



Report No. 20-115

Specialized Program Class Referral Information 2020-2021

**Key Contact: Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support
Services, 613-596-8254**

PURPOSE:

1. To provide information regarding the specialized program class referral and placement process for the 2020-2021 school year.

CONTEXT:

2. In October 2019, Report 19-091, Specialized Program Class Referral Information 2019-2020 was provided. At that time, the decision was made to delay the reporting of this information until December in order to allow for a more accurate reflection of the number of referrals, placements and students waiting for placement.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. The data provided in this report reflects information available to Learning Support Services (LSS) as of 30 October 2020. It is important to note that this data changes over the course of the school year as new referrals to specialized programs are received and as students enter and exit specialized program classes.

A total of 633 referrals for specialized program classes were reviewed by referral review committees as part of the spring process in order to provide recommendations for the 2020-2021 school year. This represents an increase of 53 referrals over the 2019-2020 school year.

Table 1 provides a summary of elementary specialized program class referral information available for the 2020-2021 school year. In any given school year, specialized program class referrals received after March inform placement recommendations for the following school year. While referrals are reviewed throughout the school year, operationally, this represents a much smaller number than those reviewed each spring. The Elementary table from Report No. 19-091, Specialized Program Referral Information 2019-2020 is included as Appendix A for reference.

Table 1: Elementary Specialized Program Class Referrals

Specialized Program Class	Specialized Program Class Capacity (Total pupil capacity across the District)	Total Number of Referrals Spring 2020	Total Number of Recommendations	Transferred to other committees ¹	Total Number of Students Placed in Specialized Program Classes by IPRC ²	Total Number on Waitlist
Autism Spectrum Disorder ³	210	72	38	<5	208	27
Behaviour Intervention Program	96	28	26	0	92	0
Developmental Disability Program	300	43	36	<5	281	<5
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	10	0	0	0	<5	0
Dual Support Program	30	7	6	<5	16	0
General Learning Program	208	66	60	<5	193	<5
Gifted	373	70	67	0	233	0
Language Learning Disability Program Primary	80	27	22	0	62	0
Language Learning Disability Program Junior	36	18	17	0	35	0
Learning Disability Specialized Intervention Program	112	91	62	0	105	18
Primary Special Needs Program	110	45	37	<5	86	0
Physical Support Program	24	<5	<5	0	16	0

Note:

n<5 were suppressed so that individual students cannot be identified from the data.

Table 2 provides a summary of secondary specialized program class referral information available for the 2020-2021 school year. In any given school year, specialized program class referrals received after March inform placement recommendations for the following school year. While referrals are reviewed throughout the school year, operationally, this represents a much smaller number than those reviewed each spring. The Secondary table from Report No. 19-091,

¹ In a small number of cases a referral review committee may recommend that a referral be considered for another type of specialized program class. With parent/guardian permission, the referral is officially passed to another committee.

² This figure represents all students IPRC'd to a specific specialized program class for the 2020-2021 school year by 30 October 2020 and includes new placements and students returning for a subsequent placement in a specialized program class.

³ This specialized program class has vacancies while carrying a wait list due to unused spaces in an intermediate only class.

Specialized Program Class Referral Information 2019-2020 is included as Appendix B for reference.

Table 2: Secondary Specialized Program Class Referrals

Specialized Program Class	Specialized Program Class Capacity (Total pupil capacity across the District)	Total Number of Referrals Spring 2020	Total Number of Recommendations	Transferred to other committees ⁴	Total Number of Students Placed in Specialized Program Classes by IPRC ⁵	Total Number on Waitlist
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	102	5	<5	0	94	0
ASD Secondary Credit Support Program	40	19	8	0	39	<5
Behaviour Intervention Program	56	12	9	<5	50	0
Developmental Disability Program	120	6	5	0	106	0
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	10	<5	<5	0	8	0
Dual Support Program	50	16	13	0	37	0
General Learning Program	224	61	58	0	217	0
Storefront	12	14	9	<5		0
Gifted ⁶	N/A			N/A	236	N/A
Learning Disability Program	96	32	30	0	81	0
Physical Support Program	36	0	0	0	26	0

Note:

n<5 were suppressed so that individual students cannot be identified from the data.

⁴ In a small number of cases a referral review committee may recommend that a referral be considered for another type of specialized program class. With parent/guardian permission, the referral is officially passed to another committee.

⁵ This figure represents all students IPRC'd to a specific specialized program class for the 2020-2021 school year by 30 October 2020 and includes new placements and students returning for a subsequent placement in a specialized program class.

⁶ Referrals for secondary Gifted are not reviewed centrally, (e.g., school based review). Wait lists do not apply as the specialized program class capacity changes to meet demand.

Specialized Program Class Waitlist

Table 3 provides the geographic locations of students on the wait list for each specialized program class with a wait list greater than 5, as of 30 October 2020.

Table 3: Specialized Program Class Waitlist

Elementary Specialized Program Class	Total Number on Waitlist	Wait list by Geographic Zone				
		Far East	East	West	Far West	South
Autism Spectrum Disorder	27	<5	7	8	6	<5
Learning Disabilities Specialized Intervention Program	18	<5	5	6	5	<5

Note:

N<5 were suppressed so that individual students cannot be identified from the data.

For the elementary Developmental Disability Program, elementary General Learning Program and ASD Secondary Credit Support program, staff has analyzed the wait list data with respect to distribution across the geographic zones, as with the other two specialized program classes, no significant geographic patterns were identified.

As previously reported in Report 20-024, Academic Staffing 2020-2021 and Memorandum No. 20-027, Specialized Program Class Planning 2020-2021, 5 elementary and 3 secondary specialized program classes were opened to support anticipated student needs and minimize wait lists for the 2020-2021 school year.

LSS had not recommended 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, 8 new classes for September 2020). There are significant system impacts associated with this practice including:

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

Increasingly, staff is concerned regarding the sustainability of the model in its present form. Analysis of the number, type and location of elementary and secondary specialized program classes between 2013-14 and 2020-21 has been completed and will be brought to SEAC and Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

Professional Assessments

Due to the impact of the school closure as a result of the pandemic, data regarding the total number of professional assessments completed, professional assessment wait lists and wait times could not be accurately reflected for the 2019-2020 school year.

LSS has begun work to understand the impact of the school closure on professional assessments and will provide additional recommendations when this information is available.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

4. Data collection for this report was completed with existing LSS human resources. Using current methods, approximately 50 hours of staff time are required to complete this annual analysis.

Specialized program classes represent a significant year over year cost to the District. Special education spending in the OCDSB continues to exceed special education funding provided by the province. LSS continues to analysis the ongoing impact of consistently adding additional specialized program classes.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

5. The information in this report will be reviewed with the OCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

STRATEGIC LINKS:

6. The presented information directly contributes to the Key Performance Indicators of Caring and Social Responsibility. LSS staff will use this information to improve equity of access, opportunity and outcomes for learners with special education needs. In addition, this information will support informed and responsible resource allocation with respect to specialized program classes.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

7. The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:
 - Based on the information provided, are there considerations for the specialized program class referral process for the 2021-2022 school year?
 - Given the pressures associated with annually increasing the number of specialized program classes, should consideration of alternative methods of supporting students in their community schools be examined?

Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services

Camille Williams-Taylor
Director of Education and Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A 2019-2020 Elementary Specialized Program Class Referral
Appendix B 2019-2020 Secondary Specialized Program Class Referral