

Hello. My name is Deborah Nightingale. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I'm happy to answer questions or provide more information on this issue to anyone at any time.

I am a SEAC representative and 3 of our 5 children attend school at this board. I am concerned about TCDSB's recent decision to postpone many Identification, Placement & Review Committee meetings (IPRC's) and Special Education assessments until after the start of the new school year. These are meetings for Special Education students that normally would have been completed well before the end of school in June, so that students can start the first day of the new school year in the appropriate class or school and with appropriate supports. Students who are still seeking IPRC's are students who have not waived these meetings and are seeking placements or supports different from their current situation.

Failure to complete these before the start of school means that many students will start school in the wrong placement and/or without appropriate supports. These students will have to wait until some later point in the school year to be placed appropriately and to receive these supports. It is predictable that many of these students will be afraid to move if they receive a late placement, because the extra disruption is perceived as too challenging, and these students will try to tough it out in whatever situation they find themselves. This would be very stressful and disruptive for everyone in a regular school year, but in this extraordinary school year, these delays, late movements, or inappropriate placements will be particularly difficult for everyone to handle.

I am requesting that these overdue meetings be prioritized to be completed before the first day of school this September, in order to minimize considerable and unnecessary stress and disruption for everyone - these students and their families, and their classmates, teachers, and schools.

Here is some brief history and background on this issue:

The Ministry of Education stated twice in two recent Memos that the Ministry expects that all IPRC's should have been completed on schedule, even if remotely. (A summary of these M of E memos are attached below for your reference.) After extensive inquiries, it appears that the TCDSB and TDSB are the only school boards in the province that have not met this expectation. This month the TDSB indicated that it plans to complete all outstanding IPRC's, Special Education

Program Recommendation Committee meetings and Special Education assessments before school starts in September 2020.

An IPRC, or “Identification, Placement & Review Committee” meeting is a half hour to hour long meeting that includes the student’s parent, and typically also includes a principal, special education consultant, and/or psychologist, as appropriate. The purpose is to evaluate the student’s Special Education needs, previously obtained assessments, and parent’s preference, in order to identify a Special Education exceptionality, leading to a specified Placement and/or possible education supports.

Regulation 181/98 governs IPRCs, which are to be held every school year for Special Education students who seek them or are referred, in order to confirm placements, typically for the following school year.

On May 20, 2020 at a SEAC meeting the Superintendent of Education, Special Services gave a verbal report announcing that certain categories of IPRC’s would be “prioritized” but other IPRC’s would be postponed until some time after the start of school in September. Students who have been waiting for Special Education assessments would not go to IPRC’s before the new year starts because the information was incomplete and these students will be dealt with “ASAP” in 2020-2021.

We were told that the TCDSB was only holding IPRC’s in May and June for 3 scenarios:

- students leaving Gr 8 (elementary school) for Gr 9 (high school)
- elementary students going into Congregated Gifted classes (usually at Gr 6)
- students moving out of care and treatment programs

Perhaps in May it was hoped that things would clear up by the fall, so it would be easier to quickly process these students at that time. We know now that this clearly will not be the case. The start of school and the whole new school year will certainly be more tumultuous and have a heavier and more complex workload than usual for staff. If these students don’t have their virtual meetings while there are no students in school, it seems very unlikely that their needs will be expeditiously addressed after we start a very uncertain and complex school year in September. Trying to process and move or support these students late will be much more work, stress, and disruption for everyone. In this case, “an ounce of prevention” (by completing these meetings now) is definitely worth “a pound of cure” (by

attempting to complete these later). This cannot wait until “normal operations resume”.

It seems that this issue may affect hundreds of students who have not had their IPRC meetings or received their TCDSB psychological assessments as a precursor to these meetings. There has been no indication that the IPRC’s at TCDSB will be completed before the start of school or at any specified time soon.

I am requesting that all outstanding IPRC’s and Special Education assessments be prioritized to be completed before the first day of school in September.

On behalf of many students, their families, their classmates, and their teachers, support from Trustees and staff for this priority would be very much appreciated. Thank you very much.

Excerpts from MOE Memos:

“The Ministry has sent two communications to school boards, on April 21, 2020 and May 27, 2020 with clear expectations regarding Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRC).

On April 21, 2020, it was written:

Boards are expected to continue to conduct annual reviews by IPRCs as set out under Ontario Regulation 181/98.

And on May 27, 2020, it was written:

As indicated in our previous memo, IPRCs should continue to conduct annual reviews. Any initial IPRC decisions that were in progress at the start of the school closure period should also continue. Going forward, as set out in Ontario Regulation 181/98, initial IPRCs may be requested by parents and/or initiated by boards following the appropriate processes.”