

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BOARD**

**7 June 2023
26 June 2023**

Report No. 23-045

Special Education Plan 2022-2023

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PURPOSE:

1. To obtain Board approval of the Special Education Plan 2022-2023.

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 Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (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, the review and revision of the plan was undertaken which included consultation with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), review of each standard with a dedicated team from Learning Support Services (LSS), and collaboration with other OCDSB departments for feedback on the plan. Furthermore, it was

recommended that for some of the standards of the plan, an independent review by each SEAC member be undertaken. Revision of some content is status quo and those 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:

4. 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.

5. Purpose and Requirements of the Special Education Report

School boards must submit a Special Education Report on the delivery of special education programs and services to the Ministry of Education every two years on the odd year. The purpose of the report is to provide the Ministry of Education with a summary of the provision by the school board of special education programs and special education services. This report is attached as Appendix B - Special Education Report 2023.

6. 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:

- 12 October 2022, Transportation and Equipment;
- 9 November 2022, Special Education Staff and The OCDSB Model for Special Education;
- 11 January 2023, Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals and Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) - Role and Composition;
- 1 February 2023, Individual Education Plans (IEPs); and
- 1 March 2023, Early Identification Procedures/Intervention Strategies and Educational and Other Assessments.

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 IPRC process or having IEPs to ensure key information is up-to-date and reflects District practice.

The current practice of reviewing the special education plan in sections with the 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.

7. Key Updates to the Special Education Plan 2022-23

Last year, a new component within the plan (for the standards where content changes are possible) was a "Moving Forward in this Standard" section, which outlines upcoming work or next steps related to the information shared within the section. This has been maintained and updated for this year's plan.

Some other significant changes to the plan this year include:

- a revision to the Early Identification Procedures and Interventions Strategies standard to streamline information and for general readability;
- an addition of a flowchart to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee Process and Appeals standard to help outline more clearly the process;
- an update to the Equipment standard to reflect more completely the expenditures and reimbursement from the Special Equipment Amount and;
- an update to The Board's Consultation Process standard to include current initiatives that LSS has been focused on.

Staff is committed to continuous improvement and opportunities to increase the accessibility of the information for staff, parents/guardians and where appropriate, students.

8. 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:

9. 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, the SEAC has allocated time on most agendas for this item.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

10. 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 the 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 2022-2023 draft will be presented at the SEAC meeting on 7 June 2023 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 draw connections from the Special Education Plan to the *LSS Guide* (an online resource available for staff) and to other departmental work. This year there were opportunities to collaborate with Program and Learning through the destreaming sessions to demonstrate a shared understanding of how to support a variety of learners within the classroom.

LSS plans to offer collaborative 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.):

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

These learning opportunities will solidify the cross-departmental work that happens and supports the District's commitment to ensuring the diverse needs of special education learners are served in a culturally responsive manner through the lens of inclusive design.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the 2022-2023 Special Education Plan, attached as Appendix A to Report No. 23-045 be approved.

THAT the 2022-2023 Special Education Report, attached as Appendix B to Report No. 23-045 be approved.

Peter Symmonds, Superintendent,
Learning Support Services

Michelle Giroux
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDIX

Appendix A 2022-2023 Special Education Plan

Appendix B 2023 Special Education Report