



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOARD FROM THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."
Philippians 4:13*

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November 8, 2021	November 18, 2021	Click here to enter a date.

Sophia Harris, Recording Secretary
Sarah Pellegrini, Assistant Recording Secretary

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.



Brendan Browne, PhD
Director of Education

A. Della Mora
Associate Director, Academic
Services and Chief Operating
Officer

D. Boyce
Associate Director of Facilities,
Business and Community
Development

R. Putnam
Chief Financial Officer and
Treasurer

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the Board of Trustees with recommendations from the Special Education Advisory Committee.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 1 hour

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Trustees with recommendations from the Special Education Advisory Committee.

C. BACKGROUND

1. On October 20, 2021, the Special Education Advisory Committee met.
2. At that meeting, recommendations to the Board of Trustees were proposed.

D. EVIDENCE

The Special Education Advisory Committee met on October 20, 2021 and motions regarding Agenda Items 12a) *Letter of Interest from Jennifer Di Francesco to Serve as a Community Member Representative on the Special Education Advisory Committee*; 14b) *Consideration of Motion from Tyler Munro, representative of Inclusion Action in Ontario (IAO) regarding Promotion of Inclusive Practices in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan*; and 14c) *Consideration of Motion from Geoffrey Feldman, representative of Ontario Disability Coalition regarding Recommendation that Multiple Exceptionalities (ME) Staff use Clear Mouth Shields*, were approved by a majority vote as per the Minutes of that meeting included under *Communication* on the Order Page.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Special Education Advisory Committee recommend to the Board of Trustees that the following be approved:

1. That the letter of interest from Jennifer Di Francesco to serve as a Community Member Representative on the Special Education Advisory Committee be accepted (**Letter of Interest from Jennifer Di Francesco to Serve as a Community Member Representative on the Special Education Advisory Committee**);
2. **WHEREAS:** The mission of the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) is to be an Inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ;

WHEREAS: An “Inclusive” school board is one that focuses educating all students in regular classrooms and delivering necessary services and accommodations to special needs students in a regular classroom at their student’s local school and in their local community. Those boards operate few or no special segregated classrooms (ISP classes);

WHEREAS: Pope Francis and Catholic Social Teachings strongly supports the establishment and operations of Catholic Schools following the “Inclusive” model:

- ‘An inclusive education finds a place for all and does not select in an elitist way the beneficiaries of its efforts.’ – Pope Francis
- “An education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic schools” – Pope Francis
- “Putting the entire person at the centre of education” - Pope Francis
- “Orienting educational work towards the margins, social margins and existential margins through service, encounter and welcome.” – Pope Francis
- "Education is an inclusive movement. An inclusion that goes towards all the excluded: those for poverty, for vulnerability due to wars, famines and natural disasters, for social selectivity, for family and existential difficulties," – Pope Francis
- Vatican City, Feb 20, 2020 / 10:08 am ([CNA](#))- Pope Francis called for an educational revolution Thursday, telling the Congregation for Catholic Education that more effort needs to be made to accelerate the inclusiveness of education. FRATELLI TUTTI Encyclical Letter Pope Francis writes: ^[98]I would like to mention some of those “hidden exiles” who are treated as foreign bodies in society. Many

persons with disabilities “feel that they exist without belonging and without participating”. Much still prevents them from being fully enfranchised. Our concern should be not only to care for them but to ensure their “active participation in the civil and ecclesial community. That is a demanding and even tiring process, yet one that will gradually contribute to the formation of consciences capable of acknowledging each individual as a unique and unrepeatable person”. I think, too, of “the elderly who, also due to their disability, are sometimes considered a burden”. Yet each of them is able to offer “a unique contribution to the common good through their remarkable life stories”. Let me repeat: we need to have “the courage to give a voice to those who are discriminated against due to their disability, because sadly, in some countries even today, people find it hard to acknowledge them as persons of equal dignity”.

- “Defense of the right to life implies the defense of all other rights that enable the individual with the disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, and in health care, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities, and services.” US Catholic Bishops Statement on Disability (2016);

WHEREAS: 30 years of extensive research supporting accommodating special needs student within regular classrooms has shown, with an Inclusive approach:

- The special needs student does the same or better academically in an Inclusive classroom
- Academically all students do better in Inclusive classrooms.
- Teachers become more effective educators by broadening their teaching skills which benefit all students in Inclusive settings.
- Students learn to interact socially and accept those who are not like them, those who are different.
- Special needs students learn to interact with their peers in a typical accommodated, class setting and this eases the transition into adult life, making them more productive members of society. An artificial segregated setting can never achieve this and discourage accommodation in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

- Monies can be diverted from expensive segregated programs, bussing and underutilized assets to training staff, hiring frontline staff supporting students in regular classrooms and hiring support staff;

WHEREAS: 19 of the 60 English language school boards (32%) in Ontario promote the use Inclusive classrooms and operate no or only a few ISP classes for a limited number of Identifications;

WHEREAS: 12 of the 29 English Language Catholic School Boards (41%) in Ontario promote the Inclusive classroom and operate no or only a few ISP classes for a limited number of Identifications;

WHEREAS: New Brunswick, which has similar student enrollment levels as TCDSB, prohibits by law the segregation of any student due to a disability. New Brunswick has been a global leader in Inclusive education for 35 years;

WHEREAS: Most school boards that promote Inclusive classrooms achieve similar or superior results on standardized testing when compared to geographically overlapping boards that segregate special needs students, some by significant amounts. Renfrew Catholic DSB EQAO scores are 19% higher than Renfrew DSB. Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic DSB EQAO scores are 16% higher than Hamilton-Wentworth DSB. Of note Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic DSB has been operating without ISP classes as we know them for over 50 years;

WHEREAS: There is a presumption by TCDSB staff at all levels that the current ineffective and expensive parallel model of special education is best suited for a special needs student. This presumption is made without benefit of reviewing research or having experience in Inclusive school boards. Parents and advocates who request an Inclusive placement for a student are dismissed without serious consideration of the request and they are often subject to significant pressure from staff to consent to a segregated placement recommendation;

WHEREAS: There are few if any accommodations provided to students in ISP classes that could not be provided in a regular class if staff were trained and supported to provide those accommodations; and

WHEREAS: Promoting Inclusive Education is consistent with our Catholic values, modern pedagogy research and practices, is consistent the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Ontario Human Rights Code, the laws and court rulings of Canada and Ontario. It is more cost effective than a segregated approach and helps all students reach their potential.

That a senior Academic and Special Education staff (the Senior Team) look into how to promote Inclusive placements for special needs students that are currently or likely to be place in Intensive Support Program (ISP) and bring back a report to Board and SEAC by January 2022 meetings; and **(Consideration of Motion from Tyler Munro, representative of Inclusion Action in Ontario (IAO) regarding Promotion of Inclusive Practices in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan);**

3. That the following be considered by the Senior Team for inclusion in the 2021-2024 Multi Year Strategic plan (MYSP):
 - provide a modern definition of Inclusion in an education setting that will be posted prominently on the board's website, on related documents and shared with staff.
 - Consult with experts in Inclusive Education, Inclusive school boards, SEAC, review research and review available plans for transitioning a board to an Inclusive model.
 - Develop a general strategy for preparing staff, departments and the board to support a transition to an Inclusive model.
 - Identify and prioritize policies and procedure documents than need to be updated to reflect a change to an Inclusive model of education, including the Special Education Plan.
 - Identify groups of students and/or schools that will be transitioned to the Inclusive model each year, the staff groups that will educate and support them and the training they will need. **(Consideration of Motion from Tyler Munro, representative of Inclusion Action in Ontario (IAO) regarding Promotion of Inclusive Practices in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan); and**

4. **WHEREAS:** The mission of the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) is to be an Inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ;

WHEREAS: An “Inclusive” school board is one that focuses on educating Special Needs Students who have difficulty with hearing or communication unless they see the complete face and lips of the Staff Member;

WHEREAS: The TCDSB is expected to deliver the necessary services and accommodations to all students;

WHEREAS: The Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Staff have had approved the use of a Clear Mouth Shield made by ClearMask™ it is a transparent Face Mask used by the hospital teaching staff with multiple exceptionality children and youth who need to view the complete face for full communication and learning;

WHEREAS: Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or lack communication ability will benefit and become more intently involved when being instructed etc. by Multiple Exceptionalities (ME) Staff who communicate through facial expressions and mouth movement; and

WHEREAS: TCDSB should accommodate all students by using all supports needed to communicate and instruct students.

That the responsible staff member research the fully transparent, anti-fog masks available to help healthcare providers and essential workers to protect themselves, communicate better, and ease confusion manufactured by ClearMask and make them available to all school staff who wish to use this clear mask shield to fully communicate, instruct, etc. with students who rely upon the full facial expressions that includes lip movement to enable them to provide full and inclusive education (**Consideration of Motion from Geoffrey Feldman, representative of Ontario Disability Coalition regarding Recommendation that Multiple Exceptionalities (ME) Staff use Clear Mouth Shields**)