

ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

OUR VISION

**Catholic Education + Future Ready**

# PARENT GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATIO

OUR MISSION

**Learning together today, transforming tomorrow**

**The purpose of this parent guide is to:**

- provide general information about special education programs and services;
- provide specific information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC);
- set out the procedures involved in identifying a pupil as “exceptional” and deciding the pupil’s placement;
- set out procedures for appealing such decisions if you do not agree with the IPRC;
- provide general information about the Individual Education Plan (IEP); and
- provide general information about the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

**Additional information can be obtained from:**

- Your school principal, or
- The Superintendent responsible for Special Education
- St. Clair Catholic District School Board Website: [www.st-clair.net](http://www.st-clair.net)
- Ministry of Education Website: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html)
- EduGAINS Website: [www.edugains.ca](http://www.edugains.ca)

**Notes:**

- If you wish to receive this Parent Guide in Braille, large print, or an audiocassette format, please contact the school principal.
- The word “parent” in this guide includes guardian.

**OVERALL BOARD PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**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 an Individual Education Plan containing special objectives and an outline of educational 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 to meet the student’s needs.

**What special education programs and services are provided by the board?**

Most students who receive special education programs and services attend their home school and follow a program that has been modified and/or accommodated by the classroom teacher with support from the program resource team in collaboration with the parents. The program and services may require that part of the student’s day be spent in a smaller resource setting or that resource support be an integrated part of in-class activity. In all cases, inclusion in the regular classroom is the primary goal.

Detailed information on the programs and services provided can be found in the Special Education Plan on the board’s website at [www.st-clair.net](http://www.st-clair.net).

The programs and services provided by the board are designed to comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act and regulations made under the act and other relevant legislation.

## **IDENTIFICATION, PLACEMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (IPRC)**

### **Summary of the IPRC Process**

The following outlines the process, which begins with the recognition by the classroom teacher that a student is having difficulties and ends with the formal identification of a student as exceptional.

#### **TEACHER REFERRAL TO SCHOOL RESOURCE TEAM**

The in-school team reviews the student's progress and develops an action plan.

#### **SCHOOL BASED RESOURCE TEAM**

The parent and school resource team meet to address the needs of the student.

#### **REFERRAL TO IPRC**

The school resource team, with parental support, makes a referral for an IPRC meeting.

#### **IPRC**

The IPRC determines the appropriate category and definition of the exceptionality and the placement of the student.

#### **INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)**

The IEP is developed and implemented in co-operation and consultation with the parent(s).

#### **REPORTING TO PARENTS**

The results of the IEP are reported to the parent(s) in conjunction with each report card and the IEP is revised, as necessary, after each reporting period.

#### **ANNUAL REVIEW**

The school resource team reviews annually with the parent(s) the identification and placement of the student.

### **What is an IPRC?**

Regulation 181/98 of the Education Act requires that all school boards establish IPRCs. There are two types of IPRCs: school based and system level.

The school based committee is responsible for all IPRCs at the school level. The committee consists of the principal (chair), program resource teacher, classroom teacher and/or guidance counsellor and a program resource consultant.

The system level committee is responsible for all placements involving self-contained classrooms. The committee consists of the superintendent responsible for Special Education (chair), a program resource consultant, a principal, a program resource teacher and a classroom teacher.

### **What is the role of the IPRC?**

The IPRC must:

- invite the parents and the student (if the student is 16 years of age or older) to attend the IPRC meeting;
- review relevant information about the student;
- describe the student's strengths and needs;
- decide whether your child should be identified as exceptional;
- identify the area(s) of your child's exceptionality or exceptionalities according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education;
- decide on an appropriate placement for your child;
- discuss proposals for special education programs and services if the parent, or the student age 16 or older, requests it; and
- review the identification and placement of your child at least once in each subsequent school year unless the parent gives written notices dispensing with the review.

## Who is identified as an exceptional pupil?

The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as “a pupil who’s behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program. . . or receives a special education plan”. Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education. A complete listing of these categories and definitions can be found within this document.

## What will the IPRC consider in making its placement decision?

**Placement in the regular classroom is the option of first choice.** Before the IPRC can consider placing your child in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will meet your child’s needs and be consistent with your preferences.

If, after considering all of the information presented, the IPRC is satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet your child’s needs and that such a decision is consistent with your preferences, the committee will decide in favour of placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services.

If the committee decides that your child should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written Statement of Decision. You are welcome to visit the class before making a decision.



## How is an IPRC meeting requested?

Parent initiation:

You, as the parent, may make a written request to the principal for an IPRC meeting for your child. Within 15 days of receiving your request, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide and a written statement indicating approximately when the IPRC will meet.

Principal initiation:

The principal 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 giving you notice, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide and a written statement indicating approximately, when the IPRC will meet.

## Parental Attendance at an IPRC Meeting

You are encouraged to be present at and participate in all discussions about your child and to be present when the identification and placement decisions are made by the IPRC.

If you are unable to attend the scheduled meeting, you may:

- contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time; or
- inform the school principal that you will not be attending. As soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward to you, for your consideration and signature, the IPRC’s written Statement of Decision noting the decision or identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

## **Who else may attend an IPRC meeting?**

Either you, as the parent, or the principal of your child's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting. The parent and principal should be informed if others will be attending. Others who may potentially be invited to attend an IPRC are:

- the student;
- 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;
- your representative/advocate is welcome – that is, a person who may support you or speak on behalf of you or your child;
- an interpreter, if one is required; and
- other individuals whose presence is requested by either the parents or the principal of the student's school (subject to the agreement of the IPRC chair).

## **What information will parents receive about the IPRC meeting?**

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the chair of the IPRC will provide you with written notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend. This letter will notify you of the date, time and place of the meeting and will request confirmation of your intention to attend. Before the IPRC meeting occurs, you will have received a written copy of any information about your child that the chair of the IPRC has received.



## **What happens at an IPRC meeting?**

The chair will introduce everyone and explain the purpose of the meeting.

The IPRC will review all available information about your child.

The IPRC will consider the following information:

- the results of an educational assessment of your child;
- the results of any other assessments, such as health and/or psychological assessments, if it is believed that such information is required to make an accurate identification or placement decision;
- the results of an interview with the student, if the committee feels it would be useful to do so;
- any documentation that you submit about your child or that your child submits, if he or she is 16 years of age or older; and
- any other information that may be relevant to the IPRC decision.

The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for your child. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at your request or at the request of your child, if the child is 16 years of age or older. You will be encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion.

After all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decisions.

## **What will the IPRC's written Statement of Decision include?**

The IPRC's written Statement of Decision will state:

- whether the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional;
- the categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified as they are defined by the Ministry of Education;
- the IPRC's description of your child's strengths and needs;
- the IPRC's placement decision;
- the IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services; and
- the reason for recommending that your child be placed in a special education class, if that is the decision made by the IPRC.

### What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?

If you agree with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC, you will be asked to indicate your agreement by signing the Statement of Decision document. **The Statement of Decision may be signed at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned.**

If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and if you have agreed with the IPRC identification and placement decision, an IEP will be completed within 30 days of the date of the IPRC meeting.

### Can the placement be reviewed once a child has been placed in a special education program?

An IPRC meeting will be held annually to review the identification and placement of your child unless you, the parent, provide written notice that you wish to dispense with the annual review.

You may request a review IPRC meeting at any time after your child has been receiving special education services for 3 months.

A request for an IPRC review may be made by:

1. The school principal with written notice to the parent.
2. The parent in a written request to the principal.
3. The Director of Education of the educating board (in purchase-of –service situations).

### What does a review IPRC consider and decide?

The review IPRC considers the same type of information that was originally considered.

The IPRC conducting the review will consider the progress your child has made in relation to the IEP.

The IPRC will review the placement and identification decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

### How do I appeal an IPRC decision?

If you disagree with the IPRC's identification of your child as exceptional or with the placement decision of the IPRC, you may, within 30 days of receipt of the original decision or within 15 days of receipt of the decision from the second meeting described above, give written notification of your intention to appeal the decision to:

The Director and Secretary of the  
St. Clair Catholic District School Board  
420 Creek Street  
Wallaceburg, ON N8A 4C4

The notice of appeal must indicate the decision with which you disagree and include a statement that gives your reasons.



## **INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)**

### **What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?**

An IEP is a written summary of the student's strengths, interests, achievement levels and needs, based on a thorough assessment of the strengths and needs that affect the student's ability to learn and to demonstrate learning. It may also address expectations for the student's learning during the school year that differ from the expectations defined in the appropriate grade level of the Ontario curriculum. The IEP must be completed within 30 days of the date of the initial IPRC, or after a change in placement, including the beginning of a new grade. The principal must ensure you receive a copy.

The IEP is a plan developed in collaboration with parents and implemented and monitored by school staff. The IEP is a continuous working document and involves ongoing review, evaluation, and adjustments.

The IEP must include:

- specific educational expectations/accommodations and/or modifications and/or alternative expectations);
- an outline of the special education program and services that will be provided;
- 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 toward achieving these expectations; and
- a transition plan, a detailed and coordinated plan that helps to ensure that a student has supports in place to facilitate educational transitions.

Detailed information about the IEP may be found on the Ministry of Education website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)

### **How do I, as a parent collaborate in the development of my child's IEP?**

You collaborate in the development of your child's IEP by advocating for your child's best interest through:

- providing important information about your child's likes, dislikes, learning styles, interests, reactions to situations, and about the God given talents and skills your child demonstrates at home and in the community;

- reinforcing and extending the educational efforts of the teacher by providing opportunities for your child to practise and maintain skills in the home; and
- providing feedback on the transfer of skills among school, home and the community.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)**

### **What is SEAC?**

SEAC is a standing committee of the school board. It is responsible to advise the board on all matters related to the provision of special education programs and services. Membership on SEAC is comprised of two board trustees and up to twelve parent representatives. Representatives come from local associations of provincial organizations, which operate to further the interests and well-being of all children with special needs. Representatives are nominated by their organizations and appointed by the board to serve on the committee.

For additional details about SEAC, refer to the board's website at [www.st-clair.net](http://www.st-clair.net) .



**Learning Knows No Bounds**

## CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

The Ministry of Education Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities are listed below. Only these Ministry defined categories of exceptionality will be used in the IPRC process.

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CATEGORY	DEFINITION	DESCRIPTION
Behaviour	Behaviour	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;</li> <li>b. excessive fears or anxieties;</li> <li>c. a tendency to compulsive reaction;</li> </ul> <p>an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.</p>
Communication	Autism	<p>A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) disturbances in rate of educational development, ability to relate to the environment, mobility, perception, speech and language</li> <li>b) lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language</li> </ul>
	Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing	<p>An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.</p>
	Language Impairment	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and</li> <li>b. include one or more of: language delay; dysfluency; voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.</li> </ul>
	Speech Impairment	<p>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.</p>
	Learning Disability	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ 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 <i>at least</i> in the average range;</li> <li>✧ 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;</li> <li>✧ 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;</li> </ul>



		<p>◇ 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);</p> <p>◇ 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;</p> <p>◇ is <i>not</i> 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.</p>
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive service;</li> <li>b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development;</li> <li>c) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.</li> </ul>
	Developmental Disability	A severe learning disorder characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;</li> <li>b) an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;</li> <li>c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.</li> </ul>
Physical	Physical Disabilities	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	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.