

Report No. 22-046

Special Education Plan 2021-2022

Key Contact: Peter Symmonds, Superintendent, Learning Support Services, 613-596-8254
Amy Hannah, System Principal, Learning Support Services, 613-596-8211 ext. 8111

PURPOSE:

1. To obtain Board approval of the Special Education Plan 2021-2022.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The special education plan outlines several links to the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan with a focus on reducing barriers to student achievement and providing individualized, personalized support and resources to meet the needs of every learner. In addition, the plan supports the development of strategies, tools, and resources to improve student well-being while fostering strong relationships among students, staff, families, and the school community. The goal of the plan is to provide students, families, and employees a fulsome tool to use as a guide and resource when supporting students with special educational needs in the OCDSB.

CONTEXT:

3. School boards are required to prepare a special education plan annually. The plan must be approved by the Board and submitted to the Ministry of Education every year by 31 July. The special education plan is a document which provides detailed information about how the school District carries out its legal responsibilities for the provision of special education programs and services. The special education plan is in many respects, a detailed expression of how the District will implement the Board's special education policy. Recognizing the size and complexity of the plan, there is a regular cycle to manage review of the different sections of the document. Once again, this year, after consultation with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), a modified review process for the plan was undertaken. Over the past four years, Learning Support Services (LSS) has completed comprehensive reviews of the plan. Therefore, it was recommended that for some of the sections of the plan an independent review by each SEAC member be undertaken, as the content in

the selected sections remain status quo and are prescribed by the Ministry of Education. As it pertains to the sections of the plan that were to be reviewed independently, SEAC members were given a variety of opportunities (e.g., monthly meetings, email correspondence, etc.) to provide their feedback on these sections.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. Purpose and Requirements of the Special Education Plan

The purpose of the special education plan is twofold: to inform the public about the manner in which the school board is carrying out its special education responsibilities; and to report to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry policy document *Special Education in Ontario - Kindergarten to Grade 12 - Policy and Resource Guide 2017* establishes precise requirements for special education plans for all school boards as well as the standards against which their special education plan will be measured. The standards reflect what the Ministry of Education considers to be necessary to meet the needs of exceptional students.

4. Revision Process of the Special Education Plan

The revision process of the plan includes two steps: a formal review brought forward at monthly SEAC meetings, and an independent review conducted by individual members of the SEAC. The following is a summary of the topics and dates of the items reviewed at the following SEAC meetings:

- 6 October 2021, Transportation;
- 3 November 2021, Special Education Staff and Equipment;
- 8 December 2021, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) - Role and Composition;
- 5 January 2021, The OCDSB Model for Special Education and Individual Education Plans (IEPs);
- 2 February 2021, Early Identification Procedures/Intervention Strategies and Educational and Other Assessments; and
- 2 March 2021, any additional comments or feedback from the sections reviewed independently were discussed.

The remaining sections were reviewed independently by all members:

- Specialized Health Support Services in School Settings;
- Provincial and Demonstration Schools in Ontario;
- Accessibility of School Buildings;
- Roles and Responsibilities;
- Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities;
- The Board's Consultation Process;
- Coordination of Services with Other Ministries or Agencies; and
- Special Education Placements provided by the OCDSB.

Over the years, considerable effort has been made reviewing the language of the special education plan and how to access specific information to best support students and families. A regular part of the annual review process includes a review of current data such as expenditures for equipment, professional development opportunities, the SEAC membership, students identified through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process or having IEPs to ensure key information is up-to-date and reflects District practice. A new

component within the plan this year (for the standards where content changes are possible) is a “looking ahead in this standard” section, which outlines upcoming work or next steps related to the information shared within the section.

The current practice of reviewing the special education plan in sections with SEAC on a monthly basis works well in that it allows for discussion of the document in manageable pieces, allowing progress to be made over the course of the year. However, given that approval by the Board occurs at the end of the school year, only minor edits can be accommodated at this stage. The final approval stage will likely generate ideas and suggestions which will be carried forward into the review process which starts again in September. Staff is committed to continuous improvement and opportunities to increase the accessibility of the information for staff, parents/guardians and where appropriate, students.

5. Submission Process and Timelines

As required in the *Special Education in Ontario - Kindergarten to Grade 12 - Policy and Resource Guide 2017*, the approved special education plan is forwarded to the Ministry of Education along with a copy of the Board motion and the date of approval.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

6. The work undertaken on the special education plan by LSS to review and update the plan has been substantive over the course of this year. Staff estimates approximately 15 days of work have been invested in reviewing and rewriting the plan. In addition, SEAC has allocated time on most agendas for this item.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

7. The key consultation on the plan has occurred through SEAC meetings. The dates and times of the meeting discussions are noted above. The value of discussions at SEAC is that it ensures the committee, and members of the community with a strong interest in special education issues, have the opportunity to discuss ideas and inform the way that services are delivered. The Special Education Plan 2021-2022 draft will be presented at the SEAC meeting on 1 June 2022 for approval.

A variety of sections of the plan were shared with different District staff for review. The following departments and individuals were consulted for feedback:

- LSS (Academic and Professional Staff);
- Program and Learning (System Principals);
- Equity, ESL/ELD System Principal (K-12); and
- Human Rights and Equity Advisor.

In an effort to support District staff and ensure the personalization of learning, LSS will be offering learning sessions pertaining to the following standards within the Special Education Plan to educators (i.e., administrators, teachers, educational assistants, and, early childhood educators, etc.) beginning in September 2022:

- The Board's Model for Special Education;
- The Individual Education Plan;
- The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee; and
- Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies.

The learning series that LSS will provide next year, is intended to demonstrate the District's commitment to ensuring that the diverse needs of special education learners are served in a culturally responsive manner through the lens of inclusive design.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the 2021-2022 Special Education Plan, attached as Appendix A to Report No. 22-046 be approved.

Peter Symmonds, Superintendent,
Learning Support Services

Camille-Williams Taylor
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDIX

Appendix A 2021-2022 Special Education Plan