



NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

# **Parent Guide to Special Education 2021**



*The Niagara Catholic District School Board,  
through the charisms of faith,  
social justice, support, and leadership,  
nurtures an enriching Catholic learning community  
for all to reach their full potential and become  
living witnesses of Christ.*



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## Guiding Principles

- All staff will make programming decisions from a Christ-centred perspective.
- Students and their successes are the focus of all decision making.
- The foundation of programming and delivery is early intervention and ongoing data collection and assessment.
- Inclusion of students into their home school and age-appropriate class is the preferred practice.
- A range of services will be provided from Kindergarten to graduation.
- All programming decisions will be collaborative and consultative.

## Philosophy of the Student Support Department

The Niagara Catholic District School Board is committed to the inclusion of students with special education needs within their home school and in their age-appropriate classes. The Board is also committed to the philosophy that all students within its jurisdictions be provided with the opportunity to access programs, services, and supports that will maximize their potential and receive an education commensurate with their identified needs.

- Education is of paramount importance to the physical, intellectual, social-emotional, and spiritual growth of all children.
- Each student is entitled to the best educational programs, services and personnel that can be provided.
- All special education programs and services provided by the Board will be within the atmosphere of a Catholic school community.
- The Student Support Department will utilize all resources to determine the educational needs of students and will provide programs, services and personnel to support the development of students with special education needs to their maximum potential.
- The needs of students shall be met in the most enabling setting.
- Ongoing communication and cooperation with the parents of students with special education needs is vital for success in all special education programs and services.
- The education of students with special education needs is a shared responsibility of the student, teacher(s), parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Board.
- The Student Support Department will cooperate with, and will seek the assistance of, all other appropriate agencies in meeting the needs of our students with special education needs.
- Special Education programs and services will be provided in a safe atmosphere that cherishes and celebrates the uniqueness of each individual.



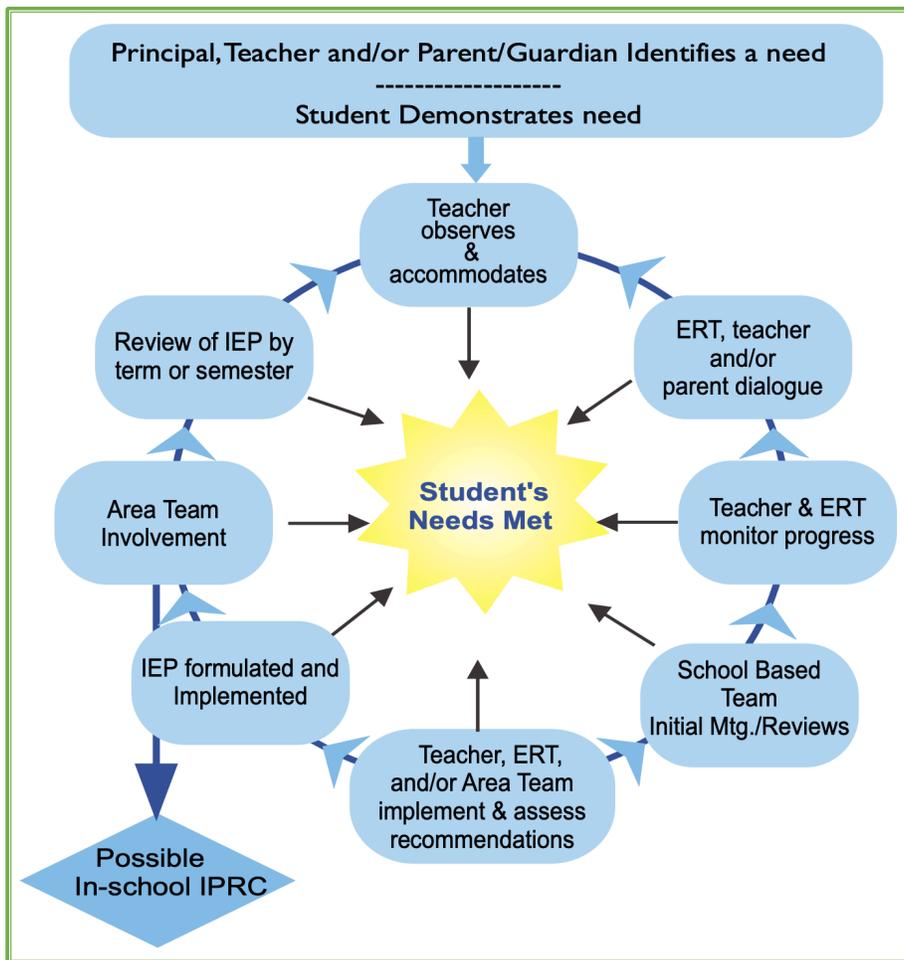
## Programming Decisions for Students

### Early Identification and Intervention

The Niagara Catholic District School Board strongly supports an early identification/intervention model of services for students with special education needs.

### Problem Solving Model for Service Delivery

The Niagara Catholic District School Board has put into place a problem-solving model for identifying and meeting student needs at any grade level. The parent/caregiver has a key role in the education of the student with special education needs. As such, early and ongoing discussion between school and home will occur to ensure that the most appropriate decisions are being made regarding school placements and programs. This model sets in place a variety of mechanisms for identification of needs, accommodations and modifications, goals and expectations for IEPs, and ways of monitoring student progress. This model also clearly outlines when specific staff will get involved in the process of identifying and servicing the needs of the child. It is important to note that the focus of this model of service delivery is on the student's home school and is rooted in the belief that problem solving begins at school and ends with student success. It is also important to note that this model of service delivery can be activated by any one of the stakeholders in the education of the students within the Niagara Catholic District School Board.





## Terminology

**ERT:** Educational Resource Teacher

**IEP:** Individual Education Plan

**SBT:** School Based Team, In-school team which provides early intervention to address student needs.

**Accommodations:** Adjustments to the learning process that do not alter the grade level expectations.

**Area Team:** Student Support personnel

**IPRC:** Identification, Placement, Review Committee

## Case Conferences

Case Conferences are collaborative activities and may include the teacher, Educational Resource Teacher, Principal, parents, community workers and/or other support personnel. These meetings may be held to share needs demonstrated by the student, assessment findings from board assessments or assessments from community resources, discuss possible programming/resources and/or student progress.

## School Based Teams (SBT)

The School Based Team Approach accepts:

- that the Principal is the leader of the team.
- that the Principal and Educational Resource Teacher will be responsible for coordinating all team activities.
- that the goal of the SBT approach is to address the educational, physical, spiritual and/or social/emotional needs of students in the regular classroom.
- that the aims and objectives of team activity, as an integral part of the Problem-Solving Model, are understood and supported by all staff members.
- that each school will have a team composed of the Principal (Chair), the Educational Resource Teacher (Recorder), presenting Classroom Teacher(s), three representatives (elementary), or three Department representatives (secondary).
- Optional Members may include:
  - previous classroom teacher
  - Child and Youth Workers
  - Educational Assistant(s)
  - Early Childhood Educator
  - Chaplaincy Leader
  - Student Success Teacher
- that additional personnel from the Student Support Department will be available as resources to the school team and teaching staff.
- that the members agree to implement the recommendations of the School Based Team.
- that the recommendations made at the SBT are regularly reviewed and modified as necessary.



## Niagara Catholic Staff Who Support Students with Special Education Needs

The Niagara Catholic District School Board utilizes a wide range of teachers, professionals, and paraprofessionals in its delivery of programs and services to students with special education needs. Staff members are deployed within schools as well as on a system-wide basis. Staff members include:

Student Support Department Staff	School Based Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendent of Education – Student Support</li> <li>• Student Support Coordinators</li> <li>• Program Resource Teachers</li> <li>• Behaviour Resource Teachers</li> <li>• Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</li> <li>• Itinerant Teacher of the Blind and Low Vision</li> <li>• Speech Language Pathologists</li> <li>• Special Needs Facilitators</li> <li>• Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Leads</li> <li>• ABA Facilitators</li> <li>• Consulting Board Psychologist</li> <li>• Consulting Educational Audiologist</li> <li>• Mental Health Lead</li> <li>• Social Workers</li> <li>• Stay in School Coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal</li> <li>• Classroom Teacher</li> <li>• Early Childhood Educators</li> <li>• Educational Resource Teachers</li> <li>• Educational Assistants</li> <li>• Child and Youth Workers</li> <li>• Interpreter</li> <li>• Intervenor</li> </ul>

## Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

As outlined in *Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Policy and Resource Guide 2017, Ministry of Education) an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is:

- a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student’s strengths and needs that affect the student’s ability to learn and to demonstrate learning.
- a working document that contains the transition plan, a detailed and coordinated plan that helps to ensure that a student has supports in place to facilitate educational transitions.
- a record of any accommodations needed to help the student achieve the learning expectations identified in the IEP, given the student’s identified learning strengths and needs.
- a working document that identifies learning expectations that are modified from the expectations for the age-appropriate grade level in the subject or course, as outlined in the Ministry of Education’s curriculum policy documents, if modifications are required.
- a working document that identifies alternative expectations, if required, in areas not represented in the Ontario curriculum.
- a record of the teaching strategies specific to modified and alternative expectations and of assessment methods to be used to determine the student’s progress towards achieving these expectations.



- a working document that is developed at the beginning of a school year or semester or at the start of a placement and that is reviewed and adjusted throughout the reporting period.
- an accountability tool for the student, the student's parents, and everyone who has responsibilities under the plan for helping the student meet the stated goals and learning expectations as the student progresses through the Ontario curriculum.

In addition, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 156 (PPM 156), "Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs" outlines the expectation that a transition plan must be developed for all students who have an IEP.

The purpose of the IEP is to identify clearly for parents, school staff, and the Ministry of Education the reason for accessing special education programs and services.

An IEP must be developed for every student who has been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

In addition, an IEP may be developed for a student who has not been identified as exceptional but is working with accommodations, or on modified or alternative curriculum.

## Transition Planning

Effective transition planning is important. Individualized transition plans that reflect a student's strengths and needs provide the foundation for successful transitional experiences that support the building of student resiliency. Articulating student transition needs can also be a valuable component of developing an individual student profile. The implementation of effective transition plans will result in continuity of programs and services for students with special education needs and will support improved student achievement and well-being.

### Guiding Principles for Transition Planning

The Niagara Catholic District School Board has established a transition process for students new to the Board and for students being educated within the Board. The Niagara Catholic District School Board is committed to the following guiding principles regarding their transition planning processes:

- a. The student and their strengths and needs are central to the focus of transition planning.
- b. The planning of transitions is a collaborative process, involving parent(s)/guardian(s), outside agencies and other professionals involved with the student; and,
- c. Each transition planning process is unique to the student.

Transition processes that take place in the Niagara Catholic District School Board include Preschool Transition Process; Grade 8 to Grade 9; and Integrated Transition Planning.

## Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)

Regulation 181/98 requires that all School Boards shall establish Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs). The IPRC has a legal responsibility to make decisions about the identification of pupils as exceptional and placement of pupils into special education programs and services.

Niagara Catholic maintains two types of IPRCs:



- IPRC at the school level – Regular Class Placements within the school
- IPRC at the system level – Special Class Placements within the system

The IPRC will:

- decide whether or not a student should be identified as exceptional.
- identify the area(s) of exceptionality of a student, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.
- determine an appropriate placement; and
- review the identification and placement at least once in each school year. For further information please refer to the Niagara Catholic District School Board IPRC Parent Guide.

### Ministry of Education Categories and Definitions

**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.

**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 diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

**Language Impairment:** A learning disorder characterized by 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 forms, content, and function of language in communication.
- 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:

- 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 behaviour 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.

**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 support services.
- 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 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 students without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.

**Blind and Low Vision:** A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

**Multiple Exceptionalities:** A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a 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.

## Placement for Students with Special Education Needs

A range of placement options are available across and external to the Niagara Catholic District School Board to meet the needs of students in the most enabling environment. These placements are available for any student with special education needs.

### Regular Classroom Placements

**Regular Class with Indirect Support:** Students with special education needs who are enrolled in a regular class and are receiving direct instruction from a regular classroom teacher to whom the Board provides specialized consultative services.

**Regular Class with Resource Assistance:** Students with special education needs who are enrolled in a regular class and are receiving direct specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from a special education teacher.

**Regular Class with Withdrawal Assistance:** Students with special education needs who are enrolled in a regular class and are receiving instruction outside the regular classroom for part of the school day from a special education teacher.

### Special Education Class Placements

Special Education class placement will be provided based on the need for intervention outside the regular classroom. The duration of the special placement will be determined by the success of the intervention, the nature of the need and parental wishes.

**Special Education Class with Partial Integration:** Students with special education needs who are enrolled in and attending a self-contained special education class and integrated for at least one instructional period daily.

**Special Education Class Full Time:** Students with special education needs who are enrolled in and attending a special education class (in accordance with Regulation 298, section 31) for the entire school day. Opportunities for integration into age-appropriate classes are arranged.



## Provincial and Demonstration Schools

The Ministry of Education operates Provincial Schools and Provincial Demonstration Schools in the province of Ontario. They exist to:

- provide education for students who are deaf or blind, or who have severe learning disabilities.
- provide an alternative education option.
- serve as regional resource centres for students who are deaf, blind, or deafblind.
- provide pre-school home visiting services for students who are deaf or deafblind.
- develop and provide learning materials and media for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind.
- provide school board teachers with resource services.
- play a valuable role in teacher training throughout the province.

Provincial Demonstration Schools	Schools for the Deaf
Sagonaska School 350 Dundas Street West, Belleville ON K8P 1B2 Phone: (613) 967-2830 Fax: (905) 967-2482	Sir James Whitney School 350 Dundas Street West, Belleville ON K8P 1B2 Phone and TTY: (613) 967-2823 Fax: (613) 967-2857
Amethyst School 1090 Highbury Avenue, London ON N5Y 4V9 Phone: (519) 453-4408 Fax: (519) 453-2160	Robarts School 1090 Highbury Avenue, PO Box 7360, Station E, London ON N5Y 4V9 Phone and TTY: (519) 453-4400 Fax: (519) 453-7943
Trillium School 347 Ontario Street South, Milton ON L9T 3X9 Phone: (905) 878-8428 Fax: (905) 878-7540	Ernest C. Drury School 255 Ontario Street South, Milton ON L9T 2M5 Phone: (905) 878-2851 Fax: (905) 878-1354
School for the Blind and Deaf-Blind	Francophone School for the Deaf and Those with Learning Disabilities
W. Ross Macdonald School 350 Brant Avenue, Brantford ON N3T 3J9 Phone: (519) 759-0730 Fax: (519) 759-4741	Centre Jules-Léger 281 rue Lanark, Ottawa ON K1Z 6R8 Phone: (613) 761-9300 TTY: (613) 761-9302 and 761-9304 Fax: (613) 761-9301



## Community Partners

- Bethesda
- Child Parent Resource Institute (CPRI)
- Home and Community Care Support Services
- Community Living
- Contact Niagara
- Niagara Children's Centre
- Niagara Support Services (NSS)
- Niagara Training and Employment Agency (NTEC)
- Pathstone Mental Health

## The Special Education Advisory Committee

The Special Education Advisory Committee of the Niagara Catholic District School Board holds monthly public meetings during the school year, usually the first Wednesday of each month, except for a school holiday, in which case the meeting will be held on the second Wednesday, at 7:00 p.m. at the Catholic Education Centre. From time to time the meeting location may change at which time the location will be posted and members will be notified of the different venue. SEAC information and meeting dates are published on the Board's Calendar and on the Board's web site: [www.niagaracatholic.ca](http://www.niagaracatholic.ca).

In keeping with legislation set out in Regulation 464/97, 11, 12(1), (2) of the Education Act, the roles and responsibilities of the SEAC of the Niagara Catholic District School Board include:

1. To further the interests and well-being of groups of exceptional children or adults.
2. To provide important advice on special education.
3. May make recommendations to the district school board or school authority respecting matters affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board.
4. Is provided with the opportunity to participate in the annual review of the Special Education Plan.
5. Participates in the board's annual budget process as it relates to special education; and
6. Reviews the financial statements of the board as they relate to special education.

The list below includes the local associations who are members of the Niagara Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee:

- Autism Ontario Niagara Region Chapter
- Community Living – Port Colborne/Wainfleet
- Community Living – Welland/Pelham
- Down Syndrome Caring Parents – Niagara
- Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario Niagara Region
- Niagara Children's Centre
- Pathstone Mental Health