



A Parent Guide to Special Education

Bluewater District School Board
2023



SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BLUEWATER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Bluewater District School Board is a learning organization committed to a standard of excellence in fostering the academic, physical, social, and emotional development of all students. In Bluewater District School Board, we believe that all students can learn and have a right to an education. Educating children is a partnership that reflects the shared responsibility between home, school, and community. Establishing effective communication between the home and school is crucial to developing learning programs that accommodate students' needs and capitalize on students' strengths. In order to promote success for students with varying abilities, a collaborative effort must be made by all partners.

Most students with special learning needs are able to succeed in the regular classroom. Some students, however, may require specialized programs and services in order to achieve success. The *Education Act* requires that school boards provide, or purchase from another board, special education programs and services for students with exceptional learning needs.

Bluewater District School Board offers a range of special education programs and services to address the needs of exceptional students, and encourages the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms and home schools to the extent that their unique learning needs can be met in those locations. Occasionally, students with special needs may require the support of special class programs in order to facilitate learning. Parents are assured there will be ongoing opportunities to share in decisions related to special education programs and services provided for children with special needs. Working together is essential for student success.

In Bluewater District School Board, the general model of special education and the provision of special education programs and services are consistent with the board's "Vision, Mission and Strategic Priorities". BWDSB's mission "to provide a quality education for every student in a safe, accepting and caring environment" lies at the heart of the special education programs and services that the board provides to students with special learning needs.

Vision: *Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow*

Mission: *To provide a quality education for every student in a safe, accepting, and caring environment.*

Four Priorities:

1. Safe Supportive Learning Community
2. Quality Instruction
3. Community Engagement
4. Stewardship of Resources

For more information on special education placements, programs and services offered by Bluewater District School Board, please refer to the board's **Special Education Plan**. This plan can be accessed through the board's website at www.bwdsb.on.ca, or a copy may be obtained by contacting:

Learning Services - Student Support
Bluewater District School Board
P.O. Box 190, 351 First Avenue North
Chesley, ON N0G 1L0
(519) 363-2014

A PARENT GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

This guide has been developed in order to provide information for parents related to special education processes and procedures in Bluewater District School Board, including:

The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process

This guide will provide information regarding the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), and set out for you the procedures involved in identifying a pupil as “exceptional”, deciding the pupil’s placement, or appealing such decisions if you do not agree with the IPRC. The categories of exceptionality under which a student may be identified are also listed in this guide.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

This guide will describe the purpose and content of Individual Education Plan, explain when and how it is developed for a student, and provide information with respect to the role of parents and student in the process.

If you require more information after reading this guide, please refer to the board’s Special Education Plan which can be accessed through the board’s website at www.bwdsb.on.ca.

Additional information may also be obtained from the school principal, or by contacting the Learning Services – Student Support department of Bluewater District School Board.

Please note: When used in this guide, the word “parent(s)” refers to both parent(s) and guardian(s).

THE IDENTIFICATION, PLACEMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (IPRC) PROCESS

What is an IPRC?

Ontario Regulation 181/98, "Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils", requires that all school boards set up Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs). The IPRC is a formal committee that meets to decide if a student should be identified as an exceptional pupil, and if so, recommends the placement that will best meet the student's needs. An IPRC is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or a supervisory officer of the board.

When it becomes apparent that a student has special needs to the degree that they may be an exceptional pupil who requires a special education program, the student may be referred to an IPRC. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend an IPRC meeting for their child.

It is important to note that the determining factor for the provision of special education programs or services in Bluewater District School Board is not any specific diagnosed or undiagnosed condition, but rather the needs of the individual student based on an individual assessment of strengths and needs.

What is the role of the IPRC?

Under *Regulation 181/98*, the responsibilities of the IPRC are:

- *to decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;*
- *to identify the areas of your child's exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education;*
- *to determine an appropriate placement for your child (regular class and special class placement options in Bluewater District School Board are described in the following pages of this guide); and,*
- *to review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.*

Who is identified as an exceptional pupil?

Regulation 181/98 defines an exceptional pupil as "a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that they are 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. Those categories and definitions are described further on in this guide.

What is a special education program?

A special education program is defined in the *Education Act* as an educational program that:

- is based on, and modified by, the results of continuous assessment and evaluation; and,
- includes a written plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific learning goals and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

What are special education services?

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.

What special education programs and services are provided by Bluewater District School Board?

Bluewater District School Board offers a range of programs and services designed to meet the diverse and specialized needs of students. Equitable allocation of resources ensures availability of programs and services for all exceptionalities. Parents are assured there will be ongoing opportunities to share in decisions related to a student's program and placement.

For an overview of the special education programs and services provided within the board, please refer to Section 9 of BWDSB's Special Education Plan which can be accessed online through the board's website at www.bwdsb.on.ca.

What placement options are available to students in Bluewater District School Board?

A range of placement options designed to meet the needs of students with special needs is described by the Ministry of Education and offered within Bluewater District School Board. The range of placement options includes:

A regular class with indirect support

The student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialized consultative services.

A regular class with resource assistance

The student is placed in the regular class for most of or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom, from or under the direction of a qualified special education teacher.

A regular class with withdrawal assistance

The student is placed in the regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom for less than 50 per cent of the school day, from or under the direction of a qualified special education teacher.

A special education class with partial integration (in order to best support student need)

The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class where the student-teacher ratio conforms to *Regulation 298, section 31*, for at least 50 per cent of the school day, but is integrated with a regular class for at least one instructional period daily.

A special education class full time (in order to best support student need)

The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class, where the student-teacher ratio conforms to *Regulation 298, section 31*, for the entire school day.

In Bluewater District School Board, we encourage the inclusion of exceptional students in regular classrooms and home schools to the extent that their unique learning needs can be met in those locations. The board endeavours to meet the needs of all students accessing special education programs and services in the most enabling environment. In keeping with this belief, before considering the option for placement in a special education class, the school team and Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) will consider whether placement in a regular class, with appropriate special education services, would meet the student's needs and is consistent with parental preferences. In some cases, specialized placements may be required to meet the needs of individual students.

Specifically, Bluewater District School Board provides for:

- a number of full-time special education resource classes for students with developmental needs and students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and,
- a range of resource programming options offered within the regular class setting for students with needs in the areas of communication impairment, learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, giftedness, hearing impairment, vision impairment, and physical disabilities.

Each school in Bluewater District School Board has a Learning Resource Teacher on staff who coordinates and provides special education programs and services at the school level.

What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

If your child is identified as an exceptional pupil, an IEP must be developed for your child in consultation with you. It must include:

- a description of your child's strengths and needs;
- a description of specific learning goals/expectations and any accommodations required to support your child's learning;
- an outline of the special education program and services that will be provided;
- a statement about the methods by which your child's progress will be reviewed; and,
- a transition plan that includes the specific goals, actions required, person(s) responsible for actions, and timelines for each educational transition where the student requires support.

The IEP must be completed within 30 days after your child has been placed in a special education program, and the principal must ensure that you receive a copy of it.

For more information on the development of an IEP, please refer to the second half of this guide.

How is an IPRC meeting requested?

The principal of your child's school:

- must refer your child to an IPRC, upon receiving your written request; or,
- may, with written notice to you, refer your child to an IPRC when the principal and the child's teacher(s) believe that your child may benefit from a special education program.

Within 15 days of receiving your request or giving you notice of referral to IPRC, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet.

May parents and students attend the IPRC meeting?

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents and students (16 years of age or older) to be present at and participate in all committee discussions about your child, and to be present when the committee's identification and placement decision is made.

Who may be in attendance at an IPRC meeting?

- the principal of your child's school;
- your child's classroom teacher and other school-based special education staff (including the Learning Resource Teacher);
- resource personnel who may provide further information or clarification, such as board special education staff or a representative of a community agency;

- a parent representative (i.e., a person who may support you or speak on behalf of you or your child); and/or,
- an interpreter, if one is required. (services of an interpreter may be requested through the principal of your child's school).

Either the parent or the principal of your child's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.

What information will parents receive in preparation for the IPRC meeting?

Some time prior to the IPRC meeting, the principal and/or a designated school staff member will arrange a preliminary discussion with parents in order to:

- ensure that parents understand the purpose of the IPRC and their rights concerning the IPRC, as explained in "A Parent Guide to Special Education";
- request any additional information from parents that may be relevant to the IPRC decision;
- review the results of educational and/or other formal assessments that have been completed with the student;
- outline the agenda for the IPRC meeting;
- explain the recommendations that will be made by school staff;
- discuss the possible decisions the IPRC might make with respect to identification and placement; and,
- respond to any questions or concerns that parents may have about the IPRC process.

How will parents be informed about the timing of the IPRC meeting?

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the chair of the IPRC will provide you with written notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend as an important partner in considering your child's placement. This letter will notify you of the date, time, and place of the meeting, and it will ask you to indicate whether you will attend.

What if parents are unable to make the scheduled meeting?

If you are unable to make the scheduled meeting, you may either contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time, or let the school principal know you will not be attending.

As soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward to you, for your consideration and signature, the IPRC's written statement of decision noting the determination of identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

What happens at an IPRC meeting?

- The chair introduces everyone in attendance and explains the purpose of the meeting.
- The IPRC will review all available information about your child. The members of the IPRC will:
 - ❖ consider an educational assessment of your child;
 - ❖ consider, subject to the provisions of the *Health Care Consent Act, 1996*, a health or psychological assessment of your child conducted by a qualified practitioner, if they feel that such an assessment is required to make a correct identification or placement decision;
 - ❖ interview your child, if they feel it would be useful to do so (with your consent, if your child is less than 16 years of age); and,
 - ❖ consider any information that you submit about your child, or that your child submits (if the child is 16 years of age or older).

- The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the child. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at your request or at the request of your child, if the child is 16 years of age or older.
- You are 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.

What will the IPRC consider in making its placement decision?

Before the IPRC can consider placing your child in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will meet your child's needs and be consistent with your preferences.

If, after considering all of the information presented to it, the IPRC is satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet your child's needs and that such a decision is consistent with your preferences, the committee will decide in favour of placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services.

If the committee decides that your child should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written statement of decision.

What will the IPRC's written statement of decision include?

The IPRC's written statement of decision will state:

- whether the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional
- where the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional,
 - ❖ the categories of any exceptionalities identified, as they are defined by the Ministry of Education;
 - ❖ the IPRC's description of your child's strengths and needs;
 - ❖ the IPRC's placement decision; and,
 - ❖ the IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services.
- where the IPRC has decided that your child should be placed in a special education class, the reasons for that decision.

What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?

- If you agree with the IPRC decision, you will be asked to indicate by signing your name on the written statement of decision that you agree with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC.
- If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and if you agree with the IPRC identification and placement decisions, the board will promptly notify the principal of the school at which the special education program is to be provided of the need to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child.

Once a child has been placed in a special education program, can the placement be reviewed?

- A review IPRC meeting will be held once within each school year, unless the principal of the school at which the special education program is being provided receives written notice from you, the parent, dispensing with the annual review.
- You may request a review IPRC meeting any time after your child has been in a special education program for three months.

What does a review IPRC consider and decide?

- With your permission, the IPRC conducting the review will consider the progress your child has made in relation to the IEP. The committee will consider the same type of information that was originally considered by the IPRC, as well as any new information.
- The IPRC will review the placement and identification decisions and determine whether those decisions remain appropriate and should be continued, or whether a different decision should now be made.

What can parents do if they disagree with the IPRC decision?

If you do not agree with either the identification or the placement decision made by the IPRC, you may:

- within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss your concerns; or
- within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with the secretary of the school board.

If you do not agree with the decision after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of your receipt of the decision.

If you do not consent to the IPRC decision but you do not appeal it, the board will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.

How do I appeal an IPRC decision?

If you disagree with the IPRC's identification of your child as exceptional or with the placement decision of the IPRC, you may, within 30 days of receipt of the original decision or within 15 days of receipt of the decision from the second meeting described above, give written notification of your intention to appeal the decision to:

The Director of Education
Bluewater District School Board
P.O. Box 190, 351 1st Avenue North
Chesley, ON N0G 1L0
(519) 363-2014 or 1-800-288-4403 (telephone)
(519) 370-2909 (fax)

The notice of appeal must:

- indicate the decision with which you disagree; and
- include a statement that sets out your reasons for disagreeing.

What happens in the appeal process?

The appeal process involves the following steps:

- The board will establish a special education appeal board to hear your appeal. The appeal board will be composed of three persons who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal, one of whom is to be selected by you, the parent.
- The chair of the appeal board will arrange a meeting to take place at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after the chair has been selected (unless parents and board provide written consent to a later date).
- The appeal board will receive the material reviewed by the IPRC and may interview any persons who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal.
- You, the parent, and your child (if 16 years of age or older), are entitled to be present at and to participate in all discussions.
- The appeal board must make its recommendation within 3 days of the meeting's ending. It may:
 - ❖ agree with the IPRC and recommend that the decision be implemented; or
 - ❖ disagree with the IPRC and make a recommendation to the board about your child's identification or placement, or both.
- The appeal board will report its recommendations in writing to you and to the school board, providing the reasons for its recommendations.
- Within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the school board will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations (boards are not required to follow the appeal board's recommendations).
- You may accept the decision of the school board or you may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal. You may request a hearing by writing to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal. Information about making an application to the tribunal will be included with the appeal board's decision.

What organizations are available to assist parents?

Many community agencies, service providers and organizations are available in Bruce and Grey Counties to provide information and support to parents of exceptional children. Bluewater District School Board works collaboratively with these community partners, including:

- Bruce and Grey Counties (Preschool Resource and Children's Services Programs)
- Bruce County Special Needs Resource Program
- Bruce Grey Child and Family Services
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Child Parent Resource Institute (CPRI)
- CHOICES Drug and Alcohol Counselling for Youth
- Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation
- Community Living Owen Sound, Walkerton and District, and Kincardine and District
- Developmental Services Ontario -- Owen Sound
- FASworld Canada
- Grey Bruce Regional Health Services, Owen Sound
- Home and Community Care Support Services South West
- Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services
- Saugeen First Nation
- South Bruce Grey Health Centre
- Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC)
- TVCC

What are Provincial and Demonstration Schools?

The Ministry of Education operates Provincial and Demonstration Schools throughout Ontario for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, who are blind or visually impaired, who are deafblind, and/or who have severe learning disabilities, as well as those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Residential programs are offered at the schools Monday to Friday for students who live too far from school to travel daily.

Additional information may be obtained from the Resource Services departments of the Provincial Schools listed below.

English Language Demonstration Schools for students with severe learning disabilities:

Amethyst School (1515 Cheapside Street London, ON N5V3N9 Tel: 519-453-4408)

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/amethyst/index.html

Sagonaska School (350 Dundas Street West Belleville, ON K8P1B2 Tel: 613-967-2830)

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/sagonaska/index.html

Trillium School (347 Ontario Street South Milton, ON L9T3X9 Tel: 905-878-8428)

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/trillium/index.html

Provincial Schools for the deaf:

Ernest C. Drury School (255 Ontario Street South Milton, ON L9T2M5 Tel: 905-878-2851 TTY: 905-878-7195) www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/ecd/index.html

Robarts School (1515 Cheapside Street London, ON N5V3N9 Tel: 519-453-4400 TTY: 519-453-4400)

www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/robarts/index.html

Sir James Whitney School (350 Dundas Street West Belleville, ON K8P1B2 Tel: 613-967-2823 or 1-800-501-6240 TTY: 613-967-2823) www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/sjw/index.html

Provincial School for the blind and deafblind:

W. Ross Macdonald School (350 Brant Avenue Brantford, ON N3T3J9 Tel: 519-759-0730 or 1-866-618-9092) www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/wross/index.html

French Language Provincial School for the deaf and Demonstration School for students with severe learning disabilities:

Centre Jules-Léger (281 Lanark Avenue Ottawa, ON K1Z 6R8 Tel: 613-761-9300 TTY: 613-761-9302) <http://www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/cjl.html>

Where can parents obtain additional information?

Additional information with respect to the IPRC process can be obtained from the school principal and/or Learning Resource Teacher, or by contacting:

Learning Services - Student Support
Bluewater District School Board
P.O. Box 190
351 First Avenue North
Chesley, ON N0G 1L0
(519) 363-2014

CATEGORIES OF EXCEPTIONALITIES AND DEFINITIONS

The *Education Act* identifies five categories of exceptionalities for exceptional students: **behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, and multiple**. These broad categories are designed to address a wide variety of conditions that may affect a student's ability to learn, and are meant to be inclusive of all medical conditions that can lead to learning difficulties.

A student may present a range of learning needs and may be identified as exceptional within one or more of the categories. However, it is important to note that the determining factor for the provision of special education programs or services is not any specific diagnosed or undiagnosed condition, but rather the needs of the individual student based on an assessment of strengths and needs.

Bluewater District School Board applies the Ministry of Education categories of exceptionality when identifying students as exceptional, in conjunction with assessment data gathered, in order to make informed decisions related to student identification and placement. The following definitions are provided by the Ministry of Education for the five categories of exceptionalities and their subcategories:

BEHAVIOUR

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature as to adversely affect educational performance, which may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

- an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;
- excessive fears or anxieties;
- a tendency to compulsive reaction;
- an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors or any combination thereof.

COMMUNICATION

Autism

A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:

- disturbances in rate of educational development; ability to relate to the environment; mobility; perception, speech and language;
- lack of representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

Language Impairment

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors and which may:

- involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication;
- include one or more of the following: language delay; dysfluency; voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.

Speech Impairment

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

Learning Disability

One of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills and that:

- affects the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are at least in the average range;
- results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range) and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support;
- results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and work habits and learning skills;
- may typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; memory and attention; processing speed; perceptual-motor processing; visual-spatial processing; executive functions (e.g. self-regulation of behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making);
- may be associated with difficulties in social interaction (e.g. difficulty in understanding social norms or the point of view of others) with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities;
- Is not the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural difference; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.

INTELLECTUAL

Giftedness

An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

Mild Intellectual Disability

A learning disorder characterized by:

- ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive service;
- inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development;
- potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Developmental Disability

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

- inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;
- ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;
- limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

PHYSICAL

Physical Disability

A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or developmental level.

Blind and Low Vision

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

MULTIPLE EXCEPTIONALITIES

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments or disabilities.

THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

What is an Individual Education Plan?

An **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is a written plan which describes the special education program and/or services required by a particular student on an ongoing basis, and how the special education program and services will be delivered.

The IEP is based upon a thorough assessment of a student's strengths and needs that affect the student's ability to learn. The IEP describes any accommodations necessary to support the student's learning. If required by the student, the IEP identifies modified and/or alternative learning expectations that make up the student's program, and outlines specific teaching and assessment strategies that will be employed to help the student achieve those expectations. The IEP also contains a transition plan which addresses the steps and supports necessary to assist the student through key educational transitions.

The special education program and services provided for the student are adjusted as necessary on the basis of continuous assessment and evaluation. The IEP helps teachers to monitor the student's progress and provides a framework for communicating the information about the student's progress to parents and student (age 16 and older). Bluewater District School Board encourages collaboration and consultation among school staff, parents, district special education staff, and other professionals involved with the student in the development of the IEP. Parents and students (age 16 and older) are consulted in the development of the IEP, are provided with a copy, and are informed of any significant revisions to the IEP when those occur.

In Bluewater District School Board, we adhere to the policy document [*Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide \(2017\) DRAFT*](#) to ensure that the development of IEPs is carried out in a manner that is consistent with Ministry standards and *Ontario Regulation 181/98*. The IEP reflects the school board's and the principal's commitment to provide, within the resources available to the school board, the special education program and services needed to meet the identified strengths and needs of students.

Bluewater District School Board utilizes an electronic IEP tool to support the development, revision and implementation of the IEP and related documents. A sample of the IEP template is included in Section 11 of the board's **Special Education Plan**, which can be accessed online through the board's website at www.bwdsb.on.ca.

Note: Throughout this guide, the term "parent(s)" refers to both parent(s) and guardian(s).

What information is included in an IEP?

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a working document that is developed, implemented, monitored and reviewed in a collaborative manner. The IEP:

- describes the student's strengths and needs, identified on the basis of educational, medical and/or psychological assessment information and from observations of the student;
- records relevant medical/health information and formal assessment data;
- identifies the student's current level of achievement;
- describes the accommodations needed to help the student to access curriculum and demonstrate learning;
- identifies learning expectations that are modified from the Ontario curriculum expectations for the regular grade level in a particular subject or course (if required by the student);

- identifies alternative learning expectations in areas not represented in the Ontario curriculum (if required by the student);
- describes the teaching strategies employed to support the student's learning related to modified and/or alternative expectations;
- describes the assessment methods used to evaluate the student's progress towards achieving these expectations;
- contains a transition plan which ensures that supports in place to facilitate educational transitions;
- is developed at the beginning of a school year or semester, or at the start of a placement;
- is regularly reviewed and updated with respect to student's progress, showing dates, results and recommendations (at least once within each reporting period);
- records consultations with parent(s)/student; and,
- acts as an accountability tool for the student's parent(s), and all those who have responsibilities under the IEP for helping the student meet the stated goals and learning expectations.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is not:

- a description of everything that will be taught to the student;
- a list of all the teaching strategies used in regular classroom instruction;
- a record of all of the student's learning expectations, including those that are not modified from the regular grade-level curriculum expectations; or,
- a daily lesson plan.

What are accommodations, modified expectations and/or alternative expectations?

The IEP should identify which of the following options best suits the student's needs in each subject, course or skill area addressed within the IEP:

- accommodations only
- modified learning expectations (with or without accommodations)
- alternative learning expectations (with or without accommodations)

With appropriate special education programs and services, many students with special needs will be able to achieve the grade-level learning expectations of the provincial curriculum. The IEP documents any accommodations that are considered necessary for the student to succeed. **Accommodations** are the teaching and assessment strategies, supports, and/or individualized equipment provided to allow a student to access the curriculum and to demonstrate learning. For students who do not require modified or alternative learning expectations, the IEP will focus solely on the accommodations and services necessary to support the student's learning.

Some students may require modifications to the learning expectations of the Ontario curriculum in order to meet their learning needs. **Modified expectations** are changes made to the grade-level curriculum expectations for a particular subject or course. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills from the curriculum for a different grade level, and/or increasing or decreasing the number and complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations.

A small number of students may require alternative learning expectations in order to succeed and meet their learning needs. **Alternative expectations** are developed to help a student acquire knowledge and skills in areas that are not derived from the Ontario curriculum.

What is a “transition plan”?

[PPM No. 156 "Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs"](#) requires that all students who have an IEP must have an up-to-date transition plan at every stage of their journey through school. The key transitions in a student’s schooling can include the following:

- entry to school
- the move from one grade to another
- a change from one school to another
- the move from elementary to secondary school
- the transition from secondary school to postsecondary activities
- a move to a school following a prolonged absence for medical reasons, or after receiving care, treatment, or rehabilitation at another institution

In consultation with parents and community partners, the development of a coordinated plan for each key transition will help to ensure that school and board staff are prepared to meet the needs of the student, contributing to smooth transitions and paving the way for the student’s future success.

Why is an IEP developed for a student?

An IEP is developed for one of the following reasons:

- An IEP must be developed for every student who has been identified as an “exceptional pupil” by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) within a period of 30 school days after the student has been identified and placed in a program.
- An IEP may be developed for a student who has not been formally identified as exceptional, but who requires special education programs or services in order to attend school or to achieve curriculum expectations, and/or whose learning expectations are modified from or alternative to the expectations set out for a particular grade level or course in a provincial curriculum document.

Additional considerations:

- If a school principal determines that a student’s achievement will be assessed on the basis of modified expectations, an IEP is required even in the absence of identification by an IPRC.
- If a student regularly requires accommodations (including specialized equipment) for instructional or assessment purposes, it is advisable to develop an IEP.
- In order to receive accommodations during Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments, a student must have an IEP that identifies the accommodations required.
- If a Special Equipment Amount (SEA) and/or Special Incidence Portion (SIP) funding application is being made to the Ministry of Education on behalf of a student, a student must have an IEP as supporting documentation that identifies the accommodations required.

What are the steps in the development of an IEP?

The school principal is responsible for ensuring that an IEP is developed for each exceptional pupil. Typically, the principal will delegate many tasks related to the IEP to teachers. Once a student has been identified as exceptional, or as having special needs requiring a special education program, the principal assigns to one teacher the primary responsibility for coordinating the development, implementation and monitoring of the student’s IEP. A team approach underlies the IEP process, and the process is goal-oriented; that is, it always keeps the goals and expectations for the student in mind. The phases of the IEP process include the following tasks:

1. Gather information

- review the student's records (including the previous IEP, the IPRC statement of decision, and any assessment documentation on file)
- consult with the student (age 16 and older), parent, school staff and other involved professionals
- observe the student
- review the student's current work
- conduct further assessments, if necessary
- consolidate and record information

2. Set the Direction

- establish a collaborative approach (including the student and parent)
- establish roles and responsibilities

3. Develop the IEP

- identify and record the student's strengths and needs
- identify goals and expectations
- determine strategies and resources
- develop a transition plan
- establish a monitoring cycle

4. Implement the IEP

- share the IEP with the student, parent, school staff and other involved professionals (providing a copy to the parent and to the student, if age 16 or older)
- put the IEP into practice
- continuously evaluate the student's progress
- adjust goals, expectations, and strategies as necessary

5. Review and Update the IEP

- update the IEP periodically (at least once per reporting period)
- review and update the IEP at the end of each reporting period and when the student transfers to another school
- store the IEP in the Ontario Student Record

How can parents and students be involved in the development of the IEP?

Parents are consulted in the development of the IEP and receive a copy upon its completion. Parents also are consulted about any significant revisions to the IEP and receive a copy of the revised IEP when changes are made.

In Bluewater District School Board, we believe that the educational growth of a student is best accomplished through the mutual efforts of, and close communication among, the student, parents, school staff, community partners, and other professionals involved with the student. The IEP provides an opportunity for all those involved with the student to work together to provide a program that will foster student achievement and success.

As a parent, you can support the development of the IEP for your child by:

- providing school staff with up-to-date information that is relevant to your child's learning (e.g., recent assessments, medical/health reports);
- sharing important information about your child that will assist in the development and implementation of an appropriate educational program (e.g., talents, skills, strengths and needs demonstrated in the home and community; learning styles/preferences; interests; reactions to various situations);
- reinforcing and extending the efforts of educators by providing opportunities for your child to practice and apply skills at home;
- providing feedback on your child's transfer of skills from school to home/community settings; and,
- maintaining open communication with the school.

Depending upon developmental stage, a student may participate in the IEP process by:

- helping educators to identify individual learning styles/preferences, interests, strengths and needs;
- demonstrating awareness of the accommodations provided to support their learning;
- assisting in the determination of annual program goals and learning expectations;
- working actively to achieve the goals and learning expectations contained in the IEP; and
- helping to monitor their own progress and developing awareness of how grades and/or marks will be generated for the Provincial Report Card.

What can parents do if they do not agree with some aspect of the IEP?

Most Individual Education Plans are developed by the teacher in collaboration with the school resource teacher and in consultation with parents and student (if age 16 and older). Parents, students, and teachers all play a role in the planning and implementation of a student's IEP.

Occasionally, issues related to the planning and implementation of the IEP may become a source of disagreement and conflict between parents and school staff. Informal conflict resolution, beginning with problem solving, is often the most effective approach as it enhances the ability of students, parents, and educators to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions.

In situations where there is dispute related to aspects of the IEP, the school principal and school team will work collaboratively with the parent(s) and student to facilitate a satisfactory resolution. Through discussion with parents, language will be clarified and a shared perspective for meeting the student's needs can be reached. Occasionally, additional meetings may be required, and other board special education personnel may assist as part of the school team in order to support dispute resolution.

Where can parents obtain additional information?

Additional information with respect to the development of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) can be obtained from the school principal and/or Learning Resource Teacher, or by contacting:

Learning Services - Student Support
Bluewater District School Board
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Chesley, ON N0G 1L0
(519) 363-2014