SECTION C-9

PARENT GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION
The Individual Education Plan Document; A statement from the Ontario Ministry of Education

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

Our Vision
Inspired by our rich heritage and challenged by the struggles of our past, we are an inclusive Catholic educational community, called to express our mission as Church, to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant in the world today, and to be the hope for the future.

The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
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* Throughout this guide, the word "parent" is intended to refer equally to a child's guardian.
What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

An IEP is a written plan that describes accommodations, expectations and modifications that are in place for a student in order to achieve his/her full potential. An IEP is not a pristine piece of paper that is filed in the Ontario Student Record and referred to only on occasion. Rather it is a living document that continues to change with the needs of the exceptional child. It is a roadmap for all those involved with this child, so that maximum learning can occur.

THE IEP WILL INCLUDE SOME OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Student’s strengths and needs;
- Assessment data;
- Student’s current level of achievement in each program area;
- Goals and specific expectations for the student;
- Teaching strategies to meet expectations;
- Program modifications (changes required to grade-level expectations in the Ontario Curriculum);
- Accommodations (instructional, environmental and assessment that will help your child access the curriculum and demonstrate learning);
- Special education services provided to the student;
- Individualized equipment;
- Assessment methods;
- A Transition Plan (over the age of 14);
- Alternative program expectations and teaching strategies and evaluation of progress.

DEVELOPING THE IEP:

Specific steps help ensure that an IEP will work well

1. Gather information from as many sources as possible.
2. Set a clear direction.
3. Develop the IEP.
4. Implement the IEP.
5. Review and update the IEP.

WHAT ROLE DO PARENTS PLAY?

Parents play a powerful role in the IEP process. Be sure to ask for a copy of your child’s IEP within 30 business days of the first day of your child’s enrollment in a special education program. You know things about your child’s approach to learning that no one else knows. Be sure to tell the teacher about your child’s:

- Likes, dislikes and interests;
- Interests in extra-curricular activities;
- Talents and abilities;
- Family relationships and dynamics (including extended family and pets);
- Peer relationships and dynamics; and
- Family routines and schedules.

As a parent, 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 the child in the discussions; and
- Telling the teacher what you hope your child will accomplish this year.

CARRYING OUT THE IEP

There are many things you can do at home to help your child reach his/her goals.

1. Talk to the teacher about what she or he is trying to accomplish.
2. Do what you can at home to try and support your child’s goals.
3. Take every opportunity to communicate with your child’s teacher.
4. Provide additional insights and resources to the school.

5. Share significant personal/family events as relevant.

REVIEW AND UPDATE THE IEP

Your child’s progress toward his/her expectations will be reviewed each term/semester. Then the IEP will be updated to include new expectations and/or accommodations considered necessary to help the learning process.

1. Talk to your child’s teacher about the expectations that have been set.
2. Communicate regularly with the child’s teacher regarding progress.
3. Look for evidence of growth on your child’s report card.
4. Recommend changes in goals, strategies and/or accommodations where you see a need.
5. Be actively involved in discussions at school when your child is changing grades, schools or moving into the workplace.
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Special education for special children
A parent's guide to IPRC's

THE RENFREW COUNTY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
Philosophy of the School Board

The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board strives to integrate children with special needs into the mainstream of school life. We believe regular, neighborhood schools—and whenever possible, regular classrooms within those schools—are the best, first choice for all our students. All students are thereby given the greatest opportunity to participate in the life of their school community. This philosophy of inclusion is our mandate from the Ontario Ministry of Education. It is also a philosophy manifest in our claim to Catholic Christian community.

Inclusion—attitudes and mechanisms that encourage students toward fullest possible participation in school life—allows children to play, pray and learn with their friends, in age-appropriate peer groups. Sometimes, however, a student’s needs exceed accommodation that can be practically provided in a regular classroom. In such cases, the school board strives to develop special placements that best meet the unique needs of each individual student.

As Catholics, and as educators, we accept the infinite value of all God’s children. Our goal is to deliver nurturing programs to enable all students to achieve their full learning potential, equipping them to follow their individual pilgrimages with hope and bright expectation.

The purpose of this guide is to provide parents* with information regarding procedures to identify a student as “exceptional,” to assist in the development of an appropriate placement plan for exceptional students, and to outline mechanisms of appeal if a parent disagrees with the educational placement of their child.

It is the policy of the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board to encourage full participation of parents throughout any student evaluation and planning process.

* Throughout this guide the word “parent” is intended to refer equally to a child’s guardian.

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The Education Act

The Education Act requires that school boards provide, or purchase from another board, special education programs and services for their exceptional pupils. This parent guide will provide you with information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), as well as the procedures involved in identifying a pupil as “exceptional,” and deciding or appealing the placement determined by the IPRC.

What is an IPRC?

Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards set up an Identification, Placement, and Review committee (IPRC). An IPRC is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the board.

Within the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, IPRC members include: a principal or supervisory officer, a special education teacher, and a classroom teacher.

Parents are invited to attend the meeting.

The role of an IPRC

The IPRC will:

• decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;
• identify the areas of your child’s exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionailities provided by the Ministry of Education;
• decide on an appropriate placement for your child and review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

If you wish to receive this parents’ guide in a Braille, large print, or an audio-cassette format, please contact the board at the address or telephone number shown on the last page of this guide.

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Who is identified as an exceptional pupil?
The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as "a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program..." Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

What is a special education program?
A special education program is defined in the Education Act as an educational program that:

- is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation; and
- includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

What are special education services?
Special education services are defined in the Education Act as the facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program.

What is an IEP?
The IEP must be developed for your child, in consultation with you. It must include:

- specific educational expectations;
- an outline of the special education program and services that will be received;
- a statement about the methods by which your child’s progress will be reviewed; and
- for students 14 years and older (except those identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness), a plan for transition to appropriate post-secondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living.

The IEP must be completed within 30 school days after your child has been placed in the program, and the principal must ensure that you receive a copy of it.

How is an IPRC meeting requested?
The principal of your child’s school:

- must request an IPRC meeting for your child upon receiving your written request;
- may, with written notice to you, refer your child to an IPRC when the principal and the child’s teacher or teachers believe that your child may benefit from a special education program.

Within 15 days of receiving your request, or giving you notice, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet.

May parents attend the IPRC meeting?
Regulation 181/86 entitles parents and pupils 16 years of age or older:

- to be present at and participate in all committee discussions about your child; and
- to be present when the committee’s identification and placement decision is made.

Who else may attend an IPRC Meeting?

- The principal of your child’s school;
- other resource people such as your child’s teacher, special education staff, board support staff, or the representative of an agency, who may provide further information or clarification;
Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) play a vital role in the success of special education programs and services in Ontario’s publicly funded schools.

(www.seac-learning.ca)

Who Is a Member of SEAC?

SEAC membership is composed of representatives from:

• up to 12 local parent associations, affiliated with provincially incorporated associations which further the interests of exceptional pupils or adults, and which do not represent professional educators;

• one, two or three board members, depending on the size of the board

• one or two representatives for Aboriginal pupils where appropriate; and

• may include one or more members at large.
Are there any guidelines in choosing SEAC members?

The following are some guidelines from the Ministry publication, “Special Education: A Guide for Educators” that have been useful to boards:

1. The SEAC seats for representatives of local associations should be used to bring to the committee the perspective of parents of children with a wide range of exceptionalities.

   Representatives of local associations should bring the perspective and the resources of a provincial or a national association that is incorporated and operates throughout Ontario to further the interests of one or more groups of exceptional pupils;

   1. The representative of the local association nominated by the association is normally the person appointed by the board.

   2. The association selects as its representative, a member who lives within the jurisdiction of the board, the actual address of the "branch" of the association should not be significant.
What is SEAC?

SEACs are Special Education Advisory Committees established since 1980 as part of the revision of Bill 82. SEACs are referenced in Regulation 464/467. Section 57.1 of the Education Act requires each board to establish a SEAC. Each SEAC must convene at least 10 times per year.

What does SEAC oversee?

The Special Education Advisory Committee

- Makes recommendations to the school board with regard to special education
- 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

What is SEAC's role in Quality Assurance?

SEACs focus on three areas to assure quality in special education:

- School Board Special Education Plans
- Individual Education Plans
- Public Relations
How is SEAC involved in School Board Education Plans?

With the assistance of SEAC, school boards must review the plan once a year and send any amendments to the Minister of Education. Every two years, boards must prepare and approve a report of the special education programs and services. The standards stipulate that in developing and modifying their special education plan, boards must take into consideration issues and feedback from members of the community including parents, members of school councils, community organizations, and students. This public consultation, which takes place with the assistance of the board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), must be maintained on a continuous basis throughout the year.

How is SEAC involved in Individual Education Plans?

A school board's Special Education plan is reviewed yearly by the Ministry of Education. The SEAC has the opportunity to provide comment and advice to the board when the results of the Ministry's review are received and when the board develops its response for inclusion in the board's Special Education Plan. As the Ministry moves, over time, to having school boards develop and implement procedures for quality assurance for the implementation of IEPs, the SEACs will have an important role to play in providing further advice to boards.

How is SEAC involved in public relations?

Parents or members of the public may contact a member of their school board's Special Education Advisory Committee to discuss their point of view about the board's system-wide planning and development of special education programs and services. Members of the public may attend a SEAC meeting to make their views known to the Committee on special education issues, and through it, to the district school board.
The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board provides Special Education programs and services in accordance with the Education Act and Regulations.

DEFINITION

A student identified as having a speech and/or language disorder is experiencing difficulty in the area of communication. Difficulty learning to speak, understand or use language, speak fluently or a voice problem can adversely affect a student’s educational, social, psychological and emotional well-being.

The Ministry of Education defines the exceptionality

Language Impairment

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or 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.

SERVICES
A Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) provides the following:

- Screening (students with moderate to severe articulation, fluency, voice, or swallowing disorders are referred to SHSS-CCAC for follow-up)
- Assessment of speech and language skills
- Establishment of a program and/or intervention strategies
- Liaison with other community agencies.

SLPs work in collaboration with the Communicative Disorders Facilitator (CDF) to:

- Modify the classroom program
- Support classroom and special education teachers in developing communication strategies
- Provide direct short-term intervention for individuals or small groups
- Support parents in carrying out home programs.

HOW A STUDENT IS IDENTIFIED

A student with speech/language difficulties may have trouble following the classroom program and/or making him/herself understood. After discussing concerns with a parent, school staff may refer a student for assessment by an SLP. The assessment information will then be used to make recommendations and/or plan a program to meet the student's needs.

A student with a language problem may have difficulty with:
- Following directions
- Understanding classroom conversations
- Remembering information
- Speaking on topic
- Understanding and using words/sentences appropriately in conversation or in written language
A student with a **speech** problem may have trouble speaking clearly and may use:
- Substitutions, e.g. tar for car
- Omissions, e.g. cool for school
- Distortions, e.g. houth for house

A student with **fluency** difficulties experiences a disruption in the normal flow or rhythm of speech. Characteristics of stuttering may include:
- Repetitions of sounds/syllables/phrases e.g. b-b-b-because, can can can I go?
- Hesitations e.g. um…, ah…, like…ah

A student with **voice** difficulties may experience problems with the following:
- Inappropriate pitch (too high/low or monotonous)
- Loudness (too loud/quiet)
- Quality (harsh/hoarse/breathy/nasal)

If you are concerned about your child’s speech-language skills, contact the principal of your school. Parents will be consulted if school staff have concerns.

For more information regarding the identification, placement and review process, please contact your school principal.

**HOW PARENTS* CAN HELP**

Early detection and treatment of speech and language problems is the key to the prevention of many learning and social problems. Parents play a vital role in:
- Early referral
- Following up on suggested medical assessments e.g. hearing test
- Regularly conversing with their children
- Regularly reading to their children
- Ensuring child has adequate sleep, exercise, and nutrition
- Reinforcing the school program in the home

Encouragement for the student to try recently learned speech / language / fluency / voice patterns outside of the school environment is essential to the success of the program.

*Includes guardians
OTHER SPEECH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Sprouting Speech (ages 2 to 5 years, including JK)
Telephone: (613) 732-7007 or 1-888-421-2222
Web: www.champlain.ccac-ont.ca

School Health Support Services (SHSS)
Champlain Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)
Telephone: (613) 732-7007 or 1-888-421-2222
Web: www.champlain.ccac-ont.ca

Ottawa Children’s Treatment Centre – Renfrew Site
Telephone: 1-800-565-4839
Web: www.octc.ca

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders
Web: www.oafccd.com

College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
Web: www.caslpo.com

Communication Disorders Assistant Association of Canada
Web: www.cdaac.ca

Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologist and Audiologists
Web: www.osla.on.ca