Greater Essex County District School Board

Special Education Plan 2025
Building Tomorrow Together

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THE BOARD'S CONSULTATION PROCESS - Section A

Standard 1—The Board's Consultation Process

Standard 1 - The Board's Consultation Process

Purpose of the Standard
To provide details of the board's consultation process to the ministry and to the public.

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) values collaboration with families, community partners and stakeholders and we welcome input into our Special Education Plan. The GECDSB's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) formally reviews the Special Education Plan annually in the spring. SEAC members are able to share information and input from their respective associations/agencies and provide feedback. Administration has reviewed the Special Education Plan and it is our goal to make the plan easier to navigate by organizing according to the Ministry Standards for School Board's Special Education Plans. Input from SEAC was received and all feedback was reviewed.

There were no majority or minority reports concerning the Board's approved plan in 2024-2025.

New for the 2025-2026 School Year

We continue to focus on raising awareness and understanding of our Special Education Plan.

Consultation Process
- The 2025-2026 Special Education Plan will be uploaded to the board website for September 2025 public consultation. As part of this consultation process, the public will be able to provide feedback through a Microsoft Forms survey. This survey will be anonymous. Results will be shared during the fall with SEAC members.

Updates to the Special Education Plan
- Update our plan as changes occur to Ministry Standards for School Board's Special Education Plans.

Below, are highlights of several key additions that are included within the GECDSB's 2025-2026 Special Education Plan

Standard 4 - Transition Service Navigator
- New for the 2024–2025 school year—and continuing into 2025–2026 through Responsive Education Program funding—is the introduction of the Transition Service Navigator position. This initiative is designed to improve educational outcomes for students with special education needs by enhancing transition practices as students enter, move through, and exit the school system. More information about the Service Navigator role and their impact on providing supports for students, families and schools can be found in Standard 4 - Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies.

Standard 6 - Educational and Other Assessments
- At the GECDSB we are committed to ensuring that our Special Education Plan provides a clear overview of supports, programming and resources utilized. This year we have rewritten Standard 6 - Educational and Other Assessment, to reflect the most current tools and assessments used by our staff to inform programming and interventions for our students.

Standard 10 - Project Search
- Project SEARCH is a unique school-to-work training program for students with developmental disabilities. Students are immersed in a host business and get more than 700 hours of hands-on work experience geared to in-demand roles in the local labour market. More information about Project Search can be found in Standard 4 - Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies and Standard 10- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Planning.

Standard 10- High School Students with Intellectual Disabilities Integration Program (HSSIDIP)
- The GECDSB is partnering to support the HSSIDIP program. The program is an employment-training program through the Government of Canada that is focused on transforming the lives of students who have an intellectual disability or autism. More information about HSSIDIP can be found in Standard 4 - Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies and Standard 10- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Planning.

Standard 10 - HUB Classroom Pilot Program
- The GECDSB is introducing a pilot of five HUB school classrooms within five of our elementary schools. These classrooms are being introduced to support students with a GAINS profile. Additional information about the structure and focus for the HUB classrooms can be found in Standard 10 – Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Planning.

Standard 13 - Staff Development
- Professional development for teachers is essential as it enhances their ability to implement inclusive teaching strategies, such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), ensuring they can effectively meet the diverse needs of all students while managing classroom challenges. The GECDSB believes that ongoing professional learning and staff development opportunities are key components of a thriving school system. Additional information can be found in Standard 13 - Staff Development, which provide an overview of PD for this year and the plans for the 2025-2026 school year.

Standard 13 - Thumbnail Sketches for GECDSB Staff

- This year, staff within our Special Education Department have dedicated time to update and revise the **Special Education Thumbnail Sketches**. These sketches provide a concise overview of the Special Education services and programs offered within the GECDSB. More information about the Thumbnail Sketch can be found in Standard 13 - Staff Development.

Standard 14 - Special Education Equipment Amount (SEA)

- As a result of the Ministry of Education directive about Special Education Equipment Amount (SEA) processes for school boards, the board created a SEA Committee that focused on reviewing the current SEA process for the GECDSB.
- In addition, the board engaged in discussion with our co-terminus board partner with a focus on aligning processes and sharing resources. Additional information about Specialized Equipment can be found in Standard 14 - Equipment.

Section C - SEAC Handbook

- During the 2024-2025 school year a sub-committee was established to create a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Handbook. The purpose of the Handbook is to provide a guidebook for members of SEAC, as well as outline varied roles and responsibilities of its members. More information about the SEAC Handbook can be found in Section C - Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

Appendix 6 – Restructuring of Supports for Students in Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE)

- As follow-up to our 2023-2024 review of the RISE program, the board engaged in a consultation process throughout the 2024-2025 school year with students, families, staff, union partners, community partners and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) about the restructuring of supports for students who were in the RISE programs during the 2024-2025 school year. The RISE Review overview from the 2024-2025 GECDSB Special Education Plan can be found in Appendix 6-RISE (Reaching Individual Success and Excellence - Partially-Integrated Classroom) Program Review
- Information about the consultation process and the support for students for the 2025-2026 school year, can be found in Appendix 7, entitled Changes to the Partially Integrated Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) Program at the Greater Essex County District School Board.

Appendix 7 - Student Support Funds

- The Student Support Funds in the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) collective agreement are designated to protect and enhance services and supports for students, particularly those with special education needs. These funds are part of system priorities investments, aimed at ensuring that

students receive the necessary resources and assistance to succeed in their educational environment. These allocations are made collaboratively in accordance with the priorities and needs identified by the school boards and ETFO and are intended to ensure that all students have access to the support they need to succeed.

- For the 2025-2026 school year, the student support funds will be used to provide Learning Support Teacher (LST) positions to schools, specifically to help support students who were in the RISE program, during the 2024-2025 school year.
- Information about the use of the Student Support Funds for the 2025-2026 year can be found in Appendix 7 - Changes to the Partially Integrated Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) Program at the Greater Essex County District School Board.
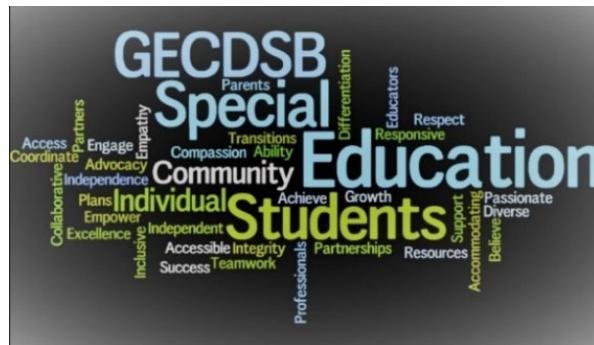
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES - Section B

Standard 2—The Board's General Model for Special Education

Standard 2 - The Board's General Model for Special Education

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide the ministry and the public with information on the board's philosophy and service delivery model for the provision of special education programs and services.

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) takes great pride in providing a variety of high-quality programs and services to meet the needs of our learners with special needs and our students who are deemed at-risk.

The GECDSB is committed to providing learning opportunities which will maximize the social, emotional, physical and intellectual potential of the learner in a safe and nurturing environment. All exceptional pupils shall have available to them, in accordance with the Education Act, the regulations, special education services, programs and placements to meet their individual needs. Students in special education programs will have access to resources and technologies appropriate to their needs and developmental stages. These programs will provide meaningful learning opportunities for success.

In an effort to reduce the automaticity of identifying younger students through the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), resulting in young students being placed on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), the GECDSB is committed to not formally identifying students in Kindergarten to Grade 2. This direction is in response to the philosophy of destreaming students and changing their trajectory through opportunities to explore multiple pathways.

Formal Identification, through the IPRC process, will only take place beginning in Grade 3, unless a parent/caregiver request is initiated.

It is imperative for students to be engaged in their learning if they are to meet with success in the classroom. Educators need to be responsive to all their students in order to promote this level of engagement. Consideration must be given to student identities, student strengths and interests, as well as students' lived realities. Before any referral to the School Based Team (SBT) occurs, intentional dialogue must take place that examines equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism through the following questions:

- Why this student?
- Why now?
- What interventions have been utilized by the teacher(s) to support the student's learning?
- What other interventions should be considered?

These questions keep the focus on the educator and how they can best meet the needs of the student or students who are struggling learners in their classroom.

Philosophy

The Greater Essex County District School Board offers a range of special education programs and services to address the needs of students. Most students with special needs will be encouraged to succeed in the regular classroom with appropriate supports, modifications and/or accommodations. **The placement of a student in a regular class setting is the first option, in the range of programs and services provided, that is considered by the IPRC and developed with parents/guardians**. The Committee shall, before considering the option of placement in a special education class, consider whether the placement in a regular class, with appropriate special education services, would meet the   student's needs and is consistent with parental/guardian preferences.

Ontario Human Rights Commission OHRC Right to Read and the Focus for the GECDSB

On February 28, 2022, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released its Right to Read report, highlighting the need for systemic changes in how Ontario schools teach reading, especially for students with reading disabilities. The report emphasizes that teaching children to read is a fundamental responsibility of schools.

In response, the Greater Essex County District School Board has implemented several initiatives:

Tiered Interventions

- *Lexia Core 5* (Tier 2) *and SickKids Empower Reading Program* (Tier 3) are available in all elementary schools.
- *Lexia PowerUp* is used in secondary schools.

Professional Development

- Over the past three years, the Special Education and Program Departments have collaborated to train teachers using the **Science of Reading (SOR)** framework, which is evidence-based and supports effective reading instruction.

Structured Literacy

- The board is aligning its reading instruction with SOR principles, emphasizing explicit, focused, and developmentally sequenced teaching to ensure equity and improve foundational reading skills and comprehension.

The GECDSB will continue this work into the 2025-2026 school year.

Range of Programs and Services Greater Essex County District School Board

Based on the Cascade or Reynolds Model (2007)* as a general procedure, educators often use what has become known as the Cascade Model as an explanatory principle to place students with exceptional needs in the environment that is least restrictive or most enabling.
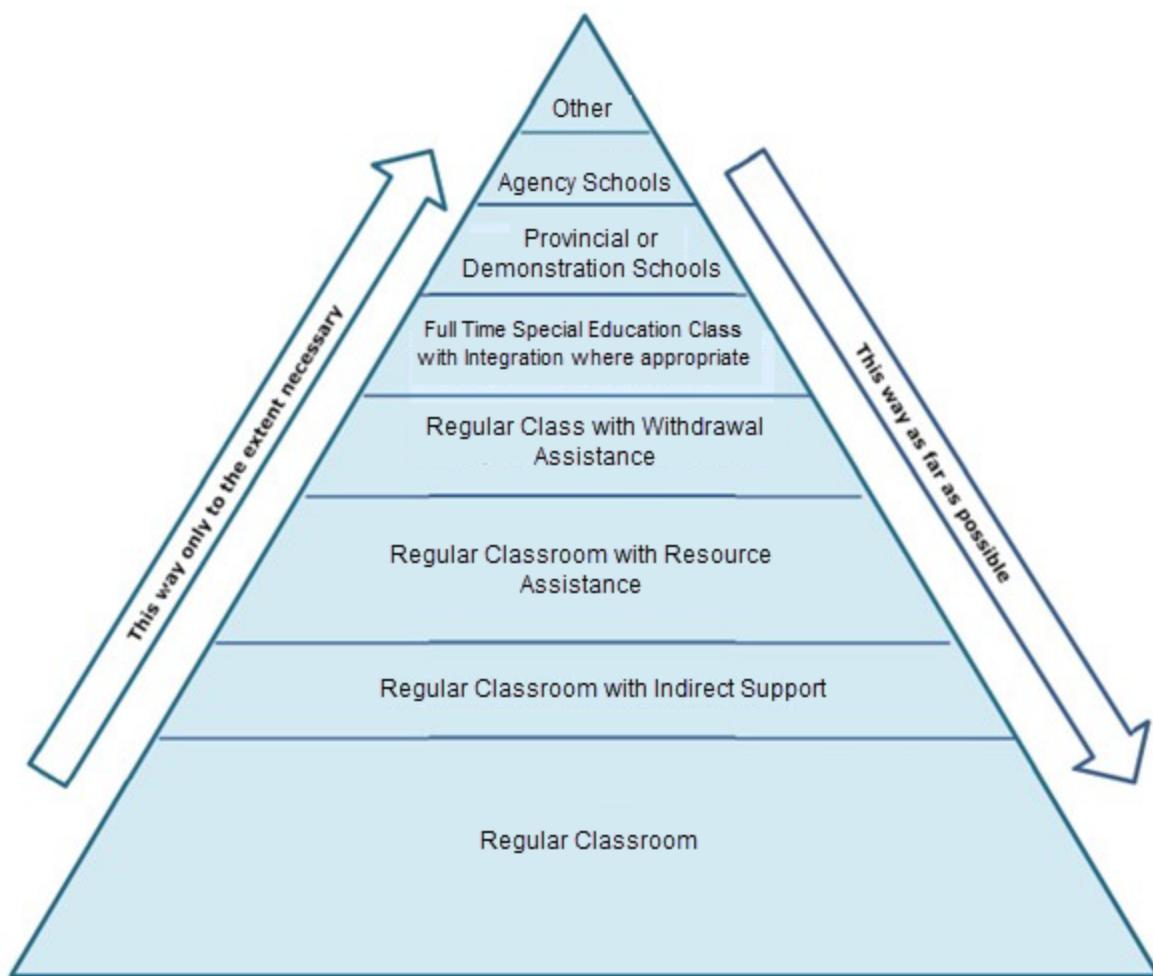
NOTE: It is important to recognize that the Cascade Model is a philosophical model not a legislative model.

*Encyclopedia of Special Education (Volume 1): **A reference for the education of Children, Adolescents, and Adults with Disabilities and Other Exceptional Individuals.** Edited by Cecil R. Reynolds & Elaine Fletcher-Janzen, John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

The Board's General Model for Special Education Key Points

- As noted in the Ministry's IPRC document, our first placement option is at the student's home school (home school is defined as the school within the boundaries of the district in which the student resides).

- We strive to provide service and supports using the Home School model.

- The goal of the Home School model is to support students within the school setting using the resources, supports and services available to the school.

- The Home School model provides supports for students experiencing mild, moderate or severe difficulties in all areas of exceptionality within the community school setting. The classroom teachers in conjunction with the learning support teacher, the school's special education team and educational support staff collaboratively develop Individual Education Plans (IEPs) designed to enhance the learning outcomes for students identified as needing additional support.

- The school based team members work efficiently and in collaboration when creating solutions that require the allocation of resources, including human resources, to be distributed with great thought and integrity. We recognize and acknowledge the strong partnerships among parents/ guardians, education staff and community agencies are always in the best interests of the learner. This multi-disciplinary approach supports the learner as well as the classroom teacher and educational support staff and is a key component of our success in educating students as well as in our program delivery model.

- Depending on the nature and severity of the student's needs, supports outside the regular classroom may be employed.

Elementary Schools
- The supports available to elementary schools in addition to instruction by the homeroom teacher may include the Learning Support Teachers (LST), GAINS Teachers, and in five of our elementary schools this may also include HUB teachers (David Maxwell, William G. Davis, Prince Edward, Talbot Trail and Northwood).

Secondary Schools
- The supports available to secondary schools in addition to subject specific teachers may include the Learning Support Teacher (LST), STEPS Teacher, MAPS Teacher and Stepping-In Classroom Teacher, (a fully self-contained secondary ASD system level placement for students with complex needs, including autism).

Additional Supports:
Additional supports in both elementary and secondary schools may include:

- Educational Support Staff (ESS), as well as itinerant staff such as the Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Teachers of the Blind/Low Vision, Teacher Consultants, Special Educational Coordinators, staff from our Behaviour Transition Team, Registered Behaviour Analyst (RBA), Tier 3, Facilitator-Inclusion, Behaviour Management System Worker (BMSW), Speech and Language, Psychology, and/or Social Work/Attendance. Community agencies are also available to consult with the school team to strengthen and extend the existing supports within the school.
- Our staff is to be applauded for their dedication and commitment to our students. The center of every conversation is the learning of students and how to improve their academic achievement. In the Special Education Department, we pay close attention to improving literacy and numeracy skills as well as promoting independence. The leadership of the school principal is critical in terms of fostering a team approach as well as creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students.

Link to the GECDSB Strategic Plan

We are committed to fulfilling the Greater Essex County District School Board's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

Greater Essex County District School Board Strategic Priorities
Our Vision: Building tomorrow together.
Our Mission: Leading excellence in public education by creating confident learners, engaging diverse communities and demonstrating ethical stewardship.

The three strategic priorities focus on student success and well-being are:

1. Creating confident learners through personalized learning, supportive environments and trusting relationships.
2. Engaging communities through equitable and reflective practices that respect and honour our diversity.
3. Demonstrating ethical stewardship through thoughtful and intentional use of financial, human, environmental and community resources.
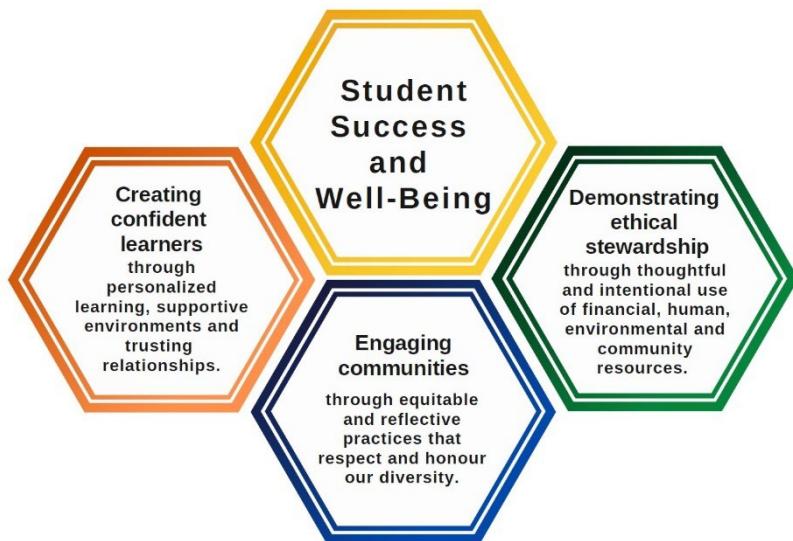
Standard 3—Roles and Responsibilities

Standard 3 - Roles and Responsibilities

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide the public with information on roles and responsibilities in the area of special education.

The following information is taken from Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Resource Guide 2017, pp A10 – A14.

Implementing the policies and regulations related to special education is a collaborative process requiring input and cooperation from many levels. It is important for parent/guardian, community and educators to understand their roles and responsibilities in order to provide high quality programs and services for our students with special needs. Below is a summary of the roles and responsibilities of key players in the delivery of special education provincially and locally:

The Ministry of Education (London District Office 1-800-265-4221)

- defines, through the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda, the legal obligations of school boards regarding the provision of special education programs and services, and prescribes the categories and definitions of exceptionality;
- ensures that school boards provide appropriate special education programs and services for their exceptional pupils;
- establishes the funding for special education through the structure of the funding model. The model consists of the Foundation Grant, the Special Education Grant, and other special purpose grants;
- requires school boards to report on their expenditures for special education; sets province-wide standards for curriculum and reporting of achievement;
- requires school boards to maintain special education plans, review them annually, and submit amendments to the Ministry;
- requires school boards to establish Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs);
- establishes Special Education Tribunals to hear disputes between parents/ guardians and school boards regarding the identification and placement of exceptional pupils;
- establishes a provincial Ministry Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) to advise the Minister of Education on matters related to special education programs and services;
- operates Provincial and Demonstration Schools for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind, or who have severe learning disabilities.

The District School Board (519-255-3200)

- establishes school board policy and practices that comply with the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;

- monitors school compliance with the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- requires staff to comply with the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- provides appropriately qualified staff to provide programs and services for the exceptional pupils of the board;
- obtains the appropriate funding and reports on the expenditures for special education;
- develops and maintains a special education plan that is amended from time to time to meet the current needs of the exceptional pupils of the Board;
- reviews the plan annually and submits amendments to the Minister of Education;
- provides statistical reports to the ministry as required and as requested;
- prepares a parent guide to provide parents/guardians with information about special education programs, services and procedures;
- establishes one or more IPRCs to identify exceptional pupils and determine appropriate placements for them;
- establishes a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC);
- provides professional development to staff on special education.

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

- makes recommendations to the Board with respect to any matter affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the Board;
- participates in the Board's annual review of its special education plan;
- participates in the Board's annual budget process as it relates to special education;
- reviews the financial statements of the Board as they relate to special education; and
- provides information to parents/guardians, as requested.

The School Principal

- carries out duties as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda, and through Board policies;
- communicates Ministry of Education and school board expectations to staff;
- ensures that appropriately qualified staff are assigned to teach special education classes;
- communicates Board policies and procedures about special education to staff, students, and parents/guardians;
- ensures that the identification and placement of exceptional pupils, through an IPRC, is done according to the procedures outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and Board policies;
- consults with parents/guardians and with school board staff to determine the most appropriate program for exceptional pupils;
- ensures the development, implementation, and review of a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), including a transition plan, according to provincial requirements;

- ensures that parents/guardians are consulted in the development of their child's IEP and that they are provided with a copy of the IEP;
- ensures the delivery of the program as set out in the IEP; and ensures that appropriate assessments are requested if necessary and that parent/guardian consent is obtained.

The Classroom Teacher

- carries out duties as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- follows Board policies and procedures regarding special education;
- maintains up-to-date knowledge of special education practices;
- where appropriate, works with special education staff and parents/guardians to develop the IEP for an exceptional pupil;
- provides the program for the exceptional pupil in the regular class, as outlined in the IEP;
- communicates the student's progress to parents/guardians; and works with other school board staff to review and update the student's IEP.

The Special Education Teacher, in addition to the responsibilities listed above under "The Teacher"

- holds qualifications, in accordance with Regulation 298, to teach special education;
- monitors the student's progress with reference to the IEP and modifies the program as necessary;
- assists in providing educational assessments for exceptional pupils.

The Early Childhood Educator

The Early Childhood Educator, in coordination and cooperation with the classroom teacher:
- plans for and provides education to children in Kindergarten;
- observes, monitors, and assesses the development of Kindergarten children;
- maintains a healthy physical, emotional, and social learning environment in the classroom;
- communicates with families;
- performs duties assigned by the principal with respect to the Kindergarten program.

The Parent/Guardian

- is familiar with and informed about Board policies and procedures in areas that affect the child;
- participates in Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs), parent-teacher conferences, and other relevant school activities;
- participates in the development of the IEP;

- is acquainted with the school staff working with the student;
- supports the student at home;
- works with the school principal and educators to solve problems;
- is responsible for the student's attendance at school.

The Student

- complies with the requirements as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- complies with Board policies and procedures;
- participates in IPRCs, parent-teacher conferences, and other activities, as appropriate.

Standard 4—Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies

Standard 4 - Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide details of the board's early identification procedures and intervention strategies to the ministry and to the public.

Preschool Children partnerships between the GECDSB and community agencies have been strengthened over the years and certainly serve as a strong preliminary step in identifying children "at risk" or children with varied needs.

- At the preschool level numerous agencies may be involved, assessments and reports may be available and parents/guardians may have begun partnering with other professionals to ensure the needs of their children will be met. Preschool identification assessment and programming is a collaborative effort between parent/caregiver, school and agencies. Early identification procedures and programs are reinforced and strengthened by ongoing dialogue and appropriate responses.

- Kindergarten registration occurs in February at the home school. As a part of the registration process, families complete a registration form with the support of school personnel that provides useful information for the planning of educational services. Information about the child's growth and development as well as health related issues, for example allergies, and any community involvement is collected. Embedded in the registration is both a survey asking parents how they are receiving supports and services and a link for parents to request that board special education personnel reach out to them directly.

- New this year a Virtual Welcome to Kindergarten Evening for Parents of students with special education needs was held. This event explained the boards process, services, support model, SLP, Psychology, Vision and DHH Itinerant teachers, Behaviour Team all explained their services. In addition, community partners from John McGivney Children Centre and Children First explained their services and supports.

  - In many cases, early learners with special needs are referred to the school through local community agencies such as Children First, John McGivney Children's Centre, Talk2 Me or regional autism service providers.
  - Once school begins in September, the classroom teacher leads the team, if applicable, to provide continuous and ongoing assessment of the student's growth and development in the cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical areas to parents/guardians. School assessments will guide the teacher in implementing Tier One strategies. When concerns arise about a student's development, the teacher will consult with the Learning Support Teacher (LST). The principal may engage

other special education staff for assistance such as the Special Education Coordinator, Speech and Language, Psychological Services or Social Work school-based teams. In some cases, a referral to the School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS) may be in order.

Speech and Language Services Model

- When issues around speech or language development arise our Speech-Language Services staff will become involved. Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are professionals with training at the Masters degree level in communication development and disorders. They provide service in accordance with the standards of professional practice of The College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario and adhere to the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) and associated legislation including the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA).

Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies: Scope of SLP Services 2025-2026

SLP Services at the GEDCSB are based on a model of Early Assessment and Intervention for students between JK and Grade 1, utilizing all tiers of intervention. Interventions are aligned to the Kindergarten and Primary curriculum, as well as to supporting IEP development (if applicable).

Early Assessment and Intervention Model Primary Focus: JK-Grade 1

- Provide Supports in classroom for Tier 1, 2, and 3 as prioritized with school administration
- Teacher/Staff Consultation
- Small Group in-class interventions by SLP
- Specific interventions requiring pull out of student(s)
- Formal Assessments JK-Grade 1
- Informal Assessments JK-Grade 1
- Articulation Blocks (JK- Grade 1; up to 8 sessions – maximum 2 blocks for a student)

Ongoing SLP Services: JK-Grade 12

- Meet with LST's and school administration
- Report writing
- GAINS/STEP consultation/collaboration
- System level PD presentations
- School-based PLC's
- Articulation therapy for Grade 2 students (3-6 sessions; if have not previously had 2 blocks in JK to Grade 1)
- Other consultations in the elementary and secondary panels

General consideration for SLP Services

- Students in JK to Grade 1 will be eligible to receive individual assessment and small group direct interventions to facilitate łanguage development
- Students in Grade 2 may receive one block of direct contact articulation therapy on a case-by-case basis
- Beyond Grade 1, assessment and consultation may occur based on student needs on a case-by-case basis.
- Students in Grade 2 and above will not receive direct SLP interventions, but SLP consultation will be available, as well as speech and language assessments on a case-by-case basis.

School SLPs will be available for consultative services in the GAINS, and STEPS classrooms for communication needs.

Examples of assessments that our Speech-Language Pathology Services provide for Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention include the Bracken Basic Concept Scale, 3rd edition (BBCS-3R/BBCS:E), the Oral Language Acquisition Inventory, 2nd edition, the Kindergarten Language Screening Test, 2nd edition, the Emerging Literacy Language Assessment (ELLA), the Test of Pragmatic Language, 2nd Edition (TOPL-2), the Expressive Language Test 2 (ELT-2:NU), Goldman-Fristoe Test of Articulation (GFTA-3), Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF-5), and the Clinical Evaluation of Language Foundations Preschool (CELF-P3).

Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies

- Assessment of a student includes discussion with parents/guardians and school staff, observation of the child, review of school records/history, and individual formal (standardized) and informal testing. Intervention services may include individual and small group therapy, classroom-based support, and home practice materials.
- Some general reading interventions, screeners and diagnostics may include Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, Lexia Core5/Power Up, Empower, Acadience, IDAPEL (screeners), Quick Phonics Screener, Heggerty, Fondation phonologique, Pratique Ponemique and/or small group instruction and guided practice.

Behaviour Support Team Service Model

- The Greater Essex County District School Board is committed to providing learning opportunities in a safe and nurturing environment. From time to time, students may present complex challenging behaviours or mental health concerns that require early intervention and/or intensive short-term support from a multi-disciplinary team beyond the school-based team.
- The GECDSB Behaviour Support Team includes a Supervisor of Behaviour Support Services (a Registered Behaviour Analyst), Registered Behaviour Analysts (RBA–Ontario), a Behaviour Management Service Worker (BMSW), Facilitators-Inclusion,

Applied Behaviour Analysis Facilitators (ABAF) and Tier 3 Itinerant Support Teams, each team is composed of a teacher and a Student Support Worker.

- Members of the Behaviour Support Team provide direct and consultative intervention services to the students referred to them for support while working to build capacity with staff across the system around strategies that promote positive behaviour.
- Special Education Coordinators, along with consultation from the school principal, facilitate the referral to the Behaviour Intake Team for additional short-term intensive support. Registered Behaviour Analysts (RBA's) allocated by family of schools typically do the initial consultative assessment to determine which level of team support is a best fit for the current need of the student. Students do not need to be identified as Exceptional to receive services from the Behaviour Support Team.

Transition Service Navigator

- New for the 2024–2025 school year—and continuing into 2025–2026 through Responsive Education Program funding—is the introduction of the Transition Service Navigator position. This initiative is designed to improve educational outcomes for students with special education needs by enhancing transition practices as students enter, move through, and exit the school system. The Service Navigator works collaboratively across the Board and with community agencies and employers to support students with special education needs and/or disabilities as they transition to post-secondary pathways. The role also includes sharing best practices, tools, and resources to promote consistency and success in transition planning.
- Several impactful initiatives were launched or expanded this year as part of the Service Navigator's work. These include the successful launch of **Project SEARCH**, an employment-readiness program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the coordination of the **High School Students with Intellectual Disabilities Integration Program (HSSIDIP)**, which increases access to meaningful employment opportunities for students with developmental disabilities. The Service Navigator also planned, coordinated, and hosted a **Virtual Information Session for Parents of New Students with Special Education Needs**, providing families with critical information early in the registration process.
- Further, the Service Navigator has actively participated on the **Community of Practice for Coordinated Service Planning** and the **Transition to Adulthood Planning Committee**, both of which strengthen regional collaboration and planning. This year also saw the co-hosting of the **Planning for Success Information Session**, aimed at helping families understand the range of post-secondary options and supports available to students with developmental disabilities. Enhancements to the student registration process were made through the addition of a family survey and direct contact links, which allow the Board to better understand and prepare for students' individual needs. A new **Community Special Education** section was also developed and added to the Board's website to centralize resources and information for families and community partners.

- **The website can be accessed at: [Link to GECDSB Service Navigator.](#)**
- Additionally, the Service Navigator has played a vital role in supporting new families arriving from out of town or from outside the country. In many cases, these families reached out before having permanent addresses or the ability to register. The Service Navigator provided guidance, answered questions, gathered necessary data, and initiated early transition planning to ensure a smooth start for students upon arrival.
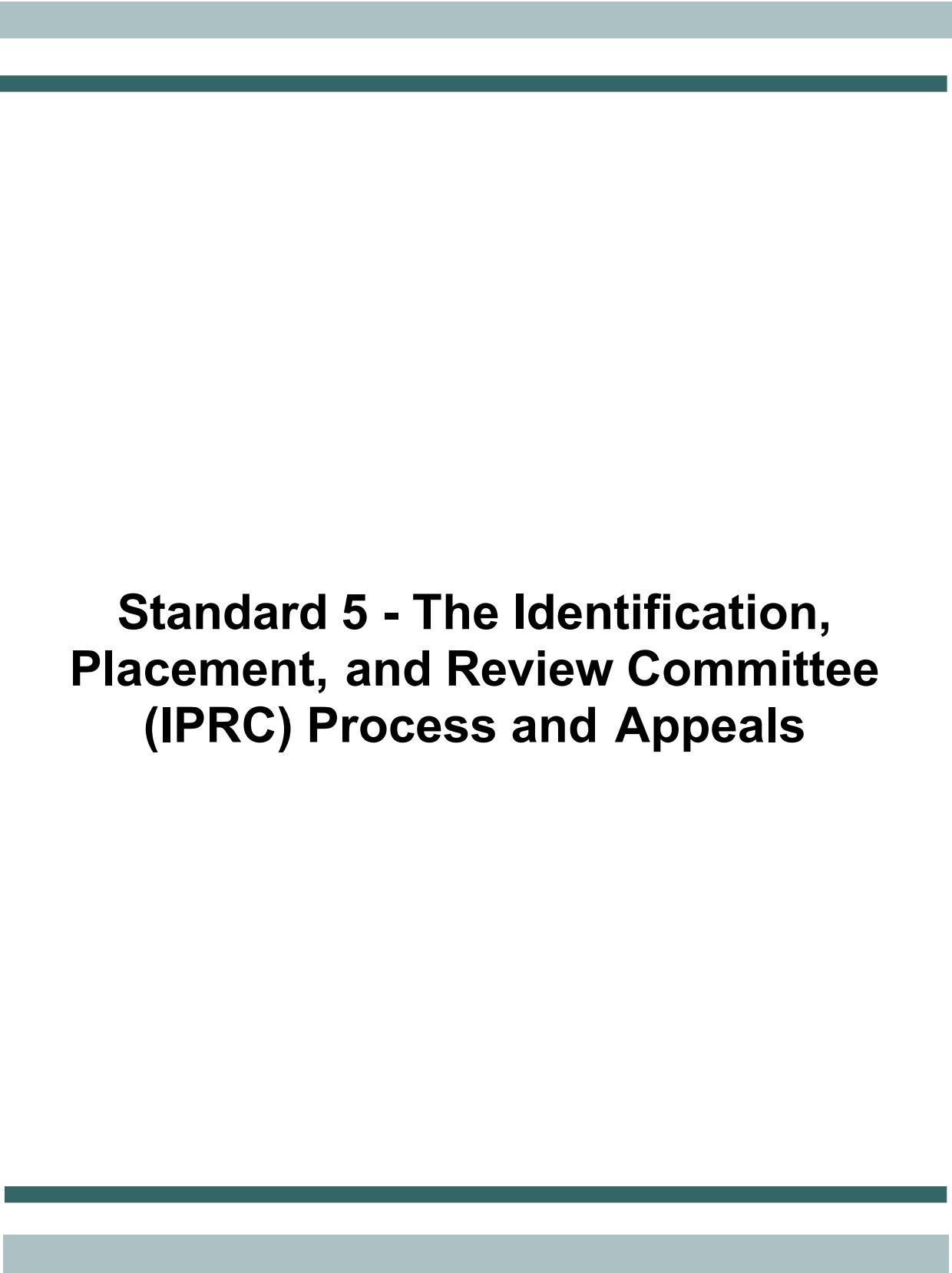
Standard 5 - The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals

Standard 5 - The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide details of the board's IPRC process to the ministry and to the public.

- Regulation 181/98 requires that all school Boards set up Identification Placement Review Committees (IPRCs). The GECDSB has a well-established process which identified approximately 3965 students or 13% of the total number of students within the GECDSB, deemed as Exceptional.

- The Greater Essex County District School Board has a total of 5845 students on an IEP. Of those 5845 students, there are 1880 non-identified IEPs, which makes up 32% of that total, while 68% of students have an IEP.

- In the 2024-2025 school year, as of March 31, 2025, a total of 299 initial IPRCS were conducted. There were 819 IPRC reviews held (this number does not include parents who waived their right to hold an IPRC Review meeting) during this same time period.

- There were zero (0) parent/guardian appeals filed last year with our Board.

- Parents/guardians and students, 16 years of age or older, shall be full partners with regard to assessment, identification and placement decisions. As full partners parents/guardians and students 16 years of age or older will be made aware of their rights in the entire process including the right to mediation and/or appeal.

- Upon the completion of the initial identification process, continued support and partnership between home and school is strongly encouraged.

- The Individual Education Plan (IEP) will assist parents/guardians, administrators, teachers, and educational support staff in developing common goals for students. The GECDSB endorses a model of special education that supports and encourages partnerships between school, family and community.

IPRC Statement of Decision

- The Statement of Decision must state whether the IPRC has identified the student as exceptional and indicate the placement. The placement does not mean the school location, rather the type of placement, for example, regular classroom, fully self- contained etc. If deemed Exceptional then the categories and definitions of the exceptionality must be stated as they are found in the Section "Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities."

- The Statement of Decision must also include a description of the student's

strengths and needs. The IPRC decision regarding placement and the reasons for special education class placement will be stated. Stressed in Regulation 181 is the requirement that the IPRC shall place a student in a regular class when such placement meets the student's needs and is in accordance with parental/ guardian preferences. This regular class option must be explored as the first option at all IPRC meetings.

- Parents/guardians or students over the age of 18 will sign the IPRC.

- The original IPRC statement is to be placed in the Ontario Student Record (OSR) and copies are distributed to the parent/guardian and to the Board's Special Education Department.

- Throughout the IPRC process, we encourage parents/guardians to meet with school personnel to resolve any outstanding issues or misunderstandings. Home and school communication is critical at all stages of the IPRC process.

- When parents/guardians, or students over the age of 18 disagree with the IPRC decision, they have the right to request that a meeting be reconvened within 15 days to reconsider the IPRC decision. Prior to moving to the appeal process, as outlined in Ministry Regulations, mediation of   the process is facilitated by the Superintendent of Special Education.

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

Process Leading to IPRC

- On-going assessment of the student's strengths and needs by a teacher

- Discuss with the classroom teacher next steps and interventions/strategies in the regular class

- A possible meeting with the School-based-team (Principal, Learning Support Teacher, Teacher, Parent) to determine possible changes to the academic program, homework assignments, and accommodations (i.e. allow for extra time, quiet working environment, reduce writing requirements, use of a scribe or assistive technology

- Consultation with the Special Education Services to review your child's profile (standardized assessment may be recommended.)

The IPRC Meeting

- The Parent/Guardian along with the school's review team meet to determine exceptionality and placement as defined by the Ministry of Education.

- If the student warrants a formal identification, their strengths and needs are

determined from assessment data presented at the meeting.

- IPRC documentation includes basic documentation on the student, current school, strengths and needs assessment data and dates, and the student's placement (i.e., grade seven and/or special education class)

- The regular class is always considered the first option

- Direction from parents in terms of the student's placement is always considered and respected by the IPRC committee

Following the IPRC Meeting

- Strengths and needs statements from the IPRC Statement of Decision are used to create an Individual Education Plan (IEP)

- Student receives accommodations and/or modifications to the curriculum so that opportunities for success are provided

- On-going assessment of the student is determined by the criteria set out in the Individual Education Plan

- Changes are made to the student's IEP as their goals are achieved and new goals are created

- The Parent/Guardian along with the school's review team meet at an annual IPRC meeting to consider updated assessment data, current and future placement options and to review IEP goals

- Parents may waive their right to attend the IPRC review; however, attendance is encouraged

- IPRC reviews will not be waived when the student is in grade 7 or 8

Note: Learning Support Teachers (LSTs), Special Education Services staff and Program Department staff may consult with teachers about in-class accommodations and supports for higher achievement without parent/guardian consent. However, it is strongly encouraged that all plans or strategies to support students and enhance achievement or behaviour be shared with the parent/guardian. The partnership between home and school is critical in all stages of the identification process.

Standard 6—Educational and Other Assessments

Standard 6 - Educational and Other Assessments

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide details of the board's assessment policies and procedures to the ministry and to make parents aware of the types of assessment tools used by the school board, the ways in which assessments are obtained by IPRCs, and the ways in which assessments are used.

Beyond teacher observations, classroom evaluation or student performance and reporting, it is sometimes necessary to employ assessment tools to further delineate student strengths and areas of need. All assessment data is viewed in conjunction with reports from teachers and parent/guardian(s) in order to get a complete profile of the learner.

The purpose of the assessment is:
- To answer specific questions or concerns;
- To build an accurate picture of strengths and needs;
- To assist in planning an effective program;
- To help parents/guardians formulate an understanding of the student's learning potential;
- To provide documentation required for identification as an exceptional student.

A range of assessment strategies are used to develop appropriate programs and interventions for students. The intent of any assessment is to assist the student by providing staff with insights into the student's strengths and instructional needs.

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) considers assessment to be an integral part of the instructional process. Classroom teachers and Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) regularly use educational assessments to evaluate student achievement and student progress.

Practitioners from Psychological Services and Speech-Language Pathology Services identify and conduct specialized assessments and review assessment reports from community practitioners to determine learning needs to inform programming. A comprehensive assessment system may include family/educator/student report measures, observation, screening, and/or use of standardized assessment tools to develop appropriate programs and interventions for students.

The Process for Parent/Guardian Consent

Informed consent must be obtained for Registered Behaviour Analysts (RBA), Psychological Services and Speech Language Pathology staff to access the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR).

Information to be shared includes, but is not limited to, that which is contained in the

OSR. This information is obtained and used only for the improvement of instruction and other education of the student in accordance with the Education Act, (R.S.O. 1990. S.266(2)) and is collected, transmitted, retained, and disposed of confidentially in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (R.S.O. 1990 c. M. 56). Informed consent from the parent(s)/guardian(s) for students under eighteen (18) years of age is obtained for all referrals for assessment by school personnel to Registered Behaviour Analysts, Psychological Services, and Speech-Language Pathology.

Consent for Sharing Information and Protection of Privacy

All information is collected, stored and shared in accordance with the Education Act, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) and other legislation that governs the use of personal information.

A separate consent form, Consent to the Disclosure, Transmittal and/or Examination of Records or Information, must be signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) (or by the student if sixteen (16) years of age or older and who has been withdrawn from parental control) to share information with outside agencies.

Communication of Assessment Information

Upon completion of an assessment, Registered Behaviour Analysts, Speech-Language Pathologists, Psychologists, Psychological Associates, and/or Psychometrists discuss the results with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and, where appropriate, the student.

A written confidential report is shared with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and is copied for the OSR with parent(s)/guardian(s) consent. A copy of the psychological report is held in the central files. Central files are secure files stored at the GECDSB board office. In alignment with Registered Health Professions Act (PHIPA), only members of the Psychological Services team may access these locked files. Communication of a diagnosis (Psychological Services) is a controlled act in psychological practice under the Registered Health Professions Act (RHPA), 1991. The Act requires that diagnoses (e.g., learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, etc.) be formulated and communicated directly to the parent(s)/guardian(s) by a Psychologist or a Psychological Associate who is licensed to do so.

Speech and Language Assessments

Assessment Tools

Speech Tools (Articulation, Motor Speech, Fluency, Voice)
- Goldman-Fristoe Test of Articulation 3 (GFTA-3);
- Bracken Basic Concept Scale – Third Edition;

- Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language – Second Edition (CASL-2);
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Preschool – Third Edition (CELF-P3);
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Fifth Edition (CELF-5);
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Screening Test – Fifth Edition (CELF-5 Screener)

Early Functional Communication Profile
- Emerging Literacy & Language Assessment Record Form (ELLA);
- Expressive Vocabulary Test – Third Edition (EVT 3);
- Language Processing Test – Elementary (LPT 3);
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Fifth Fourth Edition (PPVT 5);
- Preschool Language Assessment Instrument Profile (PLAI 2);
- Preschool Language Scales Fifth Edition (PLS-5);
- Preschool Language Scales Screening Test Fifth Edition (PLS-4 Screener);
- Test for Auditory Comprehension of Language – Third Edition (TACL 3);

Social Language Tools (Pragmatics, Social Communication)
- Social Language Development Test – Elementary: Normative Update (SLDT-E:NU);
- Social Language Development Test – Adolescent: Normative Update (SLDT-A:NU);
- Test of Pragmatic Language – Second Edition (TOPL 2);

What Do They Measure?
- These tests measure all aspects of speech (articulation, motor speech, stuttering, voice), language (vocabulary, grammar/syntax, linguistic concepts, memory, narrative development), phonological processing, and social language (pragmatics, social communication). Areas measured address both comprehension and expression of oral and written language.

Qualifications of Assessors
- Registered Speech-Language Pathologists (Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA).

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Consent and Feedback
- Informed consent from the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be received prior to the assessment for students under eighteen (18) years of age, or from the student if eighteen (18) years of age or older or sixteen (16) and withdrawn from parental control.
- Results are communicated to the parent(s)/guardian(s) by a Speech-Language Pathologist.
- The parent(s)/guardian(s) receives a copy of the assessment report.

Information Sharing and Privacy
- If permission is granted, results are shared with the school team.
- The parent(s)/guardian(s) is legally able to withhold permission for a Registered Health provider to share a copy of the report with the school. No aspects of the report, including recommendations, are shared with the school.

Professional to disclose information to others.
- A written report is also provided for the OSR with parent(s)/guardian(s) permission. A release of information must be signed by parent(s)/guardian(s) to share information with other agencies.
- All speech and language files and records are maintained following the procedures outlined in the RHPA.

Psychological Services Assessments

Assessment Tools

Measures of Intellectual Functioning
- Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence – 2nd Edition (CTONI-2)
- Differential Ability Scales (DAS);
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales – 5th Edition (SB-5);
- Test of Nonverbal Intelligence- 4th Edition (TONI-4);
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – 4th Edition (WAIS-IV);
- Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence – 4th Edition (WPPSI-IV);
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – 5th Edition (WISC-V);

Psychological Processes Related to Learning (e.g., Memory, Attention, Phonological/Language, Perceptual-Motor, Visual-Spatial, Executive Functioning)
- Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test – 2nd Edition (Bender Gestalt II);
- Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration – 6th Edition (VMI 6);
- Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning – 2nd Edition (BRIEF-2);
- Brown Executive Functioning/Attention Scales;
- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing – 2nd Edition (CTOPP-2);
- Conners – 4th Edition (Conners 4);
- Delis-Kaplan Executive Functioning System (DKEFS);
- Expressive Vocabulary Test – 3rd Edition (EVT-3);
- NEPSY-II: A Developmental Neuropsychological Assessment - 2nd Edition (NEPSY-II);
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – 5th Edition (PPVT-5);
- Rey Complex Figure Test (Rey)
- Comprehensive Executive Functioning Inventory (CEFI)

Academic Achievement
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – 4th Edition (WIAT-4);

Adaptive Skills
- Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System – 3rd Edition (ABAS-3);
- Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales – 3rd Edition (VABS-3).

Personality, Behavioural, and Social-Emotional Functioning
- Conners 4
- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule – 2nd Edition (ADOS-2);
- Autism Spectrum Rating Scales (ASRS);
- Beck Depression Inventory - 2nd Edition (BDI-II);
- Children's Depression Inventory – 2nd Edition (CDI 2);
- Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children – 2nd Edition (MASC-2)
  - Behavior Assessment System for Children 3rd Edition (BASC-3)
  - Beck Youth Inventory-2 (BYI-2)

What Do They Measure?
- Psychological assessment tools are selected to provide information on a student's intellectual functioning, cognitive and processing skills, attitudes or interests, and other behavioural and social-emotional skills that are relevant to the development of academic skills, adaptive and life-functioning skills, and overall adaptation and adjustment.
- In conjunction with other sources of information, assessment information may lead to a psychological diagnosis or recommendation of formal identification. Diagnoses are communicated by members of the College of Psychologists who are legally authorized to do so.

Qualifications of Assessors
- Registered Psychologists and Psychological Associates; Psychometrists supervised by members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario (all under the RHPA)

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Consent and Feedback
- Informed consent from the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be received prior to the assessment for students under eighteen (18) years of age or from the student themselves if they are eighteen (18) years of age or older or over the age of sixteen (16) and withdrawn from parental control.
- Results are communicated by a Psychological Services staff member to the individual who provided consent for the assessment.
- The parent(s)/guardian(s) receives a copy of the assessment report.
- Communication of Diagnosis is a Restricted Act under the RHPA. Diagnoses (e.g., learning disability) must be communicated by a member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario who is legally authorized to do so.

Information Sharing and Privacy
- If permission is granted, results are shared with the school team.
- The parent(s)/guardian(s) is legally able to withhold permission for a Registered Health Professional to disclose information to others. No report or information regarding the results of the assessment are provided to the school
- A written report is also provided for the OSR with parent(s)/guardian(s) permission.
- A release of information form must be signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) to share information with other agencies.
- All psychological files and records are maintained following the procedures outlined in the RHPA in a digital Client Management System requiring multiple access requirements.

Criteria for Managing Wait Times – Centralized List

Strategies to Manage Psychological Assessment Wait Times

- When the psychologist or psychological associate completes a consultation with the school, they will determine if a student will be recommended for an assessment.
- Students recommended for assessment will be placed on the centralized assessment waitlist for Psychological Services staff.
- The centralized list is prioritized by the following criteria: complexity of case, duration of concerns, current performance, intervention history, and readiness. Students will be ranked on each criterion into Low, Moderate, and HIGH, with the total score for each student determining their rank on the centralized waitlist. Assessments on the waitlist will be assigned to staff by the Manager of Psychological Services.
- Professional Student Services staff are responsible for completing assessments and managing the waitlist for their assigned assessments from the centralized list. Waitlists and wait times are monitored on an ongoing basis by the Manager of Psychological Services.

Registered Behaviour Analyst (RBA) Assessments

Assessment
- Behaviour Analysts perform a variety of assessments at different levels when aligned to support a school team and a student. These include Functional Behaviour Assessments, Functional Analysis, and may include other questionnaires and surveys to measure baseline skills prior to program implementation.

Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA):
- An FBA is an overarching process of evaluating the environment that surrounds a student to support determining what is behind the presentation of certain

behaviours, in order to increase the likelihood of determining possible solutions. The ultimate goal is to use observation, data collection, information gained from caregivers and support team members, and rapport building with the student to support an understanding of the many functions a particular behaviour or set of behaviours may be accessing.

- An FBA is supported through a Bio-Psycho-Social lens, considering the biological, psychological, and social contributors and addressing them through both preventative practices and skill development programs. Consequence programs that focus on positive reinforcement are meant to increase the likelihood that skill development programs are effective. FBAs can be supported by a school team that includes teachers, school staff, service providers, and family, but is ultimately led by a Registered Behaviour Analyst.

Functional Analysis (FA) or Practical Functional Analysis (PFA)
- A Functional Analysis is a more systematic and controlled analysis of a certain behaviour or group of behaviours. It can only be conducted by a Behaviour Analyst or a Psychologist with explicit training in FAs. The environment around an FA is highly controlled through the assessment process to determine whether there are environmental conditions that lead to greater success for a student to optimize safety and learning. The FA process can be challenging to implement in schools due to many factors outside of environmental control, meaning that adapted methods are often considered (such as the Practical Functional Assessment). An FA is considered to have greater risks and requires explicit informed parent consent.

Other Assessment Tools
- Behaviour Analysts utilize a number of qualitative assessment tools, which include but are not limited to reinforcement surveys, motivation assessment scales, interviews, and skill evaluation forms that may be tied to specific skill development programs.

Qualifications of RBAs
- Behaviour Analysts must be Registered in Ontario with the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts. They must have at least a Master's degree, pass an exam, and a complete a number of supervised practice hours as per the College. Many RBAs also hold dual qualifications as a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst, but this is not mandatory in Ontario at this time.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Consent
- Though the services of a Behaviour Analyst are dually to the school team and the student, informed consent from the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be received prior to the initiation of services for students under eighteen (18) years of age, or from the student themselves if they are eighteen (18) years of age or older or over the age of sixteen (16) and withdrawn from parental control.

- Consultation Notes and Behaviour Intervention Plans that are derived from the assessments above are shared with the school team supporting the student. The parent(s)/guardian(s) receives a copy of the assessment report.

Information Sharing and Privacy
- Consultation reports completed by the Behaviour Analyst are shared with the school team, and a copy is provided to the parent(s)/guardian(s) as outlined within the consent process.
- A written copy of all formal reports is also provided for the OSR.
- A release of information form must be signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) to share information with other agencies.
- All RBA files and records are maintained following the procedures outlined in the RHPA in a digital Client Management System requiring multiple access requirements.

Standard 7—Specialized Health Support Services in School Settings

Standard 7 - Specialized Health Support Services in School Settings

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide details of the board's specialized health support services to the ministry and to the public.

Students with complex health conditions and disabilities may rely on health supports to attend school. Some students may have developmental delays or other conditions that do not affect their ability to attend school but may affect their ability to fully benefit from educational routines.

Ontario Health atHome (OHaH) provides various health services in schools, including nursing support, to enable children to attend school despite medical needs. These services are designed to support students with short or long-term illnesses, disabilities, or complex conditions. Services are available in school for eligible students who require medical and/or rehabilitative assistance to enable them to attend school, participate in school routines and receive instruction.

These supports are provided on a priority-needs basis and children with complex needs requiring assistance in order to safely attend school are the top priority. A care coordinator will assess the student's needs and create a supportive care plan for the individual.

What services are included?

Through the school health support services program in public schools, your care coordinator works with you and your child to develop a care plan to support in-school access to a wide range of professional health services, including:

- Nursing
- Diet and nutrition counseling
- Information and referral services
- Coordination of services

Please note: Therapy services are not offered through Ontario Health atHome. If you are looking for school-based therapy services in public schools, you can find the information through the following webpage: [Link to Provincial Children's Treatment Centres](#)

Is my child eligible?

Any child or youth is eligible to receive care through the school health support services program in public schools if the student:
- Has a valid Ontario health card

- Is registered as a student at a school as defined under the *Education Act*
- Would experience a significant disruption in school attendance, instruction or participation without the support of this program

Referrals for public school programs

A referral from the student's school principal or special education representative is required. Parents may contact either the school or Ontario Health atHome to begin the process. Eligible services will not be initiated until a referral is received from the school and an assessment and care plan have been completed by a care coordinator.

Standard 8—Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

Standard 8: Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

Purpose of the Standard:
To make information on the categories and definitions of exceptionalities available to the public, including parents and community associations.

The following information is taken from *Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Resource Guide (2017).* **These categories and definitions of exceptionalities are provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education.**

Behaviour

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

a) an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;
b) excessive fears or anxieties;
c) a tendency to compulsive reaction;
d) an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Behaviour

- the need for formal identification is based on long standing difficulties;
- children who might benefit from formal identification have severe behavioural and social-emotional difficulties that are not effectively managed with typical classroom strategies that teachers would regularly employ. In addition, behavioural concerns are of significant duration and the previous efforts of school-based personnel assisted by psychological services have met with limited or non-enduring success;
- typically, these children would meet DSM-V diagnostic criteria as diagnosed by a qualified psychologist or medical practitioner for one or more of the following:
    - Oppositional-Defiant Disorder
    - Conduct Disorder
    - Mood Disorders - e.g. depression
    - Anxiety Disorder
        - selective mutism
        - obsessive-compulsive disorder
        - social phobia
        - post-traumatic stress disorder
        - general anxiety disorder
- assessment measures used to reach a diagnosis would typically include the use of psychometric instruments, rating scales, observation, and interviews

with parents/guardians and teachers.

Communication - Autism

A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:
   a) disturbances in: rate of educational development; ability to relate to the environment; mobility;   perception, speech and language;
   b) lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Communication - Autism

- diagnosed with one of the pervasive developmental disorders/autism spectrum disorder by a qualified psychologist or medical practitioner.

Communication - Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

- a permanent hearing loss, as documented by a current audiogram by a registered audiologist,   that has a significant impact on the student's learning.

Communication - Language Impairment

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical or sensory factors, and which may:

   a) involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and
   b) include one or more of the following:
      a. language delay;
      b. dysfluency;
      c. voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Language Impairment

- a language impairment to the extent that, in the opinion of a qualified speech and language pathologist, significant modification to program is required.

Communication - Speech Impairment

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Speech Impairment
- an impairment or disorder in articulation, voice or fluency that significantly interferes with communication, social interaction and academic progress to the extent that, in the opinion of a qualified speech/language pathologist, augmentative/alternative communication device is required.
  Examples:
  a) a student with apraxia (motor planning) who is so unintelligible that picture communication symbols are necessary to supplement oral communication;
  b) a student whose stuttering is so severe during oral presentations in the classroom that written communication becomes more effective;
  c) a student with a cleft palate whose speech is so unintelligible due to hyper nasality that a Digivox is programmed with routine classroom request.

Communication – Learning Disability

The Ministry of Education defines a learning disability as one of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills that:
- Affects the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are at least in the average range;
- Results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range) and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support;
- Results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and work habits and learning skills;
- May typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; memory and attention; processing speed; perceptual-motor processing; visual-spatial processing; executive functions (e.g., self-regulation of behavior and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making);
- May be associated with difficulties in social interaction (e.g., difficulty in understanding social norms or the point of view of others); with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities;

- Is not the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural differences; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Learning Disability
- This is a learning disorder that affects one or more ways that a student takes in, stores, or uses information. This is a "life-long" condition, but can be addressed by identifying the individual's strengths and potential compensatory strategies.
- Individuals receiving an identification of Communication: Learning Disability often have at least average levels of abilities in some key areas, such as language abilities and/or nonverbal/perceptual skills, as assessed on accepted measures of learning and intelligence (e.g., Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Fifth Edition [WISC-5]). In all cases the student is not performing at their full potential in fundamental academic abilities such as reading, writing, and/or arithmetic. The student's difficulties may sometimes be masked by the tremendous amount of effort they exert to successfully perform these basic tasks. The presence of a learning disability may also be reflected in more "nonacademic" areas, such as executive functioning (e.g., planning, organizing, self-regulation, or monitoring activities) and/or social interactions. A Learning Disability may sometimes occur in the presence of other disorders (diagnosed or undiagnosed) or with another area of exceptionality.
- An identification of Communication: Learning Disability can only be made in the absence of other factors and/or circumstances that may adversely impact upon academic achievement (e.g., generalized intellectual delays, visual and/or auditory deficits, socio-economic factors, cultural differences, ESL/ ELL factors, lack of motivation, or gaps in learning).

Intellectual - Giftedness

An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Intellectual Giftedness
- In many cases, children who may meet the Ministry's criteria for giftedness are viewed (considered) by their parent/guardian and/or classroom teacher as more advanced than their peers before any formal type of assessment occurs.
- Within the GECDSB, a two-step process is used to aid in identifying giftedness; all Grade Two students (with parental/guardian consent) participate in the Insight cognitive test; and on the basis of the score obtained (i.e., at 130 or

beyond the 98th percentile) the school will consult with the psychological services personnel assigned to each school. Students with a score at 130 or beyond the 98th percentile on the Insight Ability score will be administered the Gifted Rating Scale (GRS). The GRS will be administered to the classroom teacher after a Form 3 Request for Consultation Form is completed by the students parent. Upon completion of the GRS, staff from the psychological services staff will provide the school and the students' parents with a Consultation Report indicating if the student meets the criteria for identification of gifted. On some occasions, the psychological services staff may recommend an individual cognitive assessment when there is variance between the cognitive assessment results on the Insight testing and the GRS.

- The same criteria may be applied to external psychological assessment reports provided by the   parents/guardians.

Intellectual - Mild Intellectual Disability

A learning disorder characterized by:
a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum   modification and supportive service;
a) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development;
b) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Intellectual - Mild Intellectual Disability
- a mild to borderline cognitive impairment which results in well below academic achievement in all   areas and the need for considerable curriculum modifications and/or alternate specialized programming and;
- mild to significant adaptive behaviour deficits

Intellectual - Developmental Disability

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

a) an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities   because of slow intellectual development;
b) an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;
c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Intellectual Developmental Disability
- borderline to profound cognitive impairment which results in well below academic achievement in all areas and the need for considerable curriculum modifications and/or alternate specialized Programming;

- and mild to significant adaptive behaviour deficits;
- a moderate to severe level of general intellectual disability with delays in adaptive functioning, which indicates a need for a program that is focused on the student's social adjustment and independent living, in addition to the acquisition, where possible of academic skills;
- a full-scale I.Q. of 69 and below with comparable delay in adaptive functioning.

Physical - Physical Disability

A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or developmental level.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Physical Disability
- an ongoing physical or medical disability or condition as identified by a medical practitioner which results in a need for extensive modifications to the classroom environment and/or program

Physical - Blind and Low Vision

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

Criteria for Formal Identification: Physical – Blind and Low Vision
- results of an ophthalmologist or optometrist assessment indicates acuity with correction within the range of 20/70 which requires modifications to print material or braille instructions.

Multiple - Multiple Exceptionalities

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities, that is of such nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teacher's holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.

Standard 9—Special Education Placements Provided by the Board

Standard 9 - Special Education Placements Provided by the Board

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide the ministry and the public with details of the range of placements provided by the board, and to inform the public that placement of a student in a regular class is the first option considered by an IPRC.

The GECDSB believes in providing a range of placements based on the:
- intensity of a student's particular needs;
- the modifications and accommodations required;
- consultation with parents/guardians to determine preferences;
- availability of specialized class placements in any given exceptionality;
- services required and human resources available.

The discussion of placement in the regular classroom is the first option with parents/guardians. In order for parents/guardians to make educated decisions about placement issues, they are encouraged to have an open discussion with teachers, participate in classroom visits when arranged, and take opportunities to speak with other parents/guardians.
- We are moving towards greater inclusionary practice opportunities for integration to enhance socialization, exposure to same age peers and role models for language development and interaction with the curriculum content regardless of their exceptionality.
- The principal of the school is key in setting the tone for successful integration and inclusion. Providing the consultative and professional support necessary to plan effective integration is the role of our Special Education Services Department. When teachers and parents/guardians embrace the philosophy of integration and appropriate supports can be provided to ensure students needs are met, then we generally have a recipe for student success.
- Placement in a Special Education program – Partially Integrated or Fully Self-Contained classroom requires an identification through the IPRC process.

A Special Education placement (Regular Class/Indirect Support, Regular Classroom with Resource Assistance, Regular Classroom with Withdrawal Assistance or a Fully Self-Contained classroom) requires an identification through the IPRC process.
- Below, you will note the four placement options for students within the GECDSB.

The four options for placement within the GECDSB are:

Regular Classroom/Indirect Support
- Student is placed in regular class for the entire day.
- Always considered the first priority by the IPRC committee.
- Teacher provides accommodations and/or modifications.

Regular Classroom with Resource Assistance
- Student remains in the regular classroom for most or all of the day
- Receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom.
- This means the student receives specific, targeted instruction and support from a teacher such as our Learning Support Teacher (LST) while remaining in the homeroom classroom environment. This placement is often used when a student needs additional, specialized instruction in a specific subject or skill.
- Support for students who require it is provided by the Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Itinerant Teachers of the Blind/Low Vision.

Regular Classroom with Withdrawal Assistance
- Student remains in the regular classroom.
- Some specialized assistance such as our Learning Support Teachers (LST) for a specified amount of time but less than 50% of the day.
- All elementary and secondary schools have an LST.

Special Education Fully Self-Contained
- The student remains in a full day self-contained classroom.
- Giving Attention to Individual Needs (GAINS) at the elementary level.
- Skills to Enhance Personal Success (STEPS) in the secondary panel.
- Stepping-In in the secondary panel
- My Achievement Pathway to Success (MAPS) in the secondary panel.

Elementary System Specialized Placements
Our elementary Giving Attention to Individual Needs (GAINS) classes are full day self-contained programs for students with profound and complex needs. The total is 50 GAINS rooms as of September 2025. This is an addition of 5 GAINS classrooms at Amherstburg, Begley, Coronation, King Edward, and Roseville.

Amherstburg-1	King Edward - 3
Anderdon - 1	LaSalle - 1
AV Graham – 1	Legacy Oak - 1
Beacon Heights – 1	Marlborough - 2
Begley – 3	McWilliam - 2
Brock - 1	M.D. Bennie - 1
Campbell - 1	Northwood - 3
Coronation – 2	Princess Elizabeth - 1
Dougall – 1	Queen Elizabeth - 2
Eastview Horizon – 3	Queen Victoria - 1
Erie Migration – 1	Roseville – 1
Essex PS - 3	Southwood - 3
Ford City -1	Suzuki - 1
Forest Glade – 2	Talbot Trail - 3
Hetherington - 1	West Gate - 2

Secondary System Specialized Placements

Our Secondary Skills to Enhance Personal Success (STEPS) are full day self-contained programs for students with profound and complex needs. These are the STEPS classrooms as of 2025.

Belle River DHS – 2 STEPS, 1 Stepping In
Erie Migration Secondary – 2
Essex DHS - 1
Herman Secondary - 3
Leamington - 1
Massey - 5

North Star -1
Riverside - 3
Sandwich Secondary - 2
Tecumseh Vista Academy Sec. - 2
Walkerville - 3
Westview Freedom Academy – 4 STEPS, 1 Stepping In

- The Stepping-In classroom is a system placement designed for students with complex special needs, including ASD, that requires a highly supported alternative learning environment with intensive services from a multi-disciplinary team where needs and programming cannot be met in a STEPS classroom.

Note: Westview Freedom Academy, Leamington Secondary and North Star Secondary School offer MAPS programs. Students need to have an IPRC and meet the criteria order to attend MAPS programming.

All secondary schools offer Locally Developed Compulsory Courses (LDCC) for Grade 9 and 10 students. These courses offer a pathway for students who are pursuing a secondary school diploma. A student does not have to be formally identified to attend these programs.

For students requiring alternative programming that cannot be provided in a school setting, information regarding these programs are shared with parents/guardians by our Special Education Coordinators who are responsible for initiating referrals. Referrals may be considered for Education and Community Partnership Programs (Maryvale, Regional Children's Centre and New Beginnings) Provincial and Demonstration Schools, etc.
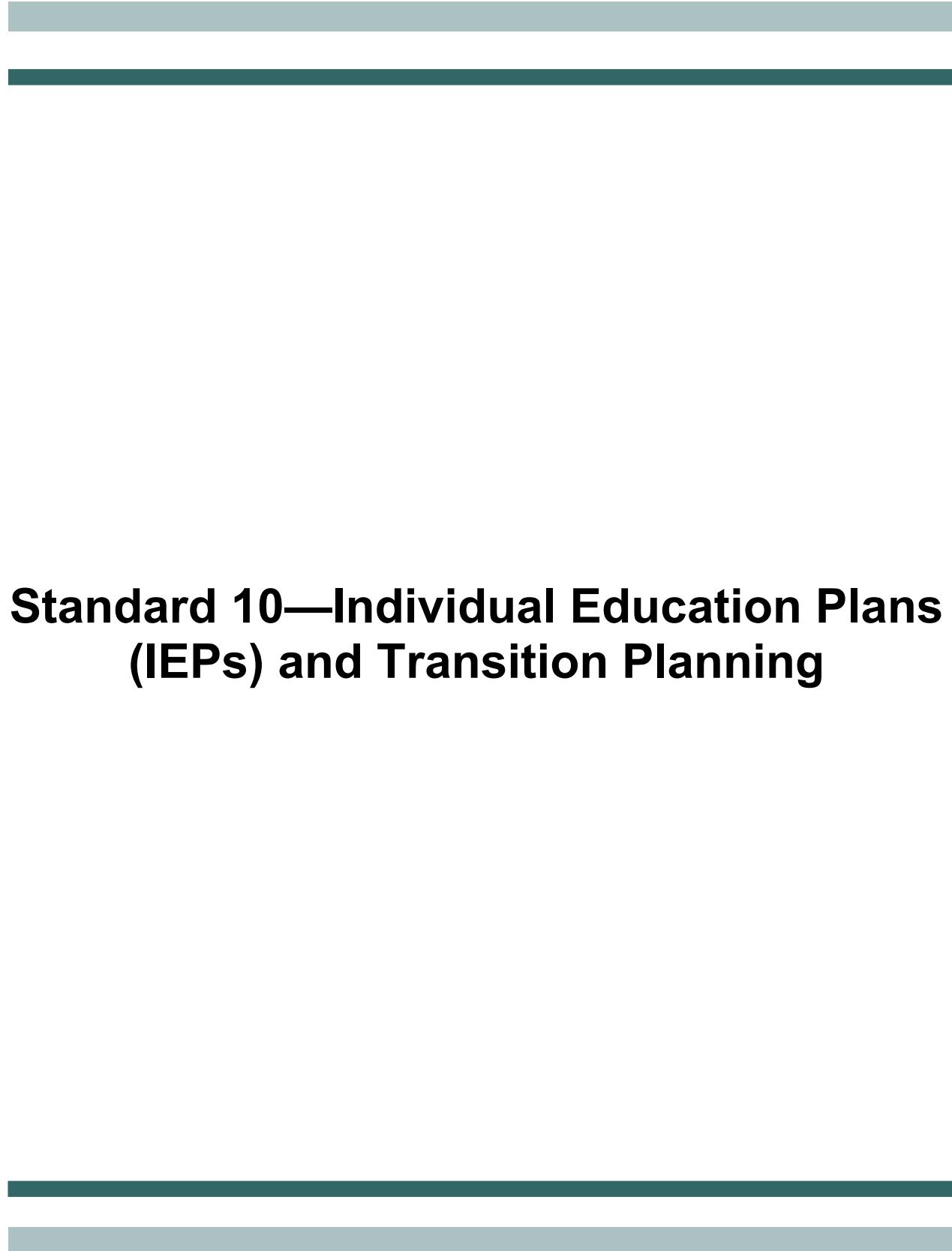
Standard 10—Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Planning

Standard 10 - Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Planning

Purpose of the Standard:
To inform the ministry and the public about the ways in which the board is complying with ministry requirements for implementing IEPs.

Individual Education Plans (IEP)

IEP Standards
- Students identified through IPRC will have IEPs.
- In addition, there is a category of "IEP non-identified" in some cases. Consultation with the principal, LST, the Educational Coordinator and parents/guardians is required. Most students with "IEP – non-identified" are moving towards further assessment and possible IPRC. All student with SEA equipment must have an IEP whether formally identified or not.
- Students with IEPs are entitled to modifications and/or accommodations that support and enhance success to assist them in reaching their full potential.
- The IEP is a working document that has flexibility to be adjusted as needed throughout the school year to meet the needs of the student. IEPs are revised every reporting period.

IEP Standards & Report Card

"Promotion at risk" or "Progressing with difficulty" and the IEP
- Students who have been formally identified through the IPRC process have IEPs in place. Well established procedures for ongoing and continuous assessment should meet their overall educational goals and hence would not be at risk of failure (repeating a grade). In the majority of cases, report cards for students with an IEP will reflect positive growth and development.
- On provincial report cards, the IEP box will only be indicated and a statement included if the student has a modified or alternative program. The IEP box will not be checked if the student has accommodations only.

Parent/Guardian Involvement and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Process

Good communication and collaboration with parents/guardians during the initial states of completing an IEP are very important in order to ensure that everyone is working toward common goals for a student. The IEP Consultation form will help to facilitate parental or guardian involvement in shaping the Individualized Education Program (IEP). With this form, parents/guardians can offer insights into the IEP's formation, and they have the option to engage a community partner who aids their child/ward. Furthermore, students aged 16 and above are encouraged to join in the consultation process.

The following is recommended as a process to implement with respect to parent/guardian involvement and the IEP:

- All assessments, recommendations from medical reports, IPRC strengths and needs statements as well as parent/guardian input is reviewed collaboratively by the school team and parents/guardians or student, where appropriate, to determine major goal areas for a student's IEP. Parents/guardians may wish to include strategies utilized at home.
- The classroom teacher prepares a draft IEP and shares the draft with key team members, parents/guardians and the student, where appropriate. Input on the draft copy is reviewed by the school team and the final IEP copy is developed by the school team.
- The final copy is shared with teachers, parents/guardians and, where appropriate the student. The final copy is filed in the OSR. A copy goes home to parents/guardians and a copy is forwarded to the classroom teacher(s). Ongoing consultation and open communication with teachers and parent/guardian throughout the IEP process will prevent disagreement and difficulties with respect to IEP interpretation and implementation.
- When a parent/guardian disagrees with significant aspects of the IEP, the principal will convene a team meeting with special education staff, parent/guardian and key teachers to review concerns and find solutions.

Note: Individual Education Plan (IEPs) audits are conducted on a regular basis in both the elementary and secondary panels. The goal of these audits is to ensure quality and consistency in IEPs and provide training and education to school staff.

Transition Planning at GECDSB
Throughout their education, all students face a variety of transitions, including the transition from home or from an Early Years program to school, from one grade or level of schooling to another, from one school to another, and from secondary school to an appropriate post-secondary pathway. Positive transition planning and implementation requires a team, including the student, parents/guardians and school staff. Outside organizations can be particularly important when assisting students leaving school on a post-secondary pathway. All of our transition processes have one important thing in common and that is to reduce the level of anxiety students and families may experience.

Students with special education in the GECDSB may be involved in one of the four various transition processes:

Entry to School
- Most students enter school in their JK or SK year
- A child could be coming from home, childcare with or without community partnerships including Talk2Me, JMCC, JMCCSA, Children First
- Parents working with community partners sign consent with both the community partner and the appropriate school

- Community partners share information including student name, need, and school attending with the Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Services. In turn the Supervisor shares this information with the appropriate Special Education Coordinator
- The Special Education Coordinator will reach out to family, daycare, community partners as appropriate to gather information, plan an observation and schedule a transition to school information meeting
- Transition meetings will be planned with parent/guardian, and community partners at the receiving school to learn about the student and make an entry plan
- The transition meeting includes parents/guardians, their advocates, when invited by parents/guardians, and community partners as deemed appropriate;
- The student's profile would be developed, including strengths and areas of need, which would be the starting point of developing the IEP if applicable

Transition within School

HUB Pilot Classrooms
The Hub is a structured and specialized program designed to address the unique needs of complex learners, emphasizing literacy /numeracy, social, communication and independence skills while integrating a component of skill generalization to the classroom environment. This program incorporates various structured centers, including direct teacher time. It utilizes visual schedules, structured learning (independent work), vertical learning surfaces, table activities, technology, and reinforcement strategies.

The Hub is a modelled after the TEACCH philosophy, it focuses on visual structure, predictability, and individualized learning to promote independence and success. The remainder of the school day the student is integrated into their home room. Teachers and support staff use explicit instruction, modeling, and reinforcement to help students develop essential skills. The focus is on building independence through repetition, structure, and consistency.

School to School Transition
- Many students change schools, whether because of program considerations or relocation of the family. Regardless of the reason, the transition can be made more smoothly with advance planning;
- When a transition is occurring, parents/guardians need to register their child at their new community school. Upon receiving the registration, the school principal shall initiate the appropriate transition process;
- In accordance with *The Ontario Student Record Guideline (2000)*, pertinent information about the student should be shared with the receiving school prior to the student's arrival so that appropriate supports are put in place;
- If a student has a behaviour/safety plan a formal transition meeting between schools will be held. Formal transition meetings will also be held for students

entering or changing self-contained placements. School Principals may initiate transition meetings for other reasons at their discretion. Formal transition notes will be taken, parents/guardians will receive a copy.

- In planning programming, the receiving school should use assessments from the originating school;
- The new school will access a copy of the student's IEP, including the transition plan in clevr, a copy will also be included in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR).

Transition from Elementary to Secondary School
- Included in all IEPs for all students;
- Transition information meetings are held for all grade 8 students with Student Success Teachers, Grade 8 Teachers and Learning Support Teachers
- To support students with special education needs transitioning from elementary to secondary, educators need to provide these students with information regarding types of secondary school programming and the requirements to complete the programs;
- IPRCs occur with the secondary school in attendance to gather information about the student and answer any parental questions. At this meeting information is shared about secondary supports, and pathways, and specialized programs offered by the GECDSB
- Our expectation at GECDSB is that board staff help students understand their learning profiles/needs so that they can further develop their self-advocacy skills.

Transitions from School to Work, Post-Secondary Education, and Community Living
- The transition from secondary school to post-secondary destinations – whether further education or training, work, or independent living can be intimidating to many students. This transition can be particularly challenging for some students with special education needs. The probability of success is greatly increased when schools work with the student, parents/guardians, employers, community agencies, and providers of further education coordinated plans for exceptional students;
- In addition, to support a student with special education needs in making the transition to work, further education, and/or community living, this process could include making provisions to help the student connect with post-secondary institutions, community agencies, and/or the workplace, as appropriate.
- Students may have access to several programs as they turn 18, including Project Search, and the High School Students with Intellectual Disabilities Integration Program (HSSIDIP). In addition, the GECDSB cohosts Planning for Success Information evening for parents each year with the WECDSB and Windsor Brokerage.

Project Search
- Project SEARCH is a unique school-to-work training program for students with disabilities in their final year of their high school STEPS placement within the GECDSB. Students are immersed in a host business and get more than 700 hours of hands-on work experience geared to in-demand roles in the local labour market. They learn employability skills and plan their careers with guidance from a teacher and skills trainers. A local employment agency supports graduates and their employers.
- The GECDSB has partnered with St Clair College as the host business and Community Living Windsor as the local employment support agency.

High School Students with Intellectual Disabilities Integration Program (HSSIDIP)
- The GECDSB is partnering to support the HSSIDIP program. The program is an employment-training program through the Government of Canada that is focused on transforming the lives of students who have an intellectual disability or autism.

APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS (ABA)

As per the Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 140, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) incorporates methods and strategies based scientific research, to build repertories of skills and/or behaviours of students. Although PPM 140 was developed for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the application of ABA strategies are appropriate for a variety of students across multiple environments. These methods are often incorporated into the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Applied Behaviour Analysis is utilized across classrooms to enhance motivation to learn through environmental arrangements that cue and reinforce skills and positive behaviours. ABA highlights the use of data to inform progress and to monitor goal achievement over time, as well as trends in behaviour that may help inform the direction of skill development in the future.

ABA methods are consistently used by classroom staff to:
- develop positive behaviours (e.g., improve the ability to stay on task, improve social interaction);
- teach new skills (e.g., comprehensive skills, including language skills, social skills, motor skills, academic skills);
- apply or generalize a new skill or behaviour from one situation to another (e.g., from completing assignments in a special education classroom to maintaining the same performance in a regular classroom.)

For individuals struggling with more specific or persistent behaviour challenges, practices rooted in ABA focus on meeting student needs, and teaching replacement skills that support them to be more successful. Data on what happens before behaviour, and what happens after, can help educators develop an understanding of what may be influencing behaviour and how to better meet student needs.

Further individualized behaviour assessment and support can be provided through a Registered Behaviour Analyst from the Behaviour Support Services Team. Special Education Coordinators can support these referrals as needed.

In terms of supporting our educators in implementing ABA methods and strategies, ongoing in-servicing has occurred with the Behaviour Support Services team across a variety of opportunities over the past several years, including:

- Consultation to educators and classroom teams by Registered Behaviour Analysts, BMS Workers, and Facilitators within the Behaviour Support Services team.
- Professional Development opportunities for educators and administrators, including ABA topics such as, Reinforcement, Promoting Positive Classroom Behaviour, Function-Based Intervention, Classroom-Based Strategies to Promote Self-Regulation, Structured Learning Supports, Explicit Teaching of Skills, and Practical Functional Assessment.
- On-site Behavioural Skills Training for staff through the lens of meeting student needs in order to determine the best way to teach replacement skills.
- On-site training in completing Functional Behaviour Assessments (FBA) and the use of Universal Protocols in order to determine the function(s) of a student's behaviour and maintain safety, televisibility and rapport while implementing skill development programs;
- On-site training with educators in order to support the incorporation of ABA methods and strategies into the IEP;
- Staff resources on Edsby that are easily accessible to all staff for information, resources, strategies, documents, downloads, etc.;
- Ongoing collaboration with community partners such as Thames Valley Children's Centre (TVCC), John McGivney Children's Centre (JMCC), Therapeutic Learning Centre, Spark Pediatric, Virtual Behaviour Services, and Regional Children's Centre (RCC);
- Developing individualized data collection materials based on need(s);
- Classroom observations and Tier 3 Team consultations in order to assist teams with setting up Structured Learning Environments on the whole classroom level;
- Environmental scans and Behavioural Management Systems supports (including individual staff BMS consultations and wider BMS training refreshers) to assist classroom teams with implementing best practices across multiple domains;
- Mandatory completion of the Introduction to Autism or ABA learning modules through the Sonderly learning platform (formerly the Geneva Centre for Autism) for all Educational Support Staff; including the opportunity of Registered Behaviour Technician training through the Ministry Funded Training program
- Registered Behaviour Analyst Implementation of Practical Functional Assessment and Skill Based Intervention with staff training to support their understanding of explicit teaching of skills for targeted students, through the

lens of supporting any student to become happy, relaxed and engaged while at school, whatever that may look like, to fuel their learning ability. From there, skills are developed in a systematic order, including expressing wants/needs, tolerance to denials and cooperation with instructions.

- Behaviour team staff training on supporting students with excessive behaviour and interfering stereotypes using advanced applications of ABA including Interview Informed Contingency Analyses.
- Behaviour team staff training on the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and the related AIM Curriculum as an approach to supporting internal verbal behaviour and related externalizing behaviour
- Implementation of classroom-wide behaviour technologies to promote self-regulation skill development, through both in-class training and consultation, as well as a Self-Regulation based pilot project throughout kindergarten classrooms
- Classroom management and Behaviour Management Systems training opportunities for all Kindergarten teaching staff.
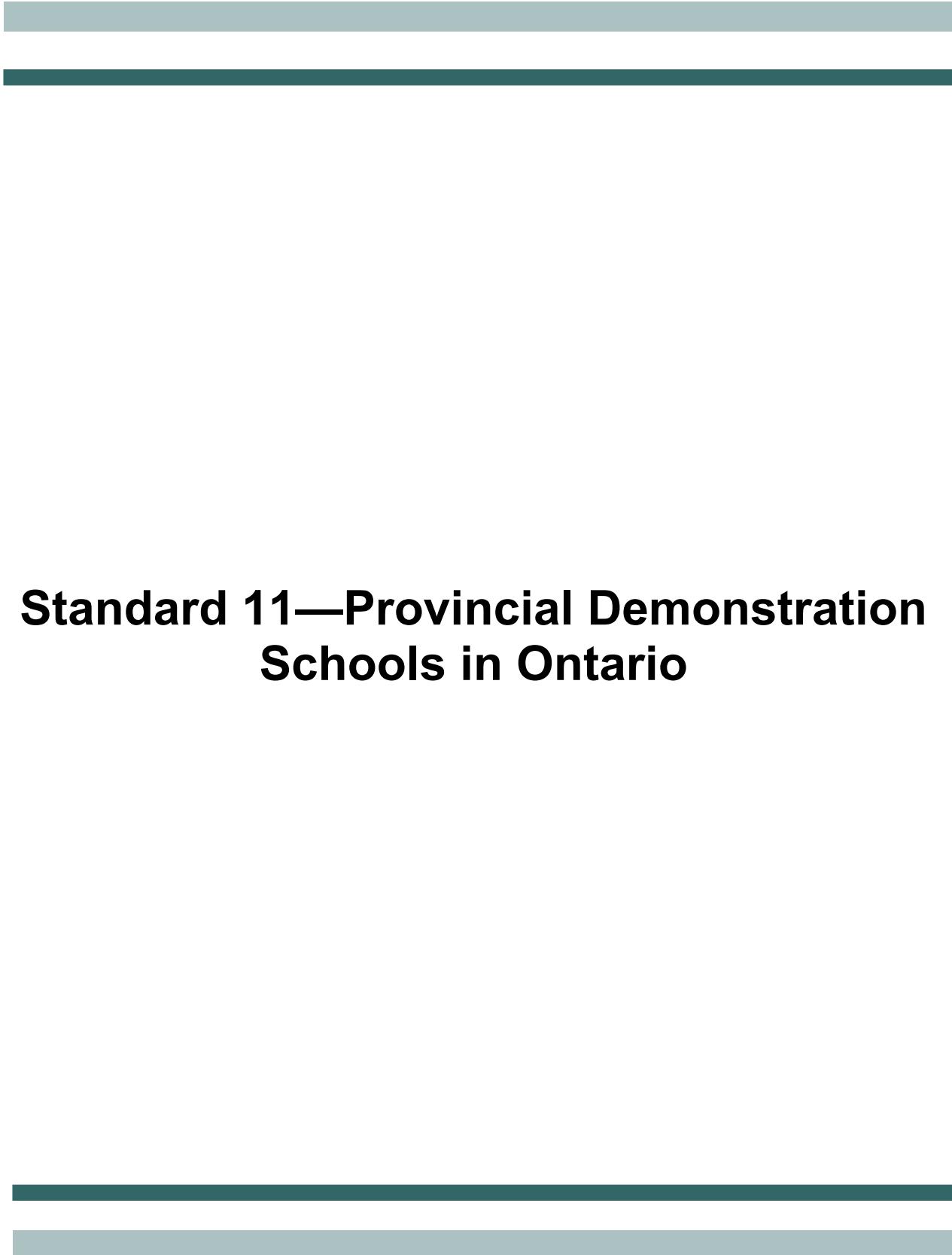
Standard 11—Provincial Demonstration Schools in Ontario

Standard 11: Provincial Demonstration School in Ontario

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide the public with information about the Provincial and Demonstration Schools that are operated for students who are deaf, blind, or deafblind, or who have severe learning disabilities, which may include attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Admittance to a Provincial School is determined by the Provincial Schools Admission Committee in accordance with the requirements set out in Regulation 296.

Provincial School Contacts
Provincial Schools Branch Ministry of Education 255 Ontario Street South Milton, Ontario L9T 2M5 Tel: (905) 878-2851 Fax: (905) 878-5405
More information about Provincial Schools can be found at:
Link for Provincial Demonstration Schools website

The Provincial School for students who are Blind/Visually Impaired or Deaf-Blind:

W. Ross Macdonald School: School for the Blind and Deaf-Blind
350 Brand Avenue Brantford, Ontario N3T 3J9 Tel: (519) 759-0730 Fax: (519) 759-4741

The W. Ross Macdonald School is located in Brantford and provides education for students who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. The school provides:
- a provincial resource center for the students who are visually impaired and deaf-blind;
- support to local school Boards through consultation and the provision of special learning materials, such as Braille materials, audiotapes, and large print textbooks;
- professional services and guidance to Ministries of Education on an inter-provincial, cooperative   basis
- programs tailored to the needs of the individual student and are designed to help these students learn to live independently in a non-sheltered environment;
- programming delivered by specially trained teachers;
- the Ontario curriculum developed for all students in the province;
- a full range of courses at the secondary level;
- offer courses in special subject areas such as music, broad-based technology, family studies, physical education, and mobility training;
- are individualized, to offer a comprehensive life skills program; and
- provide support through home visits for parents/guardians and families of children who are preschool deaf-blind.

The Provincial Schools for the Deaf:

The Robarts School for the Deaf
1515 Cheapside St. London,
Ontario N5V 3N9
Tel: (519) 453-4400
Fax: (519) 453-4193

Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf
255 Ontario Street, Milton,
Ontario L9T 2M5
Tel: (905) 878-2851
Fax: (905) 878-1354

These schools provide elementary and secondary school programs for students who are deaf from preschool level to high school graduation. The curriculum follows the Ontario curriculum and parallels courses and programs provided in school boards. Each student has special needs met as set out in their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Schools for the deaf:
- provide rich and supportive bilingual/bicultural educational environments which facilitate students' language acquisition, learning, and social development through American Sign Language (ASL) and English;
- operate primarily as day schools; and
- provide residential facilities five days per week for those students who do not live within reasonable commuting distance from the school.

Each school has a Resource Services Department which provides:
- consultation and educational advice to parents/guardians of students who are deaf and hard of hearing deaf and hard-of-hearing;
- information brochures;
- a wide variety of workshops for parents/guardians, school boards, and agencies; and
- an extensive home-visiting program delivered to parents/guardians of students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing preschool children by teachers trained in preschool and deaf education.

Demonstration School for Students with Learning Disabilities:

Amethyst School
1090 Highbury Avenue London, Ontario N5Y 4V9
Tel: (519) 453-4400
Fax: (519) 453-2160

The Amethyst School provides a targeted instructional plan for students who have severe learning disabilities. They provide:
- educational programs for students in a residential setting;
- a specialized program that incorporates severe learning disabilities in association with an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder;
- self-advocacy training, social skills, individualized instruction and counseling;
- resources to school boards; and

- teacher training.

For the 2024–2025 school year, we have the following number of GECDSB students in each program:

- W. Ross Macdonald School for the Deaf-Blind – 3
- The Robarts School for the Deaf – 0
- Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf – 1
- Amethyst School for Learning Disabilities – 0

Standard 12—Special Education Staff

Standard 12: Special Education Staff

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide specific details on board staff to the ministry and to the public.

Special Education Staff
Please refer to GECDSB (www.publicboard.ca) for individual pamphlets on the services the following departments provide to students and their parents/guardians:
- Psychological Services
- Speech and Language Services
- Teachers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Itinerant
- Teachers for the Blind/Low Vision – Itinerant
- Special Education Coordinator
- Behaviour Transition Team

Education Support Staff (ESS)

We also have educational support staff to support students. These students have been identified as needing intensive support due to the complexity of their needs. Education Support Staff consist of Student Support Worker (SSW), Child and Youth Worker (CYW), and Support Worker for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SWDHH).
- ESS are not assigned as a "one-on-one" support for a student.
- Very few students who have IPRCs will require support from ESS.
- ESS have the goal of developing independence in the students that they work with and are not intended to be constant supervision for the students as they grow and develop.
- Students who require the assistance of a SWDHH may have "one-on-one" support.

All ESS work in partnership with administration, teaching staff and other educational support staff in an effort to strengthen student learning, growth, development and independence.

Staff	Actual For 2024-2025	Projected for September 2025	Minimum Qualifications of Personnel
Special Education Coordinators	8	8	Bachelor of Education Special Education Part 1
Itinerant Teachers for Deaf/Hard of Hearing	4	4	Bachelor of Education Teaching Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing AQ

Itinerant Teachers for Blind/Low Vision	7	7	Bachelor of Education Teaching Students who are Blind/Low Vision Part 1
Behaviour/Transition Specialist	1	1	Completion of a post-secondary degree or diploma; post-graduate studies or equivalent field experience in behavioural science (e.g. in autism and behavioural science, psychology)
Transition Service Navigator	1	1	Specialist in Special Education; Master or Doctoral Degree in Special Education would be an asset

Professional Student Services Personnel	Actual For 2024-2025	Projected For September 2025	Minimum Qualifications of Personnel
Psychologist	6	4.4	Ph.D., & registration with the College of Psychologists and Beahviour Analyst of Ontario (C.Psych)
Psychological Associate	0.8	0.8	MSc. & registration with the College (C.Psych.Assoc.)
Psychoeducational Consultant	3	3	M.A., M.Ed., or M. Sc. – supervised by Ph.D.
Registered Behaviour Analyst (RBA-Ont)	5	5	M.A., M.Ed., or M. Sc. And registration with the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analyst of Ontario

Applied Behaviour Analyst Facilitator	5	~~5~~	Ontario Secondary School Diploma
Speech/Language Pathologists	9.0	7.0	M.Sc. & registration with the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologist of Ontario (CASLPO)
Communicative Disorder Assistant	1.5	0	Communicative Disorders Assistant Diploma – supervised by

Educational Support Staff	Actual for 2024-2025	Projected for September 2025	Minimum Qualifications of Personnel
Student Support Workers Including SSW-C and AA	579.5	543.5	Ontario Secondary School Diploma
Educational Assistants funded by Jordan Principle	25.5	0	Ontario Secondary School Diploma
Child and Youth Worker (CYW)	76	78	CYW Diploma
Support Workers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing	19	16	Level 2 - Interpreter Training Program from a recognized institution. American Sign Language proficiency rating of 3. Level 1 – related community college diploma and/or courses and/or lived experience. American Sign Language proficiency rating of 2.

Standard 13—Staff Development

Standard 13: Staff Development

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide details of the board's professional development plans for special education staff to the ministry and to the public.

An Overview of PD within the GECDSB
The priorities of the Special Education Department are determined through feedback and consultation with stakeholders and needs identified in the system, including Ministry and Board goals.

This year the GECDSB has provided multiple professional development sessions for staff on UDL. Professional development on UDL can equip teachers with strategies to create inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs. UDL training helps teachers design flexible lessons that accommodate students at various academic levels, reducing the need for modifications. This approach can provide teachers with practical tools to manage diverse behaviors and learning styles effectively.

Below, is an overview of the learning that was offered to the GECDSB during the **2024-2025** school year.

Summary of UDL Professional Development Sessions			
Title	**Audience**	**Facilitator**	**Summary**
UDL Now! Embrace Inclusion, Ignite Potential (October 2024)	All staff	Dr. Matt Bergman	Introduction to UDL principles and practices, understand why UDL is important through the lens of variability, firm goals & expert learning and emphasizing the importance of inclusion in educational settings.
UDL Playbook: Supporting Teachers with Implementing UDL (October 2024)	Principal and Vice Principals - Elementary and Secondary	Pam Chu-Sheriff	Practical strategies for supporting teachers in the implementation of UDL in their classrooms.
Infusing Technology into Learning (October 2024)	Learning Support Teachers	Dr. Matt Bergman	Techniques for integrating technology into UDL practices to enhance learning experiences.
Mythbusters: UDL Misconceptions to be Unlearned (November 2024)	New Teachers	Dr. Katie Novak	Addressing common misconceptions about UDL and clarifying its principles.

Mythbusters: UDL Misconceptions to be Unlearned (November 2024)	New Teachers	Jeff Horwitz	Continuation of the session on debunking UDL myths.
UDL Playbook: Supporting Teachers with Implementing UDL (November 2024)	Vice Principals -Elementary and Secondary	Pam Chu-Sheriff	Further strategies for vice principals to support teachers in UDL implementation.
Engaging Universal Design for Learning Workshop (January 2025)	Elementary and Secondary LSTs, Student Success & Guidance Teachers	Dr. Todd Cunningham	Best practices in UDL, Long Term Accommodated Practice, Understanding Student Needs and Mental Health and Self-Perception in the Classroom
A Deeper Look at Firm Goals and Flexible Means (January 2025)	Secondary teachers	Dr. Matt Bergman	Exploring the balance between firm educational goals and flexible teaching methods.
An Evening with Todd Cunningham (February 2025)	Parents/ Guardians	Dr. Todd Cunningham	The connection between mental health and self-perception in the classroom, how to identify and support students' unique learning needs and effective long-term accommodations that promote success.
Connecting UDL, Inclusive Practice & Equitable Access (February 2025)	All teachers – Elementary & Secondary	Dr. Angela Burke	Linking UDL with inclusive practices and equitable access to education.
Practical Strategies for Implementing UDL (February 2025)	Secondary teachers	Dr. Chris Bronke	Practical approaches for secondary teachers to implement UDL in their classrooms.
UDL – School Focus (May 2025)	Principals – Elementary & Secondary	Dr. Angela Burke	Administrators developing an area of focus which reflects the learning needs of their students and school community. School leaders will leave the meeting with a focus for the 2025-2026 school year and a UDL goal.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Institute (September 2024 - April 30, 2025)	GECDSB System Leaders	Multiple presenters	Comprehensive training on Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to build inclusive and equitable school systems, focusing on leadership, collaboration, community building, professional learning, tiered interventions, and data-based decision-making.
Equity by Design (Coming June 2025)	All staff	Dr. Katie Novak & Mirko Chardin	Focus on designing equitable educational practices through UDL.

Throughout the 2024–2025 academic year, the GECDSB Special Education Department prioritized building the capacity of Educational Support Staff in the development, implementation, and revision of Behaviour and Safety Plans. A variety of targeted professional learning sessions were offered to support staff in their roles, foster collaboration, and enhance inclusive practices across school settings. These sessions were designed to be interactive, practical, and aligned with the evolving needs of students and school teams.

Summary of Professional Development Sessions for Special Education Teams

Date	Audience	Summary of Professional Development
November 2024	STEPS, MAPS, LSTs (Secondary Special Education Teachers)	Subject-Specific PD Day focused on varied learning experiences for staff to support students in Special Education programs.
November 2024	GAINS Teams (Teachers & SSW Staff)	Half-day PD with sessions led by community partners and GECDSB staff, supporting GAINS classroom programming and planning.
November 2024	SSW Teams (ECEs, GAINS SSWs, Elementary & Secondary SSWs, CYWs, SWDHHs)	Differentiated learning: ECEs with teaching partners; GAINS SSWs with GAINS teams; Elementary SSWs in Math PD; Secondary SSWs & CYWs on Behaviour and Safety Plans; SWDHHs in team sessions.
January 2025	SSWs, CYWs, SWDHHs	Capacity-building session at home schools focused on Behaviour Plan development and implementation, followed by collaborative review and planning.

June 2025	Elementary ESS Team (SSWs, CYWs, SWDHHs)	Inclusive education session in partnership with Holland Bloorview and Rick Hansen Foundation, focusing on accessibility, inclusion, and student participation.

Special Education Additional Qualification Subsidies
Ministry of Education funding was allocated to the GECDSB once again this year to subsidize teachers in both the elementary and secondary panels, to complete a wide range of Special Education Additional Qualification courses. At this time, given the subsidy available, approximately 28 teachers across the elementary and secondary panel have signed up for additional qualifications in the area of Special Education.

Looking Forward-2025-2026
During the 2025-2026 school year, we will continue to engage staff in exploring inclusive teaching strategies, differentiating instruction, strategies such as UDL, as well as exploring the importance of accessibility, inclusion, and full participation of students with varied abilities in school settings.

Thumbnail Sketches
Staff within our Special Education Department have dedicated time this Spring to update and revise the Special Education Thumbnail Sketches.
These Thumbnail Sketches are designed to provide a concise overview of the Special Education services and programs offered within the GECDSB.
- The Thumbnail Sketches serve as a valuable guide for our educator teams, offering key information about programming, available resources, and the guiding philosophies behind our **GAINS**, **STEPS**, **MAPS**, and **HUB** classrooms.
- Additionally, the Thumbnail Sketch for our **Learning Support Teachers (LSTs)** is being revised to better support their roles in both elementary and secondary schools across the system.
- These updates aim to enhance consistency, support informed instructional planning, and strengthen collaboration across our schools.
- Staff will be provided with these Thumbnail Sketches for the 2025-2026 school year
- We will endeavour to provide varied learning opportunities for our Learning Support Teachers, Teachers New to GAINS and STEPS and our HUB teachers next year, using the Thumbnail Sketches as their guide

Applications for Breaking Barriers Grants
School boards are invited to submit applications to fund projects that prevent and remove accessibility barriers experienced by students with special education needs / disabilities.
- The purpose of the 2025–2026 Breaking Barriers application-based funding is to provide school boards with opportunities to:

- Remove barriers for individuals with disabilities (e.g., students, educators, parents/guardians), and promote and support accessible, inclusive, and equitable education practices both inside and outside of the classroom;
- Educate students, educators, parents/guardians and the broader school community about disabilities, and services and supports for students with disabilities;
- Empower individuals with disabilities to participate in accessible and inclusive initiatives together;
- Empower students to play a leadership/allyship role in promoting inclusive, barrier-free school environments;
- Raise awareness about the value and benefits of accessibility and inclusion; and
- Prevent and remove the unique barriers faced by students whose disabilities intersect with differing identities, including race, culture, language, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, creed, age and ethnicity.

The GECDSB has applied for the following Breaking Barrier Grants for the 2025-2026 school year:

Grant Title	Summary of the Initiative
Ableism	A year-long PD series to address ableism and enhance staff capacity to support students with disabilities. Builds on UDL principles to foster inclusive teaching strategies.
Strive Reimagined	A one-day event to empower students with learning disabilities through self-advocacy workshops and equip teachers with evidence-based inclusive strategies.
Math Supports – Junior/Intermediate	Improves inclusive math instruction by aligning Tier 1 practices with Tier 3 supports. Focuses on connecting IEP goals to curriculum and reducing limiting modifications.
Universal Design for Learning – Science of Reading	In-class coaching initiative for Grades 4–8 to embed structured literacy and inclusive practices. Includes assistive tech training and aligns with Right to Read recommendations.
Artificial Intelligence (AI) for All	Pilot project to integrate inclusive AI tools in classrooms. Supports personalized instruction, progress monitoring, and equitable learning aligned with UDL principles.

Standard 14—Equipment

Standard 14: Equipment

Purpose of the Standard
To inform the ministry, board staff members and other professionals, and parents about the provision of individualized equipment for some students with special needs.

Special Education Equipment
The new Ministry Document: Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) 2024-2025 Directives states:

Starting in the 2024-25 school year, the Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) is for the purchase of specialized equipment for students with special education needs. Following a review and informed by feedback from education sector partners from across the province, **the Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) is replacing the Special Equipment Amount.**

This modernized approach to funding specialized equipment aims to meet the changing needs of students better, reduce administrative burden, and increase flexibility in how school boards utilize this funding to meet local needs.

As a result of the Ministry of Education directive around Special Education Equipment Allocation (SEA) processes for school boards, The Board has created a SEA Review Committee. The focus of this committee is reviewing the current SEA process for the GECDSB. Additionally, the Board is engaging in collaborative discussions with our co-terminus Board partner, with the goal of aligning SEA procedures and sharing claims-based resources to improve efficiency.

The Board examines all reports from qualified professionals (see Specialized Equipment Allocation Directives (SEA) 2024-2025 Directives) to determine the type of equipment needed by special needs students. In accordance with PPM 149 (Sept. 25, 2009), any reports submitted by professionals outside of the Board or the John McGivney Children's Centre must be reviewed by an equivalent Board professional to assess the suitability of the recommendations for educational purposes. Recommendations from private assessments conducted by professionals not affiliated with the education system—and who lack access to the school environment, curriculum, Individual Education Plan (IEP), and support systems—must undergo internal review processes.

If it is determined that the equipment is essential for the student to benefit from instruction, then the parents/guardians and school team, work through our Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) process.

School Year		
2024-2025 Formula Component (previously Per Pupil Amount)*	All boards receive funding based on a formula consisting of: a) A Base Amount: a flat rate of $200,000 for all boards, and b) A Per Pupil Amount: providing $51.10 per student based on the board's average daily enrolment (ADE).	**The formula component is calculated as follows:** $200,000 per board + ($51.10 x ADE)
2024-2025 Claims-Based Component**	Boards can apply for funding for the purchase of any single item (any equipment type technology related or not) costing $5,000 or over before taxes for use by an individual student with special education needs and outlined and described in the student's accommodations in their IEP.	The ministry will only consider claims submitted by boards that meet the eligibility and documentation requirements set out in these directives

*SEA Formula Component can be used for any equipment type under $5,000, technology related or not, training, maintenance, and repairs related to that equipment, for students with special education needs.

**SEA Claims-Based Component is for any type of single item (any equipment type technology related or not) costing $5,000 or over before taxes for use by one specific student with special education needs.

SEA Equipment Training

The Greater Essex County
District School Board (GECDSB) provides training for SEA laptops through the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex (LDAWE).
Training will be provided by LDAWE on the following items:
- Develop skills on the proper use and general maintenance of computer hardware.
- Develop skills and techniques associated with file organization.
- Software recommended as outlined in the SEA claim package.

Initial Student Training
All training will take place in the student's home school. Training will be based on the software and hardware ordered for the student. GECDSB Special Education Department will approve all software-training plans.

Overview of Current Training Model
The current model for Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) training at the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) involves providing students with the necessary tools and resources to support their learning needs. SEA training focuses on ensuring that students can effectively use assistive technology and specialized equipment to enhance their educational experience. This includes individual training on the use of devices, software, and other tools that help students with special education needs to access the curriculum and participate fully in classroom activities.

In collaboration with the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex, there is an opportunity to enhance AT training by ensuring both students and staff receive

consistent knowledge and support. A new training model will launch in September 2025. This model will combine our current individualized student training with classroom-based sessions involving students and teachers in technology-equipment classrooms with internet access. This enhanced approach empowers students and educators alike with the skills needed to effectively integrate and use assistive technology (AT) tools in their learning environments. Aligning training for all participants can strengthen continuity in the classroom, reinforce student learning, and promote more effective application of skills.

It focuses on:

- Using built-in accessibility tools in Windows OS and Microsoft 365 (e.g., Narrator, Dictate, Immersive Reader).
- Applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.
- Converting and organizing digital content using OCR, Office Lens, OneDrive, and OneNote.
- Creating accessible content with tools like Equatio for creating accessible math and science content and conducting accessible research with Microsoft Edge.

The training is interactive, featuring live demonstrations, reflection activities, and hands-on opportunities where students and teacher will actively perform tasks using assistive technology. The goal is to build confidence and practical skills while fostering inclusive learning environments where all students can effectively use technology when and where they need it.

A checklist will be completed for student training to verify which skills and software programs have been addressed. LDAWE shall provide a recommendation as to whether Supplementary Student Training is required. A copy of the checklist will be provided to GECDSB.

If supplementary training is required, the LDAWE AT Coordinator will notify the Learning Support Teacher or Principal's designate that supplementary training will be scheduled approximately six school months from when initial training is completed.

Please Note:
This message is related to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) *Right to Read inquiry report* and our Greater Essex County District School Board's mission to provide an equitable, inclusive, responsive and comprehensive literacy program, based on the science of reading, that utilizes assessments and instructional practices to ensure every student has the fundamental right to learn to read.

Link to OHRC Right to Read Inquiry Report

Based on the *Right to Read inquiry report* and the board's mission, we are committed to ensuring allocation, access, training, and use of assistive technology aligns with research and are in the best interest of achieving the Right to Read for all students.

According to information provided by the International Dyslexia Association of Ontario, Assistive technologies include devices and applications that help people with dyslexia with various tasks including:

- reading
- spelling
- writing
- organization of ideas
- note-taking
- time management.

Assistive technologies can be very helpful for students to access or produce larger volumes of reading/writing material as required in older grades or post-secondary schools.

However, it is important that assistive technologies do not replace effective Structured Literacy instruction in reading, spelling, and writing. Structured Literacy instruction can help all struggling readers learn to read accurately and fluently.

From International Dyslexia Association: Link to IDAO Ontario
The report indicates that typical students are learning how to read and write until the end of grade 3. Students with reading disabilities may take more time to acquire these skills. Providing assistive technology without reading interventions is damaging, because students lose the opportunity to learn to read. It is also damaging in a more insidious way: it can mask the student's reading difficulties. (Section 11. Accommodations – Executive Summary, Right to Read).
As a result, the recommendation allows schools to make consideration for assistive technology as an appropriate accommodation after the primary grades. The primary purpose of accommodations is not to teach students to read, but to provide supports to enable them to meaningfully engage with curriculum material and take part in classroom activities. Accommodations are not a substitute for reading interventions. They can never replace active involvement in the classroom or interventions aimed at teaching and addressing reading and writing skills. Schools must provide accommodations alongside evidence-based curriculum and intervention strategies.
Taken from the Ontario Human Rights Commission: Link to OHRC Inquiry into Reading Disabilities Backgrounder

Standard 15—Accessibility of School Buildings

Standard 15: Accessibility of School Buildings

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide the ministry with further details of the board's multi-year plan, which was previously submitted to the ministry, for improving accessibility for students with physical and sensory disabilities, and to provide the public with this information.

Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) – Plan for 2022-2026
The Board of Trustees for the GECDSB passed the Policy and Regulation for the AODA Customer Service Standard at the Public Board Meeting on February 6, 2017.

The GECDSB remains committed to the key principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity. Our actions will demonstrate our belief in the strength diversity brings to our communities**.** Training for GECDSB staff will continue to be conducted regarding Accessibility Awareness as new employees are hired. A second mandatory training for all staff on AODA was conducted in May 2019. This training is conducted in a 5 year cycle and will be completed in May 2024.

The annual ODA plan and previous plans can be accessed through the Board website at the following address:
https://www.publicboard.ca/en/family-and-community-support/accessibility.aspx

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) is committed to the improvement of access to school premises, facilities and services to our students that are free of barriers and biases. It is for this reason we have the following policy and regulation in place:
- *Certified Service Animal for Students P-AD-31*
- *Certified Service Animal for Students R-AD-31*

If you are the parent/guardian of a student who needs the accommodation of a certified service animal (CSA), please contact the Principal of your community school and they will guide you through the application process.

Standard 16—Transportation

Standard 16 - Transportation for Students with Special Education Funds

Purpose of the Standard:
To provide details of the board's transportation policies to the ministry and to the public.

Student transportation is provided through the Windsor-Essex Student Transportation Services (WESTS), which is a separate legal entity, services four school boards which include the GECDSB, Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board, Conseil Scolaire Viamonde, and Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence.

- The Consortium is governed by the Board of Directors comprised of representatives of the four member Boards. The Board of Directors sets transportation policies for the Consortium that are applied to each member Board on a fair and equitable basis.
- The Special Educational Coordinator, in consultation with the transition team, parents/guardians and community agencies complete information about specific student transportation needs. This information is forwarded to the Board for processing. The Board will consult with the Transportation Consortium to determine the best possible mode of transportation for a child. The final decision regarding transportation will be made by the Special Education Department.
- Depending on the identified needs of the child, the following transportation options are considered:
  - Regular school bus (community or home stop)
  - Wheelchair accessible school bus
  - Taxicab
  - Parent paid transportation

- Students attending care and treatment facilities, or correctional facilities often require transportation for integration into community schools, as well as daily transportation to their specific programs. These needs are communicated to our Transportation Consortium by the Principal of the Agency Schools.
- Decisions regarding the transportation of students presenting "high risk" behaviours are generally discussed at the IPRC meeting. Often further consultation with the Special Education Department and the Transportation Consortium occurs due to the high costs associated with this type of transportation request. Students presenting unsafe travel behavior may need to be transported separately. Decisions about special accommodations for students with safety needs are made in partnership with parents/guardians, the Transportation Consortium, the Superintendent of Special Education, and team members in the student's program.
- All students requiring special transportation must have the Special Education Transportation Application and the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians Disability

Act) form completed, the AODA form identifies any equipment requirements or accommodations required for transportation completed. This equipment may include seatbelts, buckle guard, and vests.

Consideration by STS during the selection of transportation providers for all exceptional students includes criteria related to safety, including, but not limited to:
- Drivers must have first aid training;
- Wheelchairs must be secured while being transported; and
- Criminal record checks must be completed for drivers and bus monitors.

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) - Section C

School Board Committee under Regulation 464/97

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

SEAC is a School Board committee established under Regulation 464/97.

Procedures for Selection
Selection process for members, including application and nomination forms for SEAC can be found at the following links:

Process for Filling SEAC Vacancies

https://www.publicboard.ca/en/programs-and-learning/special-education-advisory-committee.aspx

Application and Nomination forms

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.publicboard.ca/en/programs-and-learning/resources/Documents/SEAC-Nomination-Form.pdf

Special Education Advisory Committee Handbook

During the 2024-2025 school year a sub-committee was established to create a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Handbook. The purpose of the Handbook is to provide a guidebook for members of SEAC, as well as outline varied roles and responsibilities of its members. This will be presented and shared in September 2025 with SEAC.

Roles and Responsibilities
The Special Education Advisory Committee is responsible for making recommendations to the GECDSB on matters related to programming for all students who are exceptional. This includes such matters as recommendations related to establishing:

1. the philosophy and goals for special education delivery;
2. reviewing the policies and procedures of the Board as they pertain to special education;
3. funding of special education programs and services through the Board's annual budget process;
4. reviewing the financial statements for the Board, prepared under Section 231 of the Act, as they relate to special education; and
5. amending the special education plan as it is reviewed annually as required by Regulation 306.

SEAC Meetings

The Special Education Advisory Committee meets 10 times a year. Meetings will be posted on the board website. Meetings begin at 1 pm and are open to the public. The meeting dates for the 2025–2026 school year are:

Wednesday, September 10, 2025   Wednesday, January 14, 2026
Wednesday, October 8, 2025   Wednesday, February 11, 2026
Wednesday, November 12, 2025   Wednesday, March 11, 2026
Wednesday, December 10, 2025   Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Wednesday, May 13, 2026   Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Meetings are held at the Board Office but may be held elsewhere at the committee's discretion. SEAC members elect a chairperson annually in January and meetings follow a prepared agenda.

Greater Essex County District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee Membership -2022-2026

Autism Ontario (Windsor Essex)
Tim McCarthy - mcctj@yahoo.com
Jan Matte Gasparovic (Alternate)
https://www.autismontario.com/

Community Living Windsor-Essex County
Martha Vukov - marthavukov7@gmail.com
TBA (Alternate)
https://www.communitylivingessex.org/

Home and School Associations (Windsor Council)
Chelsey Lackovic - chelseylackovic3@gmail.com
TBA (Alternate)

Windsor-Essex County Up About Down Syndrome Parent Association
Joanna Conrad - conrad.joanna@gmail.com
Monica Gilles (Alternate)
https://www.upaboutdown.org/

Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex
Mary-Ann Fuduric - mfuduric@ldawe.ca
Lucy Coppola (Alternate)
 https://www.ldawe.ca

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise
Sarah Yang - Sarah.Yang@hdgh.org
Amanda Denhartogh (Alternate)
https://www.hdgh.org/

Trustee
Kim McKinley – kim.mckinley@publicboard.ca
https://www.publicboard.ca

Trustee
Nancy Armstrong – Nancy.armstrong@publicboard.ca
https://www.publicboard.ca

COORDINATION OF SERVICES WITH OTHER MINISTRIES - Section D

GECDSB Coordination with Ministries and Agencies

Coordination of Services with Other Ministries or Agencies

The GECDSB in partnership with the community provide learning opportunities which support, challenge and inspire all students to achieve their full potential and enable them to participate meaningfully in their communities.

- The GECDSB is committed to developing partnerships within the community in order to plan for and provide special education programs and services for students who are entering the system from other agencies and programs or moving from the system to other agencies and programs.

- Building strong partnerships within our community on behalf of students and parents/guardians is viewed as an important goal in special education.

- As the number of children experiencing difficulties in the school and community continue to rise it is crucial to consider innovative ways to meet the needs of students.

- The following list of partnerships with community agencies and programs reflects those used most frequently by the board: Associations for Community Living (Windsor and Essex), Autism Ontario, Big Sisters/Big Brothers, Canadian Hearing Society, Canadian Mental Health Association, Windsor Essex County Down Syndrome Parent Association, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Essex Preschool Speech and Language Services, Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario, Family Respite Services, Local Resolution Table, Home and School Associations, Children First, Essex- Windsor Chapter of Integration Action for Inclusion, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex, John McGivney Children's Centre, Maryvale, New Beginnings, Parents for Children's Mental Health, Talk 2 Me, United Way, Voice, Windsor Essex Children's Aid Society, Windsor Essex County Health Unit, Windsor Regional Children's Centre and Windsor-Essex Brokerage for Personal Health Supports.

- The Board website contains a Mental Health and Well-Being page for students, parents and staff. This page provides a point of access for mental health information. It can be accessed at: https://www.publicboard.ca/en/family-and-community-support/mental-health-and-well-being.aspx

Education and Community Partnership Program

We partner with New Beginnings, Maryvale and Windsor Regional Children's Centre to provide teachers within these mental health/correctional treatment centers. Students are able to engage in treatment and continue with their studies. Currently we have 14 teachers at Maryvale, 11 teachers at Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare - Regional Children's Centre, and 3 teachers at New Beginnings.

External Agency Partnership Protocol

The GECDSB has developed comprehensive yearly protocols when community agency personnel want to provide services to our students. These community agencies are not ones which are mandated, such as health. Interested community agencies are directed to the Board Website for further information on application and approval processes: www.publicboard.ca – Board – Board Administration – Policies and Regulations – External Agency Partnership (non-mandated).

Transitions into School

Entry to school represents a major threshold and transition in a child's life. Familiarity with the expectations of the school setting helps children adjust more easily to school and reduces anxiety for both parents/guardians and children during this transition. For children with special needs, entry to school can be more complex and therefore requires careful planning and coordination. Effective transition planning for children with special needs must occur at both the community level and at the level of the individual child and family to be successful. Each fall the Inclusion Network of Windsor and Essex County meet in October to review and make changes to the Transition Protocol with the goal of further refining the transition process for new students to area school boards, including the GECDSB.

Transition plans are developed for students with exceptional needs to ensure a smooth transition from pre-school child care settings to school. Special Education Coordinators collaborate with staff from pre-school child care settings. Special Education Coordinators meet with representatives from the various Ministries to establish links and relationships with parents/guardians and children prior to the child's entry into school in the GECDSB.

Education and Community Partnership Program

GECDSB students entering or leaving an Education and Community Partnership Program require a transition meeting between the program and the home/receiving school. A Special Education Coordinator must attend these meeting to ensure relevant information is shared with the receiving school. The Special Education Coordinator is invited to attend by the agency.

Assessments from Other Boards, Ministries or Agencies

The school, in conjunction with the appropriate personnel (such as Psychological Services, Speech-Language Pathology and Social Work) will review assessments accompanying students entering the GECDSB system from other boards, Ministries, or agencies. Where identification as an exceptional pupil is being considered, the Ontario Student Record (OSR) contents and assessments will be reviewed by appropriate school board personnel to determine whether or not the student meets the criteria for identification.

Information Sharing

For students entering the GECDSB, relevant information is shared between other school boards, Ministries, community agencies and the parent/guardians. In order for this to occur, permission forms are to be obtained and signed by the parent/guardian or by the student, if the student is of the age of consent. The Special Education Coordinator for that school will assist by acting as a liaison between the various community partners and the school.

School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS)

John McGivney Children's Centre (JMCC) provides rehabilitation services including:
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Physiotherapy (PT)
- Speech Language Pathology (SLP)

 JMCC's responsibilities include determining eligibility for and providing quality rehabilitation services

in community schools.

The objectives of the SBRS are:
- to provide children with rehabilitation needs the opportunity to attend school;
- to empower students to participate to their full potential in the school routines and outings; and
- to empower students to achieve independence in the school setting.

Who is Eligible for the School Based Rehabilitation Services?
- a student must be enrolled as a pupil at a community school;
- any student with an assessed need for occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy;
- the student would not be able to participate in school routines and instructions if SBRS were not provided in the school setting.

School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS) Referral Process
- Where the student has been identified prior to school entry as having a need for physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech services, a referral to the School Based Rehabilitation Service may be made directly by a community therapist or family doctor with consent of the parent/guardian. A referral for speech therapy must be supported by a Speech-Language Pathologist assessment.
- Once a student is attending school, concerns identified by parents/guardians, school personnel and/or community agencies as requiring a referral to the SBRS should be directed first to the teacher and principal. Occupational therapy and physiotherapy concerns will be brought to the attention of the Occupational Therapist assigned to the school to determine needs. A school board Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) will initiate the SLP referral for those needs meeting the criteria of the SBRS.

Administration as prescribed medication and injections.
- Student as authorized parent/guardian as authorized aide or other personnel employed by Board Health Professional hired by HCCSS.
- Eligible students must have a valid OHIP card, must be enrolled in a school, attending physician has prescribed medication or injection.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator is responsible for ongoing assessment of student's eligibility for treatment in consultation with the attending physician.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator determines time frame for treatment and planned date of discharge based on review of the student's progress and consultation with attending physician.
- Parent or Guardian reviews assessment and consults HCCSS Care Coordinator to verify procedure and resolve any disputes about eligibility and level of support.

Administration as prescribed oral medication.
- Student as authorized parent/guardian as authorized aide or other personnel employed by Board.
- Eligible students must have a valid OHIP card, must be enrolled in a school.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator is responsible for ongoing assessment of student's eligibility for treatment in consultation with the attending physician.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator determines time frame for treatment and planned date of discharge based on review of the student's progress and consultation with attending physician.

- Parent or Guardian reviews assessment with Principal to verify procedure and resolve any disputes about eligibility and level of support.

Occupational Therapy (OT).
- John McGivney Children's Centre (JMCC) OT provides service.
- Qualified and registered OT to determine student needs and eligibility.
- OT determines level of support in consultation with the parent or guardian, and the school personnel.
- OT determines when goals are met, and no further intervention is required.
- Parent or Guardian reviews assessments with OT, and JMCC manager if further issues arise.

Physical Therapy (PT).
- John McGivney Children's Centre (JMCC) PT provides service.
- Qualified and registered PT to determine needs.
- PT determines level of support in consultation with the parent or guardian, and the school personnel.
- PT determines when goals are met, and no further intervention is required.
- Parent or Guardian reviews assessments with PT, and JMCC manager if further issues arise.

Nutrition
- HCCSS contracts with dietitian employed by Ministry of Health to provide service.
- Assessment of student by a qualified practitioner determines eligibility.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator in consultation with physician and parent/ guardian determines eligibility and level of support.
- HCCSS Care coordinator determines time frame for treatment and planned date of discharge based on review of student's progress and consultation with attending physician.

Speech and Language Pathology (SLP) and Speech correction and remediation.
- JMCC has qualified Speech Language Pathology Providers (SLP) to provide service.
- Speech Language Pathology Assessment by registered SLP determines eligibility: Severe Articulation, fluency, voice and non-verbal
- SLP determines when goals are met, and no further intervention is required.
- SLP consults with parent or guardian and possibly JMCC manager if any further issues arise.

Catheterization, manual expression of bladder or stoma, tube feeding, postural drainage/deep suctioning.
- Health professionals provided by HCCSS provides service.
- Assessment and prescription of service by qualified medical practitioner or attending physician.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator in consultation with the attending physician and parent or guardian determines ongoing eligibility.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator determines time frame for treatment and planned date of discharge based on review of the student's progress and consultation with attending physician.
- HCCSS Care Coordinator and qualified medical practitioner meet with parent/guardian

Lifting/Positioning and Assistance with mobility and toileting.
- John McGivney Children's Centre (JMCC) Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy (PT/OT) provides the service.
- Assessment by qualified PT/OT to determine student eligibility and level of support.
- PT/OT determines level of support in consultation with the parent or guardian, and the school personnel.
- PT/OT determines when goals are met, and no further intervention is required.
- Parent or Guardian reviews assessments with PT/OT, and JMCC manager if further issues arise.

SUBMISSION AND AVAILABILITY OF THE PLAN - Section E

2025-26 Special Education Plan Checklist

District School Board/School Authority: Greater Essex County District School Board		
Compliance with *Standards for School Boards' Special Education Plans (2000)* reproduced in full in *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide (2017)*	**Report on the provision of Special Education Programs and Services 2025-26**	**Amendments to the 2025-26 Special Education Plan**
Special Education Programs and Services		
Model for Special Education	√	√
Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) Process	√	√
Special Education Placements Provided by the Board	√	√
Individual Education Plans (IEP)	√	√
Special Education Staff	√	√
Specialized Equipment	√	√
Transportation for Students with Special Education Needs	√	
Transition Planning	√	√
Roles and Responsibilities	√	
Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities	√	√
Provincial and Demonstration Schools in Ontario	√	
The Board's Consultation Process	√	√
The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)	√	√
Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies	√	√
Educational and Other Assessments	√	√
Coordination of Services with Other Ministries or Agencies	√	√
Specialized Health Support Services in School Settings	√	√
Staff Development	√	√
Accessibility (AODA)	√	√
Parent Guide to Special Education	√	√
Where programs and services have not been provided as outlined in the 2025-26 Special Education Plan, please provide a description of the variance:		

Additional Information:	
Protocol for Partnerships with External Agencies for Provision of Services by Regulated Health Professionals, Regulated Social Service Professionals, and Paraprofessionals (PPM 149) posted on school board website.	√
Special education is included in our ongoing self-improvement with respect to the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement.	√

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Document:	Format:	Please indicate the URL of the document on your website
Special Education Plan	Board Website Electronic file Paper Copy	https://www.publicboard.ca/en/programs-and-learning/special-education-plan.aspx
Parent Guide to Special Education	Board Website Electronic file	https://www.publicboard.ca/en/programs-and-learning/resources/Documents/Special-Education-Resource-Documents/Parent-Guide-to-the-IEP.pdf
Protocol for Partnerships with External Agencies for Provision of Services by Regulated Health Professionals, Regulated Social Service Professionals, and Paraprofessionals (PPM 149)	Board Website Electronic file	https://www.publicboard.ca/en/about-gecdsb/Policies-and-Regulations/Regulations/External-Agency-Partnerships-R-AD-35.pdf

Name of the Director of Education

Vicki Houston

Signature of the Director of Education   Date

July 8.25

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Individual Education Plan (IEP) Template
Appendix 2 – Parent Guide to the Individual Education Plan (IEP)
Appendix 3 – Individual Education Plan (IEP) Consultation Form
Appendix 4 – Parent Guide to the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC)
Appendix 5 - Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) Plan for 2022-23
Appendix 6 – Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) Partially Integrated Classroom Program Review
Appendix 7 - Changes to Partially Integrated RISE Program at the GECDSB
Appendix 8 - Glossary

Appendix 1: The IEP Template

Student Name   School Year:

OEN: DOB: Grade:

School: Principal:

IEP Date:

Reason for Development: IPRC Date: Waiver Date:

Exceptionality:

IEP Date: IPRC Date: Waiver Date:

Reason for Development:

Placement Information

Placement Start Date   Placement

Sources for IEP Creation

IEP Development Team   Position

Staff Member

Program Information

Program Exemptions and/or Substitutions:

Reporting Dates

First Reporting Date   Second Reporting Date   Third Reporting

Date

Reporting Format

Assessments

Type of Assessment	Assessment Month	Assessment Year	Summary of Results/Diagnosis

Strengths and Needs

Areas of Strength	Areas of Need

Subjects, Courses or Alternative Programs to which the IEP applies

Subject/Course	Program Type

Modifications/Alternative

IEP Accommodations

Instructional	Environmental	Assessment

Transition
Overall Goals

Actions	Persons Responsible for Actions	Timeline

Communication

Date	Description of Consultation	Parent/Student Feedback/Outcome of Consultation	Contact With	Contact By

The Principal has the legal requirements to implement and monitor the IEP.
The Plan has been developed according to the Ministry's standards, addresses the student's strengths and needs, and the learning expectations will be reviewed and student progress monitored at least once every reporting period.

_____

Principal   **Date**

( ) I was consulted in the development of the Individual Education Plan.

( ) I declined the opportunity to be consulted in the development of the Individual Education Plan.

( ) I have received the Individual Education Plan.

( ) I understand that my child's IEP may be shared with all of his/her teachers and support staff.

_____   _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature   **Student's Signature**

_____

Parent's/Guardian's Name (please print)

Appendix 2—Parent Guide to the IEP

Parent Guide to the Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Developing the IEP

How can I contribute to planning goals for my child? Beginning with your child's strengths and needs is an important first step.

You can help by:
- Including your child in the discussions
- Telling the teacher what you hope your child will accomplish this year
- Likes, dislikes and interests (extra-curricular activities)
- Talents and abilities
- Family relationships and dynamics (extended family relationships and pets)
- Peer relationships and dynamics
- Family routines and schedules

What should I do if I have questions or concerns About the IEP?

Your direct link to your child's programming needs is the classroom teacher and/or Special Education teacher. The Learning Support Teacher (LST) is also a valuable resource. If your concerns are not met, then it may be necessary for the principal and/or the Special Education Coordinator to get involved. It is important to keep the focus on your child's best interests and keep the lines of communication open.

Carrying out the IEP at Home - Making Learning a Priority

Parents as partners can provide an invaluable perspective on their child's personality, development, and learning style. Open communication and cooperation between home and school will also ensure that the two have similar expectations with respect to the student's special education program and services.

Tips for Parents
- Ask your child on a regular basis to share with you the events and activities of the school day.
- Speak with your child about their learning strengths and needs.
- Read to your child daily and for older students, encourage them to read daily
- Ensure that your child attends classes on a regular basis and is punctual and well prepared for the school day.
- Provide a quiet, well-equipped location in your home for your child to complete homework.

How do I work as an effective IEP partner?

Students are most successful when all team members work together towards achievable goals.

As a parent:

- Keep the focus on your child at all times
- Tell the teacher the hopes you have for your child's learning
- Bring ideas and information
- Ask questions
- Value everyone's input

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Assessment & Review

Development and review of the IEP is a team approach. It is an accountability tool for you and your child and everyone who has responsibilities under the plan. It is designed to help your child meet the stated goals and expectations as he/she progresses through the Ontario Curriculum.

Your child's report card should be a direct reflection of the goals stated in the IEP. IEP's are formally updated twice a year, however it is considered a working document that may be revised as needed.

- Talk to your child's teacher about the goals that have been set;
- Communicate regularly with your child's teacher regarding progress;
- Recommend changes in goals, strategies, and/ or resources or support where you see a need;
- Be actively involved in discussions at school when your child is changing grades, schools or moving into the workplace.

This information is also available on the ministry website Edu.gov.on.ca For more information about our special education programs and services as well as our Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Please visit our website: PublicBoard.ca

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Appendix 3—Individual Education Plan (IEP) Consultation Form

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) CONSULTATION FORM

Completion of this consultation form will assist teachers to create a profile of **[student]** as a learner and to develop a program that addresses needs by capitalizing on strengths and lived experience. Please complete the sections that are applicable.

Student's First Name: [student's first name]   Student's Last Name: [student's last name]

Area	From the Parent/Guardian/Student Input
AREAS OF STRENGTH What is [student] good at doing, things they do on their own?	
AREAS OF NEED In what areas does [student] need help?	
AREAS OF INTEREST What are the [students'] talents, interests and hobbies?	
STUDENT PREFERENCES What kind of positive reinforcement/rewards have you found that work for the [student]?	
LEARNING GOALS What are the most important things you want [student] to learn this year?	
FUTURE GOALS What are the future goals for the [student]? What do you see [student] doing as a young adult?	
LITERACY Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing What is [student] good at? What does [student] have difficulty with?	
MATH Concepts, Computation, Problem Solving What is [student] good at? What does [student] have difficulty with?	
FACILITATING TRANSITIONS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY What strategies will best support [student] as they transitions from activity to activity and location to location throughout the school	

day?	
TRANSITION PLANNING What actions need to be considered now in planning for [student]'s transition to the next grade and/or school? What actions need to be considered now in planning for [student]'s post-secondary destination(s)?	
SOCIAL INTERACTION How does [student] relate to other students in one-to-one, small group and large group situations?	
DISABILITY/MEDICAL CONDITION Please provide us with any resources or additional information about [student]'s disability/medical condition.	
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT/ASSISTIVE and/or ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY What special equipment will [student] use at school, e.g., walker, stander, voice aids, laptop?	
INDEPENDENCE/LIFE SKILLS In what areas would you like to see [student] demonstrate more independence and/or life skills?	
SAFETY/SELF-REGUALTION Are there any issues related to safety and/or self-regulation, which are unique to [student] that we should be aware of? What are the best strategies to support [student's] safety?	
KEY INFORMATION Is there any additional information that you would like to share?	
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION What agencies are [student] involved with? Please include contact information.	

Appendix 4—Parent Guide to the IPRC

Parent Guide to IPRC
(Identification, Placement, and Review Committee)

GREATER ESSEX COUNTY District School Board
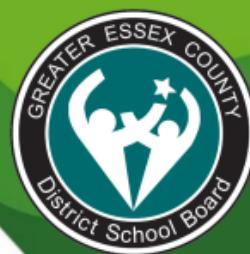
Our Philosophy

The Greater Essex County District School Board offers a range of special education programs and services to address the needs of students. Most students with special needs can succeed in the regular classroom with appropriate supports, modifications and accommodations. The placement of a student in a regular class setting is the first option in the range of programs and services provided, that is considered by the IPRC and shared with parents, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 181/98

Some students need alternative support to achieve success. Within available placement options, some students need the support of specialized programs and services which are offered within various GECDSB locations or provincial demonstration schools.

The Greater Essex County District School Board is committed to providing learning opportunities which will maximize the social, emotional, physical and intellectual potential of the learner in a safe and nurturing environment. Exceptional pupils will have access to resources and technologies appropriate to their developmental stages. These resources will provide meaningful learning opportunities for success.

Parents/guardians and pupils 16 years of age or older shall be full partners with regard to assessment, identification and placement decisions. As full partners, parents/guardians will be made aware of their rights in the entire process including the right to mediation and/or appeal. Upon the completion of the initial identification process, continued partnership between home and school is strongly encouraged. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is viewed as a valuable and necessary document that will assist parents and teachers in developing common goals for exceptional students.

Who is an exceptional pupil?	The Ministry of Education defines an exceptional pupil as: *"A pupil whose behavioural, communication, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he/she is considered to need placement in a special education program by a Special Education Identification, Placement and Review Committee."*
What are Special Education Programs and Services?	**Special Education Program** is an educational program that is based on assessment and evaluation and that includes a plan containing specific objectives and an outline of educational services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil. **Special Education Services** are facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing, a special education program (Ministry of Education Definition)
How are Special Education Programs Delivered?	The type of special education program depends on the intensity of the educational needs of the pupil. The options include: • **Indirect Support** - regular class with consultative support • **Resource Assistance** - regular class with resource support individually or in a small group, focused on a specific subject or skill within the regular class • **Withdrawal Assistance** - regular class with withdrawal support in a resource room for less than 50% of the day • **Full time Special Education** - Special Education class full time • **Provincial School** - Provincial demonstration school (i.e. Robarts School in London)

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What does an IPRC do?	**An IPRC:** • May determine your child to be exceptional. • Shall determine the placement of your child if they are exceptional. • Shall review the placement of your child at least annually. • Shall set the date on which the Board will be notified of its decision. • Shall provide you with a written statement of the Committee's determinations about your child, or to the pupil if they are an adult, and to the principal.
What is the composition of an IPRC?	**Each IPRC:** • Has a minimum of three members, one of whom shall be a principal/vice-principal or a supervisory officer/designate employed by the Board. • Has other persons appointed by the Board who can assist the Committee. *Please note that other staff members may attend as well. You may also invite others to the IPRC meeting to support you.
What is an IEP?	An Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed for your child in consultation with you. The IEP outlines the special education programs and services that will be received and specific educational expectations. The IEP must be completed 30 school days after date of placement in the program. You will be consulted and will receive a copy of your child's IEP.
Who determines that your child is exceptional?	Principal of your school requests a committee appointed by the Board, called the Special Education Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), to determine whether or not your child is exceptional.
What information is presented to the IPRC?	Principal presents the following information: • Report Cards • Educational Assessment • Psychological Report • Social Work Report (if required) • Speech-Language Pathology Report (if required) • Other reports that you feel should be considered by the IPRC.
What do you do if you disagree or have concerns about the determination?	Within 15 days, write the Principal of your school of your concerns and the Committee will schedule a second meeting within seven (7) days or at a mutually agreeable time. If you still disagree with the identification, and/or placement of your child, within 15 days of the second meeting with the Committee, you may make an appeal by writing to: The Secretary of the Board Greater Essex County District School Board 451 Park Street West, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6K1.
Can you as a parent request that your child be referred to the IPRC?	Yes. You should write your request to the Principal who must then refer your child to the IPRC. You should also send a copy of the letter to the appropriate Superintendent of Schools.

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How will you be involved?	You will be invited to an interview with the IPRC or you may waive your right to be interviewed. Since the Committee will be making decisions about your child, you are strongly urged to participate because you have the right to present additional information and to invite other persons to assist you in the process (friend, relative, member of a local association). The Committee will provide you with a copy of its determinations and ask for your written agreement or disagreement.
What happens when you make an appeal?	Within 30 days of the receipt of your notice of appeal by the Secretary, the Board shall establish a Special Education Appeal Board and the Chairperson of the Special Education Appeal Board will contact you regarding further procedures.
Is your written consent required to have your child placed?	Yes. However, your child may be placed or have a change in placement without your written consent if: (a)You have not appealed the Committee's decision within 15 days of the meeting with the Committee, or (b)You have not taken any action within 30 days of the date of the written statement prepared by the Committee. Then, the Board may, upon request of the Superintendent of Schools, direct the appropriate principal to place your child as determined by the IPRC and to notify you of the action that has been taken.
When will your child's placement be reviewed?	Every exceptional pupil's placement shall be reviewed at least once a year. In addition, after placement has been in effect for at least three months, you may request in writing to the Principal, that a review be conducted.
Will I be notified about changes in Special Education Placements?	Yes. Before any changes are made, you will be invited to an IPRC for a discussion of the proposed changes. You will be requested to give written consent to a change in placement before that change is made.

This Parent Guide has been prepared as an outline only. Further questions should be directed to your child's principal. A more detailed description of the IPRC process is available from your school. For further information please refer to:
(a)The Education Act (b) Ontario Regulation 181/98, Special Education Identification, Placement and Review Committee & Appeals

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Appendix 5 – ODA 2025-2026 Plan

Greater Essex District School Board
Administrative Building: 451 Park Street West, P. O. Box 210, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6K1, **Telephone** (519) 255-3200
GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD PLAN IN ACCORDANCE WITH ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ODA) FOR THE YEAR SEPTEMBER 2025 TO AUGUST 2026

The Ontarians With Disabilities Act 2001 requires that all public organizations such as municipalities, school boards, hospitals, universities, and colleges to prepare a plan that identifies measures the organization has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities and consult with persons with disabilities and others in preparing the plan.

The Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) empowers Regulation 191/11 "Integrated Accessibility Standards" that provides direction for the following areas:
1. Information and Communication Standards
2. Employment Standards
3. Transportation Standards
4. Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment)
5. Customer Service Standards

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) must publish this plan by September 30th of each year in accordance with the Ontarians With Disabilities Act. Every year the Ontarians With Disabilities Act Committee must update the plan for the next year.

The ODA Committee would like to provide an on-going opportunity for all staff, parents and community partners of the Greater Essex County District School Board to communicate accessibility concerns to the School Board. To share your suggestion and input, please email the committee at: ODACommitte@publicboard.ca

Plan In Accordance with Ontarians With Disabilities Act (ODA) for the year September 2025 to August 2026

1. List of Barriers, Objectives, and Responsibilities

Barrier: Updating Building Construction Standards as deemed necessary or when built into funded projects
Objective: To ensure that older buildings where feasible are updated with accessible materials
Means to Prevent or Remove: As items are requested for repair or replacement, new and more accessible items are installed (e.g. door handles)
Performance Criteria: Buildings will be updated as required or students will be accommodated at the closest site that is accessible
Resources: Facility Services
Time Line: 2025/26 School Year projects chosen on an "as needed basis: with students as the priority
Responsibility: Facility Services, Special Education Department, Information Technology Services, School Principal

Barrier: Accessible Washrooms
Objective: To provide access and functionality to washrooms
Means to Prevent or Remove: Provide appropriate lifts, sinks, toilets and door operators
Performance Criteria: Meets the needs as necessary
Resources: Appropriate materials required to modify the washrooms
Time Line: 2025/26 School Year projects chosen on an "as needed basis" with students as the priority
Responsibility: Facility Services, Special Education Department, School Principal

Barrier: Accommodations for the Visually Impaired as deemed appropriate
Objective: Submit request to the Superintendent of Special Education for students and to the HR Wellness Officer
Means to Prevent or Remove: Provide appropriate accommodations
Performance Criteria: Meets the needs as necessary
Resources: As deemed appropriate
Time Line: 2025/26 School Year projects chosen on an "as needed basis" with students and staff as the priority
Responsibility: Facility Services, Special Education Department, Information Technology Services, School Principal, Human Resources Department (for staff)

Barrier: Automatic Doors – graduated implementation
Objective: To provide access to schools for people with disabilities
Means to Prevent or Remove: Install automatic doors, openers and frames as needs are identified
Performance Criteria: People with disabilities will have access to schools
Resources: Doors, openers, ramps, rails and curb-cuts

Time Line: 2025-26 School Year projects chosen on an "as needed basis" with students as the priority
Responsibility: Facility Services, Special Education Department, School Principal

The ODA Committee has reviewed the ODA Plan for the 2025/26 school year.

In addition to this year's plan, the Committee will be focusing on the following items as the GECDSB strives to identify, address, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

- The ODA Committee will continue to collect information from various stakeholders in order to identify, remove and prevent barriers.
- The ODA Accessibility link on the GECDSB website will be updated yearly to indicate the progress being made by the School Board.
- The ODA Committee will provide a link on the GECDSB website inviting suggestions and input for barrier identification and reduction.

If you wish to provide suggestions and input to the ODA Committee, please click on the given link to send us your message via email. These messages will be presented to the ODA Committee for consideration. For this link, please see page 1 of this report.

2. Renovations completed at elementary and secondary schools during 2024/2025 school year:

Massey SS: Replacement / modification of 12 interior hallway doors to create a barrier-free path of travel. Replacement of 7 exterior doors / vestibules to meet barrier-free path of travel requirement.

Forest Glade PS: Washroom upgrades which include barrier-free upgrades.

Queen Elizabeth PS: New barrier-free washroom.

David Suzuki PS: New barrier-free washroom.

General Brock: New barrier-free washroom.

Mount Carmel Blytheswood PS: Installation of new auto operator to create a barrier-free entrance.

Sandwich West PS: Parking lot upgrades which include additional barrier-free parking, and barrier-free path of travel.

3. Renovations planned at elementary and secondary schools for completion during the 2025/2026 school year:

Margaret D. Bennie PS: Washroom upgrades which will include barrier-free upgrades. Replacement of 4 exterior doors and additional of 1 automatic door operator to meet

barrier-free path of travel.

Harrow PS: New barrier-free washroom, washroom upgrades which will include barrier-free upgrades.

PASS (formerly Alicia Mason): New barrier-free ramp at main entrance.

Information & Communication:
During the 2021-2022 school year, Communications Team & ITS team migrated board and school websites to a new platform to meet AODA requirements. The AODA scanning tool will be used on new sites to ensure compliance with materials included on board and school websites.

Employment Standards:

During the 2022-23 school year, the Board undertook an Employment Systems Review to create a more diverse workforce by evaluating formal and informal policies and practices related to the recruitment, hiring and selection processes. A plan to adopt recommendations is currently being developed.

Appendix 6 - Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) – Partially Integrated Classroom Program Review
From GECDSB Special Education Plan 2024-2025

In July of 2022, a research team was approached to consider conducting a program review of the Greater Essex County District School Board's Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) program. The central question guiding the review was whether RISE was meeting the needs of participating students. RISE is a partially integrated special education program offered in the majority of elementary schools across the system. Access to RISE typically requires students to be identified through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process and be at least two years behind in either Language or Mathematics (or both). Students participating in RISE mostly attend RISE for Language and Mathematics and return to their homeroom for rotary subjects. The research team and plan were fully assembled from across three universities and prepared in Fall 2023. A report was prepared and shared with senior administration of the Greater Essex County District School Board in Spring 2024.

Over the course of collection, researchers met with participants, for interviews and/or focus groups, to learn from their experience with the RISE program. Following the qualitative data collection, the research team worked closely with the board's Information Technology (IT) Department who shared important system-level data to inform their analyses. To address the question as to whether RISE was meeting the needs of students, they explored how the program addresses students' academic and social needs in the immediate as well as examined system data to better understand students' long-term outcomes.

From the interviews and focus groups conducted with participants, it was clear that the RISE program is overwhelmingly valued by the community. Researchers heard from many participants that students were receiving important supports through the RISE program and that educators were able to engage in effective pedagogical practices. However, the research also uncovered important structural concerns that warrant further investigation and attention. As such, the researcher's findings are nuanced and any response to their report must ensure that it centres the best interest of the child.

EXAMINING THE STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF RISE
1. Evidenced opportunities and consequences of tying student support directly to a partially integrated special education program structure.
    1.1 Enhance Awareness and Ensure Implementation of Accommodations
    1.2 Professional Development Opportunities for Educators
    1.3 Resource Allocation

2. Varied perspectives on the purpose and aims of RISE.
    2.1 Develop and Communicate the Purpose of RISE

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RISE FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
3. Mixed Results Reported for Students' Academic Skills and Achievement in RISE.
    3.1 Develop a framework that sets out program expectations for and documents assessment, pedagogical strategies, reporting practices and timelines for the

RISE Program
3.2 Support recruitment of teachers with Literacy and Mathematics specializations to inform their pedagogy in RISE
3.3 Maintain High Expectations for Student Learning
3.4 Employ differentiated instruction and universal design strategies

4. A trend analysis shows that participation in RISE is highly correlated to elementary and secondary program pathways, which can shape access to postsecondary education.

5. Approximately 1/5 of students in RISE will leave and join the regular class before end of Grade 8.
5.1 Track and share program and pathway information with families.

6. Secondary School Pathways are fairly distinct, particularly for Mathematics.

7. Students in RISE were more likely to pursue courses and programs that have more limited opportunities to complete an OSSD as well as access to postsecondary education.
7.1 Access to Guidance Counsellors with high expectations and knowledge on elementary/secondary/postsecondary pathways.
7.2 Encourage and support students to pursue more challenging pathways.
7.3 When planning for students' programs and pathways, consider the implications on students' future access to postsecondary education.

8. Even when controlling for achievement, participation in RISE is related to greater barriers for students' secondary and postsecondary options.
8.1 Investigate and remove potential barriers

RISE AND THE WORK OF FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS
9. RISE perceived as 'only option' for support.
9.1 Diversify Support Options
9.2 Engage Families in the Decision-Making Process
9.3 Improve Support and Recognition for RISE Educators
9.4 Foster a Community of Practice
9.5 Value the roles of all educators in the system

10. Families are engaging in extensive labour and connecting to external services to support their Children
10.1 Engage Families as Partners in the Care and Education of Children
10.2 A greater emphasis on sharing assessment information, and the potential pathways from RISE is needed

RISE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS
11. Partially integrated, partially segregated - RISE as a safe space
11.1 Promote Inclusive Practices
11.2 Identify and address incidences of disability discrimination
11.3 Provide Comprehensive Training for Educators on Creating Inclusive, Trauma- Informed Safe Spaces

WHO DO THESE STRUCTURES AFFECT? EXAMINING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

12. Overall demographics suggest that students in RISE, and for most identified special education categories, are more likely to be white, male, speak English as a first language and have always lived in Canada.

        12.1 Ensure Equitable Access to Special Education

        12.2 Further Examination of the Data.

        12.3 Capture Socioeconomic Status in Future Data Collection

        12.4 Adopt culturally responsive support and resources.

13. A need to address and challenge deficit understandings of disability

        13. 1 Embrace Sociocultural Perspectives on Disability and Difference

        13.2 Recognize and respond to intersectional experiences

        13.3 Adopt Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all classrooms

During the Spring of 2024 the senior team began the process of reviewing the above recommendations. From the report, Porter (2010) has outlined the steps required to ensure a successful transition. One of the steps indicates that, "We need to make a plan for transition and change and accept that this will take at least 3-5 years to do properly". While there were some immediate actions that took place decisions about the future of the RISE program will continue into the 2024-2025 school year.

For the 2024-25 school year:

1. **The RISE program will continue to exist**
2. **Demitting Gr. 8 students where possible –** This allows for students to increase self-advocacy skills needed for high school within a safe, established, trusting environment.
3. **Paused IPRC placements this year during RISE Review** – To ensure equitable access to programs and appropriate supports for students.
4. **Continue to pause IPRC's into RISE** – Concern from the research about fixed pathways for students, further marginalizing these students within and beyond the school context.

Further Actions:
Special Education staff submitted project proposals to the Ministry of Education for additional funding to support the following areas:

1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - A key component of this initiative is fostering collaboration and communication between departments. This interdepartmental learning will ensure that all staff members are working towards common goals, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the initiative. Enhanced collaboration across K-12, Special Education, Program, Student Success and Equity through effective understanding and implementation of UDL will lead to improved student outcomes and a reduction in the need for modifications in curriculum for students. This project aligns with recommendation in the Right to Read report including requiring school boards, to

implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) across all of the various education departments/systems.

We know that designing lessons through a lens of UDL that individual students differences are recognized from the outset to remove or minimize barriers. A UDL lesson is designed to meet the needs of all students in the classroom thereby minimizing the need to subsequently differentiate the lessons for individual students.

With this project the GECDSB is hoping to accomplish the following:
- Striving towards no program modifications before Grade 3
- A reduction in program modifications, especially in mathematics, before Grade 7
- A reduction in the number of students that are streamed into certificate pathways in grade 9
- Full participation for all students as we work towards phasing out partially integrated classrooms and work towards a more inclusive model of education
- Develop a greater understanding of how to leverage students' strengths
- Develop a greater understanding of the tools that can be utilized through Universal Design for Learning
- Start a mindset shift from placement of students in partially or fully integrated classrooms to one of lesson design and principles of UDL
- Start a mindset shift in secondary so that teachers implement new practices to address all learners in de-streamed pathways

We believe that all students deserve access to high quality literacy and mathematics and that teachers need support to meet the growing complexity and diverse learner needs within a classroom.

2. **Differentiated Language and Literacy in Junior Classrooms –** Our primary goal is to build teacher capacity to implement evidence-based literacy instruction and differentiation strategies within the classroom. With our secondary goal to Improve language and literacy outcomes for students with intellectual, language, and learning disabilities. We will target Grade 4 through 6 teachers across selected schools in GECDSB.

The Speech Language Pathologist will collaborate with teachers and the Teacher Consultant from the Program Department to:
1. Develop and support the implementation of a science-based literacy block.
2. Train teachers in the use of universal screeners, diagnostics, and intervention strategies.
3. Provide ongoing in-class support and coaching to ensure effective application of learned strategies.
4. Assist in progress monitoring and data collection to inform instructional adjustments.

This initiative will contain three professional development days held at each individual school. The days will include, capacity building which will involve learning about the science of reading and writing, screeners, and diagnostics to use to develop student

profiles. Teachers will also receive information that pertains to what a literacy block will look like for all students. The last day will outline differentiation during the literacy block for students with language differences using the data collected.

3. **Inclusive Math Intervention Pilot Project** - This pilot project aims to expand our efforts in Tier 2 and 3 interventions within homeroom classrooms, equipping teachers with the skills needed to support students who struggle in mathematics. By fostering a more inclusive learning environment, we strive to address diverse learning needs and promote equitable access to mathematics education. Through ongoing professional development and support from the teacher interventionist/facilitator, homeroom teachers will gain the skills and knowledge necessary to implement effective math intervention strategies. This will ensure that teachers are well-equipped to support students with disabilities beyond the initial year of the project, creating a sustainable model for inclusive math education. By implementing the Jump Math intervention tool, we will use an evidence-based approach to address the specific needs of students with disabilities. This tool has been shown to be effective in improving mathematical understanding and skills, particularly for those who require additional support. The project will focus on enhancing instructional strategies to better prepare students with special education needs for de-streamed math in secondary school. Teachers will learn how to differentiate instruction and use various teaching methods to engage all students, ensuring that those with learning disabilities are not left behind. By creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, we aim to increase student engagement in mathematics. This will help prevent learning gaps and ensure that students are well-prepared for the transition to de-streamed Grade 9 math.

4. **Inclusive Physical Education Engagement Project -** This project looks to expand upon the skills built through the Breaking Barriers: All Star Baseball project to support additional opportunities to train our high school Leadership classes on inclusive physical education to partner with the STEPS students. This will allow both semesters to have the opportunity to train with the Jays Care Foundation and provide reverse inclusion opportunities for leadership students to run programming for our STEPS students.

5. **Inclusion Coach Pilot Project** - Our pilot project proposes an Inclusion Coach position to support students with significant special education needs, including those who are non-verbal with autism spectrum disorder, have physical disabilities, and cognitive challenges. Many of these students will be transitioning to school for the first time or transitioning from elementary school to secondary schools. The Inclusion Coach will work to remove learning barriers by providing classroom coaching, co-creating accessible materials, conducting environmental assessments, and fostering inclusive learning environments. They will also build educators' capacity to implement inclusive practices confidently.

6. **Project Search** - The Project SEARCH Transition-to-Work Program is a unique, one-year employment preparation program for independent/high-functioning students with intellectual/ developmental disabilities that takes place entirely at the workplace. The school board would run a classroom in the business partner's space. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite internships. The program

culminates in individualized job development. Students are immersed at a host business and get more than 700 hours of hands-on work experience geared to in-demand roles in the local labour market. A typical cohort would have approximately 10 students per year. This program targets independent students with intellectual/developmental disabilities (and in some cases mild intellectual disabilities) who are planning to pursue paid employment upon graduation.

Appendix 7 - Changes to the Partially Integrated Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) Program at the Greater Essex County District School Board

Executive Summary
The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) has undertaken a review of the partially integrated Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) program. This report outlines the changes, consultations, and future directions aimed at enhancing student well-being, academic support, and social-emotional development.

Introduction
The restructuring of supports within GECDSB has been driven by a comprehensive review and consultation process involving various stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians, principals, educational staff, union and community partners. The objective is to provide equitable, effective, and sustainable support for students with diverse learning needs, particularly those identified with learning disabilities in reading and mathematics and those students with a mild intellectual disability.

Overview of the RISE Program Review
In the fall of 2023, a team of researchers was assembled from across three universities to review the Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) program within the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB). The review process included three data sources to enable triangulation of findings:
- A review of available information on RISE, as well as academic literature around students' intersectional experiences in special education;
- Interviews and focus groups with families, educators, and students regarding their experiences both in and outside of RISE; and
- System data provided by the GECDSB's IT department.

Concerns
- Inconsistent Academic Results
- Equitable Access Issues
- Impact on Secondary School Pathways
- Family and Educator Collaboration Concerns
- Program Structure and Support Levels

These concerns suggest that while the RISE program has positive aspects, there are significant areas that require improvement to ensure the needs of all students are met equitably and effectively.

Based on the recommendations from the Reaching Individual Success and Excellence (RISE) program review, the following consultation and action steps have been taken. Below, you will find a highlight of each. Additional details and information about the action steps can be found throughout the report.

Consultation Process and Direct Actions		
Group	**Type of Consultation**	**Direct Actions**
Special Education	Discussions and updates	Developed themes to

Advisory Committee (SEAC)	with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).	explore throughout the consultation process based on concerns raised and questions posed by the members of SEAC.
Parent/Guardians	Direct consultations by principals with parents/guardians of the students who are currently in the RISE program. Shared information with parents/guardians about the restructuring through letters and phone calls by administrators.	Identified themes from parent calls, including academic support, social/emotional support, teacher efficacy, professional development, resources, parent partnerships, staffing considerations, and community partnerships.
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation – Elementary Support Staff and Supervisor of Behaviour Services	Discussions with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) – Educational Support Staff (ESS) and the Supervisor of Behaviour Services.	Revised the Developmental Management Service Worker (DMSW) role and renamed to Facilitator – Inclusion to better align with roles of the position and address parent concerns about possible escalation of student behaviour. Hired a Facilitator – Inclusion who provides expertise and coaching with an emphasis on collaboration and structured learning supports.
Superintendent of Student Well-Being and Supervisor of Social Work	Discussions with the Superintendent of Student Well-Being and the Supervisor of Social Work.	Planned transition activities and processes for identifying students' social-emotional well-being based on parent feedback to happen at the end of the 2024-25 school year.
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario – Local Executive	Review of teacher survey and discussions with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Executive.	Identified key themes, including student-centered concerns, impact on students, need for support structures, and maintaining or enhancing support systems. Worked collaboratively with

		ETFO to identify use of Student Support Funds to help support students with special education needs.
Elementary - Learning Support Teachers (LSTs)	Discussions with Elementary Learning Support Teachers.	Reviewed key aspects of the LST role, including direct student support, collaboration with classroom teachers, and implementing targeted interventions. In the process of digitizing consents and forms, updating LST Thumbnail Sketch, and reviewed LST timelines to ensure consistency across schools and the ability of staff to support a greater number of students.
Elementary Principals	Discussions with principals.	Reviewed process and feedback from parents/guardians. Shared process and consultation with principals, reviewed the role of the LST, and engaged in ongoing professional development regarding Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI).
Students	Discussions with students currently in the RISE program	Met with students to understand their preferred learning methods, listen to their concerns about current teaching practices, and assess their understanding of their own Individual Education Plan (IEP).
Education Coordinators and Transition Service Navigators	Discussion with Education Coordinators and Transition Service Navigators	Identified key themes, including student-centered concerns, impact on students, need for support structures, and maintaining or enhancing support

		systems. Reviewed key aspects of the LST role, including direct student support, collaboration with classroom teachers, and implementing targeted interventions. Updating Thumbnail Sketches for LST. Board web page created to identified community supports from birth to 21. Working with families who have students with IEPs to plan pathways out of school to Community, College, and/or University. Special Education Q and A added to Boards Website.

Themes Developed through Consultation

Academic Support

Concerns were raised about whether Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be adhered to in the new structure and emphasized the need for regular assessments to monitor academic progress. Many parents/guardians believe integration into grade 8 homerooms is beneficial for high school preparation. Concerns were expressed about LST support, class sizes, and fear that changes might negatively impact vulnerable students and disrupt their academic momentum, especially for those with IEP modifications below grade level in Math and Language.

Social/Emotional Support

Parents/guardians expressed concern that their children considered the RISE classroom to be a safe learning environment, which allowed them to learn and take risks. There is worry about extra stress and potential negative impacts on children's confidence, as well as increased behavioural issues in larger classes. Additionally, there are concerns about social integration, with children potentially feeling embarrassed. Elevated anxiety among students and the need for specific lessons on handling changes are also significant concerns.

Teacher Efficacy

Many expressed concerns about teachers' ability to meet the diverse needs of children who are behind multiple grade levels in large classrooms, fearing that curriculum modifications may be insufficient. There are worries about job security for teachers and the increased workload due to cuts in education. Additionally, managing diverse needs and behaviours in the classroom may cause significant stress for teachers.

Staffing Considerations
There were concerns about the availability of additional supports beyond the classroom teacher, including whether there will be more Student Support Workers (SSWs), formerly known as Educational Assistants (EAs) to support students. Parents/guardians are worried that their children might not receive the necessary level of staff support to meet their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals. Questions were also raised about the impact on Learning Support Teachers (LST) and how the board will support homeroom classrooms with students who have behaviour plans.

Professional Development
Stakeholders raised concerns about how teachers are being trained for the upcoming changes and whether they are prepared to teach students who are academically below their grade level peers. There are worries about the adequacy of professional development to ensure teachers can effectively support these students in the new classroom structure.

Resources
Parents/guardians expressed concerns about their children losing Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA) equipment and the support for using devices in homeroom classrooms.

Community Supports
Many families identified that they are already seeking tutoring outside of school and want recommendations for additional community supports.

Student Feedback
Students expressed enjoyment in a variety of subjects including Language, Math, Physical Education, Art, and Music, appreciating activities that allow self-expression, creativity, and physical engagement. Students seemed to express a fondness for Math more often than Language. Some of the students find subjects like Language and Math challenging due to reading difficulties and the associated complex tasks. Some struggle with Math and Science, citing difficulties in understanding concepts and repetitive content.

Effective learning tools such as computers, Lexia, and UFLI were identified by students as beneficial, though some students find them challenging. Students appreciate individualized support from teachers and the use of manipulatives and technology to aid learning. Many students expressed a need for movement during the day and suggested improvements like regular breaks, more engaging activities, and better access to sensory items. Students expressed a clear dislike for worksheets and appreciated when teachers engaged them in small group instruction. Students generally had difficulty identifying the content in their IEPs which emphasized the need for clear communication and understanding of their own learning style in their IEP.

Overall Comments
During all consultation sessions it became evident that some parents/guardians' primary concern is the social-emotional health of their children being in homerooms all day,

fearing negative impacts on their mental health and well-being. While most parents/guardians were disappointed and concerned, they generally trust that school staff will take care of their children. Some families were supportive of the changes, appreciating that their children would remain in their homeroom for the entire day.

Restructuring of Supports for Students in RISE

Starting September 2025, students from the RISE program will be placed in their homerooms, promoting a more inclusive environment. This change aims to integrate students fully into their homeroom classrooms, providing opportunities for social interaction and fostering a sense of belonging among peers. An inclusive classroom setting can also provide diverse learning experiences, promoting empathy and collaboration among all students. Additionally, it helps prepare students for future educational settings by maintaining consistent routines and support structures within their homerooms.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

As part of the restructuring of supports for students' parents/guardians can be assured that the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will continue to be implemented and will follow students placement in their homeroom settings. Principals will be tracking student's academic achievement to ensure that timely adjustments are made to program, if needed.

Resource to Support Students with Reading

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's "Right to Read" Report underscores the fundamental importance of reading as a basic human right. It highlights that effective reading instruction is crucial for academic success and lifelong learning, particularly for students with reading disabilities such as dyslexia. The report calls for systemic changes in curriculum, early screening, interventions, and accommodations to ensure equitable access to education. Implementing these recommendations will help provide all students with the opportunity to develop essential reading skills. The resources provided by the GECDSB, such as Lexia, Empower Reading, and UFLI, play a crucial role in supporting students' reading development, ensuring they receive tailored interventions and consistent support to enhance their literacy skills.

Early Reading Enhancements: All students in Year 2 of Kindergarten to Grade 2 will be screened for reading using evidence-based tools. The tools will help ensure students who require further supports in reading are identified early and supported within the classroom.

Lexia; Core5 and PowerUp: These are tiered intervention programs designed to improve reading skills. Core5 targets foundational reading skills for younger students, while PowerUp is aimed at older students to enhance their literacy skills.

Empower Reading: This is a Tier 3 intervention program that provides intensive

support for students who struggle significantly with reading. It focuses on teaching strategies to decode and comprehend text.

UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Initiative): This program offers evidence-based practices to improve literacy instruction and support for students.

Quick Phonics Screener (QPS) and Quick Spelling Survey (QSS): This diagnostic tool is used to assess students' phonics skills, helping educators identify specific areas where students need support in reading or spelling.

Acadience Reading K-6 : Acadience Reading K-6 is a comprehensive assessment tool designed to identify students at risk for early reading difficulties and provide timely instructional support. The program offers universal screening, detects when students need extra support, and is sensitive to the effects of intervention, supporting the Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) models. Homeroom teachers in collaboration with the learning support teachers will implement the resources and diagnostic tools that best support the individual students' needs. These resources are designed to provide comprehensive support to students at various levels of reading proficiency, ensuring targeted and effective intervention.

Resources to Support Students in Math Learning

Mathology is currently a core resource K-8 of the GECDSB. It is an educational program designed to enhance math learning for students. It focuses on developing a deep understanding of mathematical concepts through engaging activities, interactive lessons, and real-world applications. The program includes:
- Interactive Resources: Digital tools and activities that make learning math fun and interactive.
- Differentiated Instruction: Tailored lessons to meet the diverse needs of students.
- Assessment Tools: Various methods to assess and track student progress.

Mathology aims to build a strong foundation in math, encouraging students to explore, understand, and apply mathematical concepts in everyday life.
New for 2025-26 JUMP Math Program - JUMP Math is a curriculum-aligned classroom math program designed to support students with learning disabilities. The program offers structured intervention focused on building foundational math skills and computational fluency. By incorporating direct instruction and engaging math activities, JUMP Math helps students overcome mathematical anxiety and boosts students' confidence, enabling them to achieve their full potential. The program is tailored to address specific learning gaps, ensuring that each student receives personalized support to enhance their mathematical understanding.

A collaborative effort between the homeroom teacher and learning support teachers will effectively address learning gaps in mathematics. The homeroom teacher will utilize Mathology resources, while the learning support teachers will help students using JUMP Math. This integrated approach will ensure cohesive and targeted support for students.

Student Support Funds and Addition of LST Positions

The Student Support Funds in the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) collective agreement is designated to protect and enhance services and supports for students, particularly those with special education needs. These funds are part of system priorities investments, aimed at ensuring that students receive the necessary resources and assistance to succeed in their educational environment. These allocations are made collaboratively in accordance with the priorities and needs identified by the school boards and ETFO and are intended to ensure that all students have access to the support they need to succeed.

Use of Student Support Funds: The student support funds will be used to provide additional Learning Support Teacher (LST) positions to schools, specifically to help support students currently in the RISE program.

Allocation of LST Positions: 0.5 LST positions will be allocated to 23 schools based on the largest number of students currently in RISE and the number of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) at each school.

Embedded Learning Support in the Classroom

When learning support is provided in the classroom, it means that extra help and resources are included in the regular classroom activities. Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) work with the classroom teacher to give specific help and make changes (targeted interventions and modifications) based on each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Benefits of an Inclusive Model
Embedding learning support within the classroom enhances social integration by allowing students to interact with their peers, fostering a sense of belonging and improving social skills. Continuous support ensures that students receive help without being segregated, promoting a seamless learning experience. Interventions and modifications address individual learning gaps, which improves academic performance. Additionally, an inclusive environment supports both academic and social-emotional growth, preparing students for future educational settings and life skills. Our traditional model also includes a withdrawal element of learning support. This may be used in conjunction with our more inclusive model.

Class Size

As students in the RISE program transition back into full-day homeroom classes, overall class sizes in our junior and intermediate levels will decrease throughout the day. Previously, students in RISE were not calculated into the class size average of 24.5, meaning that while the Board's official class size average remained at 24.5, homeroom class sizes could be significantly higher during the portion of the day when RISE students were present. With all students now included in the Board's class size calculations, junior and intermediate classes will experience a more balanced and reduced class size throughout the entire school day.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

To address parent concerns regarding the social-emotional well-being of their children, particularly students with Special Education needs, several coordinated steps are being implemented.

As outlined previously, school Principals will monitor students' academic achievement closely and make timely adjustments to programming as required. In addition, regular check-ins will be conducted with students to support their social-emotional health. A key priority will be ensuring that each student has a caring, connected adult within the school. This trusted relationship plays a critical role in providing emotional stability and fostering a safe, inclusive learning environment where students can thrive both academically and socially.

For students in the RISE program, targeted June transition activities are being organized. These will include the co-creation of individual learning profiles that can be shared with the student's receiving teacher. Consultations with students have revealed that many do not yet have a clear understanding of their Individual Education Plan (IEP), learning preferences, or their unique strengths and needs. These learning profiles will promote greater self-awareness and enhance staff understanding, ensuring that instruction is responsive and aligned with each student's learning profile.

Schools will also be utilizing targeted resources from School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) with a focus on students with Special Education needs. In particular, the "First Ten Days (and Beyond)" resource will be implemented as part of a school-wide approach to transition planning. These activities promote relationship-building, emotional well-being, and classroom community—supporting students through routines, predictability, and a gradual return to learning. For students requiring differentiated support, staff will reference additional SMHO resources such as "Supporting Minds" and "Mentally Healthy Classrooms for All", which offer specific strategies for meeting the mental health needs of students with learning differences. Additionally, the following School Mental Health literacy resources for education staff will be shared:

Mental Health Promotion at School: Classroom Considerations Supporting Mental Wellness Amongst Students with Special Education Needs

Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grades 7 and 8: Considerations for Students with Special Education Needs

Communication Strategies to Support the Mental Health of Students with Special Education Need

Furthermore, students in Grades 3 to 6 currently in RISE will have the opportunity to participate in Summer Learning Programs that focus on building learner confidence, self-advocacy, and foundational literacy skills. These programs will offer scaffolded support to help students access the curriculum more effectively, while embedding social-emotional learning strategies that promote resilience and engagement.

Collectively, these strategies reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting the academic and emotional development of all students, particularly those with Special Education needs, as they transition into the next phase of their learning.

TEACHER EFFICACY and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Overall Summary of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework that aims to optimize teaching and learning for all students by providing flexible methods and materials. UDL emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive classrooms that accommodate diverse learning needs, ensuring that every student has equal opportunities to succeed. It focuses on three main principles: providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression.

Professional development for teachers is essential as it enhances their ability to implement inclusive teaching strategies, such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), ensuring they can effectively meet the diverse needs of all students while managing classroom challenges. This year the GECDSB has provided multiple professional development sessions for staff on UDL. Professional development on UDL can significantly address parents/guardians' concerns by equipping teachers with strategies to create inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs. UDL training helps teachers design flexible lessons that accommodate students at various academic levels, reducing the need for modifications. This approach can provide teachers with practical tools to manage diverse behaviors and learning styles effectively.

Summary of Professional Development Sessions			
Title	**Audience**	**Facilitator**	**Summary**
UDL Now! Embrace Inclusion, Ignite Potential (October 2024)	All staff	Dr. Matt Bergman	Introduction to UDL principles and practices, understand why UDL is important through the lens of variability, firm goals & expert learning and emphasizing the importance of inclusion in educational settings.
UDL Playbook: Supporting Teachers with Implementing UDL (October 2024)	Principal and Vice Principals - Elementary and Secondary	Pam Chu-Sheriff	Practical strategies for supporting teachers in the implementation of UDL in their classrooms.
Infusing Technology into Learning (October 2024)	Learning Support Teachers	Dr. Matt Bergman	Techniques for integrating technology into UDL practices to enhance learning experiences.

Mythbusters: UDL Misconceptions to be Unlearned (November 2024)	New Teachers	Dr. Katie Novak	Addressing common misconceptions about UDL and clarifying its principles.
Mythbusters: UDL Misconceptions to be Unlearned (November 2024)	New Teachers	Jeff Horwitz	Continuation of the session on debunking UDL myths.
UDL Playbook: Supporting Teachers with Implementing UDL (November 2024)	Vice Principals - Elementary and Secondary	Pam Chu-Sheriff	Further strategies for vice principals to support teachers in UDL implementation.
Engaging Universal Design for Learning Workshop (January 2025)	Elementary and Secondary LSTs, Student Success & Guidance Teachers	Dr. Todd Cunningham	Best practices in UDL, Long Term Accommodated Practice, Understanding Student Needs and Mental Health and Self-Perception in the Classroom
A Deeper Look at Firm Goals and Flexible Means (January 2025)	Secondary teachers	Dr. Matt Bergman	Exploring the balance between firm educational goals and flexible teaching methods.
An Evening with Todd Cunningham (February 2025)	Parents/Guardians	Dr. Todd Cunningham	The connection between mental health and self-perception in the classroom, how to identify and support students' unique learning needs and effective long-term accommodations that promote success.
Connecting UDL, Inclusive Practice & Equitable Access (February 2025)	All teachers – Elementary & Secondary	Dr. Angela Burke	Linking UDL with inclusive practices and equitable access to education.
Practical Strategies for Implementing UDL (February 2025)	Secondary teachers	Dr. Chris Bronke	Practical approaches for secondary teachers to implement UDL in their classrooms.
UDL – School Focus (May 2025)	Principals – Elementary & Secondary	Dr. Angela Burke	Administrators developing an area of focus which reflects the learning needs of their students and school community. School leaders will leave the meeting with a

			focus for the 2025-2026 school year and a UDL goal.
Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Institute (September 2024 - April 30, 2025)	GECDSB System Leaders	Multiple presenters	Comprehensive training on Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to build inclusive and equitable school systems, focusing on leadership, collaboration, community building, professional learning, tiered interventions, and data-based decision-making.
Equity by Design (Coming June 2025)	All staff	Dr. Katie Novak & Mirko Chardin	Focus on designing equitable educational practices through UDL.

STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

Homeroom teachers play a crucial role in supporting students transitioning back from the RISE program into the homeroom for the full day. They collaborate closely with Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) to ensure that the transition is smooth and that students continue to receive the necessary support to meet their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals. Homeroom teachers implement strategies such as differentiated instruction, behavior management plans, and the use of assistive technology to accommodate diverse learning needs. Additionally, they foster an inclusive classroom environment that promotes social-emotional well-being and academic success.

School principals work with their educational coordinator to determine students that represent a critical need and may require some form of support staff intervention. If students coming out of the RISE program meet this threshold, then they may be considered for some level of support. Our Board's philosophy does not include one to one support for students, support is always shared.

Student Support Workers (SSWs) play a vital role in the classroom by collaborating with teachers and special education personnel to support students with diverse, complex and critical needs. Critical needs refer to students who require significant support due to various challenges. These include developmental disabilities, moderate to severe autism, extreme self-regulation issues, extremely low adaptive scores, complex medical issues, and safety concerns that necessitate additional assistance to ensure they can safely attend school. Students with critical needs often require specialized interventions and support beyond standard protocols to thrive in an educational environment.

SSWs design, prepare, implement, and monitor programs to develop students' social skills, behavior, motor abilities, communication, and cognitive awareness. SSWs participate in the development and review of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Behavior Plans, Safety Plans, and Transition Plans. They also implement vocational

programs, administer medication, and ensure student safety and supervision. By using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) strategies and Behavior Management Systems (BMS), SSWs help meet the behavioral and social needs of students, while maintaining their dignity and supporting their personal needs.

Child and Youth Workers (CYWs) in the school setting collaborate with the school-based team to support students' behavioral, social, and emotional development. They design, implement, and monitor programs to help at-risk students develop appropriate skills, provide proactive and reactive interventions, and participate in the development and review of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Behavior Plans, Safety Plans, and Transition Plans. Additionally, CYWs ensure student safety and document student progress.

If behaviours become a challenge in the classroom, then the school team can make a referral for GECDSB behavior team support. This team includes Behavior Analysts, ABA Facilitators, Facilitators - Inclusion, and Tier 3 teams. These professionals work collaboratively with school-based teams to implement behavior management strategies, provide expertise, and support students in developing appropriate social and emotional skills. As part of the consultation process the role of the Developmental Management Service Worker was expanded and the name of the role was changed to Facilitator – Inclusion. The Facilitator – Inclusion role focuses on providing expertise, coaching, and enhancing inclusive environments, with a strong emphasis on collaboration and structured learning supports.

As mentioned above the GECDSB has worked with ETFO to use Student Support Funds in the allocation of additional learning support teachers to the system for the 2025-26 school year.

RESOURCES

As part of the consultation with both parents/guardians and students the importance of assistive technology was highlighted. Assistive technology is crucial for students with learning disabilities as it helps them overcome barriers to learning and achieve their full potential. These tools enable students to leverage their strengths and work around their challenges, enhancing their ability to participate in educational activities. Assistive technology can improve academic performance, increase independence, and boost self-confidence by providing tailored support that addresses specific learning needs. Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA) equipment will still be utilized in the homeroom but the model of training will be adjusted.

The current model for Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) training at the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) involves providing students with the necessary tools and resources to support their learning needs. SEA training empowers students to confidently use assistive technology and specialized equipment, ensuring they can fully engage with their learning and maximize their educational outcomes. This includes individual training on the use of devices, software, and other tools that help students with special education needs to access the curriculum and participate fully in

classroom activities. Some challenges have been identified with the current approach to individual training. While students receive training, staff are not equipped with the same knowledge, leading to a disconnect that can hinder effective implementation in the classroom and create barriers to student success.

In collaboration with the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex, a new training model will be introduced in September 2025. This updated approach will provide both students and teachers with the skills and confidence needed to effectively integrate assistive technology (AT) tools into the classroom. The training sessions are conducted in device-based classrooms with internet access, ensuring a hands-on learning experience. Participants learn to navigate and use key built-in accessibility features in Windows OS and Microsoft 365, such as Narrator, Magnifier, High Contrast, Microsoft Dictate, and Immersive Reader. The training emphasizes accessible communication and the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It equips teachers and students to distinguish between accessible and inaccessible digital file types, use tools like Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Office Lens to convert notes into digital formats, and efficiently organize class materials using OneDrive and OneNote.

Throughout the training, teachers and students engage in interactive activities and live demonstrations, exploring tools like Equatio for creating accessible math and science content, conducting accessible internet research with Microsoft Edge, and using Microsoft 365 tools for various learning tasks. The training aims to build comfort and proficiency with these technologies, enabling participants to create inclusive and supportive learning environments. The sessions conclude with reflection activities where participants share their takeaways and plans for integrating the tools into their lessons, ensuring that both students and teachers leave with practical knowledge and strategies to enhance their educational experience. The goal is to create learning environments where all students can access and use technology effectively, whenever and wherever they need it.

Learning Support Teacher (LST) training for the 2025-2026 school year at GECDSB will focus on empowering inclusive classrooms through the use of built-in accessibility tools in Windows OS and Microsoft 365. This five-hour, full-day training session is designed to equip Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) with the skills to identify and effectively use key accessibility tools to support a wide range of student learning needs. This training will closely align with the sessions provided to students and teachers. Participants will engage in hands-on activities and live demonstrations of tools such as Narrator, Magnifier, High Contrast, Microsoft Dictate, Immersive Reader, and Office Lens. The training emphasizes the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, accessible communication, and effective lesson planning.

Throughout the session, LSTs will learn practical strategies for digitizing inaccessible content using OCR, organizing class materials with OneNote and OneDrive, and creating accessible math and science resources using Equatio. The training also includes interactive discussions and activities to reinforce the connection between assistive technology, UDL, and inclusive education practices. By the end of the training, participants will be able to integrate these tools into their teaching practices to enhance

accessibility and support all students effectively.

Edwin is a digital learning platform designed to support students and educators by providing interactive, curriculum-aligned resources. It is especially helpful for students with special education needs, as it allows for personalized, accessible learning.

Here's what a special education student with computer access can do with Edwin:

Access Learning Materials at Their Own Pace
- Read interactive e-textbooks and resources aligned to the Ontario curriculum.
- Revisit lessons as often as needed to support comprehension and retention.
- Use built-in tools like text-to-speech and font resizing to support visual and reading needs.

Engage With Interactive Content
- Watch videos, play educational games, and use simulations to understand key concepts in math, science, language, and more.
- Participate in interactive quizzes and activities that provide immediate feedback.

Use Accessibility Features
- **Text-to-speech** for students who benefit from auditory support.
- **Speech-to-text** for students with written output challenges.
- **Closed captions** on videos to support learners who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Highlighting and annotation tools** for organizing thoughts and study strategies.

Communicate and Collaborate
- Use safe digital spaces to ask questions, post reflections, and share work with peers or teachers.
- Receive private feedback from teachers, helping them feel supported without pressure.

Build Independence and Confidence
- Work on assignments in a structured, distraction-reduced environment.
- Set goals and track progress using built-in tools, promoting self-regulation.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Consultation with the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex (LDAWE) will continue to explore the valuable services they offer and the potential for hosting these services within GECDSB schools. LDAWE provides support, guidance, and resources for individuals with learning disabilities, including specialized programs and employment services. LDAWE provides these services for a fee but hosting LDAWE in GECDSB schools would remove barriers for some families, such as awareness of programming, transportation, and accessibility.

 TVO Learn Mathify offers free, one-on-one online math tutoring for Ontario students in Grades 4-12. The service connects students with Ontario Certified Teachers who

provide personalized support to help with homework, test preparation, and understanding math concepts. Available from any digital device, TVO Learn Mathify features interactive tools like a collaborative whiteboard and a question bank aligned with the Ontario math curriculum. Tutors are accessible Monday to Friday from 9 AM to 9 PM ET, and on weekends from 3 PM to 9 PM ET.

To create an account on TVO Learn Mathify, students need to follow these steps (https://mathify.tvolearn.com/):

1. Visit the TVO Learn Mathify website and navigate to the registration page.
2. Fill out the registration form with the required information, including a username, password, grade level, school board, and Ontario Education Number (OEN) found on their report card.
3. Submit the form to complete the registration process.

Once registered, students can log in anytime during tutoring hours to connect with a tutor.

Applications for Breaking Barriers Grants

School boards are invited to submit applications to fund projects that prevent and remove accessibility barriers experienced by students with special education needs / disabilities.

The purpose of the 2025-26 application-based funding is to provide school boards with opportunities to:

- Remove barriers for individuals with disabilities (e.g., students, educators, parents/guardians), and promote and support accessible, inclusive, and equitable education practices both inside and outside of the classroom;
- Educate students, educators, parents/guardians and the broader school community about disabilities, and services and supports for students with disabilities;
- Empower individuals with disabilities to participate in accessible and inclusive initiatives together;
- Empower students to play a leadership/allyship role in promoting inclusive, barrier-free school environments;
- Raise awareness about the value and benefits of accessibility and inclusion; and
- Prevent and remove the unique barriers faced by students whose disabilities intersect with differing identities, including race, culture, language, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, creed, age and ethnicity.

The following grants are being applied for:

1. Ableism – This proposal is meant to address ableism through a comprehensive professional development series. Ableism is discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities. Following a first year of PD on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in collaboration with Novak Education, the GECDSB will now focus on enhancing

staffs' capacity to further support students with disabilities. The intention of this grant proposal will be to continue our work with teachers and support staff to provide inclusive opportunities within their school and community. This year-long ableism PD initiative aims to deepen educators' understanding of ableism, support students with varying levels of disabilities, equip them with inclusive teaching strategies, and foster an environment where all students can thrive. By building on the foundational UDL principles, this series will empower staff to create more accessible and equitable learning experiences for every student.

2. Strive Reimagined - This proposal will outline a one-day educational event designed to empower students with learning disabilities by building their self-advocacy skills and equipping their teachers with evidence-based strategies to foster student success. The event will feature interactive workshops for students focused on understanding their learning profiles, communicating their needs effectively, and developing confidence in educational settings. Concurrently, teachers will engage in professional development sessions led by experts in special education, covering proven instructional techniques, classroom accommodations, and tools for promoting inclusive learning environments. The goal is to strengthen collaboration between students and educators, ultimately enhancing academic outcomes and personal growth for learners with learning disabilities.

3. Math Supports – Junior/Intermediate - This proposal aims to improve inclusive math instruction across ten schools by aligning Tier 1 teaching practices with scaffolded Tier 3 supports for students with IEPs. Building on last year's successful pilot and informed by our current UDL Removing Barriers grant with Dr. Todd Cunningham, the project prioritizes equity, conceptual understanding, and long-term student success—particularly in preparation for the Grade 9 de-streamed math course. A key focus of the project is supporting educators in connecting IEP goals directly to curriculum expectations and reducing the need for modifications that may limit future course options.

4. **Universal Design for Learning – Science of Reading – Junior Intermediate** - Funding to support an in-class, coaching-based literacy initiative for students in Grades 4–8 with persistent reading challenges. Two literacy consultants will work directly alongside educators to co-plan, co-teach, and embed structured literacy and inclusive practices into day-to-day classroom instruction. The model is intentionally designed to build teacher capacity within the classroom—not through pull-out or isolated PD—and supports real-time, responsive instruction aligned with the Science of Reading and UDL. In collaboration with Dr. Todd Cunningham and the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor Essex, the initiative also includes whole-class assistive technology training to normalize accommodations and support student independence. This initiative aligns with the Right to Read recommendations, Ministry priorities, and our K–8 School Improvement and Board Literacy Action Plans.

5. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) for All: Enhancing Equity, Understanding, and Independence in the Classroom** - This pilot will serve as a model for how inclusive technology can be embedded seamlessly into diverse classrooms to close opportunity gaps and personalize instruction. It aligns with the principles of Universal Design for

Learning (UDL), ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, can access curriculum in ways that are meaningful to them. The pilot will include training for educators, iterative feedback from students, and data collection on engagement and achievement. The tools used will assist teachers in progress monitoring and data analysis, leaving more time for direct differentiated instruction.   By equipping both students and teachers with the knowledge and tools to harness AI effectively, this initiative will proactively remove systemic barriers and help reimagine what equitable learning can look like. It is expected that students will show growth in the Learning Skills of Independent Work, Initiative, Organization and Self Regulation. Utilizing AI tools for teachers will allow precise, personalization and UDL for the whole class resulting greater in depth understanding of the curriculum, with the expectation that students will. AI will assist the teacher in delivery of Tier intervention in the classroom, by making groups with target skills utilizing resources the board already uses such as UFLI.

IPRC PROCESS

As part of this process the school principal will initiate an Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC) meeting. The IPRC review meeting follows a structured process to ensure that the student's needs are being met effectively. Here is what to expect:

Parents/guardians are informed about the upcoming review meeting. They receive details about the date, time, and location, and are encouraged to attend. Before the meeting, the school gathers updated information about the student's progress, including recent assessments, reports, and feedback from teachers. The IPRC review meeting involves the committee members, parents/guardians, and relevant school staff. The student's progress and current needs are discussed in detail. Change of placement will also be discussed at this meeting outlining the supports that will change for the student. The decision is documented and communicated to the parents/guardians. They receive a written statement outlining the committee's findings and the changes to the student's placement or supports. When changes are made, the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) is updated to reflect the new placement and supports, effective for the date of placement of the IPRC. The school ensures that the updated IEP is implemented effectively. Continuous monitoring and follow-up will be conducted to ensure that the student is adapting well to the changes and that their needs are being met.

Conclusion
The restructuring of special education supports at GECDSB aims to provide equitable, effective, and sustainable support for students with diverse needs. Through comprehensive consultations and targeted interventions, the board is committed to enhancing student well-being, academic support, and social-emotional development.

Appendix 8 – Glossary

Acronyms

AODA: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder
CYW: Child and Youth Worker
DSW: Developmental Service Worker
EA: Educational Assistant
GAINS: Giving Attention to Individual Needs
GECDSB: Greater Essex County District School Board
HCCSS: Home and Community Care Support Services
IEP: Individual Education Plan
IPRC: Identification, Placement Review Committee
LIHN: Local Health Integration Network
LDCC: Locally Developed Compulsory Credits
LST: Learning Support Teacher
MACSE: Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education
MAPS: My Achievement Pathway to Success
OSR: Ontario Student Record
OT: Occupational Therapy
PT: Physical Therapy
RISE: Reaching Individual Success and Excellence
SHSSP: School Health Support Services Program
SEA: Special Education Amount
SEAC: Special Education Advisory Committee
SIP: Special Incidence Portion
SLP: Speech-Language Pathologist
SSLI: Student Support Leadership Initiative
SSW: Student Support Worker
STEPS: Steps to Enhance Personal Success
SWDHH: Support Worker for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing