



## Getting to know special education programs and services

---

Children develop and learn at different rates. Some children have difficulty learning to read and write and need the assistance of a special education program. Others learn more easily and require program extensions or more challenging curriculum.

Many children who require a special education program remain in the regular classroom. They are provided with support such as program accommodations, assistance from the in-school support program teacher or itinerant teacher. Some children do better in a special education contained class. There is no *one* way to deliver special education programs, and there is no one way to address a particular disability. The Peel board offers a range of special education programs and services designed to meet a wide range of individual children's needs.

### Recognizing differences

You, your child and your school are partners in the learning process. This partnership is the key to determining a suitable program for your child.

As a parent, you know your child best. You are an advocate for your child. Your experiences with and observations of your child provide valuable insight for the school. For example, only you know if he or she began to read at an early age or had difficulty learning to talk.

Your school has a group of professionals dedicated to creating the best possible learning environment for your child. Your child's teacher is constantly assessing the needs of each student. Special education teachers in each school help classroom teachers meet the diverse learning needs of their students.

*Every* school has an in-school review committee - ISRC - that meets regularly to assess and monitor students' learning needs. The ISRC can work with your child's teacher to develop a specialized program for your child. In addition, every school has a resource team consisting of a psycho-educational consultant, social worker, speech-language pathologist and resource teacher.

If the ISRC feels your child needs more support, it will recommend that the principal refer your child to an identification, placement and review committee - IPRC. You can also ask your principal to refer your child to an IPRC. For more information about this process, see the brochure "[A Parent's Guide to Identification, Placement and Review Committees.](#)"

The IPRC may recommend a special education placement for your child and identify your child as exceptional.

## What does 'exceptional' mean?

An IPRC uses the term "exceptional" to identify a student who qualifies for special education programs. The term relates to legislation by the Ontario government that guarantees special education programs for all students who need them.

## Who needs special education support?

**Children with autism/pervasive developmental disorder** - Autism/PDD is a disability that affects verbal and non-verbal communication, social interaction, and leisure or play activities.

**Children with developmental disabilities** - Developmental disabilities or intellectual handicaps result in significant delays in children's rate of learning, the development of social interactions and the acquisition of life skills.

**Children with emotional and behaviour challenges** have difficulty developing and keeping relationships with other children and with adults. They also have trouble with social skills, personal adjustment, self care and general classroom behaviour.

**Gifted children** have 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.

**Children with physical disabilities** such as hearing and vision impairment, significant medical conditions and head injuries.

**Children with learning disabilities** - A learning disability is a disorder that involves one or more of the processes needed to use spoken or written language. Learning disabilities may interfere with the learning of academic and social skills.

**Children with syndromes** such as fetal alcohol, Williams, Fragile X and Prader Willi.

## Options and alternatives

Across Ontario, there is a trend toward integrating special education students into regular classes. The Ministry of Education supports integration whenever possible, but requires school boards to maintain a range of special education placements.

Within the Peel board, more and more of our special education students remain in the regular classroom. This trend is consistent with our philosophy of providing service for students in their neighbourhood school whenever possible.

The Peel board believes in offering parents and children a wide variety of options and alternatives. We work with parents and children to tailor the learning program that is suited to each child.

Here are some of the ways that exceptional students receive service:

- in the regular class, with specifically designed accommodations and modifications
- small group instruction within the regular classroom
- small group instruction in an alternate setting, such as a withdrawal class or special education contained class
- individual instruction in a regular class or alternate setting

## Resources

Every school has a resource team which may consist of a psycho-educational consultant, social worker, speech-language pathologist, resource teacher and department head.

Schools can also assist families by providing interpreters, including sign language interpreters.

## Busing

The Peel board provides busing for students with significant physical or developmental challenges. We also bus students in contained special education classes, if the distance requirements are met.

For more information about the busing policy, speak with your principal.

## For more information

For more information about special education services and programs, you can speak with any of the following:

- your child's teacher
- your principal
- your superintendent of schools
- Special Education Support Services of the Peel board at 905-890-1099, ext. 2357 or ext. 2320

The following publications provide more information about various special education programs. They are available from your principal:

- In-School Support Programs: A Description
- Special Education Support Programs: Criteria for Identification and Placement
- A Guide for Educational Assessments for IPRCs

## The board's special education plan

Each board is required to maintain a special education plan, to review it annually, to amend it from time to time to meet current needs of its exceptional students, and to submit any amendment(s) to the minister. Members of the community, and particularly

parents of children who are receiving special education programs and services are invited to provide input into the board's special education plan. This may be done through the board's SEAC at any point throughout the year prior to April as the ministry requires the plan to be submitted by May 15.

## Special Education Advisory Committee

SEAC is a legislated committee of the Peel board that meets the third Tuesday of each month during the school year. These meetings are open to the public. This committee consists of three trustees and representatives of local parent associations.

SEAC advises the board about special education programs and services. The associations have their own meetings and provide support and information to parents. You may also contact any of the following associations for more information:

Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter, 905-782-0055

Autism Society Ontario, Peel Chapter, 905-450-2299

Brampton Caledon Community Living, 905-453-8841

Community Living Mississauga, 905-542-2694

Easter Seal Society, 416-421-8377

Learning Disabilities Association Mississauga, 905-272-4100

Learning Disabilities Association of North Peel, 905-791-4100

Peel Parents for Hearing Impaired Children 905-812-1336

Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario, 905-793-9722

VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children, 905-637-0911