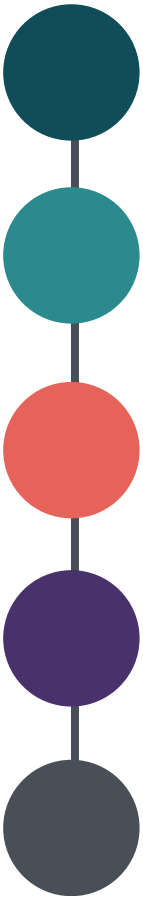
SPECIAL EDUCATION IN ONTARIO

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND CAREGIVERS



Introduction to Special Education in Ontario

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

Appealing the IPRC Decision

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Glossary & Resources

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

August 2021

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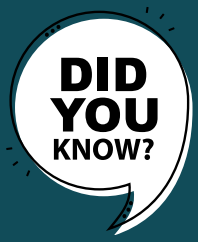
Special Education

This guide is intended to support students, parents, caregivers, and community organizations in supporting students with special education needs to understand and navigate the Ontario special education system.

Having access to information to support your special education journey is very important, no matter what role you are in.

Every child in Ontario has the right to public education. Schools, school boards, educators, students, and parents and caregivers all have rights and responsibilities in the education system.

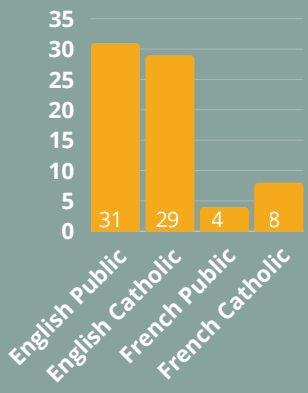


Ontario public schools are:

- ✓ Publicly-funded
- ✓ Regulated by the government

QUICK FACTS ABOUT PUBLICLY-FUNDED SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO

There are 72 publicly-funded school boards



2,056,058

students were enrolled in publicly-funded schools in the 2019-2020 school year

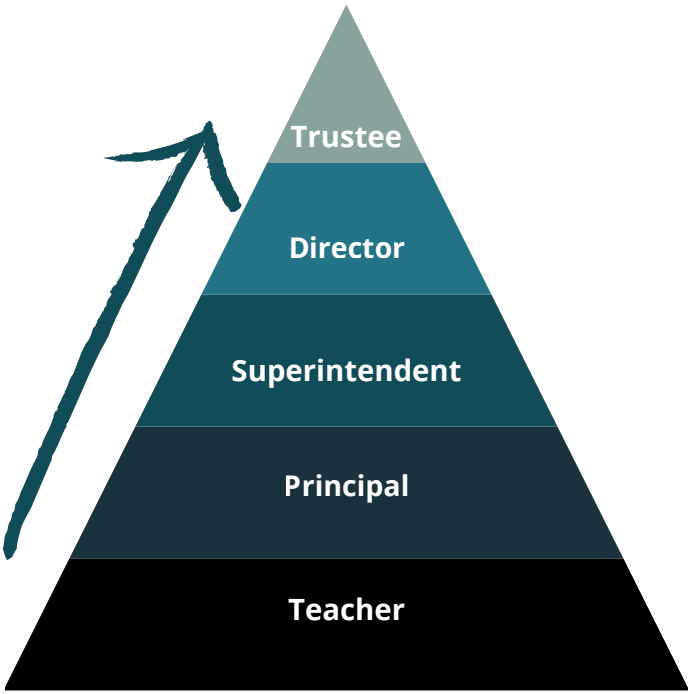
Special Education

Who's who in the education system?

Understanding the key people who support students in their special education journey is important.

Understanding each person's role and responsibilities helps to make sure that you know who to talk to about any concerns you may have, and also helps you build good communication and relationships to best support a student's learning.

If you have a concern that needs to be addressed, it is best to start by talking with the teacher, and then if problems are not resolved you can speak to people with higher levels of responsibility, as needed.



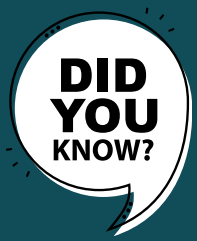
Who's who in the education system?

Teachers must have a recognized teaching certificate to teach in the Ontario public education system. Teachers are often the most important individuals in a student's education. They work with the student every day, and have the ability to create safe and caring environments for the student. Their responsibilities include:

- Preparing and teaching lessons, evaluating progress
- Supervising student behaviour and maintaining classroom discipline
- Developing and implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Principals also create safe and caring environments. They manage individual schools, and have one or more **vice-principals** to help them. Their responsibilities include:

- Supervising all staff within the school
- Student admission and placement
- Administering the school budget and reporting
- Maintaining Ontario Student Records (OSR)
- Overseeing implementation of IEPs
- Implementing student discipline
- Working with the student and parent councils
- Implementing school board-wide policies and setting in-school policies



In addition to the school board-wide policies, individual schools can have their own policies, such as uniform requirements

If you have concerns you can raise them first with the teacher. If your concerns are not getting resolved or you are not getting the help you need, you can contact the school principal

Who's who in the education system?

Superintendents are people who work at the school board level. They are usually responsible for more than one school, within a specified district of their school board. They are responsible for the administration of those schools and often participate in suspension appeals, disciplinary meetings, and requests to transfer schools. Superintendents are sometimes assigned to oversee board-wide programs, such as special education, or equity and anti-oppression.

You can contact the school superintendent if you are not getting the help you need from the school principal

Directors oversee publicly funded school boards. They distribute funding, develop policies based on Ministry regulations, provide programs in schools, such as special education, and ensure schools follow the Education Act.

You can contact the school board director if you are not getting the help you need from the superintendent

Trustees are elected during municipal elections to represent community interests. Trustees take part in committees regarding student expulsions and are responsible for the school board's budget.

You can contact the school trustee if you are not getting the help you need from the school board director

Special Education

The Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing all aspects of Ontario's public education system. The Ministry sets policies and guidelines for school boards, allocates funding to boards, develops province-wide curriculum, sets requirements for graduation, and approves textbooks and other resources.

The Minister of Education is an elected Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP), and is appointed Minister by the Premier.
For more, visit: www.edu.gov.on.ca

The Ontario College of Teachers regulates the teaching profession in Ontario. This includes establishing the requirements needed to be a certified teacher, overseeing qualified teachers, and investigating complaints against teachers.
For more, visit: www.oct.ca

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is an independent government body, that oversees province-wide standardized testing.
These tests occur in grades 3, 6, 9, and 10. Subjects include Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, and Literacy.
For more, visit: www.eqao.com

Special Education

What is my role as a parent?

Parents and educators both share a responsibility to support a student in reaching their learning goals. It is helpful to approach the relationship with the school as a partnership, where everyone collaborates to best support the student.

Parents/caregivers are experts about their child's strengths and needs, and the child's situation outside school. Parents should:

- Maintain open lines of communication with key staff in schools
- Read all reports and documents provided by the school

Great way for parents/caregivers to get involved!

Each school board must have a **Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)**, and each school is required to have a **Parent Council**. Getting involved on the council, or getting to know the parents on the council, is a great way to learn more about the school, advocate for supports, and make sure that parents are represented.

Speaking up when you have a concern can be scary. But, there are supports that can help you through challenging processes, or even just by talking to you about your situation and offering advice.

Research shows that the biggest predictor of student success is the extent to which families encourage learning and are involved in the student's education

See section "Glossary and Resources" for suggestions

Special Education

Consider joining your school's **Student Council** It's a great way to connect with other students, get involved in your school, and make sure that the student voice is heard

What is my role as a student?

Students also have a role and a responsibility to take charge of their learning to whatever extent they can.

Students know themselves best and are experts about their own experiences, and can also be the best source of information about what can help them learn. We know that when students are included in decision making processes they become better at identifying their needs.

Students should be given every opportunity and be encouraged to:

- Be engaged in their learning
- Share their strengths and needs with teachers
- Talk about their concerns when learning strategies are not working
- Know their education rights

Speaking up when you have a concern can be scary. You have a right to education, which means that you have a right to have your education delivered to you in a way that allows you to reach your full potential. If something is not working in the classroom or school setting, you can talk to someone you trust and tell them what is happening for you.

There are supports that can help you through challenging processes, or even just talking with you about your situation and offering advice.

See section "Glossary and Resources" for suggestions

Special Education

If you need translation for meetings, the school should be able to help

Ask the Principal or Guidance Counsellor for support in accessing these services

Communicating with the School

Parents/caregivers are **partners** with educators in supporting students and are encouraged to take an active role. Keeping open communication with the teacher and school is one of the most important things that a parent/caregiver can do to support a student.

You do not need to have an issue to communicate with the school.

Keeping the lines of communication open from the beginning can help if challenges come up

Tips for Communicating with the School

- Attend parent-teacher meetings
- Schedule regular check-ins in ways that work for both you and the teacher, such as through phone calls, emails, or in-person
- Write notes ahead of a meeting or phone call to organize your thoughts and prepare
- Take notes during meetings
- Plan classroom visits in advance with the school/teacher
- Write notes in the student agenda/ notebook to communicate with the teacher
- If you are able to, look for opportunities to get involved, such as in extracurricular activities

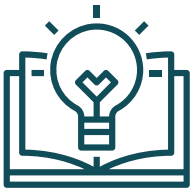
Special Education

Special Education in Ontario

We all learn differently. Special education helps students who have different learning needs to reach their educational goals in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Every school board in Ontario must provide special education programs and services to students who have special education needs. Students who have these needs have a right to accommodation to enable them to succeed in their education. They may also be formally identified with a specific exceptionality to help boards meet these needs.

We sometimes refer to these students who have been identified as "exceptional" students.



If a school board does not have their own special education programs and services, they must arrange for a student to access services and programs at another school board, and to pay for them.

This ensures that all students can succeed and benefit fully from their school experience.

Special Education

Quick introduction to key special education concepts

Special Education Programs are set up to support the learning goals of students with unique learning needs. The program is based on ongoing assessment and evaluation, and modified as needed to meet changing needs.

Special Education Services refer to specific resources, equipment, and specialized support people. They are there to support the overall program and needs of the student.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the written plan that outlines the special education programs and services being put in place to support the student.

Some students access special education services after being formally identified as having an exceptionality, through a process called the **Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)**.
See section on IPRC for further information

Other students access special education services without going through the **IPRC.**

An **IEP** may be developed without an IPRC process when a teacher has noticed that a student has special learning needs that can be supported, but the learning need has not been formally addressed through the IPRC process, or the need is not so great that the student would be identified as exceptional if an IPRC meeting were held.

Special Education

Only **52%** of students receiving special education services have been formally identified through an IPRC

Of all the students receiving special education supports in Ontario, **only 52% have been identified as exceptional through the formal process** of an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC).

That means that almost half of the students getting special education supports have not gone through a formal process, and may have been introduced to what special education means in ways that may not have answered all of their questions.

This is because going through a formal IPRC process requires schools to provide information on special education in Ontario, however the same requirement is not in place for those that are not formally identified as exceptional.

We often think of special learning needs, or exceptionalities, as a problem to be managed. Instead, we should think of them as needs that make each of us unique, and an opportunity to provide learning experiences that are different from traditional teaching methods.

We are all different: in our strengths, in our perceptions, and in our upbringings. Education should meet the different human needs of each of us - being different is exactly what makes us human!

Special Education

Special education flowchart

JOURNEY THROUGH SPECIAL EDUCATION

Need Identified

Realizing there is a learning need that is not being met, by teacher, student, or parent

Collect and share data in advance when possible. Helpful examples include psychoeducational assessments, reports, and behaviour logs

START

Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) Request

Make a written request

Within 15 days, will receive: written notice of approximate date of the IPRC meeting, and school board's guide to special education

IPRC Meeting

Identification and Placement decision is made

Participants: minimum of three school staff including Principal and/or Superintendent, Parent(s), students 16+, and support person/friend

If you disagree with the IPRC decision, you can appeal

Identification

Categories of exceptionalities:

- Behaviour
- Communication
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Multiple

Placement

- Regular class with either indirect support, resource assistance, or withdrawal assistance, *or*
- Special education class with partial integration *or*
- Full-time special education class

Student will be placed in a regular class, except when this will not meet their learning needs

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Sets out specific learning expectations and outline of educational services

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Special Education

School board-funded testing often does not take place until after Grade 3, as students will often have resolved any early learning concerns by that time

How are learning needs identified?

Learning needs can be identified in a variety of ways, such as:

- feedback from the student
- feedback from caregivers
- report cards and teacher observations
- doctor reports
- psychoeducational assessments

Psychoeducational assessments evaluate a student's cognitive or academic profile, identify abilities, educational achievement levels and underlying causes of any academic difficulty.

The psychoeducational assessment is completed by a psychologist. It is a thorough assessment and **report** on the student's strengths, needs, academic capacity, and recommendations for teaching and learning strategies.

The **report** includes six sections:

1) Referral and background
2) Assessment process or method
3) Behavioural observations and impressions
4) Test results and interpretations
5) Summary and formulation
6) Recommendations

Psychoeducational assessments

A psychoeducational assessment can cost as much as $5,000 from a private practice

You can get a psychoeducational assessment for a student in a few ways:

School Board
Talk with your school about seeing a psychologist who works with the school board. This is paid for by the school, if the Principal approves the request.

Private Practice
Work with a Psychologist through their private practice. This can be costly. Some insurance plans may cover some of this cost.

University Psychology Programs
Obtain an assessment through a psychology teaching program at a university. These assessments are done by psychology students who are being supervised by a professor. They may have sliding scale payment options, however there is often an application process and lengthy wait times.

School boards are **not** required to provide psychoeducational assessments.

If your school board does provide these services, there may still be wait lists (from a few months to a few years!), and assessments are allocated based on need.

Special Education

What about OHIP?

These assessments are not usually covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP)

If you have group medical insurance through an employer, you can see if the assessment is covered, and to what amount

You will likely need a referral from a medical doctor to get coverage

University programs that provide psychoeducational assessments

Some teaching programs that offer sliding scale assessments are included below:

Bayridge Counselling Services
- For students 6-15 years old
- Set rate of $2,799

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)
- $2,300. Accepts applications for fee subsidization based on annual net family income
- Rates may go as low as $500

Queen's University Regional Assessment and Resource Center
- For students who have not had assessments in the prior two years
- $2000 with flexible payment plans

University of Guelph Assessment Services
- Costs $2600-$3000

University of Waterloo Centre for Mental Health Research and Treatment
- $500-$2,200, based on annual net family income

This list is not compete.
More regularly updated information is available on the www.ementalhealth.ca website, which includes suggestions on programs and private practice psychologists

Special Education

Students who do not fit into one of the five categories can still be accommodated

A formal identification as "Exceptional" is not required to access special education services

Exceptionalities

Exceptionalities are categories of special needs that can affect how a student learns. Students are identified so they can be supported in meeting their full potential. Exceptionalities can include giftedness, disability, and other needs.

Students with exceptionalities have unique learning needs, and school boards are required to support these needs. Support can be provided through accommodations and/or modifications, to support student learning.

There are five different categories of exceptionality in Ontario's Education Act:

Behaviour refers to challenges over a period of time, and to such a degree, that it impacts a student's learning.

> For example: compulsive reactions, excessive fears, anxiety, difficulties with social interactions

Communication refers to challenges that impact a student receiving or relaying information.

> For example: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, Language or Speech Impairment, Learning Disabilities (such as AD/HD, reading, writing, numbers, processing, fine motor skills)

Special Education

Exceptionalities

Physical refers to a condition that affects the body, where help is needed to support the student's educational achievement.

> For example: a physical disability, Blind and Low Vision

Intellectual refers to differences in general mental or cognitive abilities - higher or lower - that may affect:

- intellectual functioning, such as learning, problem solving, judgment, or
- adaptive functioning (activities in daily life), such as communication, or independent living

> For example: Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability, Developmental Disability

Multiple refers to when a student's needs are in two or more categories of exceptionality.

> For example: a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder, who is also gifted, would be identified as living with multiple exceptionalities.

No two brains are exactly alike - it is normal for all of us to learn differently

Placements

Once identified as having an exceptionality, the IPRC will determine what type of placement is best suited for the student.

Placements refer to what type of educational setting would best meet the needs of an exceptional student.

There are five types of special education placements:

Regular class with indirect support

- The student attends a regular classroom for the entire school day
- The teacher receives support from a special education teacher

Regular class with resource assistance

- The student attends a regular classroom for the entire school day
- The student will get help from a special education teacher, either individually or in a small group

Regular class with withdrawal assistance

- The student attends a regular classroom for more than half of the school day
- The student will get help from a special education teacher outside of the regular classroom for part of the day

The student should always be placed in a regular classroom, except when this placement would not be able to meet their needs. Under these circumstances, the IPRC decision must explain the reason for the special education classroom placement.

Special Education

Teachers in a special education classroom must have specific qualifications

If an exceptional student is placed in a **special education class**, the IPRC **must** provide written reasons for doing so

Special education class with partial integration

- The student will be in a regular classroom less than half of the school day
- The remaining part of the school day, the student will receive instruction outside the classroom from a special education teacher

Full-time special education class

- The student will spend the entire day in a special education class

Maximum class sizes for full-time special education classes differ, based on the level of need. For student with severe learning disabilities, the maximum is eight students in one class, with a qualified special education teacher. Mixed exceptionality classes may have up to 16 students with one teacher.

For more information on special education classroom placements, see Regulation 298 of the Education Act, section 31

In addition to the five placement options, the IPRC can also refer the student to one of the **Provincial and Demonstration Schools.**

Students must meet eligibility requirements for admission to either:

- a provincial school for the blind, deaf, or deaf-blind, or
- a provincial demonstration school for students with severe learning disabilities

Learn more at www.pdsbnet.ca

Special Education

Accommodations, modifications and alternative programs support student success and achievement

This includes graduation and post-secondary readiness

Accommodations, modifications, and alternative programs

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) will include information about any accommodations, modifications or alternative programs that are put in place to support the student.

Accommodations are the teaching and assessment strategies, supports, or equipment used to meet a student's learning need. They change how the curriculum is delivered.

Modifications are the changes made to the grade level learning expectations for a subject or course. They change what the student will be learning.

Alternative programs, or alternative skill areas, are developed to support students in acquiring knowledge and skills outside of the Ontario school curriculum.

See section "Individual Education Plan (IEP)"

Special Education

The purpose of the IPRC meeting is to:

document the student's strengths and needs

and to make decisions about identification and placement

How are students identified as exceptional?

Students with exceptionalities require special education programs or services to meet their learning needs.

They are identified as exceptional through the **Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)**.

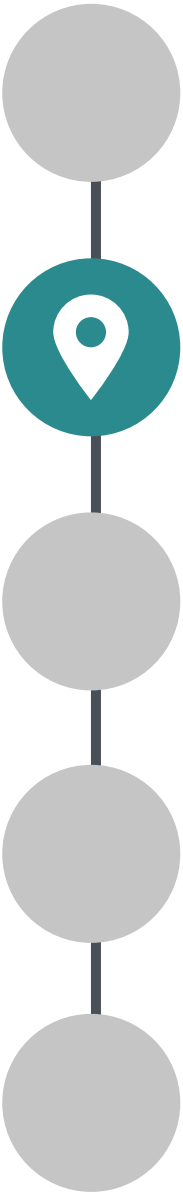
I = Identification	Deciding if the student is "exceptional"
P = Placement	Deciding the best placement for the student
R = Review	Review on whether the Identification & Placement are still appropriate
C = Committee	The Principal (or Superintendent) & two other school staff

The **IPRC** identifies any of the exceptionalities a student has, and places them in the appropriate special education program or with the appropriate special education service, if needed.

Placements are meant to be the least intrusive option available while still meeting the unique learning needs of the student.

See section "Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)"

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)



Introduction to Special Education in Ontario

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JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

The IPRC is made up of at least three (3) school board staff, including the Principal and/or Superintendent (sometimes called Supervisory Officer)

Parents and students over 16 years of age have a right to attend the meeting

What is the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)?

The **Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)** is a formal group of school board staff that meet to make a decision about the identification and placement of the student.

I = Identification	Deciding if the student is "exceptional"
P = Placement	Deciding the best placement for the student
R = Review	Review on whether the Identification & Placement are still appropriate
C = Committee	The Principal (or Superintendent) & two other school staff

Once the IPRC has determined that a student is exceptional, they will make recommendations for the types of special education programs and services to meet the student's needs.

All publicly funded school boards in Ontario must have at least one designated IPRC.

After the student has been identified as exceptional, the school board has 30 days to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

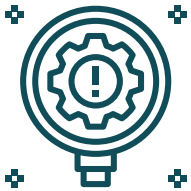
The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

All students with demonstrable learning needs may access special education services; exceptionalities are meant to be broad categories that do not exclude any medical condition that can lead to learning difficulties

IDENTIFICATION

The IPRC will decide whether a student has an exceptionality. There are five categories of exceptionality:

1. Behaviour
2. Communication
3. Intellectual
4. Physical
5. Multiple (of the above)



Students can still access special education services if they are not identified as having an exceptionality by the IPRC

PLACEMENT

If a student has been found to be exceptional, they can be placed in:

- A regular class with **indirect support**
- A regular class with **resource assistance**
- A regular class with **withdrawal assistance**
- A special education class with **partial integration**, or
- A **full-time** special education class

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

IPRC Flowchart

IPRC PROCESS

START

Learning Need Identified

Noticing that there is a learning need to be met, by a teacher, student, or parent

Collect and Share Information

Examples may include: psychoeducational assessments (when possible), medical reports, report cards, and parent and/or student logs

Share in advance, if possible and appropriate

IPRC Request

Make a written request to the Principal

Within 15 days, written notice of approximate date of the IPRC meeting *and* the school board's guide to special education must be provided

IPRC Meeting

Review of information and discussion about needs

People at the meeting:

- Three or more school staff, including Principal and/or Superintendent
- Parent, student 16+
- Family support (optional)

IPRC Decision

Identification

Categories of exceptionalities:

- Behaviour
- Communication
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Multiple (of the above)

Placement

- Regular class with either indirect support, resource assistance, or withdrawal assistance, *or*
- Special education class with partial integration *or*
- Full-time special education class

There is an annual IPRC review, to ensure that the identification/ placement are still appropriate

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Developed within 30 days of IPRC decision. Includes:

- Learning goals and expectations
- Accommodations
- Modifications

If you disagree with the IPRC decision, you can appeal

Students can access special education services without going through the IPRC process, or while waiting for an IPRC meeting

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

All communication about the IPRC meeting must be available in Braille, large-print, or audio format, upon request

The IPRC decision must be reviewed annually

You can also ask for a review after a student has been placed for 3 months

Requesting an IPRC meeting

The role of the IPRC is to meet the needs of a student, once a unique learning need is identified.

Learning needs can be identified by the student, their parent/caregiver, a teacher, the Principal, or other professionals who may support the student in their school career.

When a student is enrolled in an Ontario public school, parents and students 16+ have the right to request- in writing- an IPRC meeting. **The principal and board cannot refuse an IPRC request.**

15 days The Principal has 15 days to respond to a written request for an IPRC

Within 15 days of receiving a written request, or of the principal calling an IPRC, the principal must provide the following to the parent and student 16+:

- acknowledgement of the request
- a copy of the school board's guide to special education
- an approximate date of when the IPRC will meet

10 days The Principal must provide at least 10 days notice of the meeting date

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

Once a request for an IPRC meeting has been made, the principal must give the parent and student 16+ a copy of the school board's guide to special education for parents, within 15 days.

The guide is meant to support parents and students in understanding the IPRC process, special education, and what to expect.

If you have not received a copy of your school board's guide to special education, you can contact your Principal directly. The school board must also have it on their website.

It is your legal right to be given a guide to special education prepared by your school board

What does the Guide include?

- The IPRC & appeals processes
- Exceptionalities and placement types
- Special education programs and services that are available through the school board
- Contact information for Provincial and Demonstration Schools
- Information for the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and which local organizations are eligible to take part
- Explanation of if a parent does not sign the consent form but does not appeal within the timelines, the IPRC decision can still be implemented

The guide to special education for parents may differ depending on the school board

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

Waiting for the IPRC meeting or IPRC final decision?

Special education programs or services that meet the needs of the student must be provided, even while waiting for the IPRC meeting or final decision

Who will be at the IPRC meeting?

There are always a minimum of three school staff present at the IPRC meeting, including either the Principal or Superintendent.

Other school staff that may be there include:

- Resource teacher
- Classroom teacher
- Special education staff
- Social Worker
- School Psychologist
- Other school board professionals who provide support, or who may be able to provide further information

Other people who may attend include:

- Parent/caregiver(s)
- Student if 16+
- Representative of the parent(s) and/or of a student 16+ (to advocate, speak on behalf of, take notes for, etc.)
- Interpreter (including sign language)

Who can I bring to the IPRC meeting?

Parents/guardians and students 16+ have the right to bring a support person of their choosing to the IPRC meeting

Bring a trusted adult

This may be a friend, partner, family member, or community support

Preparing for the IPRC meeting

Not all needs are immediately visible, and some may take years to be identified.

It is important to be prepared to prove a need for supports. Collect documents and information about the student's needs. Helpful information may include doctor reports, prior IPRC decisions, past/current Individual Education Plans, psychoeducational assessments, strengths and needs of the student, teacher observations, report cards, parent notes/logs, and student stories and descriptions.

Other helpful tips

- Attend and take notes at parent-teacher meetings
- Respond to the notice of an IPRC meeting and request a different date if you cannot attend
- Ask for a copy of the school board's guide to special education
- Read any documents provided by the school and ask questions if you do not understand any part of it
- Ask the Principal who will be part of the meeting and what their role is with the student
- Arrange for a support person to come with you, even if it's only to help you take notes
- Write down any questions or concerns you may have beforehand, and bring them with you to the meeting

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

What is province-wide testing?

Province-wide testing is led by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), to monitor the quality of education and increase accountability of the publicly funded education system

Tests are administered in grades 3, 6, 9, and 10 in the subjects of Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Literacy

www.eqao.com

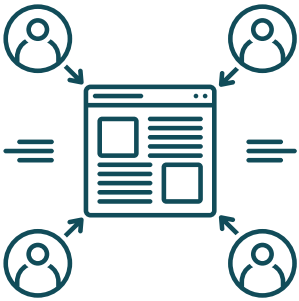
What is the Individual Educational Assessment for the IPRC?

When a school makes the decision to refer a student to an IPRC, the school will put together what is called the **Individual Educational Assessment.**

The assessment takes information from many sources, including direct observation, tests, projects, performance tasks, self-and peer assessment, and teacher notes.

The decision to identify a student as exceptional should never come only from province-wide testing.

It must include assessment strategies and tools that have been used in the classroom to help provide a complete picture of a student's strengths and needs.



How is this different than a psychoeducational assessment?

The psychoeducational assessment is a standardized assessment, completed by a registered Psychologist

The decision made by the IPRC is identifying that a student fits within a special educational category.
It is NOT a diagnosis.

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

Long-term impact of decisions

When making decisions about a student's education, it is important to consider the potential long-term impact on career pathways and graduation

What to expect at the IPRC meeting?

The meeting should begin with the host or "chair" of the meeting (often the Principal) introducing everyone at the table, explaining their roles, and the purpose for the meeting.

The chair should make sure that everyone has all of the information that will be considered.

If you do not understand something, ask all the questions you need to be sure you understand. Talk about any concerns you have. Ask for clarification anytime it is needed.

It can be very helpful to prepare your thoughts, expectations, and requests ahead of time, to help you make sure that your needs are addressed and that you cover what is most important.

Having a support person to take notes will allow you to listen and participate instead of having to write things down.

At the end of the meeting, you may be asked to sign the Statement of Decision, for the identification and placement of the student. Or, the decision may be made following the meeting.

You do not have to sign the form at the meeting. You should only sign if you are satisfied with all of the decisions.

It is best to take some time to think about the decision and recommendations and to ask any further questions that you may have, so that you can make an informed decision.

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

The IPRC Statement of Decision

As soon as possible after a decision is made, the IPRC must provide a written statement of their decision to the parent/caregiver and student 16+.

If the committee identifies the student as exceptional, the decision must include:

- The category and definition of the exceptionality
- Strengths and needs of the student
- Placement decision, including reasons if the placement is in a special education class
- Recommendations for special education program and/or services

Once you receive the IPRC Statement of Decision, you can:

- **Agree with the decision**, *or*
- **Disagree with the decision** *and*:
  - **Choose not to appeal.** The student will be placed after 30 days
  - **Request a second IPRC meeting** to review your concerns, within 15 days,
  - **File an appeal** with the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB), within 30 days

Disagree with the decision?

15 days

You have **15 days** to request a second IPRC meeting, or

30 days

30 days to file an appeal with the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB)

See section "Appeals"

Introduction to Special Education in Ontario

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

Appealing the IPRC Decision

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Glossary & Resources

Appeals

Disagree with the decision?

You have **15 days** to request a second IPRC meeting, or

you have **30 days** to file an appeal with the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB).

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The IPRC Statement of Decision and your options

Statement of Decision
As soon as possible after a decision is made, the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) must provide a written statement of their decision to the parent/caregiver and student 16+. This is called the Statement of Decision.

If the committee identifies the student as exceptional, the decision must include:

- The **category and definition** of exceptionality
- **Strengths and needs** of the student
- **Placement** decision
- **Reasons for placement in special education class**, if that is the decision
- **Recommendations** for a special education program and/or services

When you receive the IPRC Statement of Decision, you can:

- Agree with the decision, OR

- Disagree with the decision and choose one of these options:
  - **Do nothing.** The student will be placed after 30 days
  - **Request a second IPRC meeting** to review your concerns, within 15 days
  - **File an appeal** with the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB), within 30 days

APPEALS AFTER THE IPRC MEETING

If you disagree with an IPRC decision

Within 15 days, make a written (email, typed, or handwritten) request to the principal to ask for a second IPRC meeting to review your concerns; or

Within 30 days, write to the secretary of the school board explaining why you disagree with the decision and to ask for an appeal to the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB)

START

Second IPRC Meeting (Review)

After the meeting, the second IPRC will either agree with the first IPRC decision or change the decision. If you disagree with the second decision, you can appeal to the SEAB.

IPRCs are reviewed regularly; you can also ask for a review after the student has been in a special education program for at least three months

Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB)

This is a formal review process with a three person panel organized by the school board; parents choose one of the panel members.

The SEAB will review the documents related to the IPRC decision (including the decision).

If you have new and/or more complete expert information, you can ask the SEAB to consider it. The SEAB will host a meeting, also called a hearing, to consider the appeal.

School staff, parents, students 16+, and their representatives (if any) are usually at the SEAB hearing.

SEAB Decision

Parents, students 16+, and the school board will receive a written statement of the recommendations.

The school board must decide whether to accept some, all, or none of the recommendations within 30 days.

If you disagree with the outcome, you can appeal to the SET within 30 days of receiving the school board's decision.

Special Education Tribunal (SET)

This is a formal process.

SET may dismiss the appeal, grant the appeal and set aside the identification and/or placement, or make changes to the identification and/or placement.

The school board usually has a lawyer and parents can also have a lawyer.

The SET decision will be made in writing, and is final.

IPRC appeals are about the Identification and Placement decision only.
Disagreements about the Individual Education Plan (IEP) cannot be appealed. But if you have serious concerns about the IEP not meeting a student's needs you might be able to use human rights law options- e.g. complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.
See IEP pamphlet for further information.

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Appeals

The second IPRC meeting

The IPRC is intended to support the student, but there are times when a parent and/or student 16+ may not agree with the IPRC decision. **The disagreement may be about the placement and/or the identification**.

To schedule a second IPRC meeting:

- Make a written request to the principal asking to talk about your concerns. This request must be made within 15 days of receiving the IPRC written statement of decision.
- Include **what** you disagree with, and the reasons **why** you disagree. Include any new information or documentation you have received from experts.

15 days

You have **15 days** to request a second IPRC meeting

You can choose to skip this step and go straight to an Appeal

The IPRC team will then meet again to review their first decision. They will also read and consider any new information you provided to support your case in requesting a review.

The IPRC must send their second decision in writing to the parent and student 16+ as soon as possible.

15 days

Still disagree with the decision?

You have **another 15 days** to file an appeal with the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB)

If you still disagree with the second decision, you can choose to file a Notice of Appeal with the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB). This must be done within 15 days of receiving the second/review decision.

Appeals

When a notice of appeal has been filed, the IPRC placement is put on hold

Parents & student 16+ can work with the school board to put in a temporary placement, pending the final results of the appeal

WHEN

You must file the appeal within 30 days of the original IPRC written decision
or
15 days of the second IPRC review decision

Filing a Notice of Appeal with the SEAB

To appeal the decision of the IPRC to the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB), you must file a **Notice of Appeal** with the secretary of the school board.

The secretary of the board is usually the Director of Education for your school board.

You can find out who this is by asking the principal of your school, or searching online.

The **Notice of Appeal** must include:

- **WHAT** you disagree with (identification and/or placement), and
- **WHY** you disagree with the decision

Further information to include?

If you have further information and/or documents from experts that can be shared, such as medical reports or a new psychoeducational assessment, say so clearly in your notice of appeal letter.

Keeping to timelines is very important

As long as it is submitted on time, the request for an appeal should be accepted even if the notice is incorrectly written, or does not accurately describe the area of disagreement.

The SEAB panel members

The Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB) will be made up of a panel of three people who will hear your appeal about the identification and/or placement of the student.

Who are the three SEAB members?

- Representative selected by the school board
- Representative selected by the parent
- A chairperson, selected by the first two representatives

The SEAB makes recommendations about what they think the Identification and/or Placement of the student should be

Who can be chosen as the parent/student representative for the SEAB hearing?

Someone from a community organization. If you are not aware of any, the school board can provide a list

You cannot select:

- A Ministry of Education employee
- A member of the school board

The SEAB is a more formal process than an IPRC meeting. Their decision gives recommendations to the school board. The recommendations are persuasive, but the school board has the choice to accept or reject the recommendations.

Before the SEAB hearing

If you have new or updated information, you should submit your documents to the board contact person and inform them that you would like it considered at the meeting

What if I have questions before the hearing?

The school board must appoint a member of their staff to be the contact person, who will organize and prepare for the meeting.

Their role includes:

- letting you know how they will be sharing information (e.g. via email, or phone)
- being the contact person for any questions
- finding the meeting space - it must be a neutral space and reasonably close to the parents' home
- ensuring that parents and student 16+ are aware of their right to have a representative at the meeting

When is the hearing held and what can I do to prepare?

The meeting must be held at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after the Chair of the SEAB has been selected.

The meeting can be held at a later date if the parent/student 16+ and school board have all agreed in writing.

Can I bring a support person to the SEAB hearing?

In addition to submitting any new or helpful documentation, parents and students 16+ are entitled to be present for, and participate, in all discussions.

Parents and students 16+ are also entitled to have a representative at the hearing as a support, or to speak on their behalf.

The support person is different than the panel member that is chosen by the parent/student 16+

Who can I bring as a support?

You can bring anyone that you feel will help you through the process.

It could be a trusted adult, a family friend, or an advocate or staff member from a community organization.

Before the hearing, talk through your concerns about the IPRC decision(s) with the person you've invited to be your support.

You want to be clear on what you want from the hearing, as well as be clear with the support person what you want their role to be at the hearing.

The SEAB hearing

10 days

The school board or SEAB chair must give you written notice of at least 10 days before the appeal board meets

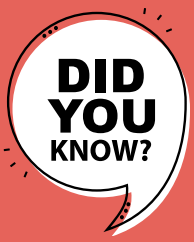
During the hearing, the SEAB panel members will review all prior IPRC decisions, any documents outlining the concerns with the decision(s) made, and will hear from any presenters.

After the hearing, the panel will provide a written statement of their recommendations and reasons for their recommendations.

Within 30 days of receiving the statement, the school board must decide whether to accept or reject the recommendations.

The school board must then send their notice of this decision to the parent and student 16+.

If you disagree with the school board's decision to accept or reject the SEAB decision, you can file an appeal with the **Special Education Tribunal (SET)**



There is no legal requirement for an official file to be kept following the SEAB decision.

Parents and students 16+ should keep copies of all information provided to them for their own records, including all written communications and notes about oral communications, any submitted information, the appeal board recommendations, and the school board decision.

The Special Education Tribunal (SET)

The Special Education Tribunal (SET) is the final place to appeal the identification and/or placement of a student.

If you do not agree with the school board's decision to accept or reject the SEAB's recommendations, you must write to the SET within 30 days of receiving the school board's decision, to say that you would like to seek an appeal.

SET will send you a Form A: Notice of Appeal

You have up to 20 days to complete and file the Form A. You should include the IPRC decision, SEAB recommendations, and school board's decision to accept or reject the SEAB recommendations.

The school board has 10 days to file a response to your appeal with SET.

The SET has broad powers and the appeal is a formal hearing process

The school board usually has a lawyer, and parents may have a lawyer for the appeal

If you are a caregiver or student needing help to find a lawyer for the appeal, contact Justice for Children and Youth

The SET process

As a first step, the SET will schedule a **voluntary mediation** prior to the pre-hearing conference, with the aim of settling the disagreement.

If issues remain after mediation, a **pre-hearing conference** will be held and **hearing** dates will be set.

Hearings can take 1-5 days.

Both sides will have a chance to present their arguments about what they think is the right identification and/or placement outcome for the student.

The decision from the SET will be made within 90 days of the hearing. The school and parent/student 16+ will receive the decision in writing.

There is no further process under the Education Act for appeals following the SET decision. The decision is final. Speak to a lawyer if you wish to consider further options to challenge the decision, outside the Education Act process.

Appeals

Appeals timeline flowchart

IMPORTANT DEADLINES FOR IPRC APPEALS

START

Once you receive the IPRC Statement of Decision, you can:

Agree with the decision

or

Disagree with the decision and choose one of these options:

- **Choose not to appeal**. The student will be placed after 30 days
- **Request a second IPRC meeting** to review your concerns, within 15 days
- **File an appeal** with the Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB), within 30 days of the original IPRC decision

15 days

30 days

Appeal by filing in writing with the secretary of the school board

Second IPRC Meeting (Review)

After meeting, the second IPRC will either agree with the first IPRC decision or change the decision.

If you disagree with this decision, you can appeal to the Special Education Appeal Board within 15 days.

15 days

Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB) consists of three panel members

Parents and school board must select their SEAB panel representatives within 15 days

The two representatives must then choose the third SEAB panel member within the next 15 days

30 days

The SEAB must make its recommendations to the school board within 3 days of the hearing. The panel may agree with the IPRC Statement of Decision, or, disagree and make a recommendation about what they think should be the identification and/or placement of the student.

Special Education Tribunal (SET)

If you do not agree with the school board's decision to accept or reject the SEAB's recommendations, you have 30 days from receiving their decision to email or write the SET.

The SET will send you *Form A: Notice of Appeal.* You have 20 days to complete and return it. Include IPRC decision, SEAB recommendations, and school board's decision. School board has 10 days to file a response.

The SET has two steps to try and settle the disagreement before the hearing. First is a mediation. If issues remain, a pre-hearing conference will be held to set hearing dates (of 1-5 days).

The SET's final written decision must be given within 90 days of the hearing.

The decision made by SET is final and cannot be appealed. If you disagree with the SET decision contact a lawyer to talk about your options.

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Introduction to Special Education in Ontario

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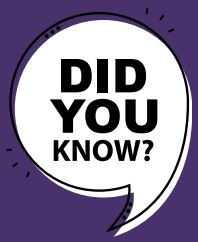
JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Individual Education Plan



An IEP is a living document - open to change and growth. It tells us who is responsible for supporting the student (accountability) and how that will happen (plan of action).

The IEP is stored in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR)

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

The **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is a written document that outlines the special education program and/or services that will be provided to the student.

Who writes the IEP?
The IEP is usually written by the classroom teacher, in consultation with the school resource teacher and others that support the student.

The IEP must be developed in consultation with parents/caregivers, as well as students 16+. Consultations may take place in a variety of ways, including meetings, or IEP questionnaires developed by the school.

If a student has been formally identified as having an exceptionality through the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), the principal has up to 30 days to give the parent(s) and student if 16+, a written copy of the IEP.

The IEP must be reviewed three times a year in elementary and each semester in secondary, but it is meant to be changed or modified as needed. It is designed to adapt to the changing needs of the student as they grow through all their years in school.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Purpose of the IEP

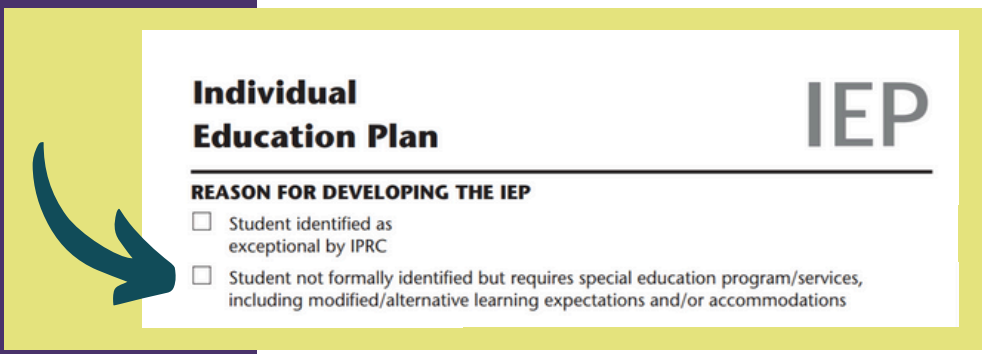
IEPs describe the special education program and/or services being put into place for a student. They outline appropriate strategies to support the student's learning needs.

Students may be provided with an IEP in one of two ways:

Student Identified by IPRC
Every student that has been identified as exceptional by the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) must have an IEP developed within 30 days of the decision.

Student Not-Identified by IPRC
IEPs can be created to accommodate a student's needs, without the formal IPRC process. Sometimes this is done prior to an IPRC process, while needs are still being assessed, or to better support a student.

The IEP must be developed within **30 days** of a student being formally identified by the IPRC



The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

IEP flowchart

THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) PROCESS

START

After the IPRC

Principals are required to make sure that an IEP is created for every student identified as exceptional **within 30 days** from the IPRC decision

It is possible to have an IEP without a formal identification through the IPRC process

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The IEP is a written document that describes the special education program and/or services that the student will be provided to help them achieve their learning goals and expectations

IEP Development

Parents and students 16+ must be consulted during the process. The IEP must include the following information:

- The name and position of all individuals on the development team
- All sources of information used to inform the IEP
- Medical conditions and assessments
- Strengths and needs of the student

IEP's may include:

Accommodations

Changes made to the way the student is taught the material

Modifications

Changes to what a student is taught, or what they are expected to learn

Alternative Programs

Developed to help students gain experiences outside the curriculum

Sharing the IEP

Once the IEP has been created, it must be shared with:

- Parents
- Students 16+
- All staff members directly responsible for instruction

It must also be included in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR)

The IEP in action

Teachers and support personnel are responsible for implementing the IEP

The IEP must be reviewed three times a year in elementary school, and each semester in secondary school.

The IEP cannot be appealed

Concerns can be discussed with teachers, principal, school board. Complaints about failures to accommodate can be made to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Individual Education Plan

See section **"What is Special Education"** for more on exceptionalities and types of placements

What is included in the IEP?

The IEP is a document that includes a lot of information about the student and how to best support their special education learning needs. This includes:

Student profile, including name, date of birth, student number, school, most recent IPRC date, and IPRC annual review date, if applicable. If identified through the IPRC as exceptional, it also includes:

Identification of exceptionality:

- Behaviour
- Communication
- Physical
- Intellectual
- Multiple

Placement: type of classroom, special education program and/or services

The IEP also includes any relevant:

- Assessments and assessment information
- Medical conditions or diagnoses
- Health services or supports needed
- Strengths and needs
- Courses or programs that the IEP applies to
- Accommodations and/or modifications
- Special education program placement
- Annual Goals
- Learning Expectations
- Transition plan

The Individual Education Plan

Accommodations and modifications support student success and achievement

This includes graduation and post-secondary readiness!

In the IEP: Accommodations, modifications, and alternative programs

Accommodations are the teaching and assessment strategies, supports, or equipment that support a student's individual learning needs.

Accommodations **do not** change the learning expectations for the grade level. This means that the curriculum stays the same: HOW the curriculum is delivered is changed.

Modifications are the changes made to the grade level learning expectations for a subject or course, to support a student's individual learning needs. This means that the curriculum may be changed or modified.

Alternative programs, or alternative skill areas, are developed to support students in acquiring knowledge and skills outside of the Ontario curriculum.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

An accommodation changes the way the student is taught the material

HOW

A modification changes what a student is taught, or what they are expected to learn

WHAT

In the IEP: Types of accommodations and modifications

ACCOMODATIONS

There are three types of accommodations:

Instructional accommodations are when the teacher adjusts teaching strategies (e.g. presenting materials in a different way)

Environmental accommodations are when the teacher adjusts the classroom environment (e.g. providing a quiet setting)

Assessment accommodations are when the teacher adjusts evaluation methods (e.g. additional time to complete a test)

MODIFICATIONS

There are different ways to modify expectations:

Different grade level, where the expectations may be taken from either a higher or lower grade level in core subjects, such as Math or Language

The complexity of the grade level are adjusted in content subjects, such as Social Studies, where the number or complexity of learning expectations may be adjusted from the regular curriculum

In the IEP: Alternative programs

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Alternative programs (or alternative skill areas) are available in both elementary and secondary schools.

The alternatives will be listed on the Program page of the IEP, and will include the current level of achievement, annual goal(s), learning expectations, the teaching strategies to be used, and how learning will be assessed.

Alternative programs at the secondary school level are non-credit courses and prepare students for daily living. Examples include Culinary Skills (KHI) and Transit Training and Community Exploration (KCC).

Alternative Programs:

Developed to help students gain experiences outside of the Ontario curriculum.

At the secondary school level they are:

- non-credited
- individualized for the student
- usually focus on skills for independent living
- use K course codes

In the IEP: Transition plans

A transition plan must be developed for each student 14+ that has an IEP, except when identified as gifted without another exceptionality.

Transition plans include:

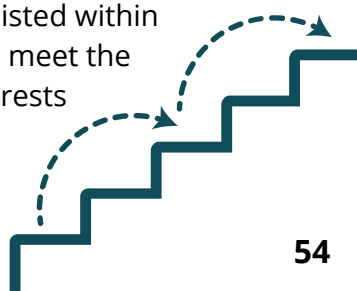
- **Goals** to transition to post-secondary activities
- **Action steps** to meet the goals
- **Individual(s) responsible** for the actions (for example, teacher)
- **Timelines**
- Important connections to **community resources** to support the student

Why are transition plans important?

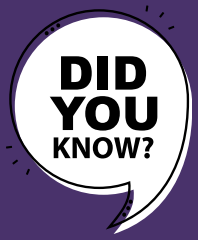
All students need guidance when moving from secondary school to whatever their next step may be. Transition planning helps students prepare to be independent young adults to the best of their abilities.

The transition plan can cover many areas including training, education, employment, and independent living skills.

As it is meant to be reviewed regularly, the goals and action items listed within the plan may change to meet the growing needs and interests of the student.



The Individual Education Plan (IEP)



The IEP is a legal document, but there is no formal process to appeal the IEP - whether on the content, implementation, or creation of an IEP

You CAN work with the school and school board to resolve problems

What if I disagree with an IEP?

While parents and students 16+ must be consulted and given a copy of the IEP, the school ultimately has the discretion to move forward with an IEP without parental consent.

Though IEPs are developed with the purpose of supporting the student and their learning, there are times when a parent/student may disagree with the IEP.

These disagreements often fall into one of three categories:

- **Content** of the IEP: whether the accommodations/modifications meet the needs of the student
- **Implementation** of the IEP: whether a teacher is providing the student with the listed accommodations
- **Putting an IEP in place:** when the parent/student feels that there is no need for the IEP

When disagreements over the IEP take place, it is important to start by talking to the school about your concerns. Further complaints can be made through the chain of responsibility at the school and school board.

The final step would be to escalate your concerns to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, in extreme circumstances.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The school does not need consent to provide special education services, but they must still consult with the parent and student 16+

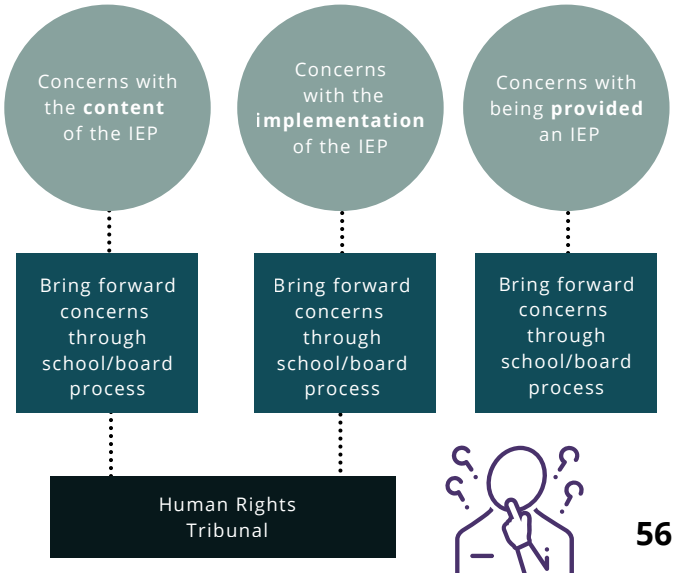
Bringing forward concerns

When disagreements over the IEP take place, it is important to start by talking to the school about your concerns.

You should always begin with the classroom teacher. Talk through any challenges, and allow time for your concerns to be addressed.

If discussions with the teacher do not resolve your concerns, you should speak to the following people in this order: the Principal, then the Superintendent, and finally the school board Trustee.

If your concerns are regarding the content or the implementation of the IEP, and you have met with all the people listed above and still your concerns have not been addressed, then you could choose to escalate your concerns by filing a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.



The Individual Education Plan

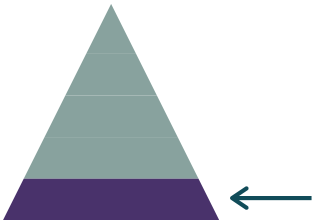
You can ask for an IPRC review after a student has been placed for 3 months

This may help with concerns related to the implementation or content of the IEP

While the IPRC cannot enforce specific IEP contents, they can make persuasive recommendations

IEP Concerns: Meeting with school/board

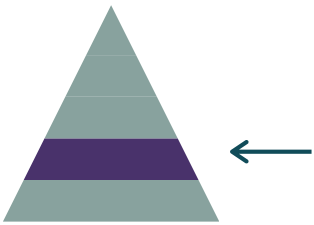
Step 1: Meet with the teacher



Identify which accommodations and/or modifications are needed but do not appear in the IEP, *or*

Identify the accommodations that are not being followed and ask that they be put in place.

Step 2: Meet with the Principal



If the meeting with the teacher is not successful, ask to meet with the principal.

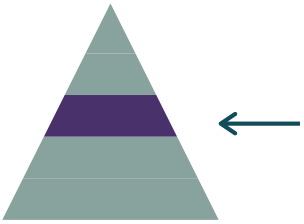
Ask about:

- how the IEP team is ensuring implementation
- concrete steps that are being taken to ensure that needs are met

Schedule a follow up meeting to check in after a few weeks.

IEP Concerns: Meeting with school/board

Step 3: Meet with the Superintendent

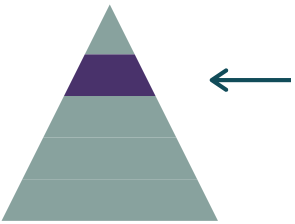


If the IEP team and/or Principal are not taking the right steps, call the Superintendent assigned to your school to request a meeting.

Superintendents oversee a network of schools, and some boards have a Superintendent assigned specifically to oversee special education.

Bring meeting notes and all documents from all previous meetings.

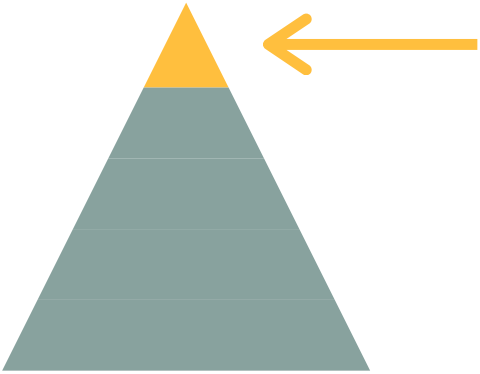
Step 4: Meet with school board Trustee



If the meeting with the Superintendent is not successful, ask for a meeting with the school board Trustee. The Trustee is an elected official, and represents the interests of the school community.

Bring meeting notes and documents from all previous meetings.

IEP Concerns: The Ontario Human Rights Tribunal



If there is a failure to accommodate the needs of the student, and you have followed the process of speaking with the school and school board personnel, your final option could be to file a human rights complaint.

This is a process outside of the school system.

The **Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO)** can determine whether the failure to accommodate the student's needs is discrimination under the law. They can make an order requiring the school to properly accommodate a student with special education needs.

The Human Rights Legal Support Centre has created a "How To" guide on the process to file a human rights complaint: www.hrlsc.on.ca/how-guides-and-faqs

Making a claim to the HRTO can be challenging

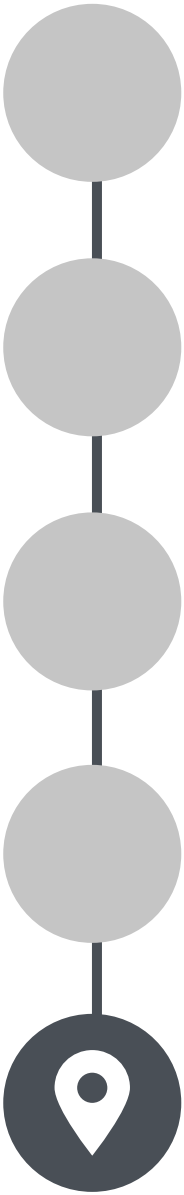
It is a good idea to consult with a lawyer beforehand

Human Rights Legal Support Centre www.hrlsc.on.ca

Justice for Children and Youth www.jfcy.org

ARCH Disability Law Centre www.archdisabilitylaw.ca

Pro Bono Ontario Education Law Project www.probonoontario.org/education



Introduction to Special Education in Ontario

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

Appealing the IPRC Decision

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Glossary & Resources

Glossary

Special education processes can be complicated and there are a lot of terms

This glossary is meant to help you understand the "lingo" that you may hear on your journey

Accommodations changes the way students are taught material.

Alternative programs are developed to help students gain experience outside of the Ontario curriculum. They are typically focused on life skills.

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) helps modify undesirable behavior and increase adaptive behavior. It tracks what happened before the undesirable behavior, the actual behavior and the outcome.

Assistive technology refers to equipment or software that enhances learning and living for people with unique abilities and needs.

Behaviour modification uses both positive and negative reinforcers/consequences to try and encourage positive behaviour.

Course codes are six-character codes that help identify the secondary school level course.

Early Childhood Educators (ECE) work with children typically up to the age of 8 (grade 3) with a focus on child development. They are registered members of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

Educational Assistants (EA) work to support student needs, under the direction of a teacher.

Glossary

Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) is the group that meets, reviews and discusses information gathered about a student, to decide if a student should be identified as exceptional in accordance to the Ministry of Education categories of exceptionality.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan created by the school to describe the special education programs and services that are to be provided to the student.

In-school support team (IST) is made up of people with different expertise to support the student, parent, and one another. The core members are typically the classroom teacher or Curriculum Leader, the principal or vice-principal, the special education teacher, a guidance counsellor, and the student success teacher. They are not mandated to be part of every school, however most schools have one in place.

Modifications change what a student is taught, and/or what they are expected to learn. Modified expectations may include changing the grade level, or changing the complexity of the grade level expectations.

Ontario Student Record (OSR) details a student's information and progress through school. It is confidential and can only be accessed by the Principal, school staff with permission, and the student and/or parent upon request.

Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC) bring together the Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) from across the province. They are a connection point and together, provide advocacy and recommendations to the Ministry of Education, as well as provide support to the individual SEACs for each school board.

Parent Involvement Committees (PIC) must be established for every school board. They provide advice on parent engagement and share information to support school councils within the individual school boards. It is a parent-led committee. To take part, the parent must have a child enrolled in a school at the same school board. The director of education and a trustee are also members. They meet at least four times a year.

Provincial and Demonstration schools are regional centres providing curriculum for elementary and secondary, as well as specialized, intensive programming for students who are Deaf, blind/low vision, deaf blind or have severe learning disabilities.

Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) are trustees and representatives of local associations that support exceptional children or adults. They provide advice on special education to their local school board and make recommendations for programs and services. Each school board must have a SEAC.

Special education programs are plans that contain the learning goals and the special education services required to meet the student's needs.

Special education services refer to resources, equipment and support personnel. They are there to support the overall program and needs of the student.

Community Organizations

There are many organizations that provide support, advocacy, direct programming, and resources to children, youth, and their families across Ontario.

The list below is not exhaustive, however make up some of the larger organizations that support individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

General

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance (AODA Alliance)
www.aodaalliance.org

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
www.camh.ca
416-535-8501
Toll-free: 1-800-463-2338

Easter Seals
www.easterseals.org
416-421-8377
Toll-free: 1-800-668-6252

Empowered Kids Ontario
www.empoweredkidsontario.ca
416-424-3864

Family Alliance Ontario
www.family-alliance.com
905-723-8111

Integration Action Group for Inclusion in Education and Community
www.inclusionactionontario.ca
Toll-free: 1-877-681-5128

Kids Help Phone
www.kidshelpphone.ca
Toll-free: 1-800-668-6868
Text: 686868

Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on SEAC
www.paac-seac.ca

Justice for Children and Youth (JFCY)

JFCY provides legal support to children and youth across Ontario. For help with a legal question, call:
416-960-1633
1-866-999-5329 (toll-free)
www.jfcy.org

Supports by Category

Acquired Brain Injury

Brain Injury Canada
www.braininjurycanada.ca

Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA)
www.obia.ca
1-800-263-5404
Includes information for Brain Injury Associations across Ontario

Toronto Acquired Brain Injury Network
www.abinetwork.ca
416-597-3057

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Canada
www.autismcanada.org
647-362-5610
Toll-Free: 1-800-983-1795

Autism Ontario
www.autismontario.com
416-246-9592
Toll Free: 1-800-472-7789

Geneva Centre for Autism
www.autism.net
416-322-7877

Kerry's Place Autism Services
www.kerrysplace.org
Toll-Free: 1-833-775-3779

Ontario Autism Coalition
www.ontarioautismcoalition.com

South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC)
www.saaac.org
416-289-0100

Surrey Place
www.surreyplace.ca
1-833-575-5437

Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (CADDAC)
www.caddac.ca
416-637-8584

Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance (CADDRA)
www.caddra.ca
416-637-8583

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
www.ldao.ca
416-929-4311

Supports by Category

Blind/Visual Impairment

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
www.cnib.ca
Toll-free: 1-800-563-2642

Deaf Blind Ontario Services
www.deafblindontario.com
905-853-2862
Toll-free: 1-855-340-3267

VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
www.viewson.ca

Communication

Child Development Programs
www.childdevelopmentprograms.ca

Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD)
www.oafccd.com
519-290-1763

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Canadian Hearing Services
www.chs.ca
Toll-free: 1-866-518-0000

Deaf Blind Ontario Services
www.deafblindontario.com
905-853-2862

VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
www.voicefordeafkids.com

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders FASD Ontario Network of Expertise (FASD ONE)
www.fasdontario.ca

Giftedness

The Association for Bright Children of Ontario (ABC Ontario)
www.abcontario.ca

Learning Disabilities

Association Francophone de Parents d'infants Dyslexiques ou Jayant tout auto trouble d'apprentissage (L'AFPED+)
www.afped.ca, 613-604-2845

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
www.ldao.ca
416-929-4311

Parent Groups

There are many parent groups set up across Ontario - some established through community organizations, and some stemming from community parents identifying a need and self-organizing.

Parent groups can be an incredible support as you navigate these processes. These groups are a good way to connect with others who have had similar experiences, and have developed expertise in navigating the special education system. The groups also provide spaces for parents to share stories and to provide one another support.

To find groups in your area, you can:

- Ask your school to connect you with the school's Parent Council
- Search online for parent support groups
- Ask a trusted community organization for connections to established groups
- Join a parent support group through an organization
- Some cities will have city staff that are in place to provide connections and to support grassroots groups in getting started. Contacting these staff, or getting connected through community spots such as community centres, can help you find a group that meets what you're looking for.

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Justice for Children and Youth (JFCY) is a non-profit legal aid clinic that provides select legal representation to low-income children and youth in Ontario.

If you have a legal problem or have questions, contact us:
416-960-1633 or 1-866-999-5329 (toll-free in Ontario)
www.jfcy.org

Enhancing Access to Special Education (EASE)

A project by JFCY, designed to support students and families of students with special education needs to understand and navigate special education processes

@jfcy.ease

JFCY would like to thank the numerous students, parents, caregivers, community supports, educators, and advocates that met with us and shared their experiences and expertise.

This publication is also available in French upon request.
Cette publication est également disponible en français sur demande.

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by the Ontario Ministry of Education