



**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
BOARD**  
**Report No. 24-085**

**13 June 2024**  
**24 June 2024**

**Special Education Plan 2023-2024**

**Key Contact:** Peter Symmonds, Superintendent, Learning Support Services, 613-596-8254  
Kate Stoudt, System Principal; Learning Support Services, 613-596-8211 ext. 8111

**PURPOSE:**

1. To obtain Board approval of the Special Education Plan 2023-2024.

**STRATEGIC LINKS:**

2. The special education plan outlines several links to the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan with a focus on the core values of:
  - Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility by highlighting the Board's model for special education and some of the key shifts that are being made to reduce barriers to student achievement and providing individualized, personalized support and resources to meet the needs of every learner;
  - Community Building by encouraging engagement, trust, and collaboration with parents/caregivers, community groups, and school based teams;
  - Responsible Resource Use by outlining the use of resources in support of teaching practices, student success, and good governance; and
  - Leadership Development by encouraging and supporting critical thinking, global awareness, and ethical decision-making.

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) through the key areas of focus, learning, wellbeing, and social responsibility.

**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.

### 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 September 2023, SEAC – The role and composition and Special Education Staff;
- 4 October 2023, Early Identification Procedures/Intervention Strategies and Equipment;
- 1 November 2023, IPRC Process and Appeals and Individual Education Plans (IEPs); and
- 6 December 2023, Transportation and the OCDSB Model for Special Education.

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;
- Coordinator 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.

#### Key Updates to the Special Education Plan 2023-2024

Some key changes to the plan this year include:

- a revision to the Early Identification Procedures and Interventions Strategies standard to outline the tier 1 supports within the classroom that can help identify when early intervention may be required, and for general readability;
- a focus in the Staff Development standard on inclusive education practices; and
- an update to The Board's Consultation Process and the Board's Model for Special Education standard to include current initiatives that LSS has been focused on.

The "Moving Forward in this Standard" section outlines upcoming work or next steps related to the information shared within the section and has been updated to reflect planning and initiatives for the upcoming year. Staff is committed to continuous improvement and opportunities to increase the accessibility of the information for staff, parents/guardians and where appropriate, students.

#### 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:**

5. 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 four agendas for this item.

### **COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:**

6. 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 2023-2024 draft will be presented at the SEAC meeting on 13 June 2024 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, Learning and Innovation (System Principals); and
- Equity, ESL/ELD System Principal (K-12).

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, Learning and Innovation through the Destreaming funding and continuation of learning work 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 2023-2024 Special Education Plan, attached as Appendix A to Report No. 24-085 be approved.

---

Peter Symmonds, Superintendent,  
Learning Support Services

---

Pino Buffone  
Director of Education and  
Secretary of the Board

## **APPENDIX**

Appendix A 2023-2024 Special Education Plan