

OUR MISSION

*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.
We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.*

OUR VISION

*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world
through witness, faith, innovation and action.*



AGENDA ADDENDUM THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE PUBLIC SESSION

Wednesday, June 13, 2018
7:00 P.M.

	Pages
14. Association Reports	
14.b Autism Ontario Minority Report 2018 - Sandra Mastronardi	1 - 48

Minority Report

2018

**The voice of Ontario's
Autism community.**



AutismONTARIO
Toronto



*There's an estimated 100,000 people with
ASD.*

*Imagine a community that sees the potential
in each and every one of them.*

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Autism Ontario – Toronto Chapter

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Background

[Autism Ontario](#) is the province's largest collective voice representing Ontario's autism community. Under the informed leadership of the provincial board of directors and through the many committed and skilled staff and volunteers at both provincial and at each local chapter who organize and support parent to parent contact, we strive to increase public awareness about autism and about the multitude of everyday challenges and barriers faced by individuals with Autism, their families, and the diverse professionals with whom they interact. Both the provincial association and its local chapters share common goals of providing information and education, supporting research, and advocating for programs and services while providing much needed support for the thousands of members within the autism community. Autism Ontario continues to listen and advocate on behalf of individuals and families affected by autism in the Ontario education system and knows through every day parent to parent contact that school related issues continue to remain one of the most significantly reported areas of challenge to families and individuals affected by ASD.

Introduction

Through its long standing representation and engagement on the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee, the [Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario](#) has had the opportunity to be both continually informed on and regularly participate in and contribute to the varied discussions concerning special education program and service delivery to the many exceptional students of the board. Through our consistent SEAC representation, the Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario has also participated in and contributed at SEAC meetings during the yearly TCDSB special education budget presentation, safe schools presentation, accessibility report and mental health and well-being report and many other aspects relevant to the committee's mandate. Through our representation we've done our best to bring forward the voice of the autism community with recommendations that we feel would positively impact

those living with and affected by autism and other exceptionalities as recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

As a standing member of the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee, the Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario has the opportunity to participate and contribute through engaged and relevant discussion, through specific member directed inquiries and through committee approved motions meant to advise the TCDSB Board of Trustees on matters within the committee's terms of reference and that affect all exceptional students of the Board. Ontario Regulation [464/97: *Special Education Advisory Committees*](#) states that every district school board shall establish this committee. According to this regulation, the Special Education Advisory Committee's role and responsibilities allow the committee to make recommendations to the district school board respecting matters affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board. The same Ontario legislation provides each Special Education Advisory Committee with the opportunity to participate in the annual review of the board's Special Education Plan, participate in the board's annual budget process as it relates to special education and to be presented with and provided the opportunity to review the financial statements of the board as they relate to special education.

On occasion, it may become necessary for individual SEAC members to present a minority report to the committee that outlines a particular member's association concerns. A minority report does not always represent the views of the majority of SEAC members but once received by the committee, it is heard and then decided if the minority report will replace the views of the majority or if it will simply be received. Once the Minority Report is received by SEAC, it is included with the minutes of the meeting at which time it is presented and submitted to the Board of Trustees. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education document [Standards for School Board Special Education Plans](#), requirements of the standard for the Board's consultation process; "a description of any majority or minority reports concerning the board's approved plan that have been

received from members of the board's SEAC and the board's response to these reports" must be included with the Board's annual special education plan submission to the Ministry of Education (MoE, Ontario Ministry of Education - Parents - Special Education Page B3).

Executive Summary

As has become customary since 2010, the members of the TCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee have been consulted on the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Accountability Framework for Special Education (AFSE). The TCDSB established the Accountability Framework for Special Education in an effort to measure the student achievement of students with special education needs on an annual basis. Through the framework created, the Board has conducted annual reviews of special education programs and services within its Board. The intended purpose for these reviews is to examine special education program and service effectiveness and to ensure ongoing and continued improvement across all of the exceptionalities. An analysis of student achievement is also provided across the exceptionalities and the Accountability Framework committees set and implement strategies that are exceptionality-specific with the intended purpose of improving student outcomes through the goals and strategies listed in the annual framework document.

The Chapter Leadership Council for the Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario have reviewed the AFSE, in particular relation to the emphasis placed on EQAO assessment to assess the achievement status of students with special needs and to the goals pertaining to "autism" and have identified several concerns with this report that we feel impact the community which we serve.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee currently has representation on the TCDSB's Safe Schools Advisory Committee and on the Mental Health Advisory Committee. Regular verbal reports are shared with SEAC through the members that represent SEAC on these committees.

At the request of SEAC and according to the regular review of the SEAC calendar; key TCDSB department staff members also make presentations that are meant to inform SEAC on the many issues that relate to special

education and to the achievement of the diverse learners attending TCDSB schools.

Many key elements that relate to special education programs and the services that impact on the achievement and well-being of students with autism and other exceptionalities were inquired about and discussed at SEAC meetings throughout the 2017-18 year. The Superintendent of Special Services, the Associate Director and Special Services department leads are also in attendance at every SEAC meeting to provide answers and clarification to SEAC member inquiries and concerns.

This report would like to acknowledge that the Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario is in full support of the mindset that effective programming and service delivery is undoubtedly essential in supporting and promoting individual and system-wide learning achievement and lifelong success in students with diverse learning needs. Our opinion is that; only when assessment data which is collected in a manner that is relevant to student learning achievement and reflects the learning profile of the student, where appropriate, agreeably has the potential for providing a window through which student success and the efficacy of system learning improvement goals and system wide professional development can be measured.

The Toronto chapter leadership, through regular family and student discussions relating to challenges in education, feel that given the spectral nature of autism, a narrowed approach may present some challenges in determining system-wide student learning achievement trends or to develop and/or implement one specific goal that will serve all students identified with this exceptionality. Given the unique etiology of autism, a “broad strokes” approach to assessment and goal setting may further create barriers and greater gaps in learning and well-being due to the numerous internal and external factors that affect individual student learning and especially assessment practices and outcomes for each unique student on the autism spectrum.

There are an abundance of factors that affect the achievement and mental health and well-being of students with autism and that impact on their short term and long term success. Some of these factors are (not limited to):

- ✚ availability and access to qualified special education teachers and support staff
- ✚ requirement for special education related professional development for staff working with students
- ✚ access to appropriate programs and services for students on the spectrum
- ✚ the absence of an autism specific model for inclusion
- ✚ a funding model that was created in 1997 and does not account for nor adequately provide for the varied needs of the multitude of students in receipt of special education programs and services in Ontario schools.

The following report hopes to cover the most commonly reported themes among the many challenges and barriers in attaining an equitable education for students with autism spectrum disorder attending Toronto Catholic District School Board schools.

Accountability Framework for Special Education

The current Accountability Framework for Special Education (AFSE) was first presented at the February 21st 2018 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting. The Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario, through their appointed representative had several questions and concerns which were not permitted due to a limitation of three questions placed on the member during discussion of the item. Ultimately, our association representative on SEAC wished for it to be recorded that she was not in favour of the draft Accountability Framework for Special Education and it is duly recorded as such in the minutes.

One of the concerns that the Toronto chapter of Autism Ontario has identified can be found on page four of the AFSE (TCDSB, Special Education Advisory Committee meeting agenda).

Special Education Needs (based on predominant exceptionality)	Number of Students	Percent of Total Group
Autism	1763	10.4
Behaviour	188	1.10
Blind and Low Vision	15	0.09
Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing	97	0.57
Developmental Disability	141	0.83
Giftedness	2408	14.15
Language Impairment	840	4.94
Learning Disability	2920	17.16
Mild Intellectual Disability	373	2.19
Multiple Exceptionalities	182	1.07
N/A	8016	47.10
Physical Disability	73	0.43
Speech Impairment	2	0.01
	17018	100.0

Number of exceptional students by predominant exceptionality.

The chart shown on the previous page which is taken directly from the current AFSE identifies students by their exceptionality and shows that there are 1763 or 10.4% of the total TCDSB special education enrollment identified as students with autism with a 108% increase since 2010 compared to the charted data on page 84 of the March 18, 2018 SEAC agenda (TCDSB, Special Education Advisory Committee meeting agenda). The chart also lists a category of “N/A” which is our understanding to be students that have not been formally identified but that require some level of special education related support or accommodation and this category is shown to include a total documented number of 8016 which makes up 47.10% of the total special education student enrollment (17,018); just shy of half. According to Ontario Regulation [181/98](#) *Identification and Placement of Exceptional Students*, and the Ontario Individual Education Plan policy documents, it is permissible for school boards to prepare an IEP for students without the requirement to be formally identified through an IPRC (MoE, Supporting the Ontario Leadership Strategy, Principals Want to Know).

Judging by the very large percentage of non-identified students receiving special education support coupled with a recent announcement by Canada’s chief medical officer that states that approximately 1 in 66 children and youth are diagnosed with ASD in Canada (Government of Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada), it is likely that out of the 8016 of “non-identified” students, there is the potential to see a fair sized increase in the number of students that would fall under the identified category of autism spectrum disorder. The Toronto chapter of Autism Ontario feels that building a framework on the categorical knowledge of actual *identified* needs would create a more precise and comprehensive needs assessment not only for stakeholders but for the TCDSB when evaluating student achievement, setting clear and measurable goals, when developing a professional development plan and in particular when justifying to the Ministry of Education and other related ministries; the large scale need to address the many shortfalls in program and service delivery, qualified staffing and special education funding for students with special education needs in the province of Ontario.

With the understanding that the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) mandate is a stated dedication to “enhancing the quality and accountability of the education system in Ontario and to work with the education community. This will be achieved through student assessments that produce objective, reliable information, through the public release of this information and through the profiling of the value and use of EQAO data across the province” (Mandate, EQAO). The EQAO mission statement is “to provide assessments, evaluation and information that support accountability and continuous improvement of Ontario’s publicly funded education system” (Mission Statement, Strategic Plan 2016-2019, EQAO).

It should also be duly noted that there are no EQAO assessment details available for the grade three and grade six student cohorts in the 2015-2016 assessment year cycle.

On page six of the AFSE under the sub-section 2.(a); “areas of relative strength”, there is a noted increase in the number of students with autism that wrote the grade three assessments in 2016-2017. The increase noted reflects a 45% increase in the number of identified participating students with autism in grade three presumably due to an increase in enrolled students with there being 91 students identified with autism in the 2014-2015 assessment cycle and 132 identified students with autism two years later in the 2016-2017 assessment cycle.

The exemption rates, according to the EQAO data charts for students with autism document that the grade three reading component of the assessment shows a 6% decrease in exemption rates, the writing and math equivalent indicates a 5% decrease in the exemption rate. It is a positive step forward to see that the exemption rates have slightly decreased however the exemption rates have remained consistently high, ranging between 29-35% which still reflects a markedly high exemption rate in comparison to the exemption rate for all students with special education needs which range between 6-9%. Exemption rates have remained consistently high over the last several years notwithstanding goals and

strategy implementation in previous accountability frameworks for special education that were specifically directed to “reduce the exemption rates for students with Autism” (TCDSB, Accountability Framework for Special Education 2015-16).

The EQAO assessment percentage values noted as “highlights” for students with Autism included on pages six and seven of the AFSE report are noted to be referencing the values noted in the EQAO assessment results percentage charts in Appendix B of the AFSE. The “highlight” values do not appear to correspond with the actual charted values.

- a. Areas of Relative Strength:**
- i. Gr.3
 - increase in number of students with Autism that wrote the assessment (from 91 to 132)
 - 6% more students wrote the assessment (less exemptions)
 - ii. Gr.3 Writing – maintained steady at 39%
 - iii. Gr. 6 Reading – increase from 28% to 33%
 - iv. Gr. 6 Writing – increase from 38% to 43%
 - v. Gr. 9 Applied Math – increase from 41% to 47% and above province at 37%
- b. Areas for Growth:**
- a. Grade 3 reading - decrease from 33% to 29% in student achievement at level 3 and 4
 - b. Gr. 3 Mathematics – decrease from 39% two years ago to 23%
 - c. Gr. 6 Math – slight decrease from 20% two years ago to 19%
 - d. Academic – decrease from 100% to 86% (due to very small sample size)
- c. Grade 10 OSSLT (Reported by percent of students successful)**
- i. Full Time – decrease from 54% successful to 52% and at the same level as province (52%)
 - ii. Part Time – decrease from 35% to 34% but at same level as province (34%)
 - iii. Students with Autism completing OSSLC is 42%, increase of 3%; same as provincial level (42%)
 - iv. Deferred students have decreased by 1% to 11% for Full Time students and maintained at 10% for Part Time students

Pg. 6-7 of Accountability Framework for Special Education

The following charts on pages 14-16 of this minority report have been captured directly from Appendix B of the TCDSB Accountability Framework for Special Education and include the actual EQAO data that is stated to be highlighted in the image on the previous page of this report.

The data in the following charts has been captured and reported in the TCDSB AFSE over a three year cycle and the 2015-16 cycle does not include any assessment data available due to job action by Ontario teachers during the assessment period.

Reading Grade 3

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 1,033		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 1,046		2014 - 2015 N = 91		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 132	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	32	3%	NP	NP	43	4%	4	4%	NP	NP	5	4%
Level 3	372	36%	NP	NP	431	41%	26	29%	NP	NP	33	25%
Level 2	428	41%	NP	NP	387	37%	15	16%	NP	NP	34	26%
Level 1	81	8%	NP	NP	70	7%	4	4%	NP	NP	7	5%
NE 1	18	2%	NP	NP	17	2%	3	3%	NP	NP	3	2%
No Data	13	1%	NP	NP	13	1%	2	2%	NP	NP	4	3%
Exempt	89	9%	NP	NP	85	8%	37	41%	NP	NP	46	35%

Writing Grade 3

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 1,033		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 1,046		2014 - 2015 N = 91		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 132	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	13	1%	NP	NP	4	<1%	2	2%	NP	NP	0	0%
Level 3	566	55%	NP	NP	569	54%	34	37%	NP	NP	52	39%
Level 2	333	32%	NP	NP	354	34%	14	15%	NP	NP	28	21%
Level 1	19	2%	NP	NP	16	2%	0	0%	NP	NP	0	0%
NE 1	5	<1%	NP	NP	9	1%	3	3%	NP	NP	1	1%
No Data	15	1%	NP	NP	15	1%	2	2%	NP	NP	5	4%
Exempt	82	8%	NP	NP	79	8%	36	40%	NP	NP	46	35%

Math Grade 3

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 1,046		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 1,062		2014 - 2015 N = 91		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 132	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	27	3%	NP	NP	26	2%	7	8%	NP	NP	7	5%
Level 3	309	30%	NP	NP	300	28%	28	31%	NP	NP	25	19%
Level 2	475	45%	NP	NP	481	45%	14	15%	NP	NP	38	29%
Level 1	120	11%	NP	NP	145	14%	2	2%	NP	NP	8	6%
NE 1	20	2%	NP	NP	15	1%	2	2%	NP	NP	3	2%
No Data	12	1%	NP	NP	12	1%	2	2%	NP	NP	5	4%
Exempt	83	8%	NP	NP	83	8%	36	40%	NP	NP	46	35%

Reading Grade 6

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 1,230		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 1,287		2014 - 2015 N = 91		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 130	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	18	1%	NP	NP	20	2%	2	2%	NP	NP	4	3%
Level 3	532	43%	NP	NP	597	46%	24	26%	NP	NP	39	30%
Level 2	521	42%	NP	NP	541	42%	22	24%	NP	NP	46	35%
Level 1	60	5%	NP	NP	35	3%	7	8%	NP	NP	2	2%
NE 1	6	<1%	NP	NP	7	1%	2	2%	NP	NP	0	0%
No Data	12	1%	NP	NP	11	1%	1	1%	NP	NP	1	1%
Exempt	81	7%	NP	NP	76	6%	33	36%	NP	NP	38	29%

Writing Grade 6

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 1,230		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 1,287		2014 - 2015 N = 91		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 130	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	31	3%	NP	NP	33	3%	6	7%	NP	NP	6	5%
Level 3	553	45%	NP	NP	644	50%	28	31%	NP	NP	49	38%
Level 2	521	42%	NP	NP	489	38%	20	22%	NP	NP	33	25%
Level 1	25	2%	NP	NP	24	2%	1	1%	NP	NP	2	2%
NE 1	4	<1%	NP	NP	11	1%	1	1%	NP	NP	1	1%
No Data	15	1%	NP	NP	11	1%	2	2%	NP	NP	1	1%
Exempt	81	7%	NP	NP	75	6%	33	36%	NP	NP	38	29%

Math Grade 6

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 1,228		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 1,287		2014 - 2015 N = 91		2015 - 2016 N = NP		2016 - 2017 N = 130	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	29	2%	NP	NP	25	2%	4	4%	NP	NP	5	4%
Level 3	160	13%	NP	NP	161	13%	15	16%	NP	NP	19	15%
Level 2	401	33%	NP	NP	390	30%	13	14%	NP	NP	27	21%
Level 1	521	42%	NP	NP	605	47%	18	20%	NP	NP	37	28%
NE 1	17	1%	NP	NP	18	1%	6	7%	NP	NP	2	2%
No Data	13	1%	NP	NP	9	1%	1	1%	NP	NP	1	1%
Exempt	87	7%	NP	NP	79	6%	34	37%	NP	NP	39	30%

The charts on the following page reflect the EQAO grade 9 math assessments and the grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) assessment results. Note that these assessments were not impacted by any teacher job action during the 2015-16 assessment cycle.

Grade 9 - Academic

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs Identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 228		2015 - 2016 N = 272		2016 - 2017 N = 239		2014 - 2015 N = 21		2015 - 2016 N = 21		2016 - 2017 N = 22	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	8	4%	4	1%	13	5%	3	14%	2	10%	6	27%
Level 3	157	69%	177	65%	147	62%	18	86%	15	71%	13	59%
Level 2	32	14%	58	21%	48	20%	0	0%	1	5%	1	5%
Level 1	28	12%	29	11%	24	10%	0	0%	1	5%	1	5%
Below Level 1	1	<1%	1	<1%	5	2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%
No Data	2	1%	3	1%	2	1%	0	0%	2	10%	0	0%

Grade 9 - Applied

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs Identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 715		2015 - 2016 N = 845		2016 - 2017 N = 679		2014 - 2015 N = 17		2015 - 2016 N = 17		2016 - 2017 N = 31	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Level 4	43	6%	54	6%	45	7%	2	12%	3	18%	5	16%
Level 3	198	28%	245	29%	167	25%	5	29%	5	29%	10	32%
Level 2	288	40%	332	39%	263	39%	7	41%	7	41%	10	32%
Level 1	115	16%	156	18%	147	22%	1	6%	1	6%	4	13%
Below Level 1	53	7%	45	5%	38	6%	1	6%	0	0%	1	3%
No Data	18	3%	13	2%	19	3%	1	6%	1	6%	1	3%

OSSLT - FTE

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs Identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 1,182		2015 - 2016 N = 1,184		2016 - 2017 N = 1,221		2014 - 2015 N = 56		2015 - 2016 N = 55		2016 - 2017 N = 62	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Successful	508	56%	503	56%	502	53%	32	74%	27	71%	32	84%
Not Successful	393	44%	388	44%	441	47%	11	26%	11	29%	6	16%
Fully Participating	901	76%	891	75%	943	77%	43	77%	38	69%	38	61%
Absent	13	1%	7	1%	8	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Deferred	268	23%	286	24%	270	22%	13	23%	17	31%	23	37%

OSSLT - PE

	All Students with Special Education Needs (Excluding Gifted)						Students with Special Needs Identified as Autism					
	2014 - 2015 N = 848		2015 - 2016 N = 976		2016 - 2017 N = 971		2014 - 2015 N = 35		2015 - 2016 N = 37		2016 - 2017 N = 45	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Successful	170	35%	135	27%	150	32%	8	40%	5	28%	3	15%
Not Successful	311	65%	372	73%	321	68%	12	60%	13	72%	17	85%
Fully Participating	481	57%	507	52%	471	49%	20	57%	18	49%	20	44%
Absent	50	6%	81	8%	75	8%	0	0%	0	0%	3	7%
Deferred	66	8%	67	7%	59	6%	5	14%	3	8%	4	9%
OSSLC	251	30%	321	33%	366	38%	10	29%	16	43%	18	40%

Note: Successful and Not Successful percentages are based on those Fully Participating.

The EQAO “level 3” line item percentage value documented in the charts in Appendix B of the AFSE; documents that students with autism are scoring well below the provincial values, board values and considerably and consistently below the values presented for all students with special education needs in all three panels in grade three, in the literacy panels in grade six and slightly below their peers in the grade nine academic math

assessment. Level 3 scoring according to EQAO represents that “the student has demonstrated the required knowledge and skills to a considerable degree. Achievement meets the provincial standard” (EQAO, Explanation of Terms).

The Toronto chapter of Autism Ontario has become increasingly concerned that the student achievement and the well-being of students on the autism spectrum is being negatively impacted by board reporting and learning improvement practices that do not directly or accurately reflect the strengths and needs of this large and varied demographic of students. We feel that the information gathered and presented in a “broad strokes” manner for the purpose of assessing student achievement targets which will then be used to inform a learning plan for exceptional students and for the educators that teach them must be prepared fully considering the spectral nature of autism spectrum disorder and addressing the variety of needs that impact the learning achievement and well-being of each individual student with autism.

We are adamant believers in that the formative K-12 years are critically important to a student’s learning of the many skills required to become innovative learners on their journey to becoming independent, contributing adults. We strongly support the idea that in providing a safe and caring learning environment for all students with special needs, in particular with autism; that student mental health must also be recognized as a key element of well-being and student achievement so that students with varied needs feel included amongst their peers in the life of the school and reflected in the curriculum that is taught in the classroom.

For the past several AFSE cycles, the goal and strategies for students with autism were largely centred around the high exemption rates for students on the spectrum. A new framework goal has been presented this year although the exemption rates still remain consistently high. The current cycle’s Accountability Framework’s new goal for 2017-18 is noted as: “the self-regulation of students in the PAST program will be tracked. By the end of the school year, more students in the PAST program will be able to

identify their emotions independently, identify a reason for their emotion and identify a strategy addressing the emotion. The focus is to track the progress of the students in identifying and using strategies to address their emotions to demonstrate overall improvement in self-regulation. The most effective strategies used to teach this curriculum where students are successful will be recorded to create resources that can be shared to build capacity within the schools to support students with Autism”.

The P.A.S.T. Program, otherwise known as the Program to Assist with Social Thinking (TCDSB Special Services, P.A.S.T. Program Brochure 2017-18), is an intensive support/one-day per week withdrawal program which is currently operating out of five TCDSB schools. The class generally has six students classified as Asperger Syndrome, high functioning Autism or Autism level 1 and focuses on students from grades three to six. Each P.A.S.T. Program ISP class is taught by one qualified special education teacher and supported by one child and youth worker. Staff from the student’s home school is often invited to visit the program and spend the day and if the student has dedicated support staff personnel at the home school, that individual will attend with the student to further support him/her in the P.A.S.T. Program setting.

The P.A.S.T. program provides a focus on the enhancement of the perspective taking abilities of the students in this class. The skill areas addressed within this context are intended to build the ability to understand the emotions of self and others, communication, cooperative play, the development of relationships and the capacity to understand their diagnosis and self advocacy skills (Special Education Program Overview and Improvement Planning 2016, Autism, Regular Class with Withdrawal Assistance). Given the small number of students versus high number of staff ratio in this ISP class, it creates a learning environment which permits explicit instruction and outcome opportunities that are likely less possible in a mainstream class setting. Parent input also suggests that there is little to no social peer interaction between the students in the P.A.S.T. Program and the students of the host school and outdoor recreational time is often if not always scheduled at a time when the students from the host school are

not outdoors. The students in the P.A.S.T. Program have little to no interaction with anyone other than their program class peers and the program staff on the day that they attend this program.

There is no debate that self-regulation skills acquisition is an important element of a child's development (Autism Speaks, What are the Positive Strategies for Supporting Behavior Improvement). It is understood that a student's ability to self-regulate directly impacts on their ability to advocate for, support and sustain their inclusion in the daily aspects of the classroom and in everyday life. There is however, still a large disparity as noted in assessment data and exemption rates between students identified with autism and their typical peers and between assessment data and exemption rates for students with special needs as noted in the AFSE.

The intended outcomes of this cycle's AFSE goal for students with Autism as noted in the AFSE is "if students are explicitly taught strategies to be flexible in their thinking, to understand their emotions and to play cooperatively, then there will an improvement in their self-regulation skills". This is a fine goal for an intensive setting such as the P.A.S.T. Program where the student to staff ratio is so that the dynamic will permit staff to easily intercept negative behaviours and interject opportunities to build on self-regulatory skill concepts within the context where it can be best learned. The AFSE further states "using checklists and feedback from the teachers in the PAST program, the data will be tracked to measure success. This is a 3-year goal that will follow the group of Year 1 students. In addition, the committee's goal is to communicate with all classrooms what effective self-regulation techniques have been found in order to assist all students with autism to reach their full potential"; this part of the AFSE goal intended outcome begs to ask the question; wasn't this already being done? Checklists have and are already being employed by the P.A.S.T. Program teachers and staff according to the TCDSB program brochure. It should also be noted that according to PPM 140, checklists should already have been a regular practice by teachers in mainstream classes and in all other placements as well.

According to the most current P.A.S.T. Program brochure; “The PAST Program teacher and a support staff make scheduled visits to the home-school to support the classroom teacher, provide peer training and to monitor the generalization of targeted skills. Weekly checklists are provided to the parent and classroom teacher to record student’s performance of targeted skills. Regular communication with parents is encouraged” (TCDSB, PAST Program Brochure 2017-18).

It should be noted that the P.A.S.T. Program, albeit a very useful program for students with HFASD; serves a small number of students from within the larger sub-set of students affected by high-functioning autism and due to the fiscal constraints within the special education funding envelope provided by the province and its impact on school board budget priorities; it does not appear that a broad expansion of the P.A.S.T. Program ISP classes will be offered at this moment. The program curriculum and concepts instilled and delivered through this program would definitely benefit a much larger number of students on the spectrum however the criteria for student eligibility to the program is highly specific and refined due to the very small number of placements that are available.

Safe Schools & Mental Health

The Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario would like to note that during the making of this minority report, particularly the research that went behind it; it was found that there is little to no Ontario research available on the learning trajectories and outcomes of students with autism, relating to their increased risk for bullying and the high co-morbidity rates for mental health disorders and other diagnosed related disorders for individuals on the autism spectrum. National and international research has often proven the direct impact and relation that physical, environmental and social factors play in determining the outcomes for these individuals leading well into adulthood. There appear to be very little Ontario research or any creation of a research based framework meant to address this very serious phenomenon that is creating multiple barriers for Ontario children and

youth with autism from achieving to their fullest potential in a safe and supportive learning environment. The safe and caring adult and peer interactions that are experienced at school, and how both positively and negatively impact directly on the individual's achievement and mental and physical well-being directly affect the individual's ability to function well into adulthood. There has been very little Ontario research to document this transition or to define or implement any working strategy for improvement or timely access to support and services after age 18.

What is Bullying? "Ontario's provincial legislation defines bullying as: repeated aggressive behaviour by a student where the behaviour is intended to have the effect of or the student ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of, causing harm, fear or distress to another individual. Bullying can take many forms, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, and harm to an individual's reputation or property and cyber bullying. The bullying also has the potential to create a negative environment at a school for an individual. The bullying occurs in a relationship where there is a real or perceived power imbalance based on factors such as size; disability; sexual orientation; gender identity; sexuality; race/ethnicity/religion; or other issues" (PREVNet Ontario Policy & Legislation Resources).

Over the past several decades, a large body of international and national research has grown to show that bullying in its many forms is reported at an alarmingly higher rate for students with disabilities (Canadian Human Rights Commission, CHRC report: For persons with disabilities in Canada, education is not always an open door). Past studies have documented reported bullying rates for students with ASD ranging as high as 94% (Hebron and Humphrey).

There are several possible factors that may contribute to the victimization of students with ASD by their peers; some of those factors are that they are more socially isolated, generally less accepted and less liked by their peers and they are more often socially excluded and ridiculed for their atypical behaviour. Children and youth on the spectrum also often lack the typical

social support and friendship networks that have been shown to protect or insulate children and youth from the negative effects of peer bullying (The Effects of Psychological Trauma on Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: a Research Review).

A child or youth with ASD has a great deal of difficulty navigating the social landscape around them and the pragmatic language deficits that they often face also places them in a position of being unable to recognize and respond to acts of bullying, especially when it is an everyday occurrence (Humphrey and Hebron, Bullying of children and adolescents with autism spectrum conditions: a 'state of the field' review).

Peer aggression and victimization often present in a variety of forms. Peer aggression (such as physical hostility, negative peer pressure and teasing, shunning and social rejection) and peer victimization grossly affects children with autism more often than their typically developing peers (Humphrey and Hebron, Bullying of children and adolescents with autism spectrum conditions: a 'state of the field' review). The characteristics which are typical in children and youth with autism spectrum disorder coupled with contextual factors have been directly linked to higher rates of peer aggression and peer victimization towards this demographic (Rotheram-Fuller, Kasari and Chamberlain). Youth who have experienced peer victimization have also been found to suffer consequent loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety and suicidal ideation at a greater rate than their peers.

The March 21st 2018 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting agenda included "*Questions arising out of the Accountability Framework Report*". These questions were driven by Board of Trustee discussion surrounding the AFSE at the March 1st 2018 Student Achievement and Well-Being meeting where the staff answers were also directed to be referred to SEAC. One of the pressing questions asked by the board of Trustees was "do we have any information on whether students with IEPs are being bullied / feel safe?" The charts that follow were provided by TCDSB staff and include data that parallels responses of students with

IEP's with typically developing students in how they answered the questions contained in recent safe schools climate surveys. See the charts below and on the following page:

2016-2017 (Spring 2017)				
SCCSC – Grades 6 & 8				
Group (IEP):	Since September, how often have you been bullied at school?			
	Never	2-3 Times	4-6 Times	7+ Times
No IEP N=4103	69.6%	20.7%	4.9%	4.9%
Not Sure N=4146	67.0%	21.3%	5.9%	5.9%
IEP N=2031	↓ 7.1% 62.5%	24.3%	5.9%	↑ 2.4% 7.3%

SCCSC – Grades 6 & 8				
Group (IEP):	How safe do you feel in your school?			
	Very Safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe
No IEP N=4103	39.3%	56.6%	2.9%	0.6%
Not Sure N=4146	35.5%	60.1%	3.2%	0.5%
IEP N=2031	40.2%	55.2%	3.0%	0.7%

SCCSC – Grades 6 & 8				
Group (IEP):	How safe do you feel walking/travelling to and from school?			
	Very Safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe
No IEP N=4103	25.4%	54.7%	10.5%	1.9%
Not Sure N=4146	24.0%	53.8%	11.6%	1.8%
IEP N=2031	26.9%	51.8%	11.8%	2.0%

The first question in the attached charts provided by TCDSB staff to SEAC is “since September, how often have you been bullied at school?” and the possible choices to answer from are; never, 2-3 times, 4-6 times and 7+ times. According to the results in the chart above, 7.1% *less* of students in grades 6 & 8 with an IEP have *never* been bullied as compared to students in grades 6 & 8 without an IEP and 2.4% of students with an IEP

responded that they had been bullied 7+ times *more* than students without an IEP. Similar trend values are presented in the data collected for the grades 9-12 Safe and Caring Catholic School Climate Survey in the chart below.

2016-2017(Fall 2016)

Safe Schools Survey – Grades 9-12

Group (IEP):	Since September, how often have you been bullied at school?			
	Never	1-3 Times	4-6 Times	7+ Times
No IEP N= 3036	85.7%	10.5%	1.7%	2.1%
Not Sure N= 1102	85.6%	11.0%	1.2%	2.2%
IEP N= 1124	↓ 3.5% 82.2%	11.0%	2.4%	↑ 2.3% 4.4%

Safe Schools Survey – Grades 9-12

Group (IEP):	How safe do you feel in your school?			
	Very Safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe
No IEP N= 3036	29.2%	63.0%	4.4%	1.3%
Not Sure N= 1102	31.5%	59.8%	3.8%	1.7%
IEP N= 1124	30.5%	59.2%	5.1%	2.7%

Safe Schools Survey – Grades 9-12

Group (IEP):	How safe do you feel walking/travelling to and from school?			
	Very Safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe
No IEP N= 3036	20.9%	62.2%	11.3%	2.2%
Not Sure N= 1102	18.9%	61.5%	12.0%	2.3%
IEP N= 1124	23.0%	58.2%	11.4%	3.4%

These tallied results of the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Safe and Caring Catholic School Climate survey (SCCSC) for students in grades 6 & 8 in the Spring of 2017 and for grades 9-12 in the Fall of 2016

distinctly show that students with IEP's feel less safe and are bullied at school significantly more than their typically developing peers.

At a higher level; it is evident that there *is* demographic specific data collection which would lead one to believe that it is to be followed by a critical system analysis and discussion on how to best create plans for system learning improvement and frameworks to support student achievement and well-being as is supported through Ontario Ministry of Education policy and legislation (Promoting a Positive School Climate: A Resource for Schools).

The data in the charts clearly identifies that there are challenges and barriers and gaps that evidently exist in providing a safe and caring environment for special needs students since the data clearly shows the disparity between students with IEP's and their typically developing student cohorts.

The responsibility for maintaining a safe and caring environment for all students as documented in Ontario policy and legislation lies with all teachers (including occasional teachers brought in to cover increasing teacher absenteeism challenges), support staff, vice-principals, principals, supervisory officers, directors of education and those working in non-school-board positions which would include volunteers, school bus drivers, etc., and also with the municipally elected school board Trustees that govern over school board policies and ensure that they are properly implemented. It is imperative that students feel safe in all of the environments in which they learn which includes, but is not limited to; "classrooms, school buses, science and technological studies labs, schoolyards, cafeterias, gyms, off-site facilities and worksites, co-op educational programs and work placements, field trip locations, arenas and sporting venues. Considerations of safety also include the manner in which College members interact with students and the manner in which students are permitted to interact among themselves" (Professional Advisory - Safety in Learning Environments: A Shared Responsibility).

Considering the data results, greater attention should be given to the evidence that shows that an individual's mental health and well-being can greatly impact on the susceptibility for self harm and suicidal ideation and have serious long-term effects on their mental health and well-being (Arseneault). According to the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP/ACPS), suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst 10 to 19 year olds in Canada. An article printed in volume 7, Issue 1 of the journal of *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* places children with autism from ages 1-16, at 28 times greater risk than typical children for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. From the same cohort of children assessed in this same study, 14% had suicide ideation or attempted suicide (Suicide ideation and attempts in children with autism). These are definitely alarming rates.

Another study undertaken in 2014 also highlighted the heightened risk for suicide amongst youth and adults with Asperger Syndrome. This report documented that 35% of the surveyed study cohort had attempted suicide. This particular study concluded that individuals with AS are at a much greater risk than the general population for attempting suicide (Paquette-Smith, Weiss and Lunskey).

Despite the national data that reveals that children, youth and adults with autism would benefit from exceptionality specific, timely intervention in the field of mental health, "children with ASD are reported to have more unmet needs for specialty and therapy care. Individuals with ASD often experience many barriers to service receipt across the lifespan, as a result of waitlists, a lack of resources, and inadequate service provider skills" (Weiss, Isaacs and Diepstra).

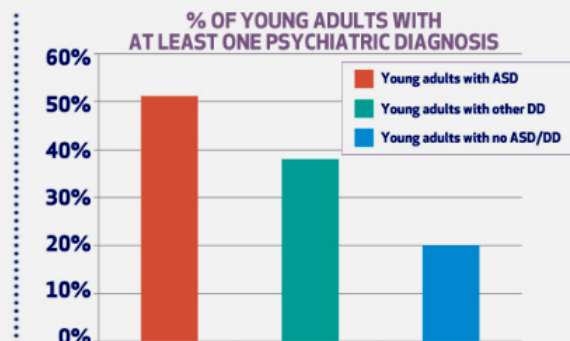
Half of young adults with autism have a psychiatric diagnosis



Research shows mental health care and prevention should be prioritized for those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities (DD) in Ontario

Study compared 5,095 young adults 18 to 24 years of age with ASD to peers with and without other forms of DD.

People with ASD have deficits in socio-communicative ability and behaviour. They experience difficulties with health, mental health and challenging behaviours, which can lead to increased service use.



Weiss J et al. J Autism Dev Disord. 2017.

Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences
ices.on.ca



Health Care Access Research
and Developmental Disabilities



2017

https://www.ices.on.ca/~media/Images/News_releases/2017/July-Dec/WeissLunskyASDpsychFIN.ashx?la=en-CA

The importance of building awareness around the ongoing bullying of students with disabilities and of the state of their mental health and well-being is paramount. The ongoing review of and implementation of system wide and tailored to fit local need goals is necessary to the learning achievement and mental health and well-being of students with special needs, particularly with autism and to the intended cessation of their continued victimization.

Inclusion

“Necessary for some, good for all”. This is a term that has been often used over the years when referring to the framework of inclusion in education. “Necessary for some” implies the divergent need for support and instructional and assessment strategies that allows access to the curriculum for students with diverse needs and ideally, “good for all” suggests how the implied adoption of the strategies, tools and resources used and implemented for diverse learner populations would also serve to

broadly benefit typically developing students in the inclusive classroom setting (L4All - ABA Placemat).

Positive, desired outcomes occur when all of the players within the education system work cooperatively to support all students' learning and well-being. This systemic congruity coupled with the uniqueness of the human essence has the potential to support the "necessary for some...good for all" mindset starting from overreaching governance procedures to the practices which are implemented in the daily rituals of the local school classroom. A reluctance to update teaching/learning practices and the insistence on using one set framework, a one-size-fits-all approach without taking into consideration the diverse learning needs within the classroom will undoubtedly create insurmountable gaps and challenges and barriers to the achievement and to the well-being of the diverse student population. Furthermore, the failure to incorporate flexibility in pedagogy and to implement consistent reviews of learning and teaching practices also has the potential to lead to barriers and gaps in student achievement, mental health and well-being and to create barriers in the accessibility to inclusionary practices for students with diverse learning needs.

The Ontario Ministry of Education mission statement, as stated on their website speaks of equality for *every* student and child. It speaks to the promise of quality education outcomes delivered by continuously evolving, exemplary educators committed to driving success for all from cradle to grave. (MoE - Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario):

Mission Statement

Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child. Learners in the province's education system will develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.

Ontario will cultivate and continuously develop a high-quality teaching profession and strong leadership at all levels of the system. Our education system will be characterized by high expectations and success for all. It will be responsive, high quality, accessible and integrated from early learning and child care to adult education.

Together, we will build on past achievements and move forward with ambitious goals.

<http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/excellent.html>

The concept of inclusion definitely requires a collaborative, layered approach that includes a steady flow of communication from a top-down transparent and accountable framework to the critically informed data sharing from the bottom-up. This consistent and constantly evolving model of informed decision making must include all voices; from the politicians in provincial government to school board governors in the boardrooms through to the educators and student voice in the classroom and extended through to the parents at home. Student voice should include the diversity that every classroom and every school board in the province of Ontario seemingly represents. Creating an educational model that truly reflects equity and inclusion for those with disabilities, particularly on the spectrum, must include opportunities for the integration of their perspectives and for the development of policies and educational practices that reflect these students' individual strengths and needs. The Ontario curriculum for all subjects and all panels must reflect the learning needs of all students with disabilities throughout each and every curriculum document to ensure truly measurable full-spectrum success for all

.

Social Inclusion vs. Exclusion

Social exclusion according to the [Collins Dictionary](#) is defined as “the act of making certain groups of people within a society feel isolated and unimportant”. Therefore, from a logical perspective, social “inclusion” would be defined as the act of making certain groups of people within a society feel supported and important.

The need to belong in society is undoubtedly an inherent characteristic of all human beings and it is a strong influence that guides our cognitive reasoning, our emotions, and our behavior (Baumeister and Leary). When the need to belong is not met, it is very likely that feelings of loneliness may begin to impact the individual (Heinrich and Gullone, The clinical significance of loneliness: a literature review). Loneliness usually comes from when there is a discrepancy between the interpersonal relationships people want and the perception of the quality and quantity of

these relationships (Peplau and Perlman). While it is sometimes normal to occasionally feel lonely, it is also understood that persistent and increased feelings of loneliness should be clinically addressed. This reasoning is supported by research findings that demonstrate that loneliness is often associated with mental health disorders like anxiety disorders and depression, and even with a person's physical complaints and diseases (Heinrich and Gullone, The clinical significance of loneliness: a literature review).

Medical professionals in North America use the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) which was revised in May of 2013. This manual is widely used to evaluate autism spectrum disorder (ASD) by the following diagnostic criteria:

“A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by the following, currently or by history (examples are illustrative, not exhaustive, see text):

1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, ranging, for example, from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation; to reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; to failure to initiate or respond to social interactions.
2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, ranging, for example, from poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication; to abnormalities in eye contact and body language or deficits in understanding and use of gestures; to a total lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication.
3. Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships, ranging, for example, from difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts; to difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends; to absence of interest in peers.” (Autism Speaks, DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria)

Clearly, the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder speaks distinctly to the many deficits in understanding, developing, reciprocating and maintaining friendships and positive, healthy relationships for those on

the spectrum. These deficits are intrinsically present early on in the behaviour of a child on the spectrum and have the risk of becoming an embedded behaviour and becoming more pronounced as the child transitions to adolescence and into adulthood if the individual is not provided with structured support in trying to learn how to understand and navigate the social landscape around them within the related environmental context. (Autism Ontario: Knowledge Base: Increasing Social Involvement).

There is a very large component of the K-12 learning that is based on the social experience. Without appropriate support, students with ASD often if not always, do not have the capacity to integrate socially which inevitably has a negative impact on their academic, emotional, psychological, physical and of course, social outcome. Furthermore, from a safe schools perspective, the inability to understand the many associated factors related to social communication also places individuals on the spectrum at a much higher risk for victimization, in which national and international research has found some of the highest victimization rates amongst this population.

Learning at school has long since transformed far beyond the one room schoolhouse and focussed learning on only the three R's. Although the "three R's" are still embedded in the daily curriculum taught in Ontario schools today, education has evolved into addressing "the whole child" in order to promote learning. Society has definitely learned a great deal about child development and its relationship to successful learning over the last several decades. "Scientists have shown us how nature and nurture, in concert, shape a child's early and continuing development--the importance of both working together is no longer in question. We know that children do not develop and learn in isolation, but rather grow physically, socially, emotionally, ethically, expressively, and intellectually within networks of families, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and our larger society" (ASCD).

Although academic learning goals are significantly important to student achievement, the balance of educating the whole child in supporting

student achievement and mental health and well-being cannot occur if academics are the only focus. When student Individual Education Plans are written, many “social” related IEP goals *if* included in a student’s IEP as alternative goals are usually written around and may include goals defining appropriate greeting mannerisms, reciprocating the teacher’s greeting using eye contact upon entering the classroom and perhaps interacting with peers using a respectful tone.

The IEP, especially at the elementary level and before the student turns 16, is usually written by the special education teacher and then presented to the parent. Parent consultation often occurs but not always. The classroom teacher is often but not always consulted and then is informed of the student’s IEP goals once the parent has signed off on the IEP. Throughout this process, there is often a large gap in informing and engaging the student in the expectation that they are to meet their determined goals with the assumption that the parent will review and explain the IEP to their child. It is essential for the success of any goal that student consultation occurs and that any goal is developed around the expectations within the contextual setting. It is crucial to the success of any goal that the structure to measure the progress of the goals is applied in a timely and cooperative manner. If the goal has been adequately met or if it hasn’t; there must be a process where all parties invested in the student’s success reconvene so that adjustments to the existing goal or a completely new goal can be considered. Ontario policy and direction surrounding IEP monitoring and review states that as a minimal standard; the IEP is to be reviewed at each reporting period (November, January and June of each school year) however as a working document, there is the capacity to review and report on a student IEP more frequently than that.

Simply having a child with autism present in the classroom doesn't necessarily mean they are included.

The manner in which social inclusion/exclusion is defined and the degree of implications, complexities and lack of awareness around social inclusion/exclusion and how it impacts on the lives of individuals with autism and their families greatly reflects on the disconnect between theory and practice around the disjointed strategies and lack of framework in creating inclusive environments.

Professional Development

Who is the educator and what is their role in supporting student achievement and mental-health and well-being for students in the classroom? According to the Ontario College of Teachers *Additional Qualification Course Guideline Teaching Students with Communication Needs (Autism Spectrum Disorders)* professional educators are described as “innovative scholars and practitioners, critical pedagogues who forward social and ecological justice” The image below further describes the identity of the educator and is taken from page 3 of the document:

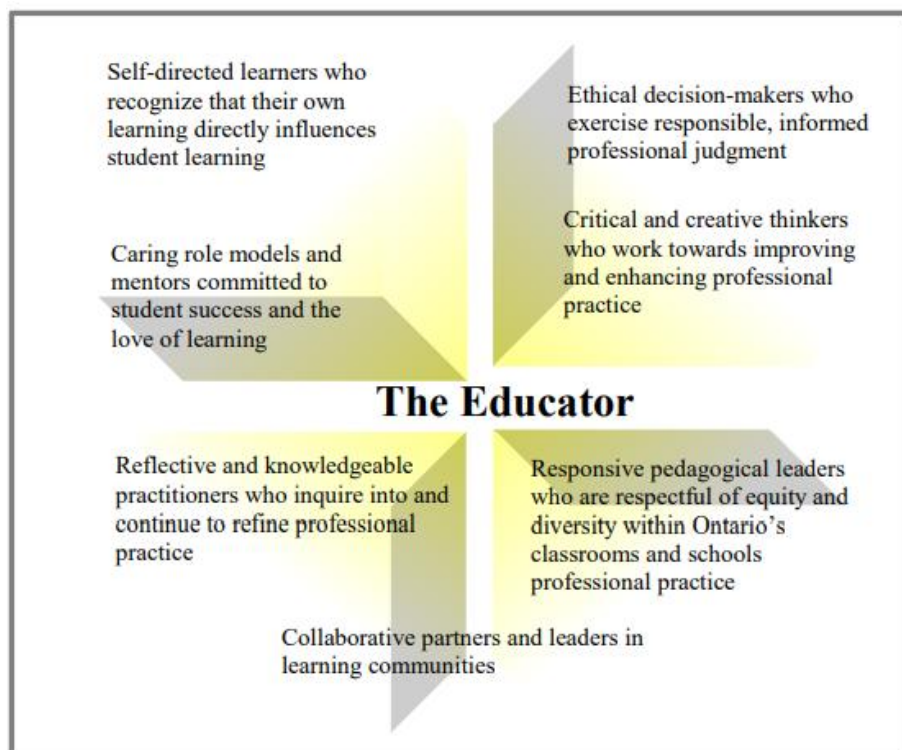






Image of the Educator, (OCT)

Educator professional development is essential in creating and supporting an equitable and differentiated learning experience for all types of learners in Ontario schools (Edugains - Differentiated Instruction Educator's Package (2016)). The Ministry of Education requires that educators attend three professional development days for all Ontario school boards which address three identified priorities across the province (MoE, Policy/Program Memorandum 151: Professional Activity Days Devoted to Provincial Education Priorities). Many advances have been made over the last few decades in understanding and in building the capacity to learn from and teach students with autism in an inclusive, regular classroom setting and there is a bounty of documentation to draw from.

One of the measures that were legislated in Ontario in 2007 was Policy/Program Memorandum 140 *Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*. The purpose of PPM 140, as outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education, is “to provide direction to school boards to support their use of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) as an effective instructional approach in the education of many students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). This memorandum establishes a policy framework to support incorporation of ABA methods into school boards’ practices. The use of ABA instructional approaches may also be effective for students with other special education needs” (MoE - Administrators). The Ontario Ministry of Education has also developed and implemented an annual process to monitor the implementation of PPM 140 by school boards; since 2008 the Ministry of Education has conducted annual surveys of school boards regarding their compliance with requirements set out in PPM 140. The surveys are not conducted by the Ministry of Education per se, rather they are internal staff surveys which are then submitted to the Ministry of Education. The results of the recent TCDSB PPM 140 survey was recently shared with SEAC at the October 2017 public meeting (TCDSB SEAC Agenda - November 15, 2017) and its analysis demonstrated that there was a decrease in compliance in all four of the required indicators, in particular in target number four which reflects the autism knowledge base of staff working with students with ASD.

Indicator/Outcome	All or Most of the Time 2015/16	All or Most of the Time 2016/17
1. Principles of ABA are incorporated into the IEPs of students with ASD, as appropriate	91.8%	88.6%  3.2%
2. Transition planning is used to support students with ASD for a variety of transitions	90.4%	89.5%  0.9%
3. Multidisciplinary teams are involved.	92%	89.3%  2.7%
4. School staff working with students with ASD are knowledgeable about ASD	78.7%	64%  14.7%

Although Policy/Program Memorandum 140 has an intended focus on students with Autism, “the use of ABA instructional approaches may also be effective for students with other special education needs” so in theory, it should be a practice that is effectively embedded in the knowledge base for teacher and staff professional development and in instructional and assessment practices in every classroom setting.

The provision of special education programming using ABA methods is definitely not a “one-size-fits-all” type practice and in fact, reflects the very spectral nature of autism. It is essential that teachers and associated staff are educated on and empowered with the skills and knowledge to understand the many facets of autism spectrum disorder, learn how to effectively create and review the individual student profile for each student with ASD and then apply ABA methods to ensure an equitable and productive learning environment for students on the spectrum.

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

Applied Behaviour Analysis methods are definitely not restrictive to those students on the lower half of the spectrum but can and should be used to support positive learning outcomes in students on the upper half of the spectrum as well and can be used, as stated earlier in this report, with students with all special education needs as well.

ABA methods are scientifically based principles of learning and behaviour which are meant to replace problematic behaviours with useful or positive

ones. Using this approach, it is important to clearly define and record the behaviour intended to be changed. The antecedent negative behaviours are analyzed, as are the triggers determined to bring on the negative behaviours and that may be maintaining the child “stuck” in the negative behaviours. This analysis and data collection is also used to help inform and develop the positive behaviours to be introduced.

Reliable data collection must be collected on a regular and ongoing basis in order to analyze the student’s progress of desired skills acquisition and to identify and update a learning plan for any new skills or behaviours that are required to be taught or to determine if the current strategies being used are not proving effective in achieving the student learning goals. The generalization of skills learned throughout a variety of contexts should also be taught, with the end result being to enable the student to develop ongoing independence skills. Policy and program memorandum 140 also requires that school board staff which includes teachers, support staff and school administrative staff plan for the transition between various activities and settings involving students on the spectrum (Psychology Today - Applied Behavior Analysis).

PPM 140, PPM 156 & the IEP

The previous section in this report provided a short summary of policy and program memorandum 140 (Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (2007)). The directions outlined in PPM 140 require that the principal ensure that ABA methods are appropriately incorporated into the Individual Education Plans (IEP) of students with ASD. The principal must also ensure that all “relevant school board personnel and community personnel who have previously worked and/or are currently working with a student with an ASD are invited to provide input and participate in the IEP process” (MoE, Special Education In Ontario - Kindergarten to Grade 12, Section E4). Another requirement under PPM 140 also states that “principals are required to ensure that a plan for transition is in place for students with ASD. Transitions may include: entry to school; transition

between activities and settings or classrooms; transitions between grades; moving from school to school or from an outside agency to a school; transition from elementary to secondary school; transition from secondary school to postsecondary destinations and/or the workplace” (MoE, Policy/Program Memorandum 140: Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)).

Transition planning is also very important for all students and is an essential contributor to success for students with special education needs, particularly for those on the autism spectrum. Policy and program memorandum 156, Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs that supports and directs transition planning came into effect as of September 2nd 2014 and the primary requirement listed is that “The school principal is responsible for ensuring that student transition plans are developed, implemented, and maintained in accordance with the requirements of this memorandum”.

All transition plans are developed as part of the IEP and these are developed for all students who have an IEP (excluding gifted). Relevant and appropriate consultation with parents, students, post-secondary institutions and community agencies and/or partners is also required as needed. Transition plans are also required to be reviewed regularly along with the review of the student IEP. The physical, emotional and learning needs must be taken into account when developing an appropriate transition plan for students and according to PPM 156, it is required that “every transition plan will identify specific transition goals, support needs, the actions required to achieve the goals, roles and responsibilities, and timelines for the implementation and/or completion of each of the identified actions” (MoE, Policy/Program Memorandum 156: Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs).

The standards that were developed eighteen years ago in 2000 by the Ontario Ministry of Education on the development, program planning and implementation of student Individual Education Plans still remain the standard today for school boards across Ontario. It is required that under

Ontario Regulation 181/98 “Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils” (Ontario, Ontario Regulation 181/98: Identification and Placement of Exceptional Students) that principals ensure that all students identified as exceptional by an IPRC receive an Individual Education Plan within 30 school (Ontario, Ontario Regulation 137/01) days of their placement. Under Ontario Regulation 181/98, the IEP must include an appropriate student transition plan for students 14 years of age and older. Although Ontario Regulation 181/98 explicitly directs transition planning for students over the age of 14, Ontario Ministry policy requires that a transition plan be developed for all students from K-12 and who have an IEP (MoE, Ontario Ministry of Education - Parents - Special Education). Also, as discussed earlier in this section, the requirements of PPM 140 must be included in development, planning and implementation of the IEP.

It is recommended that the student on the spectrum be provided as much of an opportunity where appropriate, to provide input and be involved and engaged in every aspect of the process discussed herein.

Conclusion

This minority report presented by the Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario has outlined some of the areas of which we hold the most concern at this time. These concerns have grown out of discussions with Toronto families and through input received from families throughout the province of Ontario. We all know that fulsome education is essential and has the potential to positively impact on a person's life outcome. We also know that government is investing more into creating globally competent graduates and we *know* that our children, youth and adults with disabilities have the potential and the right to be included in these goals.

Under the preceding leadership, the Ontario government had released a three-year goal to fulfil an Ontario equity action plan which stated in a letter from the then Minister of Education, Mitzie Hunter; "All students deserve to have every opportunity to reach their full potential and succeed personally and academically, with access to rich learning experiences that provide a strong foundation of confidence that continues throughout their lives. Schools should be safe and welcoming places where all students have the tools they need to achieve success and follow their chosen pathways to life after graduation including work, college, apprenticeship or university" (ONGovernment). This same report acknowledges that "existing structures, policies, programs and practices may unintentionally disadvantage certain student populations" (pg. 13-14) and that "while we have achieved much for students, we continue to observe poorer outcomes for disproportionate numbers of students" (pg. 14) in reference to among other groups, students with special education needs and further, the report states that "students with special education needs are overrepresented in the data on suspensions and expulsions" (pg. 16). Yet another barrier to student success for students with autism within the "students with special education needs" umbrella is that the same Ontario Equity Action Plan report states on page 14 that "a disproportionate number of students ... with special education needs are enrolled in applied courses and are underrepresented among students who graduate and go on to pursue postsecondary education".

The Toronto Catholic District School Board's Pastoral Plan was launched on May 9th 2018 amid 730 attendees; parents, students, teachers, principals and administrators.

The TCDSB Pastoral Plan is centred on creating an environment in our schools where “we belong, we believe, we become”. In essence, these three ideals articulate what students with disabilities and their parents strive for every day in our schools and in their daily lives. We belong; we are entitled to receive an equitable education in this province and in our schools and we have the right to feel that we are included in every aspect of our education and reflected in its curriculum. We believe; we believe in our potential to achieve greatness and to be supported in learn to become fully functioning adults, able to contribute our many skills and abilities in whatever pathway we choose. We become; our disability does not define who we are. Just like any other student, we have the ability to learn. Just like any other student, we have the ability to contribute. Just like any other student, the manner in which you treat us greatly impacts on our ability to see our own value and it impacts on our ability to trust in humanity. Just like any other student, we feel the joy and fulfillment of success and the promise of a future built on that success as we become witness to our faith in our ability to become successful graduates and fully functioning members of society.

At the TCDSB's Pastoral Plan's launch, Cardinal Thomas Collins said, “you've got to become more than you are, more than you think you can be, we need to become something extraordinary” (The Catholic Register). This statement speaks to a collaborative effort; many hands, many minds, many hearts invested in creating an extraordinary result out of the contribution that *you* as educators and safe and caring adults will make on the development of every one of our children and in particular to those who need the most of your attention and support.

The Toronto Chapter of Autism Ontario would like to thank you for reading and considering this report. We respectfully ask that this report be included with the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Special Education Plan submission to the Ontario Ministry of Education as part of its compliance with consultation requirements and we look forward to your response regarding the recommendations that are provided on pages 46 and 47 of this report.

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Recommendations:

1. That the AFSE be continually reviewed throughout the year and that all progress towards achieving the goals be reported to SEAC on a monthly basis as a written summary.
 - a. That an in-depth analysis be undertaken to assess the large number of N/A students that are receiving special education programming and supports without having been identified through the formal IPRC process and that a written report be provided to SEAC.
 - b. That an in-depth analysis be undertaken to determine the reason for the large gaps in provincial assessment data for students with autism and that the TCDSB investigate possible implementation of programs, services and professional development to close the gaps and that this information be provided to SEAC in a written report.
 - c. That the representative members from SEAC for each exceptionality; be invited to participate in any exceptionality reviews and in the goal setting process for the AFSE.
2. That all safe schools reporting always include and provide a sub-set of data collection, analysis and reporting for students with special education needs so that any gaps and challenges can be flagged and improved upon and that this data be shared with SEAC.
3. That all students with IEPs in grades 6 & 8 and 9-12 (both identified and not) be specifically surveyed each year on how they are impacted by their school climate (including bullying) and how school climate affects their learning and their mental health and well-being and that this information be shared with SEAC.
4. That the TCDSB look to investigate into the possible development of a professional development bank of modules on autism and the self-regulation connection to student achievement and well being with the intention for it to become a regular presentation/discussion at minimum for each term/semester school's PLC meetings.
5. That the requirements of Policy and Program Memorandum 140 and 156 and how they relate to student achievement and well-being be

shared and discussed with all school staff in each school at the beginning of each school year

6. That each school be required to complete a mental health and well-being plan, separate from and similar to the safe schools plan and that both plans be kept current and publicly posted and accessible to parents and stakeholders.
 - a. That this plan and any policies and/or procedures relating to its implementation be prepared in collaboration with SEAC.
7. That each TCDSB employee be educated on how to identify the “invisible” markers that may indicate that a student may require mental health support and that all TCDSB employees be guided on how to see themselves as a contributor in helping to seek access to support for that student especially when there is the threat for self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide.
 - a. That a professional development module be developed in collaboration with SEAC for use at school staff meetings in support of student mental health and well-being.
8. That the TCDSB provide SEAC with a report on how inclusion is supported for all students in receipt of special education programs and services both identified and non-identified (and by exceptionality if possible).
 - a. That this report include all aspects of inclusion: academic, physical and social and that the report also highlight where students with special needs have been offered (or where there are barriers to) the same opportunities that typical students are eligible for and have access to in order to fully participate in all aspects of school life (academic, physical and social).



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