

# Special Education Policy

## St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School – Halton Catholic District School Board (applicable to IB programme)

### IB & Inclusive Education

St. Thomas Aquinas is a welcoming, inclusive Catholic faith community. We provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all students in the IBDP programme. As per HCDSB Special Education policy, St. Thomas Aquinas believes that each student is a unique gift from God and as such has the right to an education which will foster spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social growth. We believe that students with special needs (exceptionalities) should be given the opportunities and support necessary to reach their full potential. In the HCDSB, all decisions are grounded in the following five foundational assumptions:

1. All students can learn;
2. Teachers have the greatest influence over student learning;
3. We can all be more than what we currently are;
4. Support and professional development are required to be so;
5. This is best accomplished in partnership with parents.

IBDP staff and the Special Education department work collaboratively to meet the needs of the IB student. Special Education staff oversee the support plan (IEP) that is used in the classroom to support the IB student. Special Education staff also support the process of requesting accommodations for the IBDP program; this is completed on a case-by-case basis.

### IB Viewpoint

The IB supports the following principles of an inclusive education where:

- education for all is considered a human right;
- education is enhanced by the creation of affirmative, responsive environments that promote a sense of belonging, safety, self-worth, and whole growth for every student;
- every educator is an educator of all students;
- learning is considered from a strength-based perspective;
- learning diversity is valued as a rich resource for building inclusive communities;
- all learners belong and experience equal opportunities to participate and engage in quality learning;
- full potential is unlocked through connecting with, and building on, previous knowledge;
- assessment provides all learners with opportunities to demonstrate their learning, which is rewarded and celebrated;
- multilingualism is recognized as a fact, a right, and a resource;

- all students in the school community fully participate in an IB education and are empowered to exercise their rights and accept their responsibilities as citizens;
- all students in the school community have a voice and are listened to so that their input and insights are taken into account;
- all students in the school community develop the IB learner profile attributes and develop into inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect;
- diversity is understood to include all members of a community;
- all students experience success as a key component of learning.

### IB Definition

Inclusive assessment arrangements are changed or additional conditions added during the assessment process for a candidate with assessment access requirements. These enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her level of attainment more fairly and are not intended to compensate for lack of ability.

### Inclusive Assessment Requests

All requests for inclusive assessment arrangements must be submitted using the online application in IBIS. It is mandatory to register a candidate before submitting requests for inclusive assessment arrangements.

### What Is Needed?

- Supporting documentation (psychological/psycho-educational/medical report);
- Standard scores requested in psychological reports;
- Educational evidence (teacher(s) observations);
- The above documentation should establish the 'history of need' and the 'evidence of need for access.'

All requests are made to the IBO with the support of STA special education staff.

The following is a list of accommodation arrangements that may be granted once IBO has reviewed the required documentation:

- examination papers in Braille;
- additional time – 10 to 50% more time is allowed for the candidate, as outlined within the IBDP Inclusive Assessment Policy;
- rest periods – supervised rest time maybe allowed, during which time the candidate is not allowed to work on their exam;
- information and communication technology;
- scribes – a person who writes down dictated answers from the candidate;

- readers – a person who reads allowed the questions to the candidate and can also read back answers the candidate has provided. The reader cannot explain a question or give advice on how to answer the question;
- communicators – a person who is able to convey information to a candidate with a hearing impairment, through the use of lip-speaking, finger-spelling, or sign language;
- modifications to examination papers – normally made for candidates with hearing or visual issues, such as providing an exam in Braille, enlarged print, printing on colored paper, modifications to the visual complexity of the exam, or modifications to the language of the exam paper;
- audio recordings on examination papers – the IB may provide an exam paper on a CD. This is a limited service and is not available for exams with illustrations, tables, diagrams or sketch maps;
- calculators;
- transcriptions – A candidate’s response to an assessment component is submitted in a form other than the candidate’s own handwriting. Transcription is justified when a candidate with a specific learning issue, or a physical disability, has very poor handwriting skills and cannot use a computer. Transcription is not available to candidates with poor handwriting for whom some form of special need cannot be diagnosed;
- alternative venues for examinations – if a candidate is too ill to attend school, but on medical advice is able to take the examinations at home or in hospital, authorization may be given for the examination to be taken at an alternative venue. In principle, the examination should be taken at the same time as other candidates in the group. A qualified invigilator must be present;
- extensions to deadlines – this arrangement applies to cases of illness or accident when a candidate is genuinely prevented from completing work in time for the coordinator to submit the work to the examiner.

## Policy Review

The policy is reviewed and revised as necessary in conjunction with the Special Education Department, IBDP coordinator, HCDSB Special Education staff, and school administration. Revisions are communicated during IB staff meetings, and the policy is posted on the school website.

## References

*Candidates with assessment access requirements*, IBO 2017

*Inclusive education: Inclusion in an IB context*, IBO 2016.

ibanswers@ibo.org: Common Questions

IB Conference of the Americas 2014

# Halton Catholic District School Board Inclusion Policy

## Purpose

To provide students, identified as exceptional under the Education Act, with appropriate school and/or Board placements, also as defined under the Education Act and Regulations for the Province of Ontario.

*\*The appropriateness of a placement is determined by a detailed assessment of a student's individual needs, fashioned in cooperation with the child's parents and professional service providers.*

## Application and Scope

- This policy applies to all children who qualify to be pupils of the Board under the Education Act and Regulations.
- The implications for implementation of this policy apply to all teachers and academic support staff employed by the Board whatever the identified exceptionality of the student.

## Principles

- The Halton Catholic District School Board is a welcoming, inclusive Catholic faith community.
- The Board is committed to the principle that all qualified, registered students shall be welcomed into their neighbourhood/regional school.
- In keeping with Supreme Court of Canada rulings (Eaton, Oct. 9, 1996) and with direction from the Ministry of Education for Ontario (June 9, 1994 Memo), integration of exceptional pupils is the normal practice, when such a placement meets the student's needs (i.e., is in "the best interest of the student.") and is in accordance with parental wishes.
- Consequently, the default placement for students, regardless of identified exceptionality, shall be the regular classroom with appropriate support unless otherwise determined by a duly constituted Identification, Placement, and Review Committee of the Board informed by parental wishes and relevant professional opinion.
- The school and board bear responsibility for informing parents and students of the range of available placement options and associated support services stipulated under the Education Act and provided by the Board.

## Requirements

- In a spirit of partnership, parents are encouraged to make the school aware of a child's special needs prior to or at the time of registration;
- Schools receiving students identified as exceptional shall implement entry or transition procedures as part of the student's entry plan to school;
- Classroom teachers shall include all students, regardless of exceptionality, in classroom activities and programs as determined through regular in-school special education resource team (SRT) discussions;
- Assistance shall be provided by the SRT and centrally deployed special education staff (CSRT, Central Services Resource Team) for meeting the special needs of students;

- Specialized transportation is provided for those students whose special needs meet Board and Ministry criteria;
- Access to schools in support of identified exceptional pupils is granted to those health and social service providers properly engaged by the Halton Community Care Access Centre in response to applications for service having been received from the principal of the school attended by the student;
- Placement option 5, (i.e. full time special education class) is the only placement in which a student does not have planned integration opportunities included in her/his Individual Education Program. All other placement options will include appropriate (based upon needs) integration time with chronological age peers, in the identified student's individual program. Students in placement 5 who are able to benefit from integration will require an IPRC to place her/him in an option 4 placement before integration transitions may begin;
- Access to a given option 4 or 5 placement special education class will be subject to the availability of space in the receiving class. Waitlisted students will be placed according to the date of the IPRC placing the student in the special education class.

### Our Mission

The Halton Catholic District School Board, in partnership with home and Church, is dedicated to providing excellence in Catholic education by developing Christ-centred individuals enabled to transform society.

### Our Vision

The Halton Catholic District School Board is a model learning community, widely recognized as distinctively Catholic, providing exceptional education while nurturing the call to love and serve.

### Our Values

At the Halton Catholic District School Board, we value:

1. Our Catholic Faith and aspire to be models of Christ through our actions of love, forgiveness, compassion, and acceptance.
2. The Whole Child and create conditions that support the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional well-being of all students so that they may fulfill their God-given potential.
3. Excellence in Learning and provide opportunities that meet the needs and aspirations of all learners in a supportive, creative, and innovative learning environment.
4. Relationships and Partnerships and recognize that our success is reflective of the healthy and vibrant partnership of staff, parents, pastors, and members of our broader community.
5. The Importance of Contributing to Our Communities and respecting diversity, celebrating multiculturalism, honouring individual rights, and embracing the social values of collective responsibility and the common good.

## The Practice

The practice of the HCDSB is to provide every opportunity for parents to be actively involved in the decision-making process regarding their child's learning needs, especially in relation to the development and implementation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP includes the special education programs and services the HCDSB provide that addresses your child's learning needs.

## The Ontario Education Act

The Ontario Education Act requires that school boards provide special education programs and services for their exceptional students.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are "special needs" (exceptionalities) in education?

Children with special needs require teaching interventions that differ from the average population in order to learn, to optimally develop skills, and to reach their full potential. Many types of special needs exist, and in education these are referred to as "exceptionalities". An "exceptional" student is a student who has significant behavioural, communication, intellectual (including gifted), physical, or multiple needs such that he or she is considered to need a special education program.

### 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 the people, facilities, technologies, equipment, and other resources your child's school will need to put together and then carry out the IEP. The people that may be involved with planning and implementing your child's program are your child's teacher(s), the school Special Education Resource Teacher(s) (SERT), the Principal, and board support staff.

### How are exceptionalities recognized (identified)?

Schools refer to the formal recognition of exceptionalities as "Identification." You may know that your child has special needs before entering school. You are asked to tell the school so procedures can be started to support and "identify" your child. Sometimes teachers are the ones who recognize or suspect that your child might have special needs. In these cases, specialized assessments may be offered after consulting with you. Sometimes exceptionalities will become apparent later in schooling. Regardless of when or how your child's special needs are recognized, you should discuss your child's needs and identification procedures with the school.

### How does my child receive a screening or assessment?

Formal identification of students as “exceptional” is based upon reports that may have been prepared or conducted by school or board staff or outside agencies. Possible sources of assessment data include educational, medical/health, occupational/physical therapy, behavioural/psychiatric, and psychological and/or speech-language.

HCDSB conducts a screening to identify potential “gifted” students in Grade 4. Parents are notified by the school SERT and provided with test administration information at that time.

### How is my child determined exceptional?

After reviewing assessments, if there is evidence that your child has exceptional educational needs, you or your school Principal can ask for an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meeting. This Committee will look at your child’s individual strengths and needs and decide on an appropriate identification and placement for your child.

### What is an IPRC?

An IPRC is an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee. All school boards in Ontario have these committees. The committee is made up of at least three people: i) The committee “chair” must be the school Principal, or a supervisory officer; ii) The other two members are either special education resource teachers or regular teachers appointed by the Chair.

This committee makes the formal decision about whether a student is exceptional and whether they require a special education program. Parents (and students who are 16 years of age or older) are invited to attend and encouraged to participate during the IPRC meetings. You may agree with and consent to your child’s identification and placement, request further discussion, or disagree with the IPRC and appeal the decision.

### What is the role of the IPRC?

First, the IPRC decides whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional. A lot of information is considered and discussed when making this decision: e.g. assessments, parent and teacher observations.

Second, if your child is exceptional, the committee has to identify the area(s) of exceptionality, according to the definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

Third, the IPRC considers the strengths and needs of your child in order to determine the appropriate special education “placement” for your child. A placement defines where the special education program will be delivered and the reason for the placement if other than a regular class.

After the initial IPRC meeting, you are invited by the school to review your child’s identification and placement annually as the needs of your child may change.

### What happens after the IPRC has made all its decisions?

The recommendations of the IPRC will be given to you in a written Statement of Decision. This Statement of Decision will inform you if your child was identified as exceptional, and if so, the category of exceptionality according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities as set by the Ministry of Education. The Statement of Decision will also indicate the recommended placement. Also listed will be your child's strengths and needs, and the IPRC's recommendations about the programs and services your child may need, if any.

If you agree with the IPRC decisions, you will be asked to sign your name to the Statement of Decision. You are not obligated to sign your consent at the IPRC meeting, but can take more time to consider your decision. The Statement of Decision may be taken home and then returned within 15 days.

If you sign consent to the Statement of Decision, and your child has been identified exceptional, the Principal of the school at which the Special Education Program is to be provided will be notified to begin the process of developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child.

### What is an IEP?

An IEP is an Individual Education Plan that is designed to address the learning strengths and needs of your child. An IEP must be developed for every student identified as exceptional. An IEP may also be developed for a student who is not formally identified but who requires special education programs or services. The details of how IEPs are developed and implemented are given in the Ministry's *Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide, 2017*.

An IEP must be developed and completed within 30 school days of your child's placement by the IPRC and the Principal must ensure that you receive a copy. An IEP must be developed in consultation with you (and your child where your child is 16 years of age or older) and it must include: a description of the student's strengths and needs and 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; a transition plan that includes the specific goals, actions required, person(s) responsible for actions, and timelines for each education transition where the student requires support.

### What specifically does an IEP address?

An IEP is not an outline of everything your child will be learning in any given term, but it is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required and may include recommendations made by the IPRC. The IEP is a working document that identifies learning expectations which may be accommodated, modified, or include alternative learning goals in a particular subject or course. Only expectations that differ from the regular expectations for your child's grade will be listed. Specific teaching and assessment methods will only be listed if they differ from what the teacher is doing for the rest of the students.

### What are accommodations and modifications?

Accommodations are a change to normal teaching practice to help your child achieve the provincial expectations for that grade level, or to have their individual learning needs met. Accommodations in no way alter the curriculum expectations for the grade level or course. For example, a child with a learning disability might require a controlled, quiet environment in which to write tests. A hearing-impaired child might need a personal FM system and/or a sound field system. A gifted child might need enrichment that differentiates depth, breadth, and pace of the curriculum.

Modifications are changes made in the grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet your child's learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level. Learning expectations can also be modified in number or complexity. For example, a grade 5 student identified with a developmental disability may be working on a limited number of the simpler learning expectations of the grade 1 English curriculum in reading. A gifted child may have their work reduced in some areas to allow for more complex assignments in other areas that provide additional challenge.

If a child has only accommodations on their IEP, the IEP box will not be checked off on their Provincial Report Card. If the child has modifications, the IEP box will be checked. This is to show that the child is working towards expectations not at grade level.

### How often can the IEP be revised or updated?

The IEP is a working document and is reviewed and updated at least once every school term. Parents are encouraged to collaborate with the school team in developing and revising the IEP and to discuss your child's progress on an ongoing basis. The school Principal has a legal obligation to see that the IEP is implemented. Any concerns about the IEP, or its implementation, should be discussed with the child's teacher, school SERT, and Principal.