



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



Review of the **Developmental Disabilities Program** at Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey Public School:

A SUMMARY

Why this review?

The Developmental Disabilities (DD) Program Review at Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey Public School was initiated in response to the changing learning profiles and needs of students at both schools. It was undertaken as part of a cyclical program review and monitoring process by the Learning Support Services (LSS) Department. The purpose of the review is to ensure that special education programming, services, supports, and resources continue to meet the complex needs of students at Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey. Information collected as part of this review is intended to inform educational programming and practices at both schools, and may serve as a reference for future policy and decision-making.

Process

The review was conducted using a collaborative evaluation approach whereby program evaluation staff included key stakeholders (i.e., parents/caregivers, specialized program teachers, educational assistants, administrators, and LSS staff) throughout the various stages of the evaluation. Early in the process, a small LSS interdisciplinary working group was established to guide the development of program review activities. This work was informed by several school council members from Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey who participated in the development of the parent/caregiver survey and parent/caregiver focus group questions. Their input was also instrumental in planning how best to engage parents/caregivers in the review process.

Throughout the process, parents and caregivers openly and generously shared their experiences of what it is like to raise a child with severe developmental disabilities and complex needs. With honest, and sometimes intense emotion, they described the gains their children have made at school, their goals for their children, and their frustrations with the system.

A Snapshot

NUMBER OF
SPECIALIZED
SCHOOLS:

2

NUMBER OF
STUDENTS:

200

AGE
RANGE:

3.9-21
YEARS

SURVEY
RESPONSE
RATE:

51%

RATING OF CHILDREN'S
ENJOYMENT OF SCHOOL
BY PARENTS/CAREGIVERS:

83%

We talked to Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey parents and caregivers about the school environment for their children. **Here's what we found out.**

WHAT WE HEARD

Parents feel their children are learning and safe in our current two specialized schools...

...but evidence-based research suggests many benefits from inclusion into community schools



WHAT PARENTS SAID

"I think society is better for knowing our children just as much as our children need to know society. However, when it comes to a child's safety this facility [specialized program school] is the best." Parent

"So there are concerns on my part from the parent perspective of a medically fragile child is [name of school] even the right place for him. But the problem is there's no right place for him in this school system." Parent

"I understand wanting to have them [students with severe DD] in the community, in a DD class, like in a semi-integrated, great, we all want that. We want our children to thrive, wherever that is, but right now this [school] is where he needs to be." Parent

"Just because they [non-verbal students] don't have a voice doesn't mean that they're not important. These people teach us more than we can learn. We can learn more from them than they learn from us." Parent

WHAT IS ABLEISM?

- A belief that persons with disabilities are inherently of less value
- Either conscious or unconscious
- May be embedded within systems, policies, and decision-making
- The exclusion or marginalization of disabled persons

"I want my [children] to live happy lives. I want them to feel valued, loved, accepted and respected." Parent

FINDINGS

- Parents and caregivers want to know that their children with complex needs are valued and accepted by the OCDSB, and they want to see this reflected in the work of the District.
- Parents and caregivers lack confidence in the ability of community schools, even those with special education classes, to meet the safety and educational needs of their children.

WHERE DO WE GO NEXT?

- Commit to increasing awareness of ableism across the District. Adopt a disability inclusion lens.
- Broaden equity, diversity, and inclusion work to include students with disabilities and their families.
- Ensure educators have a clear understanding of Applied Behaviour Analysis instructional approaches and alternative programming.

See over for full list of recommendations



Read the full report

The Way Forward

The recommendations for consideration listed below are intended to inform educational programming and practices at Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey with the goal of improving student learning and achievement. They may also serve as a reference for future policy and decision-making.

System Level

- 1 Maintain the two congregated schools for students with severe DD. If feasible, any additional special education classes for students with severe developmental disabilities should be located in community schools and/or in close proximity to community schools (i.e., within walking distance).
- 2 Improve opportunities for inclusion by exploring other models. For example, make first and second year kindergarten placements at Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey an exception and serve Year 1 and Year 2 kindergarten students in community schools.
- 3 Create classes in community schools for students who demonstrate readiness (e.g., have a communication system and the ability to self-regulate). For example, a 'Transitions' class for students over the age of 18 years of age.
- 4 Consider moving towards a 1:6 teacher to student ratio for those students whose needs are the most complex (e.g., students with DD who have complex health care needs and/or students with high behavioural needs).

Integration with Other Work/ Initiatives/Departments

- 5 Special Education Programs and Services (P.096. SES) makes no mention of inclusive design in its policy statement and guiding principles. The OCDSB is encouraged to develop a culture of disability inclusion by creating an organizational vision based on the OHRC's Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities. Apply a disability inclusion lens to the work of central departments, review inclusion practices in schools, restructure where needed, and encourage commitment to the changes.
- 6 Collect and analyze voluntary identity-based data and perceptual data from parents and caregivers of students who attend Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey.

- 7 Reexamine the minimum qualifications of special education teachers who work in the Developmental Disabilities Program. The 2019-2022 collective agreement between the OCDSB and elementary teachers lists Special Education Part 2 as a requirement to teach in all specialized programs except the DDP.
- 8 Investigate student management system changes to allow the age appropriate grade level assignment of students above Grade 8.

School Level

- 9 Enhance support for the development of students' communication competency by increasing the number of Communicative Disorders Assistants (CDAs) at both schools.
- 10 Strive for more consistent implementation of ABA instructional approaches and systematic instruction (i.e., the use of data-based instruction).
- 11 Ensure the alternative program for students with severe developmental disabilities includes learning expectations in the areas of literacy and numeracy skills, communication skills, and daily living skills. Consider creating alternative program guidelines for students with severe DD.

Professional Learning

- 12 Provide system leaders and administrators with training on ableism and the benefits of inclusive learning environments.
- 13 Embed inclusive education practices into staff development opportunities, such as the training of teachers new to the OCDSB and the training of new administrators.
- 14 Consider differentiated professional learning opportunities for staff at Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey and include the Learning Support Consultant, school psychologist, BCBA's, SLP's, OT's, and instructional coaches in collaboration with school staff and administrators.