an IPRC meeting?

- The chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting.
- The IPRC will review all available information about your child. The members will:
 - consider an educational assessment of your child;
 - consider, subject to the provisions of the Health Care Consent Act, 1996, a health or psychological assessment of your child conducted by a qualified practitioner, if they feel that such an assessment is required to make a correct identification or placement decision;
 - interview your child, with your consent if your child is less than 16 years of age, if they feel it would be useful to do so; and
 - consider any information that you submit about your child or that your child submits if he or she is 16 years of age or older.
- The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the child. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at your request or at the request of your child, if the child is 16 years of age or older.
- You are encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion.
- Following the discussion, after all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision.

3.12 What will the IPRC consider in making its placement decision?

Before the IPRC can consider placing your child in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will:

- meet your child's needs; and
- be consistent with your preferences.

If, after considering all of the information presented to it, the IPRC is satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet your child's ends and that such a decision is consistent with your preferences, the committee will decide in favour of placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services.

If the committee decides that your child should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written statement of decision.

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

The IPRC's written statement of decision will state:

- whether the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional;
- where the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional,
 - the categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified, as they are defined by the Ministry of Education;
 - the IPRC's description of your child's strengths and needs;
 - the IPRC's placement decision; and
 - the IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services;
- where the IPRC has decided that your child should be placed in a special education class, the reasons for that decision.
- in addition, the IPRC may consider recommendations regarding special education services.

3.14 What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?

- If you **agree** with the IPRC decision, you will be asked to indicate, by signing your name that you agree with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC.
- If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and if you **agree** with the IPRC identification and placement decisions, the board will promptly notify the appropriate personnel in the school of the need to develop or update the Individual Education Plan.

3.15 Once a child has been placed in a special education program, can the placement be reviewed?

- A review IPRC meeting will be held within the school year, unless the principal of the school at which the special education program is being provided receives written notice from you, the parent, dispensing with the annual review.
- You may request a review IPRC meeting any time after your child has been identified or has been in a special education program for 3 months.

3.16 What does a review IPRC consider and decide?

- With your written permission, the IPRC conducting the review will consider the progress your child has made in relation to the IEP. It will consider the same type of information that was originally considered by the IPRC, as well as any new information.
- The IPRC will review the placement and identification decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

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

- If you **do not agree** with either the identification or the placement decision made by the IPRC, you may:
 - within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss your concerns; or
 - within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with the Secretary of the District School Board of Ontario North East, Box 1020, Timmins, Ontario, P4N 7H7
- If you **do not agree** with the decision after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of your receipt of the decision.

If you do not consent to the IPRC decision but you do not appeal it, the board will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.

4. Appeal Process

4.1 How do I appeal an IPRC decision?

- If you disagree with the IPRC's identification of your child as exceptional or with the placement decision of the IPRC, you may, within 30 days of receipt of the original decision or within 15 days of receipt of the decision from the second meeting described above, give written notification of your intention to appeal the decision to the Secretary of District School Board Ontario North East, Box 1020, Timmins, Ontario, P4N 7H7.
- The notice of appeal must:
 - indicate the decision with which you disagree; and
 - include a statement that sets out your reasons for disagreeing.

4.2 What happens in the appeal process?

The appeal process involves the following steps:

- The board will establish a special education board to hear your appeal. The appeal board will be comprised of three persons who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal, one of whom is to 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.
- You, the parent, and your child, if he or she is 16 years old or over, are entitled to be present at, and to participate in, all discussions.
- The appeal board must make its recommendation within 3 days of the meeting.
 - It may:
 - agree with the IPRC and recommend that the decision be implemented; or
 - disagree with the IPRC and make a recommendation to the board about your child's identification or placement or both.
- The appeal board will report its recommendations in writing, to you and to the school board, providing the reasons for its recommendations.
- Within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the school board will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations (boards are not required to follow the appeal board recommendation).
- You may accept the decision of the school board or you may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal. You may request a hearing by writing to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal. Information about making an application to the tribunal will be included with the appeal board's decision.

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