



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

## STAFF RESPONSES TO VARIOUS SEAC RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO PROGRAMMING AND SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

*“There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the Lord is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you... (Deuteronomy 15:4)”*

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June 3, 2019	June 13, 2019	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>

Linda Maselli-Jackman, Superintendent of Education, Special Services

### RECOMMENDATION REPORT

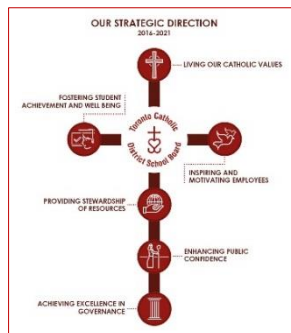
**Vision:**

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

**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.*



Rory McGuckin  
Director of Education

D. Koenig  
Associate Director  
of Academic Affairs

L. Noronha  
Associate Director of Facilities,  
Business and Community  
Development, and  
Chief Financial Officer

## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Provided within this report are staff responses to various recommendations made by SEAC to Board regarding suggested adjustments to programming and supports for students with Special Education needs.

*The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 12 hours*

## **B. PURPOSE**

1. This information report is on the order paper for the 13th June, 2019 Regular Board as a result of motions passed at the 16th May and 28th March, Regular Board meetings. It is intended to address questions on various topics that were recommended by SEAC and passed at Board.

## **C. BACKGROUND**

1. The following SEAC recommended motions have been passed by Board for a staff report:

### ***Regarding 2019-2020 Special Education Budget:***

*1) That more opportunities be provided for Special Education Needs (SEN) Students to participate in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) / Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) special programs and extra-curriculars with a focus on providing equity-based skill learning based on their particular needs;*

*2) That funding be allocated to hire a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA) to provide consultative services to schools, and to train and supervise resource staff in data collection as part of the current services offered to classrooms to assist teachers;*

*3) That at the very least, the Board maintain the current level of support staff and provide funding for them to obtain Registered Behaviour Training (RBT) certification on, at least, a voluntary basis, including the 40 hours of training and the examinations. These support staff are to be supported by the BCBA;*

*4) That an Inclusion Coach position be created to further support our Mission Statement, and the hiring/promotion of eight persons to the Inclusion Coach Position, focused on accommodating special education students in classrooms.*

***Regarding the Annual Report on the Accessibility Standards Policy (A.35):***

*5) That a representative from SEAC be included in the Members of Accessibility Working Group;*

***Regarding the need for an Emergency Plan for accommodating Special Education Students and/or Students with a Physical Disability that may be excused from regular hours of School:***

*6) That the existing resources be trained and utilized more effectively in preemptive de-escalation to prevent behavioral based exclusions;*

*7) That the school Board provide assistance for alternate arrangements instead of calling parents/caregivers; and*

*8) That accurate data be collected to better assess the current impact and create a plan to move forward.*

***Regarding the bringing forward of students to the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC):***

*9) How long does the Board expect a Principal and Teaching Staff to make efforts to accommodate a child in a regular class before starting an IPRC to move the student to the appropriate program?*

**D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS**

**1. Opportunities for SEN students to participate in STEM/STEAM**

The STEAM/STEM-related groups/clubs in various schools are open to any student who is interested. These include Robotics, etc. Students are admitted

to the STEAM or STEM program courses based on a set of criteria including an admissions assessment and interview. Students may be accepted into the program regardless of their IEP status as long they meet the eligibility criteria. A copy of the program application is attached as **Appendix A**.

In consultation with the Special Education Teacher and/or Guidance Teacher, students and Parents/Guardians have the opportunity to indicate a student's interest in any curricular or extra-curricular activity. Through ongoing communication with the school staff who support students with Special Education Needs, plans can be made to assist SEN students with engaging in desired programs to the best of their ability. Appropriate accommodations will be made as required given that the need for those is indicated to the program or activity's organizers. Curriculum staff that supports STEAM programs will look at providing programming suggestions that would make the extra-curricular activity more inclusive and share that information with principals and teaching staff.

## 2. **Funding for BCBA**

Ministry funding for the Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) 2019-2020 has virtually doubled (98.9%) from \$488,937 in 2018-19 to \$972,538 in 2019-2020. The BEA allocation provides funding for school boards to hire board-level Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) expertise professionals, including Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBAs), and to provide training opportunities that will build school board capacity in ABA.

The 2019–20 BEA allocation will have two components: Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Expertise Professionals Amount and the ABA Training Amount.

### **ABA Expertise Professionals Amount**

The ABA Expertise Professionals Amount provides funding for school boards to hire professionals with an expertise in ABA, including Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBAs). The use of ABA instructional approaches is intended for both students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other students with Special Education needs. ABA expertise professionals are intended to support principals, teachers, educators and other school staff by providing and coordinating ABA coaching, training and resources; facilitating

school boards' collaboration with community service providers, parents and schools; and supporting the Connections for Students model.

During this school year, a posting and interview process was conducted to hire one BCBA professional. This process remains incomplete as a result of the candidates having taken employment elsewhere. This process will be engaged once again for the 2019-2020 school year.

### **ABA Training Amount**

The ABA Training Amount provides funding for training opportunities to build school board capacity in ABA.

3. **Maintain the current level of Support Staff and that the Board provide funding for them to receive Registered Behaviour Training (RBT)**

In order to demonstrate its support for the continuation of the current level Special Education programs and services needed to address the requirement of SEN students, the Board of Trustees has passed a motion to preserve the current support staffing complement. However, current budget projections indicate the requirement to reduce the protected complement by 28 EAs and 2 CYWs based on the loss of the Ministry Priority Funding amount. Given the Board's responsibility to pass a balanced budget, it will be required to find efficiencies in other aspects of spending if it intends for there to be no change in the current support staffing complement.

In accordance with current Board professional development offerings and their collective agreement, support staff are invited to engage in a variety of professional learning opportunities that are intended to enhance their work-life experience and ability to support students with Special Education Needs.

Registered Behaviour Therapy (RBT) is a qualification that is external to training/certification requirements for an Education Assistant (EA) or Child and Youth Worker (CYW). It requires 40 hours of training that is supervised by a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA), a Board Certified Assistant Behaviour Analyst (BCaBA), or a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst with a Doctoral Designation (with completed dissertation) (BCBA-D). This external, additional qualification, as with any other additional qualifications (for

employees in any work group) are not mandated. It is up to individual employees whether or not they choose to pursue additional qualifications during the course of their employment with the TCDSB.

Should one choose to engage this form of professional development, the supervision that is required would need to be from a professional (in the categories indicated above) that has no professional or collective agreement jurisdiction over EAs or CYWs. Therefore, RBT training for current support staff would be voluntary and would require staff's attention to the coursework outside of the purview of their current work environment. However, RBT training appears to be more applicable to the role of the BCBA for which the Board is in the process of seeking qualified candidates to fill this role.

#### 4. **Inclusion Coach**

The philosophy of the proposed Inclusion Coach is one that currently exists in a very explicit way in the TCDSB. It is made apparent not only in the Mission of the TCDSB, but it is thus also in the Board's and Special Service Department's philosophy. In a particular way as well, this philosophy is evident in the tenets of the specialized roles of Assessment and Programming Teachers in Elementary, and Programming and Assessment Teachers (PATs) in Secondary. These long-standing roles of teachers with added responsibility within the TCDSB Special Services Department were initially designed to achieve exactly what is described in the proposed role of the Inclusion Coach.

As is evidenced in the TCDSB Parent Guide to Special Education (p.1), the Mission of "[t]he TCDSB is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish, and school and [is] rooted in the love of Christ." The philosophy of the TCDSB indicates that, "[o]ur commitment is to every student. This means...[ensuring] that we develop strategies to help every student learn, no matter their personal circumstance."

"In order to provide an education in the most enabling environment, TCDSB advocates the principle of inclusion as part of a continuum of services/programs which includes modification of the regular class program, withdrawal and intensive support programs if needed".

The TCDSB Special Services Team, including our APTs and PATs, strives for inclusion and the provision of a quality education in the most enabling

environment in their daily work with the students. The APTs and PATs are an example of the very inclusion coaches being sought. Below is an illustration of the complexity of the roles of the APT/PAT whose responsibilities may include:

- a. Completion of educational assessments using standardized and informal assessment measures;
- b. Assistance in the development of Individual Educational Plans;
- c. Use assessments in conjunction with classroom experience, knowledge of curriculum and of research-based materials to help program for students;
- d. Administering the OLSAT 8 screening to grade 4 students (APT);
- e. Supporting and assisting the transition plan for students with special needs from elementary to secondary school (PAT);
- f. Supporting teachers and administrators in understanding and interpreting formal assessment reports and their recommendations to assist with programming strategies;
- g. Conducting and facilitating intake visits and reports for students with high needs transitioning into school;
- h. Liaising between TCDSB and outside agencies;
- i. Supporting and assisting the transition plan for students with special needs from daycare/home to school, from grade to grade, from elementary to secondary school;
- j. Work collaboratively with member of the School Based Support Learning team;
- k. Consultations with school/staff with respect to programming suggestions, supports and intervention strategies as well as the implementation of differentiated instructional approach and strategies;
- l. intervention strategies as well as the implementation of differentiated instructional approach and strategies;
- m. Supporting and facilitating parent visits to Intensive Support Programs;
- n. Supporting administrators and teachers with the IPRC process and presentations to initial and/or Annual IPRC meetings;
- o. Supporting schools in the preparation of an individual student's Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA) claim;
- p. Assisting schools in the preparation of Ministry of Education Special Education Funding Claims, that is, Special Incidence Portion (SIP).

5. **Member of SEAC on Accessibility Working Group**

The Superintendent of Special Services has communicated with the

Superintendent of Area 1 who oversees the AODA Accessibility Working group regarding the request by SEAC to have one of its members sit on the AODA Accessibility Working group (committee). A commitment has been made to honour this request and the item will be placed on an upcoming SEAC agenda for a volunteer from SEAC to sit on the AODA committee.

6. **Emergency Plan for SEN students excused from school:**

*i) Existing resources be trained and utilized more effectively in pre-emptive de-escalation:*

Highly specialized supports for students and staff regarding behaviour regulation are provided by the Social Work, Behaviour Support, and Autism teams. However, all Special Services staff have the expertise within their various disciplines to provide students, staff, and parents ongoing supports to prevent or mitigate behaviour dysregulation.

The Autism team engages with schools on a referral basis in order to address the needs of students. Higher needs are given priority supports. A Behaviour Support/Safety plan, as needed, is developed with the intention of providing proactive supports and strategies for students and staff before behaviour escalates to the point of becoming disruptive to one's own or others' learning.

The focus for professional development over the last two years has been on Support staff during PA days. Next year there will be a focus on training of Administrators. Currently, Autism Support Teachers go into schools to work with staff who are working directly with the students who need support. Professional development is also done at the school level to address the needs of a specific school. A *Lunch and Learn* session with staff is an ideal way to offer this learning opportunity.

For the Social Work/Behaviour Support Team the *Crisis Prevention Institute* (CPI) is a well-used training provider of de-escalation strategies for TCDSB staff. Training is conducted in a variety of settings including direct instruction to staff at specific schools. In addition to the CPI training opportunities, there are de-escalation workshops offered twice a year. Programs such as *Zones of Regulation* and *Stop Now and Plan (SNAP)* have built-in supports which staff and students can utilize in order to prevent escalation. Registration for the various workshops is managed on a voluntary basis and can be done through the Board's on-line registration platform, *PAL*.



*ii) School Board to provide assistance for alternative arrangements instead of calling parents/caregivers:*

School staff, including Support Staff, Teachers, and Administrators take seriously their duty of care as educators. In the normal course of their daily responsibilities, they will utilize their professional knowledge and training in order to maximize opportunities for student success. Staff recognize their responsibility to provide for all students, particularly those with Special Education Needs, appropriate accommodations and differentiated instruction in order to enable students to access the curriculum to the best of their ability.

Students' readiness to learn on any given day is also a crucial factor in determining their success. The successful use of self-regulation strategies helps to promote student engagement with the curriculum and to maximize their learning in the school environment. In situations where students are challenged to successfully engage personal strategies for self-regulation, staff resources are either temporarily or more extendedly dedicated to provide needed supports for calming and attention so that students can resume their focus on learning.

In the event of exigent circumstances such as a student's personal illness or complex dysregulation, the Principal might be required to contact the parent/guardian to take the child home. A child's ensuing absence from school would be only as long as necessary for the child to return to a state of readiness to learn. While it is the school's intent to keep every child in school, there are sometimes unavoidable circumstances that would interrupt a student's school attendance. Regarding exigent circumstances that might arise for students during the school day, school staff will endeavour to do all that it can to care for the student while at school; but will call home for Parental/Guardian assistance only if remaining at school becomes detrimental for the student's wellbeing.

*iii) Accurate data to be collected to better assess the current impact and create a plan moving forward:*

Student attendance is taken on a daily basis and absences for any reason are recorded along with the reasons for absence. Student attendance is regularly

monitored by school staff and interruptions to attendance are monitored for potential patterns that might negatively impact a student's ability to access the curriculum and achieve academic success. Teachers and Administrators validate that good attendance contributes to success and poor attendance detracts from it. Therefore, the home-school partnership that is exemplified by ongoing communication among students, teachers, and parents/guardians is a critical contributor to student success.

7. **Accommodating a child in a regular class before going to IPRC**

The Education Act defines an exceptional student as “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a Special Education program...” Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

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. A Special Education program is defined as an educational program that:

- a. is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation;
- b. includes an Individual Education Plan (IEP) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

All children learn differently. Therefore, program modifications may be incorporated into a formalized IEP which focuses on the child's strengths as well as areas of need. The IEP is developed by the school, in consultation with the parent. It must include:

- a. specific educational expectations;
- b. an outline of the special education program and services that will be received;
- c. a statement about the methods by which the student's progress is reviewed;

- d. for students 14 years and older a plan for transition to appropriate post-secondary school activities, such as work, further education and community living.

If a formalized assessment and/or additional information is needed, a variety of Special Services staff is available within the TCDSB to conduct these assessments. Parents have the option to seek assessments from private sources outside the Board at their own cost.

The educational assessment may include a review of the student's work and academic records, administration of standardized group tests and, if deemed necessary, individual assessments.

Depending on the nature of the student's learning needs, the IPRC may wish to consider other assessments such as psychological, psychiatric, audiological, social work and speech-language pathology.

All of these assessments are carried out by qualified professional staff employed by the Board with the provision of informed parental consent.

In the event that programming in the mainstream classroom is not the most enabling environment for a student, consideration is given to proceed to the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee for consideration of a Special Education program and/or services.

The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) has three essential functions:

- a. to determine the strengths and needs of a student;
- b. to identify the student's exceptionality according to the categories and definitions provided by the Ministry of Education;
- c. to recommend program placement to be followed by the development/modification of the Individual Education Plan.

An IPRC meeting can be requested by either the Principal or the Parent/Guardian. The principal may, with written notice to the parent, refer the student to an IPRC when the principal and the teacher(s) believe that the student may benefit from a Special Education program. A Parent/Guardian can request an IPRC meeting by providing the Principal with a written request.

Once the IPRC meeting is convened, Parents/Guardians and students age 16 and older are entitled to attend. Others who may attend are:

- a. the Principal or designate;
- b. other professionals such as the student's teacher, Special Education teacher and/or Board support staff;
- c. students under 16 years of age with parent's consent;
- d. an interpreter (requested through the Principal of the student's school);
- e. a person to support or speak on the Parent/Guardian's and student's behalf;
- f. Principals will make every effort to accommodate parental request for specific resource staff to be in attendance.

At an IPRC Meeting, the chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting. The IPRC will review all available information about the student. They will:

- a. consider an educational assessment;
- b. consider other assessments as needed;
- c. interview the student (with parental consent if the student is less than 16 years of age) if required;
- d. consider any information that the parent or student submits, including recommendations for programs and services.

The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the student. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at the parent's request, or at the request of the student, aged 16 years or older. The parent is encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion. Following the discussion, after all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision. As soon as possible after the meeting, the Principal will forward for the Parent's consideration and signature, the IPRC's written statement.

Before the IPRC can consider placing a student in a Special Education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate Special Education services will:

- a. meet the student's needs;
- b. be consistent with the parent's preferences.

If the IPRC determines that placement in a regular class will meet the student's needs and the parent agrees, the committee will recommend

placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services. If the committee decides that the student should be placed in a Special Education class, it must state the reasons for the decision in its written statement of decision.

### **Special Education Programs**

In addition to Special Education Resource at each school, the following Intensive Support Programs (ISP) are available at some school locations:

- a. Autism
- b. Behaviour
- c. Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing
- d. Developmental Delays
- e. Gifted Congregate
- f. Kindergarten Language Program (KLP)
- g. Learning Disability
- h. Language Impairment
- i. Multiple Exceptionalities

The student's home school will be considered first for providing an appropriate program. For an overview of the Special Education process please refer to **Appendix B**.

## **E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. Information and recommendations in this report will be monitored by Special Services staff, Senior staff, and members of the Board.

## **F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

This report is for the consideration of the Board.