SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENTS PROVIDED BY THE BOARD

The plan encourages the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms and home schools to the extent that their unique learning needs can be met in those locations. The plan assures parents/guardians ongoing opportunities to share in decisions related to a student's program. SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee), in accordance with Regulation 464/97, is actively involved in the annual review of the board’s Special Education Plan.

OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Essential is the knowledge that students in our schools present unique and varied needs that must be addressed in order for them to experience success. These needs are the starting point for all discussions and decisions regarding placement, program and services. The responsibility for meeting these needs begins at the local school level and invites the involvement of all appropriate participants. Bluewater District School Board offers a range of programs and services designed to meet the specialized needs of students. These placements are: A regular class with indirect support; A regular class with resource assistance; A regular class with withdrawal assistance; A special education class with partial integration (in order to best support student need); and A special education class full time (in order to best support student need). The delivery of these programs and services involves school-based personnel, special education staff, outside agencies and the community.

Equitable allocation of resources ensures availability of services for all exceptionalities.

Range of Placement Options

A range of placement options, designed to meet the needs of individual students, exists in Bluewater District School Board. Initial decisions related to student placement are made by the receiving school principal in consultation with his/her support staff and other special education resource staff as deemed appropriate. The parent/guardian will be involved in the initial placement.

Bluewater District School Board is serviced with:

- a number of full time special education resource classes for students with developmental needs
- a range of resource programming available for communication impairment, alternative education, gifted, behaviour, learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities, including deaf/hard of hearing, blind/visually impaired and deafblind

Each school has a Special Education Learning Resource Teacher. It is strongly believed that the regular classroom is where age-appropriate peer relationships develop. In keeping with this belief, before considering the option for placement in a special education class, an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) or school-based team will consider whether placement in a regular class, with appropriate special education services, would meet the student’s needs and is consistent with parental preferences. If the committee decides that the student should be placed in a special education class, it must give reasons in its written statement of decision. Specialized placements may be appropriate to meet the needs of individual students, and a range of options designed to meet the needs of these students exists in Bluewater District School Board:
A **regular class with indirect support**
The student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialized consultative services.

A **regular class with resource assistance**
The student is placed in the regular class for most of or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom, from or under the direction of a qualified special education teacher.

A **regular class with withdrawal assistance**
The student is placed in the regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom for less than 50 per cent of the school day, from or under the direction of a qualified special education teacher.

A **special education class with partial integration (in order to best support student need)**
The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class where the student-teacher ratio conforms to Regulation 298, section 31, for at least 50 per cent of the school day, but is integrated with regular class for at least one instructional period daily.

A **special education class full time (in order to best support student need)**
The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class, where the student-teacher ratio conforms to Regulation 298, section 31, for the entire school day.

**CRITERIA FOR PLACEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**
Students’ strengths and needs and parental preferences form the basis of student placement.

Where a student is formally identified, the IPRC will recommend placement, based upon each student’s strengths and needs, as outlined in an Individual Education Plan (IEP), parental consultation and available resources.

Where a student has not been formally identified by an IPRC, special education programming/placement shall be based on the strengths and needs of students as reflected in the IEP and determined by the school-based team in consultation with parents and students. Changes in placements are considered through the consultation process and review of individual education plans through the annual review process.

**Integration Strategies**
The first option considered by the board for placement is the regular class, provided the placement meets the student’s needs and is consistent with parental preferences. Even when placement is made in a special class, in some cases partial integration in the regular class is preferable if student needs can be met in this setting.

Students can be integrated into the regular class in a variety of ways:
- modifications and accommodations to the regular program
- resource support
- individual and/or small group support provided through resource teachers and/or Educational Assistants

**Special Class Placements**
Special class placements are sometimes necessary in order to meet student needs. Students may be placed in special classes through a planning and transition process including parents, school personnel and appropriate support staff from the board and agencies involved. On occasion, this is an interim placement that precedes an IPRC placement decision.
Levels of support are based on Ministry Guidelines for class grouping by exceptionality (Ontario Regulation 298), as well as the composition of each class based on intensity of student needs.

Programs and placements required are determined annually by student needs and availability of resources. The following placements are available to students with all exceptionalities:

**Developmental Learning**
Special education resource classes are available in both elementary and secondary schools in Bluewater District School Board. Classes serve students diagnosed with developmental disabilities, multiple disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorders as identified by regulated medical or psychological practitioners. Staffing conforms to Regulation 298, Section 31. The focus is on basic literacy and numeracy skills as appropriate as well as communication, social skills and life skills programming. Where necessary, specialized transportation is provided to accommodate student needs. Levels of support are determined through assessment information, safety/supervision needs and/or medical physical needs:

- students receive intensive instruction in their particular area of need
- students have the opportunity to integrate in regular age appropriate classrooms as appropriate

The board completed a review of programs for developmental learning in 2001. It made recommendations to further support the diverse needs of students with developmental disabilities.

**Behaviour Resource**
Resource programs are available. Students must first have an IEP with social and behavioural learning expectations in place. Levels of support are determined through assessment information and safety/supervision needs.

The board has developed procedures to address physical restraint and intervention procedures for students who are experiencing difficulties with behaviour.

**Regular Class Placements**

**Regular Class with Indirect Support:**

- the student is placed in the regular class for the entire day, and the classroom teacher receives specialized consultative services
- the classroom teacher provides support as outlined in the IEP, developed in consultation with the Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) and the parent
- the classroom teacher, in consultation with the LRT, monitors student progress, adjusts the program as appropriate, and reviews and updates the IEP at least once in each reporting period
- ongoing assessment and consultation among administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and student is integral to student progress
Regular Class with Resource Assistance:

- the student is placed in the regular class for most of or all of the day
- specialized instruction/support is provided within the regular classroom, from or under the direction of a qualified special education teacher (LRT, Special Education Resource Teacher, or other Learning Services - Student Support school level staff)
- instructional interventions, modifications and/or accommodations are provided as articulated in the IEP, developed collaboratively with the classroom teacher, LRT, parent, student and other staff as appropriate; IEP is reviewed and updated at least once in each reporting period
- ongoing consultation with parents and staff involved with the student is necessary in planning and implementing programming, and evaluating and reporting student progress

Regular Class with Withdrawal Assistance:

- the student is placed in the regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom for less than 50% of the school day, from or under the direction of a qualified special education teacher (LRT, Special Education Resource Teacher, or other special education school level staff)
- specialized instruction/support is provided as described in the IEP, developed collaboratively with the classroom teacher, LRT, parent, student and other staff as appropriate; IEP is reviewed and updated at least once in each reporting period
- instructional interventions, modifications and/or accommodations are provided within the regular class program as well, and are assessed by the classroom teacher and supported by school-based special education staff
- the LRT and/or Special Education Resource Teacher develops, implements, evaluates and reports on the special education portion of the program
- ongoing consultation with parents and staff involved with the student is integral to planning and implementing programming, and evaluating and reporting student progress

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE

Programs

Communication

Special education resource programs are available in each school in Bluewater District School Board. Eligibility is determined through assessment information from a range of sources – speech and language and/or psychological and academic. Level of intervention is determined through the IEP process. Students may access this service without being formally identified as exceptional. A range of program delivery options is available within the district. Speech-Language Pathologists from the board or Closing the Gap, provide regular services directly to students or through consultation with teachers.

Blind/Visually Impaired Learning

Student eligibility is based on needs identified through medical or optometry practitioners. Programs are provided through the provision of itinerant or resource support specific to student needs and geographic considerations. Resource consultation occurs regularly through W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind.
Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Student eligibility is determined through audiometric assessment. The Teacher(s) of the Deaf provide itinerant resource support throughout the district. Regular resource support for staff occurs through resource visits provided through the Robarts School. Speech and Language assessments and support are available through the board Speech-Language Pathologists and through the partnership with Preschool Speech and Language.

Physical/Medical

Eligibility is determined through assessments provided through medical, physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy. Services are provided through school-based staff that may include Educational Assistant support. Additional services are provided in the schools directly and/or through consultation with therapists and dieticians from our partnerships.

Gifted Resource

Eligibility is determined through a combination of district-wide screening of students in Grade 4 using Insight. Support is provided through school Learning Resource teachers or through the System Special Education Lead Teachers.

Criteria for Change of Placement

A change of placement should be considered based on the following criteria:

- a student has made sufficient progress to return to a less intensive setting (regular class, resource program)
- a student’s needs have increased such that an alternative setting/special class placement is required or would be best support level of student need (i.e. Behaviour Resource Program)
- parent(s)/guardian(s) no longer wish to have their son or daughter remain in the program, or the student (18 years or older) does not wish to remain in the program.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN CARE, TREATMENT, CUSTODY AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The needs of most school-aged children/youth can be effectively met within their family environments and through regular attendance in local schools. There are, however, conditions where a child’s/youth’s social, emotional and/or medical needs require the individual to be placed in a treatment facility. There are other situations where a young person must reside in a correctional facility. In each case special arrangements may be required to address the person’s educational needs.

Service providers from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children’s Services, Ministry of Public Safety and Security, and Ministry of Education recognize the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to meet the needs of children/youth requiring special services. Fundamental to these beliefs is the recognition that an opportunity for education should be provided for school-age children who are admitted to government-approved facilities for care, treatment, custodial or correctional purposes, and who cannot attend a local school because of their primary need for the services provided by the facility.

A contract exists between the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Public Safety and Security, and Bluewater District School Board for educational programs in classrooms across the district. The teachers report to the Superintendent of Education responsible for special education, or designate. A formal contract describing the roles and responsibilities is renewed annually with these facilities.
EDU Policy/Program Memorandum #85 (1986) outlines the Ministry policy for the development of suitable educational programs which recognize the primacy of the care and/or treatment needs of the children/youth who have been admitted to facilities.

CHILDREN’S TREATMENT CENTRES & PROVINCIAL DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS

REFER TO SECTION 9 - PROVINCIAL AND DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO
- CHILDREN’S TREATMENT CENTRES

SERVICES

Special education services available through the Learning Services - Student Support department include:

- Behaviour Expertise Professional
- Psychologists/Psychometrist
- Specialized Equipment & Technology Assistants
- Specialized Technology & Learning Teacher
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Structured Learning Support Teacher
- System Special Education Instructional Lead Teacher
- System Special Education Lead Teachers
- Teacher of Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Teacher of Students who are Blind/Visually Impaired

EXCEPTIONALITY CRITERIA

The provision of effective programming for exceptional students is more important than labelling the student with a particular exceptionality. A student need not be formally identified through an IPRC process in order to receive service.

Ministry-defined criteria set out in the Ministry of Education and Training, Special Education Handbooks, are included in IPRC – A Guide for Parents and are used to assist in student identification.

From Ontario Regulation 181/98, the following document was developed: A Guide to Addressing Student Needs (Consultation to IPRC) for Administrators and Teachers

- A GUIDE TO ADDRESSING STUDENT NEEDS FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

This document addresses:

- categories of exceptionality and definitions
- district school board criteria
- informing parents
- parent and student involvement
- gathering information
- identification
- statement of needs
- recommending placement
• annual review
• requests for reviews
• meeting with parents prior to notifying the district of the decision
• communicating decision to the district
• process for resolving disputes
• appeal process

CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

The board applies the Ministry of Education Categories and Definitions of Exceptionality when identifying students as exceptional in conjunction with assessment data gathered in order to make informed decisions about appropriate student identification and placement. Educational and formal assessments regarding specific areas of concern, as well as other forms of assessment i.e., medical, hearing and vision, speech and language and psychological are also considered by the IPRC in applying categories of exceptionality and considering placement.

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

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

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.

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:
   - language delay
   - dysfluency
   - voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based

**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.

**Learning Disability**

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 and that:

a) 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

b) 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

c) 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

d) 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 behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making)

e) 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

f) 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

**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.
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

b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development

c) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment and economic self-support

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

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.

Blind and Visually Impaired

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

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 teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments or disabilities.
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