

Hello, everyone,

We the parents at Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education are reaching out to you to request a change in the class size at this school for children with multiple exceptionalities, and to request funding for additional teaching staff to accomplish this.

Currently the ratio at OCDSB special education centres is 1 teacher to 8 students. All of the students attending these schools have many challenges. They all have moderate to severe developmental disabilities, but in addition to developmental delays, many of these students also have one or more of: autism, visual impairments, hearing impairments, physical challenges (they have difficulty walking and/or use wheelchairs), and many are non-verbal. Some students also have high medical needs that require having nurses care for them in the classroom. In short, these students have the highest needs and are the lowest-functioning and most vulnerable students in our school board.

We are requesting to have the class size at Crystal Bay Centre changed to match the ratio of the board's Autism Program classes, which is 1 teacher to 6 students. It should be noted that students who attend the Autism Program classes are higher-functioning and more independent than the students at Crystal Bay. Currently, at least half of the students at Crystal Bay have a formal diagnosis of autism in addition to developmental disabilities and other challenges. Adding more staff to the current classes of 8 students is not really a viable option, as a large number of people in the classroom tends to overwhelm many of the students, and they have difficulty coping with a noisy and busy environment.

The majority of OCDSB students who have developmental disabilities as their only exceptionality are currently being taught in Developmental Disability program classes within regular schools, while Crystal Bay Centre is teaching students who have multiple diagnoses - the highest-needs and lowest-functioning students. We believe that the teacher to student ratio should be changed to be 1 teacher to 6 students, to support the reality in these classes and to give our students a favourable learning environment in which they can succeed to the best of their abilities.

Given our school's current population of 96 students, what we are asking of the Board is for Crystal Bay Centre to be allotted additional funding to hire 3 teachers and 9 educational assistants, so that each class will then have 6 students, 1 teacher and approximately 3 educational assistants, depending on specific needs.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Janet Bowen (Chair)
Alison Muir (Secretary)
Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education School Council