

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Newsletter

New OCDSB Special Education Policy

In early 2011, the Board struck the Special Education Policy Ad Hoc Committee to review and consult on the draft OCDSB special education policy, including reviewing the policy implications of any concerns with respect to specialized class location, wait list management, identification rates, IEP/IPRC protocols, and related communication protocols, and to provide its recommendations as to draft policy changes.

The Committee heard from many stakeholders and used innovative community consultation processes to capture and address stakeholder and public concerns with respect to the design and delivery of special education programs and services and then proceed to make special education policy changes, recommendations for other policy changes intersecting with special education, or procedural recommendations.

Some highlights of the new policy are:

Exceptional Students vs. Students with Special Needs:

The term 'exceptional student' is one with a crisp Education Ministry definition--a student who has been recognized via an IPRC. However, increasingly, more direct and indirect service is based on recognized need as opposed to reliance on a formal designation. Thus the application of the policy to all 'students with special needs' is more appropriate. A definitive definition for the OCDSB has been developed as:

"Student with Special Needs means a student who requires special education services, including any student who has been formally identified as exceptional by the IPRC process as well as students who may not have been formally identified but who may require services including, but not limited to, modified programs or accommodations."

Guiding Principles

These principles have been expanded from the previous policy and include;

(d) ensuring every reasonable attempt is made to support participation by the student in school activities;

(e) emphasizing the value and importance of communication and consultation with the parents/guardians of children with special needs;

(f) recognising the necessity for the provision of support for staff to develop the necessary skills and teaching strategies to work with students with special needs;

Key Learning Supports

A major change for the board in this section is;

c) equitable application of the specialized class location model using geographically defined catchment areas and designated schools to ensure fair access to specialized programs;

Following is part of the rationale of the Special Education Policy Ad Hoc Committee **Recommendation 4: Defined Catchments and Home Schools**

“What it means in practice is that all class waiting lists would disappear. So, if, for the sake of a specialized class-based program, your designated home school for that program was school X, then you would be guaranteed a spot at school X. If this meant a split

grade specialized class to make it work, or adding a class at the designated school, similar to the current ENG or EFI primary class size cap of 23, then the District would be bound to find a way to allow access to the designated school and to allow access to the specialized class services offered there.

Similarly, again to a regular student's treatment in our schools, if parents wanted the student to attend a school other than the designated catchment school for that program then they would need to apply through the transfer process, again just as with any regular student. Currently, there is not clearly established way to access the transfer process and this would put the special needs student on a par with other students.”

Parents helped with IPRC and IEP

As advertised in the March 2013 SEAC Newsletter, an IPRC (Identification and Placement Review Committees) and IEP (Individual Education Plans) question and answer session was held at Woodroffe High School on the evening of May 13. A small group of engaged and interested parents took advantage of a cozy, informal atmosphere in the school's library to ask questions and receive guidance on a range of issues related to special education, IPRCs and IEPs for their children. Parents came away with helpful information on:

- what are IPRCs and IEPs, why are they important, and what unique role does each document play for helping children with special education needs to be successful in school
- samples of IPRCs and IEPs, as well as sample needs statements, learning expectations, strategies and supports
- who to ask for assistance, from school staff right through to the central school board staff
- where to find more information on special education programs and services that are available in our board, including looking at the OCDSB's special education and SEAC web pages.

These types of sessions provide wonderful opportunities to share experiences and gain information to address a diversity of children's learning situations, ranging from:

- the child who is just starting to struggle in school and you're trying to sort out who to ask for help;
- to the child who has already been identified with some learning / special education needs (including giftedness) and you want to know how best to navigate the school system to meet the child's learning needs and achieve success.

These kinds of sessions occur regularly in the local community, hosted by a range of organizations and agencies, and are usually free of charge. We encourage you to check the board's SEAC page regularly for upcoming events, and to attend one of these learning and sharing evenings in the coming year. It's a great way to gain tips and strategies on working positively and in partnership with your child's school to maximize your child's educational success!

Please Share this Newsletter

Post a copy on the parent bulletin board

Put a copy in the teacher's lounge

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Special Education in the Budget

The District introduced the draft budget on May 15, 2013. Below is a summary of Special Education related items from the draft budget.

In the area of special education, there were a number of additional supports allocated through the academic staffing process, including:



- 1.0 Learning Support Teacher position, 0.5 at each Clifford Bowey and Crystal Bay;
- 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teaching position to support an additional Gifted class for one year;
- 1.2 FTE teaching positions to support a Dual Support class (funded through contingency for geographic model implementation); and
- 1.33 FTE teaching positions to provide an additional secondary Autism class.
- 2.4 FTE teaching positions for 2 new elementary Autism classes;
- 1.2 FTE teaching positions for 1 new elementary Behavioural Intervention Program class;
- 6.0 FTE educational assistant positions (specialized classes); and
- 1.0 FTE speech language pathologist (funded from contingency).

These investments will allow the Board to create specialized classes and provide additional support for students within an integrated or regular classroom setting. The additional classes may also expand the first phase of implementation of the geographic model for specialized classes.

Additional special education supports are also recommended as part of our FDK expansion.

3.0 FTE professional positions (psychologist, social worker, speech and language pathologist);

SEAC - Looking Back, Looking Forward

Another school year has come to a close. This past year SEAC dealt with many items. There was the new Special Education Policy, review of the suspension of students, and the launch of this newsletter to highlight a few.

For next year SEAC has on its Long Range Agenda;

- Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) governance structure discussion
- Discussion regarding special education support for students in French immersion programs
- Kindergarten intake programming
- Extended Day special education programming
- Discussion regarding special education professional development
- ADHD as an exceptionality
- Transition to Post 21
- Transition planning for students with a developmental disability

Board Responds to Students Needs

At the March 6, 2013 SEAC meeting a delegation from Cambridge Street Public School advised the committee that there is no specialized LLD class after grade six. The delegation expressed the view that a specialized class for LLD for intermediate and senior students would be beneficial.

District staff arranged to meet with the community.

This has resulted in the following staff recommendation in the draft budget.

“Presently we have 0.4 FTE Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) to serve our intermediate and high school students. The recent review of Speech and Language service delivery indicated a gap in service for this population. The goal of support needs to focus on skill-building to foster independence with academic tasks and compensation for language learning challenges. The overall aim of support should be focused on preparing the student for the demands of their anticipated high school program. This will be achieved with the addition of a Speech Language Pathologist (1.0 FTE) using the contingency funds set aside during the academic staffing process”

Province Creates Transition Planning Framework

Developing Individual Transition Plans

- Every young person with a developmental disability will have a written transition plan. A purpose of the plan is to help the young person prepare for adulthood and to plan for adult services in a manner that promotes social inclusion, greater self reliance and as independent a life as possible.
- Planning will begin at age 14 or earlier to provide young people with the information and support they need to prepare for the eventual transition from childhood caregivers to adult community supports and develop the skills they will need to function as an adult. Accelerated preparations to obtain the documentation needed to support a confirmation of eligibility for adult developmental services and supports will begin once the young person turns age 16.
- The transition plan will identify the tasks that need to be completed, the information that must be provided and the individuals responsible for completing each aspect of planning. The plan will be reviewed and updated at least annually.
- The young person, his or her parent or guardian, and individuals identified by the young person will be provided with opportunities to actively participate in and contribute to the development of a transition plan.

The above was taken from

www.opsba.org/files/MACSE_TransitionPlanningFramework-English.pdf