

MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 20-027

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees
Special Education Advisory Committee

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Peter Symmonds, Superintendent, Learning Support Services

DATE: 28 February 2020

RE: **Specialized Program Class Planning 2020-2021**

This memorandum provides information to support the proposed changes to specialized program classes for the 2020-2021 school year as outlined in Report Number 20-024, *Academic Staffing for 2020-2021*.

Annually, Learning Support Services (LSS) assesses system needs for specialized program classes. Historically, this has been a challenge as the process and timelines to determine student needs for the following year does not align well with academic staffing deadlines.

In an effort to better align with academic staffing timelines and to facilitate data informed decision making, a referral estimate process was developed. These estimates were first used to assist with specialized program class planning for the 2018-2019 school year. Two years of data analysis indicated that, in most cases, the referral estimates were predictive of actual referrals received. The estimate process has provided valuable information to inform decision making regarding specific system pressures prior to the specialized program class referral review process. This year, all school teams were asked to provide an estimate of referrals to specialized program classes by 24 January 2020. The specialized program class referral review process occurs throughout April.

Projected System Needs

Based on the specialized program class referral estimates and movement of students currently placed in specialized program classes, demand is expected to exceed capacity of current specialized classes for the following programs:

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder continues to be complex. In addition to students currently enrolled in the District who require very high levels of

support, ongoing registrations of new students with complex needs continues to occur. The District currently operates 34 specialized program classes at the elementary level.

Strategic decisions were made last year to address student transition patterns and staffing limitations at the grades 7 to 12 sites. This will allow for the intermediate ASD specialized program classes at Sir Robert Borden High School and Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School to be phased out in June 2020 without impact on students. It is proposed that the full-time equivalent (FTE) associated with these classes (i.e., 2.0 FTE) be reallocated to open primary/junior ASD classes elsewhere in the District.

The steady transition of students in ASD specialized program classes from elementary to secondary continues with 20 grade 8 students moving to grade 9 in September 2020. Secondary staffing put into place last year to facilitate the intermediate to secondary phasing at the grade 7 to 12 sites will offset some of the secondary ASD staffing requirements for September 2020 (i.e., Sir Robert Borden HS).

ASD Elementary

- *3.0 FTE elementary teacher contingency staffing requested.*

ASD Secondary

- *2.0 FTE secondary teacher contingency staffing requested.*

Behaviour Intervention Program (BIP)

The District has 10 elementary BIP specialized program classes with primary, junior and intermediate configurations. Classes are located in all five geographic zones. Referrals include students returning from care and treatment programs and students from regular program with increasingly complex profiles and level of need. Placement pressure will be at the junior/intermediate panel for September 2020.

BIP Elementary

- *2.0 FTE elementary teacher contingency staffing requested.*

Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Program (D/HH Program)

The District has 1 elementary D/HH specialized program class for students in K-8 and 1 secondary D/HH class serving students in grades 9 to 12. For the 2018-2019 school year, 1.0 FTE elementary teacher was allocated to itinerant teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing team. For the 2020-2021 school year, this allocation will shift from a central elementary position to a secondary school-based allocation. This represents a decrease of 1.0 FTE elementary teacher from the central team and an increase of 1.33 FTE secondary teacher (including preparation time).

D/HH Secondary

- *Reduce 1.0 FTE elementary teacher; and*
- *1.33 FTE secondary teacher staffing requested.*

Dual Support Program (DSP)

The District currently has three junior/intermediate DSPs and four secondary DSPs that support students with mild intellectual disability (MID) and significant behavioural challenges. The profile of students placed in DSP specialized program classes has become increasingly complex and students require substantial support from school and central teams. A significant number of grade 8 students (i.e., 14) currently placed in junior/intermediate DSPs are transitioning to secondary for September 2020.

DSP Secondary

- *1.0 FTE secondary teacher contingency staffing requested.*

General Learning Program (GLP)

The District currently has 11 elementary GLP specialized program classes (seven junior and five intermediate). In addition, there are 13 secondary GLP specialized program classes.

A junior class was added in September 2019. Students placed in junior GLP transition to intermediate GLP without being re-referred. Adding junior classes necessitates the need for additional intermediate classes as these students transition.

Projections for secondary GLP are complex as it is difficult to determine the number of students exiting the program at this time of year (e.g., some adult learners may not return in September). Contingency staffing for an additional secondary class is requested to ensure placement opportunities for grade 8 students currently placed in GLP.

GLP Elementary

- *1.0 FTE elementary teacher contingency staffing requested.*

GLP Secondary

- *1.0 FTE secondary teacher contingency staffing requested.*

Primary Special Needs (PSN)

The District currently has 10 PSN specialized program classes. A class was added to address the waitlist for the current school year. Demand for these classes continues to be high with increasingly complex student profiles (i.e., ASD, dysregulation, low

cognitive profiles, and medical fragility). Increasingly these classes are supporting young learners with unclear diagnostic profiles. The low ratio environment allows for increased support to better understand their needs in the educational environment.

- *1.0 FTE elementary teacher contingency staffing requested.*

Prioritization

LSS is not recommending specialized program class openings to address all areas of projected need as alternative strategies for student support are available (e.g., itinerant teacher, Educational Assistant [EA] etc.). In some cases, the profile of students accommodated in these classes may be supported within the regular classroom.

The District has opened a large number of specialized program classes in recent years (i.e., 14 new classes for September 2019). There are significant system impacts associated with this practice including:

- Year over year staffing costs associated with low ratio classes;
- Identifying school sites to accommodate new specialized program classes;
- New staff training; and
- Support for the school leadership team hosting the new specialized program class.

LSS is not recommending specialized program class openings for the following:

- Elementary
 - Learning Disability Specialized Intervention Program (LD SIP);
 - Language Learning Disability (LLD); and
 - Junior GLP.
- Secondary
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder Secondary Credit Support Program (ASDSCSP); and
 - BIP.

Note: For each of the above specialized program classes (with the exception of LLD) additional classes were opened for September 2019.

Elementary Gifted

Currently in the OCDSB, we have undertaken two pilot projects to support learners with giftedness at the elementary level. These pilots were developed in a partnership with the Program and Learning department. These pilots began in September of 2019 and presently are on pause due to labour action. Our goal is to further enhance strategies to support effective programming for learners with giftedness and determine how to implement these strategies for all students District-wide.

Based on the specialized program class referral estimates and movement of students currently placed in specialized program classes, vacancies within elementary Gifted specialized program classes are expected.

The District currently has 15 elementary Gifted specialized program classes (eight English, seven Early French Immersion). In order to manage vacancies, the following closures for September 2020 are recommended based on zero enrolment (e.g., no impact to current cohorts).

- *Close one intermediate Gifted English class at Glashan Public School ; and*
- *Close one intermediate Gifted French Immersion class at Broadview Avenue Public School.*

These classes could be re-opened in the future as required.

Resource Implications

The proposed specialized program class changes and staffing updates represent an approximate increase of \$2.3 million associated with 4.95 FTE elementary teachers, 5.66 FTE secondary teachers and 19.0 FTE educational assistants.

In addition, increased costs associated with new specialized program are typically incurred through facilities modifications, new classroom resources, professional support services personnel and transportation.

Next Steps

Upon approval of the Academic Staffing Report, LSS will work closely with the Planning Department and the senior team to determine specific school locations for new specialized program classes. This information will be provided to trustees and SEAC following the conclusion of the specialized program class referral review process (i.e., May 2020).

In addition, LSS will begin the work supporting schools and communities hosting new specialized program classes.

cc Senior Staff
 Manager, Board Services
 Corporate Records